MARYLAND CENTER
FOR HISTORY AND CULTURE

OH 8020

An Oral History of Caroline Remak Ramsay
Conducted by Mrs. William Cunningham

Title: An Oral History of Caroline Remak Ramsay
Interviewer: Mrs. William Cunningham
Description: Transcript, 17 pages
Interview date: July 1, 1971

Abstract: Caroline Ramsay (1904-1992) was a civil rights activist and a Republican candidate for Congress in 1962. From 1947 to 1951, she was the president of the Baltimore League of Women Voters and in 1964 she served on the Baltimore City Charter Revision Commission. In this oral history interview, Ramsay discusses her initial involvement in politics and her time as the Vice President of the Baltimore Urban League. She describes the efforts to end segregation in public spaces, such as the Ford and Lyric theaters, restaurants, and the department stores Hutzler's and Hochschild Kohn. As a member of the Citizens Planning and Housing Association (CPHA), Ramsay discusses her work to combat blockbusting, a practice in which real estate agents and developers would convince white residents to sell their homes at below-market prices, so that they could in turn sell the properties to the Black community at inflated prices.

Note on Oral History: Oral history is a methodology of gathering, preserving, and sharing the voices and memories of individuals and communities. As primary material, it documents personal reflections, commentary, and recollections, and is not intended to present a verified or "complete" history of events.

An Oral History of Caroline Remak Ramsay
July 1, 1971

Caroline Remak Ramsay was interviewed on Thursday, July 1st, 1971, by Mrs. William Cunningham. The interview took place at 800 W. Northern Parkway, in Baltimore City.

Cunningham [00:00:04] This is an interview with Mrs. John B. Ramsay on July 1st, 1971. The interviewer is Mrs. William Cunningham.

Cunningham [00:00:26] Mrs. Ramsay, when did you first become active in the political scene in Baltimore?

Ramsay [00:00:35] Well, I don't know whether you'd call it active, but when I first came to Baltimore, my husband John introduced me to Mrs. Marie Bauernschmidt, that famous character that you're probably too young to remember. But she told me how politics affected every facet of your life and that you couldn't be a do-gooder and stay away from politics. And so I suppose I got involved from that minute on.

Cunningham [00:01:03] And when was that? Back in, uh–

Ramsay [00:01:05] Well, when I first moved here in nineteen thirty-five or thirty, right after I moved here, I met Marie Bauernschmidt. And of course, by that time she was a tremendous power in the– I'm always amazed nowadays that so many people don't know about Marie because she was a legend. She was really a tremendous power, as influential as any woman in politics has ever been in Baltimore. She discovered back in 1920 that the Baltimore school system was very, very bad, though she didn't have children of her own and at her own expense, she paid for a survey for outsiders, some people from New York to come in and appraise the school system, and the results were absolutely shocking. And she found that it was riddled with politics. She heard the boss, Frank Kelly, say Van Sickle has got to go, and he was the school superintendent who evidently wasn't knuckling under to the political bosses. And then she realized that you couldn't even get a job as a teacher without being beholden to the political bosses. So she started to go after them, and she formed the Public School Association, and it was kind of a parents organization and everybody interested in education. And they exposed what was going on, and they made it have a tremendous impact on the school system. And then, of course, from that, she had this following of people that relied on her and thought she was the Angel Gabriel. And she then formed this habit of speaking the night before election and in those years before the war, I can remember people who said they wouldn't consider deciding whom they're going to vote for until they heard Marie on the radio. And it was called a program called "Mrs. B Speaks Her Mind," and she bought the time herself, and she didn't have to listen to what anybody wanted. She'd sometimes nix the ticket Republican and Democrat and say who she considered the best people for office. And there were many, many people in Baltimore we never decided or made up their mind until they heard what Mrs. B had to say. So that was one of my early ambitions to grow up to be a Mrs. B, but I never quite made it.

Cunningham [00:03:22] Well, I think you did.

Ramsay [00:03:22] And then, of course, during the war, my husband was in the Navy and I went home to Philadelphia to live off my father and took the children and moved lock, stock, and barrel and rented the house and everything. So while I was in Philadelphia, I worked on nothing but the United Nations Association. Those were the days when we were trying to–And I had lived through

in my youth, lived through the League of Nations failure, and I was terribly concerned to see the United Nations come into being. And of course, it did in 1945 before I came back here. And even before I came back to Baltimore in the fall of '45, Mr. William Cochrane said to me, "Well, Carrie, you know, you and I might as well work on the things that are controversial because it really isn't worthwhile to work on anything that isn't controversial. There are plenty of other people to work on health drives and so on." And I said, "You're right", so he got me signed up for the United Nations Association here and which followed on many of the same people that have been in the old League of Nations Association. And we tried to get people interested in the United Nations and then learning about it and learning the charter and supporting it and getting behind it. And believe it or not, it was very controversial in those days.

Ramsay [00:04:44] I can remember our minister, Guthrie Speers, at Brown Memorial Church, preaching a sermon on United Nations Day about the hope of the world being in collective security, and one of the elders said to him afterward, "I don't think you should bring such a political subject into the church. I don't think that's appropriate for the church." And nowadays the [inaudible] isn't controversial because nobody even considers it. Nobody even considers it important. Every– but it seemed to me the way to peace in those days. It seemed the only way, and I still believe that until nations begin giving up their sovereignty–the right to make war, the right to pollute, or the right to do as they please–that we have no possible hope of a viable world.

