

Paul Ortiz: Mr. Beasley, could you tell me when and where you were born and something about the area that you grew up in?

David L. Beasley: I was born right here on this place, Tuskegee. Well, we call it Tuskegee, Alabama, but this is Chehaw community.

Paul Ortiz: What did your— Oh, I'm sorry.

David L. Beasley: I was about to tell you that was 84 years ago.

Paul Ortiz: What occupation did your parents pursue?

David L. Beasley: Well, I got my grammar education right over there just beyond that trail you see there. I finished high school at Tuskegee Institute, and I also received my bachelor's degree from Tuskegee University in 1937. From there, in 1937, I graduated in June. I got a job and was hired over in Preston, Georgia, Webster County in 1937, July. I was hired as principal and teacher of vocational agriculture. I stayed there for three years. Didn't nobody run me away, but because I didn't like the place because it was a pretty tough place.

David L. Beasley: But I stayed there those three years. But I got a better job back in Alabama, in Marengo County. I was assistant to our supervisor down there. That was in 1942. No, that was back in 1940. Back up there a little bit, say 1941. Because, see, I went in the Army in 1942, and I was discharged in 1943. That was another tough place, too. Linden, Alabama, Marengo County. But I got along all right. Being born here in the South, I knew how to get along with people.

Paul Ortiz: What are some of your earliest childhood memories from this area?

David L. Beasley: Well, from this area?

Paul Ortiz: Yes, sir.

David L. Beasley: I hardly remember anything other than going to school. Nothing happened here. People just went along with things just like they were at that time till 1941 when Dr. Gomillion started the ball rolling himself, and Mr. Mitchell later joined him. They carried on. Mr. Mitchell didn't go in the Army. Dr. Gomillion, I don't know what kept him out. Maybe he was too old to go in the Army, too.

David L. Beasley: But I was in Marengo County. They said if I had stayed in Macon County, I wouldn't have had to go in the Army. But I didn't care nothing about that. I didn't mind that. I went in the Army and stayed there. I wasn't in there but a year and one month before I was honorably discharged. From that time on, I

can relate pretty well. But back of that, I can't say too much about it. We went along with things just as they were.

David L. Beasley: This isn't the place where the original house was, but it was on this land, this plot about 80 acres in here now. There was a railroad station down there, and we lived very close to the railroad station. Our house wasn't quite as far from here to that, about half the distance from here to that trail you see out there.

Paul Ortiz: So your parents were landowners?

David L. Beasley: Yeah, they owned it. I told you he bought this place 123 years ago, 1887, I think it was, somewhere back then. It has been in the family 123 years.

Paul Ortiz: Wow.

David L. Beasley: He started that church. My granddaddy did, started that church you see up there. It was always—

Paul Ortiz: That AME church?

David L. Beasley: Huh?

Paul Ortiz: That AME church?

David L. Beasley: Yes. The AME Zion Church. That's the Zion Church. They broke away from the AME due to some disagreement way back yonder, therefore, he started that church. That church up there is 100 and— Let me see. What is it? 106 years. I think I got that in this. If you haven't seen this thing, you might— I wanted to give it to you, but the lady promised to give me another one. This is the last one I got. It tells a whole lot about me.

Paul Ortiz: Oh, really?

David L. Beasley: Mostly about me.

Paul Ortiz: So your grandfather—

David L. Beasley: Because they gave me a day up there. They call it Dan's Day. That was June something. June 17th. The pastor, he wasn't the pastor here at that time when all this stuff was going on. But when he read this book here, he read this one and looked at this thing here. He says, "Man, I need to write something about you. We need to have something for you. You haven't been honored here in your own community." I said, "Well, no, I haven't." That hadn't bothered me at all. But they did. They had a fine day for me up there. Excuse me.

Paul Ortiz: Your grandfather founded that church?

David L. Beasley: Yeah, he started the building of the church up there on his place, right back in here. There was a railroad that ran right along there where that line you see is there. We owned on this side, in fact, owned all of it. But they sold off that on the other side. I bought that back recently from Tuskegee University. I bought it for the purpose of owning this little driveway that you came down. It's 50 feet wide, and I wanted to own that.

David L. Beasley: Now, the rest of it, I sold it because I didn't want it. I got all the land I want back here. So therefore, I sold that after I bought it from the university—

Paul Ortiz: I see.

David L. Beasley: —and kept this road because that's what I wanted.

Paul Ortiz: How did your grandparents acquire that land?