Ramsay [00:05:32] This isn't in an interview, this is a monologue isn't it?

Cunningham [00:05:35] No. Well, that's the idea really, to get your thoughts and let your thoughts wander where they will. I know you ran as a peace candidate in 1962.

Ramsay [00:05:48] Yes, that's right. That's right. Well, I've been registered as a Republican all my life, and I observed that the Republican nomination for Congress in this city was usually going begging. They were looking for people who would be willing to run against the incumbents who were always surefire winners. And it seemed to me like a very good place to get a peace platform. So I ran in the Republican primary and won, and then I became the Republican candidate. And Sam Friedel was not used to having to run between May and November, so he had me to run against. Though I will say he almost never appeared with me.

Ramsay [00:06:33] However, it gave me a platform and on which to talk about how preposterous the war was and how not of the national interest, the war, which was then in its infancy in Vietnam. And I'm so interested in these newspaper accounts today because so much of it, I've been working on this for so long, and so much of these things that are coming out as top secret have been in the American Friends Service White Paper, they've been in David Schoenbrun's tape recording of the History of the War from 1945 to date, and people paid no attention to them. It wasn't until the *New York Times* released them as top secret that they became so exciting and interesting. But, I felt very strongly that there was no good could come of this war and that the sooner we got out of it, the better. And being a candidate for Congress gave me a platform.

Ramsay [00:07:27] There were about 18, I think, people from all over the country who ran for Congress on a peace platform, including Stuart Hughes, who ran for the Senate from Massachusetts, and about 17 of us who ran for Congress from all the way from Oregon to Vermont. And we met in Washington in January of '63 and tried to discuss how we could keep together and how we could be an influence, but we fell apart. Of course, we were too far apart and it was too expensive, and those things always fall apart after they're over. But it's, uh, it's interesting to remember now that things, of course, people told me I was unpatriotic and I was

undermining the government and I was– It was a very unpopular position in those days, but I shouldn't say it was entirely unpopular because I got, uh, I got half as many votes as Sam Friedel did, which was pretty good considering the registration was 85 percent Democratic. So I had some impact, I didn't think it was a waste of time. And I think this is a good function for women with grown children because they can afford the time. And if they don't expect to win, it doesn't take too much money. In many, many congressional districts, the nomination of the party that isn't going to succeed will go begging. And you can win the nomination and sometimes nobody else files. You can get the nomination. And as I say, if you're a woman with grown children that has plenty of time and is trained in the League of Women Voters and is knowledgeable and articulate and knows about the issues, you can really give an incumbent something to think about and worry about. And you can get on the radio and TV, all the stations have a certain amount of what they call "face-to-face" when they have both candidates so that you're bound to get exposure for your ideas and I think it's a very worthwhile thing to do.

Cunningham [00:09:34] Can you tell me what the issues were in the city when you were President of the League in 1947 and I believe to '51?

Ramsay [00:09:47] (sighs) No, I–

Cunningham [00:09:47] (speaking at the same time) You mentioned the election–

Ramsay [00:09:47] Well, I remember that's what stands out in my mind, the fact that the election machinery was in such terrible shape and I say terrible shape, no worse than it is today, I understand. We did a precinct survey in the 12th Precinct in the 12th Ward, one of the precincts in the 12th Ward. We went from door to door to check on the voting list, and we found that of the people on the voting list, 31 percent were dead or had moved away, and they were still on the books and they were still being voted as people, well as–some people were voting them, you know, they'd come in they used to say, if you're a good party member, you vote three or four times. Well, this took me back to when I was in Philadelphia long before I was married. In fact, the first election, there was a lady there who used to round up the Watchers Certificates for things like the Socialist Party and the Prohibition Party and parties that didn't have any chance. But they were entitled watchers at the polls and she put us girls right out of college down as watchers. Well, the boss of our precinct out in Chestnut Hill Philadelphia said to Mrs. Scott afterward, he said, "You know, it's a mean thing if you win." And he said, "It's just a lark for you one day of the year and it's our bread and butter, three hundred and sixty five days of the year. And it cost me five hundred dollars more to carry this precinct than it did before you women came messing.".

Ramsay [00:11:18] So I knew from early on about how you could rig elections with dead voters or people that weren't here. And so we went after getting a bill through the legislature–of course, the legislature controls the election machinery–to say that the books had to be cleaned up every two years. That the election officers or police had to go around from house to house and check that the people that were registered from that house were still living there. And if they weren't, then they were sent a card to say, "Unless you can show that you're still living at that address, you'll be stricken from the books." Well, this bill was hanging fire in the legislature and nothing was happening, and I went down to see the mayor, who then Tommy D'Alesandro, Senior, about getting it moving. And he was a little upset because it had a rider on it about the supervisors of elections being under the merit system. And while I was there, Marie Bauernschmidt called up and she said, "What's this I hear Tommy about you're voting dead people and people that are moved away?" And he said, "Just keep your shirt on, Marie." This is literally what he said, he said, "You know, if you'll take that fool rider off of it about putting the supervisors of elections under the merit

system, I'll get behind your bill." And she said, "Well, it's a very good thing." And he said, "Well, you know, we politicians have got to live too." This is what we're fighting about right now today, twenty-four years later. But he said, "You know, we have to have someplace to put our dead, would be realistic." And so Mary said, "Well, if we take that rider off of it, would you push the bill through?" And he said he would, and he did, and it became law in 1949.

Ramsay [00:13:04] We had a law. And lo and behold, when I was in New Zealand in 1967, they repealed it. I've never yet found out what happened. But people say that it was too expensive and that you can accomplish the same thing by mail, by sending a card to every voter that's registered and say, if you don't–and then if the person isn't there, then the post office will send it back. Well whether they do get around to doing that or not, I don't know. In the meantime, the books are as full of dead wood practically as they were in 1949 because in this day and age, people move all over the country all the time. It's a whole lot worse than it was in 1949. I know one person that left here in 1962 and he's still on the books. He's a relative of mine and I'm going to see for curiosity's sake, how long he'll stay on the book.

Cunningham [00:13:56] Well, was education and the School Board an issue in those days? Or was the school board also an issue–?

Ramsay [00:14:01] Oh, the League of Women Voters has always been interested in education. They've always been interested in quality education and they have always been interested in nonpolitical appointees to the school board. Of course, the League does not support candidates or oppose candidates. Even, you know, when it's an ex-president like myself, they never take a position on a candidate, but they take a strong position on issues. And since the founding of the League back in 1920, they've been strongly interested in education and welfare. They've been two of their great interests. But I don't remember what specifically was the fight in 1947 and on to '51 when I was president.

Cunningham [00:14:48] Was housing and urban renewal a problem then? Was this an issue?

Ramsay [00:14:55] Well, I was one of the original members of the Citizens Planning and Housing Association and it got going, started with seven members, it's unbelievable. It was Francis Morton's baby in 1941 and she was a genius at community organization and she–people were hardly aware of the slums or the slum housing when she got going. But of course, as the war industries began to boom and as people poured into the city, they had to do something about controlling the housing supply, and there was a thing called the Fair Rent Commission. And I worked with her as a volunteer on the Fair Rent Commission, which meant going around and inspecting houses to see if there was any justification for raising the rent and then going to the mat with the landlords who did raise the rent. And you'd go into a street, I can remember going to Spring Street and it was in a very poor neighborhood and there was only one house in it that really looked as if it was cared for and it had been painted and the steps had been repaired and the windows were all new and shiny and the landlord would come along and raise the rent on those people because they were trying. And this is the thing that happened all over town. Anybody that kept their property up or fixed their property was being gaffed by the landlord. So we had to report them to the Fair Rent Commission and then the Fair Rent Commission would go to the landlord and force them to bring the rent down to what it had been before the inflation started with the war economy because Baltimore very quickly became a war industry city, you see.

Ramsay [00:16:37] So but–then after that, when I came back after the war, I guess I started then on the board of the CPHA and we mostly–well, we were always interested in planning, but we went

after slum housing and slum landlords and worked for the housing court and tried to get some conscientious judges and realistic funds in the housing court. I can remember when Harry Krueger–we've had judges–First, judges in the housing court used to fine a landlord and he'd pay the fine merrily and go on his way and continue the abuses. Then Harry Krueger thought of fining them 50 dollars a day for every day that the violation continued, and this ran into money after a while. And I can still remember an editorial that *The Sun* wrote about Harry Krueger and how splendid he was and said, "Whoever heard of a magistrate that wasn't purchasable?" And they soon found out that he wasn't purchasable.

Ramsay [00:17:37] So, the CPHA was doing a bang-up job in the housing field, and the League of Women Voters, one of their criteria for action is that if the job is being done better by some other organization, that they go after something else. This is one of the reasons why they have never worked on Planned Parenthood, which seemed natural for the League of Women Voters because they say that there's an organization functioning that's dedicated to that one purpose. And also, they said that it wasn't primarily connected with the government. Well, it is now, connected with government, but in the days when they wouldn't take it on as a so-called item on their current agenda, it was because of the fact that they said that it really was not related to government. And that's one of the criteria for the League primarily. Of course, the League was founded to stimulate active and intelligent participation in government. And that's one of the reasons I ran for office because I was trying to get other League members to get out of the womb, as I call it, of the League of Women Voters and get into the rough and tumble of partisan politics. Which is very hard to do when you've been in a–what I call a political science club with like-minded people who are all college graduates, virtually, and whose minds run the same way, and then you get out into rough and tumble politics and you find that it's a very different ballgame.

Cunningham [00:19:04] Yeah. And they seem to be trying to make an effort to do this now.

Ramsay [00:19:09] Well of course, the League wants their members to be active, and they do, they take an active part in campaigns. Everybody but the board, if you're on the board, you have to be, as I call it, sterilized and not–well that's an ambiguous word, but you're not supposed–you cannot participate in anybody's political campaign. However, the rest of us do. The rest of us get out and are active in the campaign almost every time. But that's different from running for office. Now, June Lee(??) or Ling (??) ran for office last year and was very narrowly defeated by Helen Koss and, since you're the Maryland Historical Society, she's a past president of the Maryland League of Women Voters. She's in the legislature now from Montgomery County, and so is Lucille Maurer. She got her training in the League. But that was the original purpose of the League was to teach people their way around in politics so that they could be active and take an active part in politics. Of course, we do have members that are on boards and commissions. And they use their League knowledge in that way.