David L. Beasley: They were slaves. When they were freed, some Whites helped him and my grandmother to accumulate funds. They bought this land for 50 cents an acre. You can't get it for \$5,000 an acre now. That's what they bought it for, 50 cents an acre.

Paul Ortiz: Wow.

David L. Beasley: All of it, the whole thing over there where those things are and over across the road over there where they had the little school. Didn't have the school there in that day, but they bought the land. Look, I never did see my grandfather to know him that much. But my grandmother, she used to sit down and tell me stories about what happened and how they had to live and how they made it, and they made it. They said, "We always had plenty to eat and decent clothes to wear." That's my granddaughter coming in there now.

Paul Ortiz: So she would tell you stories about her?

David L. Beasley: She told me stories about the situation that was going on and how it was and how you had to be humble and get along with people. So I learned a whole lot from her.

Paul Ortiz: What other kinds of stories would she tell about slavery?

David L. Beasley: But she didn't know nothing about slavery, other than— Didn't tell me anything about it, other than they had to work out there in the fields. When they finally got around and were freed, some Whites helped them to save some money. The man who sold them this place was one of them that helped them to save money to buy this land for that cheap price. Yes, sir.

Paul Ortiz: What was your grandmother and your grandfather's name?

David L. Beasley: Her name was Ellen Beasley, and his name was Jim Beasley.

Paul Ortiz: And the plantation that they worked on was around here?

David L. Beasley: Right here. Right here. They worked on this plantation. I don't remember the name of the man whom they were working under, who owned them or whatnot. But according to the deed, a man by the name of Bryant sold them the land. I got a rough copy of the deed. Well, I tried to get it up there in the courthouse, but it's written in such a way that I can't read it. Maybe you could read it. It's written in longhand, and it's written in ink. But I couldn't do much with it, not reading it.

David L. Beasley: But we did get that man named Bryant who sold the land to them as far as best I can understand. That's my mother on this side, and my wife who's in there on the other side. She was a schoolteacher, my wife was. Now, my mother was nothing but a housewife and worked out here on this farm and whatnot. Yes, sir.

Paul Ortiz: So what was life like growing up here during your childhood?

David L. Beasley: Well, we enjoyed it. We thought it was something fine to be living out here and the way things were. We had the little school there, two-teacher school. It was a one-teacher at first, then they went to two-teacher. Then they went to a four-teacher, and she was one of the four teachers. She was coming home. We was over here. I built here. I'd come out of the Army and built here. We skipping. I wanted to bring it on down the line so that we wouldn't be jumbling it up.

David L. Beasley: But anyway, she was a schoolteacher over there. She got about halfway home here one evening, and the children hollered, "Look back. The school's on fire." She looked back, and the school— No water out here. It was built out of this what we call fat pine. It just went up just like a match out there.

Paul Ortiz: What was the name of that school?

David L. Beasley: Chehaw School. Chehaw School.

Paul Ortiz: And when—

David L. Beasley: It was given by, I think, a man by the name of William Rosenwald from Chicago. He used to be connected with Sears Roebuck, I believe. But anyway, you'd have to get more of that from Tuskegee University up there. But he gave the money to build a school. They called it the Rosenwald School because he built— They came down here. He was a trustee over there. They came down, and they saw the condition. And then they began to help people to build these old one-teacher and two-teacher schools all around.

David L. Beasley: We had about 20-something of them as I can remember, and now we don't have but about five schools, I think, in this county.

Paul Ortiz: Five?

David L. Beasley: Something like that. Close to it. Yeah.

Paul Ortiz: Now, when you were going there, where would the teachers come from coming up?

David L. Beasley: They come from Tuskegee mostly, but some of them would live out here with some of the families. They could live for little or nothing. The people was growing their food and, therefore, the food wasn't a problem, just a matter of the little money that they got to buy clothes and things with. Now, that same thing happened— Where I was at? I was thinking. I lost my point there about this school business.

David L. Beasley: You got a high school up there in Notasulga, and you got one here. You got two or three eight-grade schools. I think it's around three of them you got scattered around here. But that was similar to the situation that I was in, in Georgia. We didn't have any schools over there worth anything. The little school that I taught in, it was a five-teacher school at first, and then they soon made it six because they put home ec in to match vocational agriculture and vocational education by putting that in.

David L. Beasley: They had a little old four-room building when I went there. They put the four teachers that they had when I went— I was the fifth teacher. Therefore, we didn't have four room. They had the teacher in the room. I was in the back room, and the other teacher's in the front. Then when we got the home ec teachers, it was almost the same thing. Before I left there, we built a vocational building to teach home economics and agriculture. As soon as I got it finished, I left.