Cunningham [00:20:26] I know that you served on the Human Relations Commission for the state for 18 years.

Ramsay [00:20:33] Yes, I did.

Cunningham [00:20:35] Can you tell me about that?

Ramsay [00:20:36] Well, when Governor McKeldin first wanted to appoint me back in 1951, it was a brand new commission that has just been created. And I had just been President of the City League of Women Voters, and he called me up and said, would I serve on this commission? And I

said, "No, I wouldn't be any good." You know, I'll tell you I'm a damn Yankee, everybody here– When I first came to Baltimore, I was reading *Gone with the Wind* and I said to my sister-in-law, "Is this the way people down here feel about me?" And she said, "Certainly. I was twenty-one years old before I knew, 'damn Yankee' wasn't all one word." And I said, "I don't think you want any damn Yankees on this commission." "Yes, I do. It's my commission and I want you to serve on it." So, I served on it and it was then called the Interracial Commission or the Maryland Commission on Interracial Problems and Relations, of all the unwieldy titles. And the very first thing we had to do, there was a fight going on at Ford's Theater, and the black people were picketing Ford's Theater because they were not allowed to sit downstairs in Ford's Theater. They could buy seats in the balcony. And this was a perfectly ridiculous situation, and the owners of Ford's Theater, who were absentee owners in New York said, well, they were perfectly willing to open it up if we could assure them that there wouldn't be any–they wouldn't lose business and there wouldn't be any disturbance or any repercussions. And we confidently assured them that it would be perfectly peaceful, and all right. And so they went ahead and opened it up.

Ramsay [00:22:09] And then the next thing was that the Lyric Theater, who allowed people to sit downstairs or anywhere they wanted, wouldn't allow Marian Anderson on the stage. Well, this seemed incredible to Dr. Kraushaar of Goucher, who was on the committee in those days, and he negotiated with the Lyric that the sky wouldn't fall if Marian Anderson sang at the Lyric Theater. And we all went down there and sat in a box and it was our evening of triumph. And then we began tackling the department stores. In those days and–I can remember a black lady who said, you know, it's very hard when you go down Christmas shopping and you hear all the people on the street singing carols and the Christmas spirit's in the air and there's shops you can't go into and you want to go someplace and get a cup of coffee or a soda, and you have to explain to your child that, "No, we can't sit down in there because they don't like black folks." And it just about brought tears to your eyes, you know, to hear this woman talking about–in front of the commission, about how hard it was to be discriminated against completely. I mean, here are people trying to sell merchandise and they don't want to sell it to one segment of the community. Well, I can remember going with Jake Wagster to see old Mr. Hutzler, who was a good friend of mine, and he said, "I'd open it up tomorrow. I'd open it up tomorrow, if you wouldn't say anything about it." But he said, "Mrs. Lillie Jackson wants to put it on the radio, wants to announce it." And he said, "That'll wreck my business. I won't do it. I won't do it if there's going to be any publicity about it."

Ramsay [00:23:48] Well, we said we couldn't control whether it was publicity about it. Well, he said he'd go along if the other people would, so we had to systematically, one by one, get everybody to say and somebody held out and then Hochschild Kohn were brave and they opened up. They were the first one. They took the lead and then everybody else came along. And then when it came to the restaurants, the first things that opened up, of course, were the five and ten cents stores, Kresge's and Woolworth's, and people who had out-of-town ownership. Their New York boards said that they would not discriminate more and more.

Cunningham [00:24:22] Are you talking now about the lunch counter, or–?

Ramsay [00:24:25] Yes, yes, the lunch counter. Yes. Oh, they were open for sales, the merchandise from the first whenever I knew it, but the lunch counter wasn't open. And then you know, in the days of those sit-ins, they had people go down, and sit white and Black together at the lunch counters. And then the people behind the counter were instructed not to serve the Black people and to serve the white people. And then the white people that got their food would get up and leave and walk out with their Black friends when their Black friends weren't served. It was incredible. I mean, considering that it was only, oh, less than 20 years ago. We did a–the

Commission, one of the first things we undertook was a community self-survey. I know Rabbi Israel Goodman was the chairman of that survey and a professor from Fisk named Dr. Herman Long came in. He buys the idea of a community self-survey. He said, "Usually when you have surveys, some team of experts or academic people, come in and do a survey of any situation in the community, and then the thing's published and is buried in the files. But, he worked up the idea of a community self-survey in which the people in the community did the surveying. And he said, "The least that we would get out of it would be that we'd learned to work together." The Blacks and whites doing it, like FDR said, will learn to work together by working together.