David L. Beasley: I left because it was a better job here. I was getting \$100 a month over there, which was good money. Over there, even the White principal wasn't getting 100, and he was kind of raising sand about that. But the reason I got that \$100, it was through some maneuvering of the state supervisor who was a Black man and the superintendent who was a very fine White lady, and—

Paul Ortiz: This was in Alabama?

David L. Beasley: No, this is in Georgia.

Paul Ortiz: Georgia.

David L. Beasley: When I got to be principal over there and that's why I got— I was just leading up to how I got that \$100 a month for teaching. I left that 100 for 120 here, plus travel. That put me up near \$200 a month. When I left there and went in the Army and came out of the Army, when I came out of the Army, I came back here, but I didn't come to this place because I hadn't built this house. I built this house in 1949. We were still living in the old shack down there. I call it the old shack, but it's a nice home. We thought it was

fine.

David L. Beasley: But after I came back, I worked up to the primary airfield as chief of security until it closed in 1945. The war ended. 1945, I built this house then. So I came here, and I didn't do anything but mess around a little bit with politics and whatnot. I got involved in the stuff with Dr. Gomillion and Mr. Mitchell, and we moved on from there. After the Army airbase closed up there, I went to the VA hospital the second time.

David L. Beasley: The first time I went over there, I hadn't finished school. I hadn't done nothing but plowed out here in this field. I maneuvered around there and got a chance to go to school and work when I graduated from high school. I was working at the VA at that time when I graduated from high school. Now, when I graduated from college, I didn't go back. Well, after I graduated from college, I went over there and taught school, came back here. And then after I came back and got out of the Army and went back to the VA the second time.

David L. Beasley: The first time I went there, I went there as a pot washer and a kitchen helper and whatnot. The second time, I went back as a file clerk, and I stayed there 27 years at that time. Then I retired from the VA, and I came home to sit down and do nothing. But this political stuff that I was involved in, that was in 1969, I believe, when I retired from over there. That's all in here.

David L. Beasley: When I retired from over there and came here and messed around for about six months, then I ran for county commissioner, and I was elected. We had six people running for county— I think that's the tax collector's thing up there. County commissioner's thing, I got it. I never did put it in a frame. It's in there now. I didn't serve but four years county commissioner because I didn't like it. Those are some of the medals that they gave me for doing different things and whatnot.

David L. Beasley: But after I served as county commissioner, I came out, stayed out about almost a year. Yeah, about a year. The tax collector passed. She was a lady. A schoolteacher, who's still teaching school, called me about this time one afternoon. She said, "Dan, Mrs. Martin has passed." I said, "She has?" I said, "Well, I'm sorry," just like that. I wasn't thinking about nothing. So she says, "You can get that job if you want to. The governor's going to appoint somebody to carry out the unexpired term," which was two and a half or three years. I don't know exactly which.

David L. Beasley: Anyway, I said, "Okay, I'll take a shot at it." I called the state senator who lived down here about seven or eight miles. He wasn't at home, and I talked to his daughter. I told her. I said, "You tell your daddy when he comes home—" He's a good friend of mine because he used to work up here in Tuskegee. "Tell your daddy when he comes home that Mrs. Martin passed this afternoon, and the governor's going to appoint somebody to fill out that unexpired term. He going to have something to do with it, being the state senator from this county. Tell him if he doesn't have anyone else that he wants to give it to or recommend, consider me."

David L. Beasley: I didn't tell him to appoint me. I just told you the exact words I used, "Consider me." When

he came home that night, he called me. It was late. He said, "Dan, what's your address? Give me your full name and address and how you get your mail." I gave it to him. I'm going to try to get this for you right quick. He said, "Can you come to my house?" No, that wasn't at that time. He asked for it later.

David L. Beasley: When he went to work that day and came back, he said, "Can you come to my house tomorrow morning at about 8:00?" I told him, "Yeah. Where you live?" I didn't know exactly where the man lived, to tell you the truth. I went down there that morning and went in his house, and we sat down and talked. He said, "You can get that appointment if you want it." He told me the same thing the lady told him, said, "If you want it, you can get it."