Ramsay [00:25:54] Well, he said to me, "I want 250 volunteers," just the way he'd ask for 250 feet of rope. The idea that I could get 250 volunteers just in a month or so just baffled me completely, Black and white. And I assembled a list of about 250 volunteers, and I don't know how I got them, but at any rate, only about 130 of them turned up for the first training session. And he said that was all right, that was what he expected, he just wanted to ask for 250 because he needed 120. And we went to work and we had a committee on discrimination in the school, discrimination in housing, and in public accommodations, and in welfare facilities like hospitals, service things, and in the religious community. And there were six committees altogether, and then we published our findings about two years later. And of all the discriminatory practices that were in existence in Baltimore. And of course, even in those days, I suppose housing turned out the worst of all, although they were all pretty bad in those days. And it was allowed to run along until 1959 when the Greater Baltimore Committee saw that this was going to be the death of Baltimore, and they founded Baltimore Neighborhoods.

Cunningham [00:27:19] We'll stop there and I'll check on the tape

pause in recording

Cunningham [00:27:31] We're talking about Baltimore Neighborhoods.

Ramsay [00:27:45] Well, Baltimore Neighborhoods was founded on the premise that white people and Black people could live comfortably together in the same neighborhoods. What was happening was in those days there was a tremendous amount of blockbusting. As soon as a black family would move into a neighborhood, why then the blockbusters would get busy and go to the other residents and say, "Look, the black families moved into your neighborhood. This neighborhood's going colored, you better get out while you can and sell your property and go somewhere else." And so the result was that people would panic and the blockbuster was able to buy the property at a very low figure and then turn around and sell it to a black family at a very inflated figure. And they made enormous profits, and it was a thing that was very difficult to control. And Baltimore Neighborhoods would try to forestall this panic by going into a neighborhood, meeting with the Improvement Association, telling them, "Now you're just going to sacrifice your house, that you've taken years and years to maybe pay for. And now you're going to throw it away because of this man that's playing on your prejudices and who's trying to steal your house from you and turn around and sell it at a great profit to somebody else."

Ramsay [00:29:08] Well, the issue really came down to a matter of the schools. In many cases you could convince–and we did–the Baltimore Neighborhoods staff and board and so on had some success in convincing people that they didn't need to run when the black people came. And usually the older people would stay and particularly people with grown children. But it was the people that had children in the schools that worried about the schools. And as the schools got more and more black and as the white children came to be a minority in the schools and they began to really get

disturbed and move away, even without the blockbusters. And we've got that problem with us to this day, is the great exodus to the suburbs and the great difficulty in getting people to stay in integrated neighborhoods and accept the fact that they can live comfortably side by side.

Cunningham [00:30:14] What other contributions did you make to better race relations? I know you were also on the board of the Urban League. Was that a viable, active group?

Ramsay [00:30:26] Oh yes, indeed. That was long before the Interracial Commission came into existence. Of course, the Urban League was founded in 1920, and they worked for interracial teamwork. They had the–they were dedicated to trying to get, primarily, equal job opportunities, but to accept the fact that Black and white people could work together. Their symbol is a (unintelligible) panda, black and white and the (unintelligble) Interracial teamwork is their theme. They had an industrial relations committee in the Urban League and of course, Furman Templeton was Executive Director when I was on the board. And you could only serve two three-year terms. I was on for six years and then I was off for a while and then I was on again and it represented the finest cooperation between Black and white people I've ever known. I learned a great deal from Furman Templeton, and I have still tremendous admiration for the Urban League, and it almost seems to be the only organization in the country which is still dedicated to the idea that the Black and white people can work together instead of going their separate ways. I'm not opposed to "Black is Beautiful," but I think that we can all do a better job if we pull together.

Ramsay [00:31:53] Of course they were helping in some of these, some of these struggles. They were very helpful in the community self-survey. They were helpful in the restaurant battle, I didn't even mention the hotel battle. Of course, getting the hotels opened to Black people was all tied up with sports. That was interesting because the teams would come here, visiting baseball teams and visiting football teams, and for the Black stars on them, and they couldn't stay with their teammates. They'd have to go someplace else. And this was very distressing and Governor McKeldin got into the battle. And I can remember various meetings the Interracial Commission had with the Hotel Association and Governor McKeldin would come and put his weight behind it. And eventually, we got the hotels open first to the teams and then to the general public, and we convinced them that the sky wasn't going to fall.

Ramsay [00:32:55] The interesting thing about being on the Interracial Commission was that we didn't have any power at all. All we could do was persuade and try to convince people that they should change their policy, and we would always have people coming to tell us, "Of course I'm not prejudiced, it's other people." In all my years on the commission, I never saw one person who admitted to being prejudiced and they'd say–and I can remember saying to some of these people, "Well, now who are these mysterious public that are prejudiced?" You know, we've had doctors and dentists and restaurant owners and hotel owners and movie theater owners, and everybody and to a man, they say they're not prejudiced, it's the public that are prejudiced. Now, who is this mysterious public? Well, of course they never could tell you. They were just more people the same like them. But I always remember the woman who said, "Of course I'm prejudiced and I know I'm prejudiced, but it's a poison that I hope not to communicate to my children. I'm trying very hard not to communicate it to my children."

Ramsay [00:33:59] But of course, it goes back to the fact that if–I don't say I'm not prejudiced, but if I'm less prejudiced than some of the people in my friends, it's because I'm a damn Yankee going back to it. I can remember when I was running for office, and I will say that I did need a little bit of money, and dear Mr. Harry Niles, who you know is a great advocate of peace, had a businessmen's luncheon for me to try to raise some money for some folders or something like that.