David L. Beasley: Well, they knew that I was born and brought up here. I hadn't been arrested or anything, nothing but maybe a traffic violation once. I got caught for speeding. That's the only time I might ever got caught there down there in Autauga County. But anyway, so they thought I was all right. Governor Wallace was the governor at that time, and he knew that I fought him. We fought him. Gomillion, Mitchell, and Beasley fought him to get this registration in here. We hadn't gotten it at that time.

David L. Beasley: That's why I asked you had you seen this book because this shows you how they were so determined to keep us from registering to vote, all these PhDs and Masters and whatnot in there. They did everything they could to keep us from getting it. But anyway, Senator Perry and I talk just like you and I are talking here. I says, "I don't know whether I ought to be saying all this stuff to you because you taped some stuff on a fellow that's—" He finally got to be representative of the county, Thomas Reed. You read or heard about him?

Paul Ortiz: Yes, sir.

David L. Beasley: He got reelected again after he served his prison sentence. But anyway, I said, "I don't know what you doing. You may have something you're getting on me that you can take and use, not that I've done anything that anybody would be ashamed of. I wasn't." Anyway, he says, "You can get that appointment if you want it." We sat there arguing and talked about a half hour. He said, "The old man wants you, if you're appointed, to serve because he knows that you'll treat everybody right."

David L. Beasley: He said, "You'll be fair towards White as well as Black, although the White, some of them have been a little obnoxious to you." I guess that's a good word to use. "They weren't so kind to you and whatnot." One man told me they going to run me out of this county. I said, "Well, you sure will have to do it because my granddaddy was here and my daddy was here. So I'm here, and I'm here to stay." There wasn't no houses was here at that time. I had a couple of shotguns back there, and I kept those ready. Wasn't nobody going to run me anywhere. They might carry me away, but they wasn't going to run me away.

David L. Beasley: But anyway, I finally told him that, "I'll accept the appointment, but I won't guarantee you that I will serve even if I run and get elected." Well, you know if I ran and got elected, I was pretty sure I was going to serve, and I ran. He appointed me, and I took the thing in. I know when I got that. I got that in May of 1977, and I served for 12 years as tax collector. When I left, I retired. I didn't quit. I wasn't fired. Didn't

nobody defeat me. They ran against me twice, and I beat them.

David L. Beasley: I ran three times. The last time didn't nobody run against me because they figured wasn't doing nothing but wasting time and money. Sure enough, I served about two or three years that third term, and I just quit. I could make more money sitting down here on retirement than I was making up there working, going up there every day, being bothered with trying to keep them folks' tax straight and keeping folks from stealing the money and whatnot.

David L. Beasley: In spite of that, they stole some and I had to pay it back. But that was all right. I just wanted to make sure that a Black man could run one of those offices up there and not be accused of stealing the money and taking it because I was driving. I just bought a new car right after I got that appointment. I said, "Now, I had money enough to buy that car before I got that appointment." But that was beside the point.

David L. Beasley: We went on. From there, I came out and I've been off ever since. I haven't done anything but messed around here. Well, I do a little notary work and work with the church and work with different people, people like you or like Mr. Norelle who come by. They're breaking into the scene. There was another lady who was interested in the same thing that you were interested in.

Paul Ortiz: Well, yeah. Yeah, actually I work with her.

David L. Beasley: Yeah?

Paul Ortiz: Yeah.

David L. Beasley: Mrs. Whorley.

Paul Ortiz: Whorley, yeah, yeah. One of my colleagues.

David L. Beasley: She was supposed to come out here, but she didn't get it. So since you getting it, I don't guess she'd be interested in it.

Paul Ortiz: Well, actually we're all interested. But one thing I was going to ask you, Mr. Beasley, now before we started the actual interview, you told me that you came out of the Army in '43, and you started thinking about registering to vote.

David L. Beasley: That's right.

Paul Ortiz: Now, had you thought about registering to vote before that?

David L. Beasley: No, I hadn't. Well, yes, I did, too, because when I graduated from college up there, during the graduation exercise, we called the seniors together. But they separated them. They called the



agricultural seniors together. I asked. I guess I was being a little unfair to the instructors. I said, "Why is it that we can't get registered to vote here?" I just asked them. Well, they was slow on that because they wanted their jobs up there at the institute, and they didn't want to say too much.

David L. Beasley: They thought that they would get fired about it, but Dr. Gomillion didn't get fired because Dr. Patterson gave him leeway. As long as he did his work, he could do all this other stuff. But that did happen. Yes, sir.

Paul Ortiz: Now, this was during commencement?