And there was a gentleman there who was a good friend of mine, he comes from Virginia, and he said, "Well, I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Carrie, but I really can't support you because I just don't like your stand on race." And I said, "Well, what is it you don't like about my stand on race?" I said, "Surely you can't ask people to serve in the Army of the United States and to pay taxes to the United States and be second-class citizens. They have to have the same rights and privileges as everybody else. I don't see how this is anything that's arguable. What can you say on the other side?" "Well," he said, "Of course you're right. You're absolutely right. I agree with you. But you're moving too fast." And I said, "Too fast after a hundred years? I can't say that's too fast."

Ramsay [00:35:15] But this is the attitude of most people on this whole subject is that, "I'm not prejudiced and I'm perfectly willing to see Black people have a fair shake, but we just can't go so fast." And the key to it all is education, education. And then when they get educated and they want to have the fruits of their education–it's just like women, of course. I said when I was running for this, "Women's lib is nothing new to me, though I don't like their tactics and I don't like the way they go about it, and I think it's very foolish." I had a slogan when I was running that, "We cannot afford to waste brains no matter how packaged," and I still think this is true. I think it's ridiculous to say that you're not going to use women or Black men or Black women with all their capacity simply because of the fact that they wear skirts–or they don't even wear skirts anymore–but simply because they happen to be constructed differently biologically, I guess you would say. I heard Shirley Chisholm say, testifying over there in Congress, that she had been much more discriminated against as a woman than she had been as a Black. And I remember when the Civil Rights Act of '64 was passed and, of course, one of the southern senators–I think it was Stennis–introduced that amendment to put sex into it: that they may not discriminate because of race, creed, national origin, or sex. And he thought that would get it defeated because all these eager beavers from the North that he thought had a biased attitude about his point of view, biased about race–why, if you put sex and they wouldn't stand for that and they'd defeat it, well, they didn't, they went ahead and passed it. And for a year or two, we had more complaints at the Human Relations Commission on the ground of sex than we did on the ground of race because at last, the women had someplace to go. Just like everything else, it doesn't really get enforced and most people aren't aware of their rights under the Civil Rights Act of '64.

Ramsay [00:37:28] I heard Betty Friedan last night, and she was trying very–on TV, she was trying very hard to be tactful, but the interesting thing about the men is that they say that they're all for women having a fair shake and being able to have any jobs that they can qualify for and that's true until they come into the jobs that they want to reserve for the men. That's perfectly all right. I saw a little girl down in the House of Representatives Cafeteria in Washington the other day, and the lady that was with me said, "Well, at least you're not being discriminated against. You got a job as a summer intern just the same as the boys." And she said, "Yes, I got the job, but now that I'm there, the boys get all the interesting work. They want me to stay in the office and do the typing." And I said, "That's par for the course." That's so in anything that you–You asked me about other organizations that I've been interested in, I've been interested in peace organizations, you know, and SANE and the World Federalists and the UN Association and–Well, the UN Association has _____(??) with President of the UN Association, I'll say that. But I can remember when they wanted to get some important man to be President of the UN Association, called me up, and said wouldn't I be Executive Vice President, and I said, "No, you mean you want me to do all the work and have him have the title? No thanks. I'm not going to do that for you."

Ramsay [00:39:07] I heard the other day about San Francisco–The just yet recent election where they have a single ballot. They don't have a party primary, everybody's on the same ballot as candidates for the city council, and the one that gets the highest number of votes is the president.

And there's a young lady lawyer out there, whose name I don't know, it'd be interesting to put on this tape. But at any rate, she's very brilliant and very beautiful, I understand it she had a good public relations man and, lo and behold, she got the highest number of votes in the election. So now she's going to be president of the City Council in San Francisco and some of these seasoned politicians that are on the council with her said, "Well, of course, she'll step aside and let one of us experienced people do it." And she said, "no (unintelligible) I'll do it myself." It's like Sam Friedel, who when he was running against me, went around town saying, "I have nothing against Mrs. Ramsay. She's a fine, civic-minded lady, but she hasn't got my experience in politics." Well, that was the only thing he ever said about me that was very nice of him, but it didn't make any difference. His experiences only led him to keep on voting for those military budgets, which most of the experienced legislators do.

Cunningham [00:40:26] Will you uh–

Ramsay [00:40:26] You didn't get me here to make a stump speech on what to do with our national priority.

Cunningham [00:40:30] I was just going to ask you that. (laughs)

Ramsay [00:40:33] You were?

Cunningham [00:40:34] Yes, I was going to get into the (unintelligible).

Ramsay [00:40:37] Well, we have the wrong priorities all the time. We're trying to win the hearts and minds of men. As the preamble to UNESCO says and "Since wars begin in the minds of man, it is in the minds of men that the bulwarks of peace must be erected." Well, we think we can win the minds and hearts of men and the world and defeat communism with weapons and you can't. You can't. You can't defeat Castro or Allende or anybody else with weapons. And there is no security–there is no security in this world today. And the fact that we have seven times as much overkill as the Russians have doesn't give us any safety as long as they have enough bombs to put us out and we have enough bombs to knock them out. What difference does it make if we keep on augmenting them increasingly? And this is what I've thought from before the Second World War, that you–Look, who's the biggest, most prosperous people in the world today are the Germans, the Japanese who we defeated in the last war. And I have a great friend who is a Dane and who worked in the Danish underground and who was taken out of Denmark across the Straits of _____(??) in the concealed cabin of a fishing boat. And I should think she'd be so bitter about the Germans that are so much more prosperous than Denmark, and she said, "No, I'm not against the Germans, I'm just against war. If they can demonstrate by their prosperity, having been the ones that lost the last war or the last big war, how successful they are, maybe this will convince people that it's the losers in a war that gain; you don't gain anything by winning a war."

Ramsay [00:42:27] And the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, of course, is another organization that's working in this field. There are really too many working in it. I got another organization yesterday, I don't know what the name of it was–sounded just like the World Federalists. And then the Members of Congress for Peace through Law, which I think are the most promising group because they're at least people in politics who have power. And then there's Common Cause, which is working to try to educate people about the uselessness of war. But mostly today it's going back to that thing, I said before, that in the forties, after the Second World War, and in the early fifties, people had the idea that as long as we fought to make the world safe for democracy, we ought to make democracy work and that they had an obligation to do something

about their city and their government and their schools. And then now they have this attitude that they're helpless, except the young people. The young people say that you can't repair the system, that you're going to have to simply do away with it; that it's too encrusted and too overlaid and too much of a big bureaucracy.

Ramsay [00:43:42] My daughter works for the federal government and I know exactly what a dead bureaucracy it is. She says she has to make 18 copies of every order, and I said, "Where do they go?" And she said, "I don't know. It's enough to have to get them out. I don't worry about where they go." And this is in the war on poverty, so to speak. If they were (unintelligible; dog barking loudly) bureaucrats, we might get someplace with our national priorities. But it's appalling that we're the richest country in the world, and we can't grapple with any of our problems. As John Gardner, the head of Common Cause says, it's because the people haven't got access to the government, the government isn't responsive to the people, and the people feel helpless. They're frustrated and desperate because they can't get–and then they don't believe in what the government tells them and this is the most disastrous thing of all. But I'm making a stump speech. You want history. This is current. Very current.

Ramsay [00:44:55] Do you think we've about exhausted the (unintelligible), have you got any more questions? Oh you wanted to talk about Tommy D'Alesandro and McKeldin. McKeldin, as I say, appointed me to the Interracial Commission and I worked with him over the years because we're both maverick Republicans. People say neither of us, we're Republicans in the sense that we're not going to knuckle under very well to any Republican platform. I have a very warm spot in my heart for Ted McKeldin. I think he was always really, genuinely sincere about his racial attitudes. I really think that I never knew any occasion returned to him that he didn't help us. Of course, Governor Tawes, also appointed me to the Commission, and so did Ted Agnew. In fact, he appointed me for a term to run to 1973, but soon as Mandel came in, he fired all of Agnew's appointees, which really he couldn't do strictly under the terms of the Commission, but I didn't feel like taking the governor to court about it, and I didn't. I'd had 18 years on the Commission, I was willing to step down. But I thought that McKeldin was absolutely genuine about race, and I also thought that he was genuine about constitutional liberties. I can remember in the days when we had the Ober Law on the books, which was a Maryland subversive activities law of a sort–ridiculous law. Nobody was ever indicted or even arrested under it, I don't think, but they did have a legal officer, and he could use the police to oversee what he considered subversive activities. And one night the UN Association had a meeting–or maybe it was the World Federalists, I guess it was the World Federalists–had a meeting at the Lyric. And lo and behold, this subversive officer–legal officer sent out the police to take the licenses of all the cars that were parked there. And Governor McKeldin said that this was absolutely an infringement of constitutional liberties and the list was to be destroyed immediately and he didn't give it houseroom of any kind. I thought that was a very controversial issue in those days, as I say, and I thought it was very courageous of him to do it.

Ramsay [00:47:28] He was my honorary chairman when I ran for Congress, and he did a bit of campaigning with me. He did a tape for me. And of course, he was magic. I can remember going to Timonium with him and he talked to everybody. He talked to the nuns and call them Sister Theresa and Sister Marguerita. He knew their names. He'd talk to people from Easton and Cumberland and Pocomoke City and Elkton and he knew their names and how many children they had and whether their wife had an ulcer or a tumor. And he is absolutely the–that is the consummate attribute of a politician, I think, to be able to remember people's names and the real reason for it is, is because he's genuinely interested in people. He loves people. And also he's disarmingly frank with people. He wins friends. I can remember Jake and Peggy Waxter went on a trip on the Governor's yacht

down the Chesapeake, and they put in on a Sunday to some town on the Eastern Shore. And McKeldin took off and went to the Methodist Church and was shaking hands. I think they asked him to say a few words or when he was shaking hands on the way out, he said, "You wonder why I and Episcopalians should be worshiping in the Methodist Church. It's very simple. You have the largest congregation in this town, and so naturally, I come to where there are the most voters." Well, you can't resist anybody that's as frank as that.