David L. Beasley: No, just before commencement. Just before. They were getting us all together to tell us where we were going and this place and that place. I'd heard about registration down in these counties, these Black Belt counties especially. I guess I'm the only one that raised any question about this registration business after we were about to get out of school.

Paul Ortiz: Now, did students—?

David L. Beasley: Now, that was before I graduated now, when I asked this question. But it's my senior year, right along in May or June because I graduated on June 2nd. That's the only time I can remember that Tuskegee University had graduation in June. I graduated on June 2nd.

Paul Ortiz: 1937?

David L. Beasley: 1937.

Paul Ortiz: Okay.

David L. Beasley: Yeah. I thought we had a program of the thing in here. That file you see over there is full of this stuff, nothing but this. This was our annual and—

Paul Ortiz: What was school at Tuskegee like during those years?

David L. Beasley: Well, if you wanted to learn, you could learn. It's just like now. If those students up there want to learn and be somebody, they can learn. But if they prove to some of them teachers up there that they don't want to do nothing, just get by, the teacher won't waste no time with them, and I don't much blame the teacher.

Paul Ortiz: When you were going to school at Tuskegee, were you talking about registering to vote with other students?

David L. Beasley: No, I didn't think about it while I was going to school. But around the end of when I got ready to graduate, that's when I got interested in it. I was determined to get registered.

Paul Ortiz: What led to your interest? Did you hear about other people at the—?

David L. Beasley: Well, I just know— I knew the population of this county better than anybody else, tell you the truth. The population at that time, I think, was roughly 24,000 Blacks. There wasn't but 3,000 Whites, 3,000 and something, between 3 and 4,000. Well, I thought about that to myself. I didn't say nothing to anybody about it. But I did bring it up in this little meeting that we discussed things that folk graduated. I said, "We got a county here of 24,000 Blacks and just 4,000 Whites, so to speak, and we're not registered. Don't have but 81 people registered. 81."

David L. Beasley: Some of those were in that book there. They registered only what they call the big folks. One of the big individuals, I have Dr. Moton. They registered him.

Paul Ortiz: Dr. Moton was registered?

David L. Beasley: Yeah, Dr. Moton was registered. Mr. Logan was registered. That's Dr. Washington. I don't know nothing about it. I doubt that he was ever registered. Now, these are some of the executive committee. Now, there's one or two people on this executive committee that was registered. There's one, Mr. James John. All these folks, I think, are dead. But anyway, Reverend Richardson, he wasn't registered. G.W. Johnson, that's the man that if you read that, you'd see where they say he betrayed the Negroes, the Black folks.

Paul Ortiz: He did?

David L. Beasley: Yeah. They say he betrayed them because he vouched for Mr. Mitchell to get registered. And then when they called him down there for this hearing, you see, he, "I don't know nothing about it." Then they called him to court down here. I had to go on the stand down there. He denied that he knew Mr. Mitchell, and Mr. Mitchell was the clerk in his church. He never was anything. He just went down after that. Nobody had any respect for him after that.

Paul Ortiz: That was Reverend Johnson. Now, which church was he?

David L. Beasley: Huh?

Paul Ortiz: Which church was he the pastor of?

David L. Beasley: Who?

Paul Ortiz: You said Reverend Johnson?

David L. Beasley: No. G.W. Johnson, he was the business manager. He taught business. That's what he did.

Paul Ortiz: Oh, he taught business at Tuskegee?

David L. Beasley: Yeah. Reverend Richardson was the chaplain at that time. He's in that book there. Yeah.

Paul Ortiz: Now, Mr. Beasley, you talked about registering to vote at this meeting. Who called the meeting?

David L. Beasley: Well, now let's see. I was president of the agricultural seminar. That's what we called it. I called the meeting, but we didn't call it for registration and voting. We called it for just to talk about, "We're going out now, and we going to try to be somebody." That's what we talked about. This came up. I brought this up and asked this man. Where that man? I can show him to you.

David L. Beasley: He was the agricultural director at that time, J.R. Otis. Let's see now. Where is old J.R. Otis? There's Dr. Carl. I don't know whether you seen a picture of him or not.

Paul Ortiz: Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

David L. Beasley: J.R. Otis. I don't see Otis on him. I think he was Director of Agriculture at that time.

Paul Ortiz: Right. It says here, "Director of School of Agriculture."

David L. Beasley: Does it say Otis? Who does it say?

Paul Ortiz: Okay. It says J.R. Otis.

David L. Beasley: J.R. Otis, yeah.

Paul Ortiz: Director of School of Agriculture.

David L. Beasley: He was on here. There he is. There he is right there. That's J.R. Otis. Yeah. Yeah.

Paul Ortiz: What was his reaction? Was he—?

David L. Beasley: Well, he didn't have too much to say. Then one of my teachers who thought a whole lot of me, W.W. Hayes, I thought would have said something. He said, "Well, we don't know much about that." This man here, let me open this thing here. I'm just amazed [indistinct 00:40:30]. The man here that, Alvin J. Neeley, just about ran the school until Dr. Patterson. They had Dr. Patterson up there. Now, this man here, Alvin J. Neeley, he just about ran the school before Dr. Patterson got there.

David L. Beasley: When Dr. Moton was still the president, but this man was the kingpin. He made it pretty tough for some of us, especially me. He put me out of school once about something that I didn't have no responsibility for what happened, between a girl and a boy. You might not want to put that in there. That's up to you. But he just put me out of school for a year. I got off a year, but I got back in. I went to Florida A&M

University down there one year.

David L. Beasley: I had a brother teaching down there, and I went down there one year and came back. Got put out of school down. Well, we didn't get put out of school. But it was in the summertime, and I wanted to leave anyway. I didn't want to go down there, but my brother was there. He was paying my way then. He paid my way that whole year. He said, "Well, if you go back up there, you can't look for too much from me." I said, "Well, that's all right. I'll make it."

David L. Beasley: I came back after they fired us down there during the summer because we was walking up and down the road, and they had one pint of whiskey, and we were drinking it, four of us. Two old guys was from Pensacola, Florida. They were rough cat, and the other two of us was just along. I was just along, and I did take a drink out the bottle. We passed a White deputy's house. He was about as far from— Saw us. And Pinky, "Come on. Let's drink." He turned it up right there in front of the man's house, but we didn't know he was a deputy.

David L. Beasley: He got in the car. After we kept on, he told us, "Put that bottle away," on his porch. Pinky said, "Well, hell, he ain't got nothing to do with us." He said, "All right," And he kept on drinking. He got in his car, and the road split up there going up to the campus and going to town. Two went to town, and two went towards the campus. He jumped in his car and came up there and picked up two of us. I was one of the two that he picked up. He carried me up there and said, "Where's Dr. Lee?" I said, "I don't know."

David L. Beasley: So we went to Dr. Lee's son first, tried to find him because we knew that he wouldn't do nothing, but smooth it over.

Paul Ortiz: What was his son's name?

David L. Beasley: G.R. Lee, Jr. Lee, Jr. He's a good friend of my brother. But the old man, he never did find out who the other two fellas were. But he put me with the other fella and me out of— He fired us, and that meant we had to leave school. It was in the summertime. I could have gone back in September. I didn't want to go back. I came home and messed around here and went up there on the campus. That same man, Dr. Otis and Dr. Patterson were good friends of mine. They saw to it that I got a job.

David L. Beasley: I stayed in school those other two years until I graduated. When I graduated, I never forgot them, and they didn't forget me because I didn't forget Tuskegee University, Dr. Patterson and Mr. Otis, that Director of Agriculture. Of course, Dr. Foster became president, I believe, before I went down. I don't like to remember when, but he became president later on.

Paul Ortiz: Now, during those years, in the '30s, what were race relations like in Macon County?

David L. Beasley: Well, it was about just like you read about. You did what they said. Called you stay in your place and I'll stay in mine. There was no fight or nothing going. When Gomillion got started in this thing and Mitchell didn't care, he came from Birmingham. That was kind of a rough place, too, in there. I wasn't

supposed to be rough, but I joined in with them. That's what some of the Whites in Macon County didn't like because I joined in with these fellas who, Gomillion came from South Carolina. Mitchell came from Birmingham.

David L. Beasley: The tax assessor, he dead and gone now. His wife is real sick. I worked with her when I was serving over there. What was I talking about?

Paul Ortiz: The tax assessor.

David L. Beasley: Oh, the tax assessor. Oh yeah, the tax assessor. "Mr. Beasley, I don't know what's wrong with you." I said, "Nothing wrong, Mr. Henry." "You going around here and joining with Gomillion and Mitchell trying to get these folks registered." I said, "Well, we got a right to register, some of us. We've been to school." "Yes, but the people don't want that." He meant the White people didn't want it.

David L. Beasley: So we kept on after it anyhow. We used to go out. Didn't nobody bother us even when we went to town during this, from 1943 on up—