Ramsay [00:49:01] It's like Tommy D'Alesandro, Senior who–Junior his name was. But I call him Old Tommy–he used to say, when you put a proposition to him, "Is it good for Tommy and is it good for the city?" In that order, you know? And he was very disarmingly frank about–he wanted to know whether it was going to be good for Tommy. A friend of mine went down, put some proposition to him one time about some housing thing, I think it was, and he said, "Well," he said, "that's all very well. But what's Foghorn Ramsay going to come down here and say to the City Council about it." And this man said, "Don't worry, Foghorn Ramsay is all for it. I'll take care of Foghorn Ramsay." I was very proud of the fact that he called me Foghorn Ramsay. I used it in my campaign. I said that a foghorn warned of danger, and that's what I was doing; I was warning of the danger that this country was running into, and it certainly turned out to be prophetic. But Tommy was the one that gave me that title.

Cunningham [00:50:03] Do you know Tommy the Third?

Ramsay [00:50:05] Oh, yes–

Cunningham [00:50:08] (speaking at same time) Do you have much contact with him?

Ramsay [00:50:09] Oh yes, yes I know Tommy the Third. And I like him, I think he's an earnest young man and I think he's tried to do his best in many ways. I don't think that–he's not as tough as his father. And he's, uh–I sometimes think he's not as smart as his father, or he's certainly–he's not quite as shrewd as his father. And I think that he's been–Well, you might say that Tommy went along with the machine–Big Tommy–and he had only one machine to contend with, whereas young Tommy has been caught between these two machines all the time, and he's never been able to quite get a majority of the City Council that would go along with him.

Ramsay [00:51:00] Now, this is something that is very little understood: the fact that one or two or three people can have a tremendous influence in the City Council. This is why I wish people would pay more attention to the races for Council. Now I was speaking of back and after the war, when people were really beginning to think they had an obligation to take an interest in politics. And I can remember Warren Buckler was running for the City Council and he is a man of high intelligence and a great asset to the government. And he was elected to the City Council, and Tom Read and Charlie Masson, and they were all three independent. I think Charlie Masson–well, he was later a Republican–I think he was a Democrat in those days. Anyhow, the three of them didn't belong to any machine. And they held the balance of power; nobody could pass anything because they'd have nine votes on one side and nine votes on the other, and they had to get–the three of them usually voted as a bloc so that they could practically control what the vote was. And we could do that today. When they had that somebody died in the City Council and the seat was vacant in the Third District for a year–and they finally compromised on Larry Best because they thought he wasn't going to belong to either faction. Of course, one of the factions immediately wooed him and won him over. But young Tommy's been handicapped all the time by this business of the two factions heading each other off. And I don't wonder he got fed up with it, and I don't know what the next mayor is going to be confronted with either.

Cunningham [00:52:50] Do you want to make any comment on the school board mess?

Ramsay [00:52:55] I don't know much about the school board mess. In the old days, I used to sit in on the school board meetings occasionally, and in those days, the mayors were very careful to appoint people to the school board who were distinguished citizens or maybe even a who's who or were important people that were well known. And then one time it became obvious that all these people came from north of North Avenue and the city as a whole wasn't being represented. Then, of course, there weren't any black people. That was another thing we battled in the Interracial Commission, both on the city level and on the state level: the fact that there weren't Negro representation or women on most boards and commissions. They'd have what– in later years, what my daughter calls an instant Negro. They'd have one–All of a sudden, there'd be a furor about "There's no Negro on the school board." And somebody would–the mayor and was then in would appoint a Negro. Or they'd usually have one woman–the token woman–on most boards and commissions.

Ramsay [00:54:05] I was the only one on the Interracial Commission for years, and the Chairman used to get up and say–they'd all, pick up their briefcases and say, "Well, we'll leave everything in the capable hands of the little lady." And it was a standing joke with the Commissioner in as much as I'm nearly six feet tall. He'd say, gaily, "We'll leave it in the capable hands of the little lady." Well, that meant that women were designed to do the work and the men were meant to do the decisions; they did the decisions and left it for the little lady to do the work. Well, as I say, in those days the school board, though, it had one woman on it: Dr. Morrisy from Notre Dame. Dr. Elizabeth Morrisy, who is a very distinguished educator. But she also was from the white community north of North Avenue, and there began to be rumblings that they wanted more black representation and more representation from the parts of the city that weren't represented. And I think that that was a legitimate complaint, and I think that that's why you haven't got the smooth running, harmonious whole that you had in the old days, because in the old days the School Board was populated with people that didn't really know much about what the people in the ghetto wanted, or what the unmet needs of education were, or whether it was relevant or irrelevant. And the whole business of education is in a revolutionary stage now. The school board in those days–

Cunningham [00:55:41] We'll continue the interview with Mrs. Ramsay.

Cunningham [00:56:03] Mrs. Ramsay, I think we can get on to your activities on the Planned Parenthood board.

Ramsay [00:56:10] Well, people tell me it takes a generation for an idea to bear fruit, but I can remember–I've been married for thirty-five years and before I was married, I worked for Planned Parenthood in Philadelphia. It's been more than a generation, and I guess you can say it's taking hold, but it isn't taking hold enough to suit me when there are five million women in the United States who want family planning service and only about a million of them are getting it. Of course, Planned Parenthood has always emphasized "every child a wanted child," and they have not embraced the concept of zero population growth, which is requiring–would require not more than two children per family to stabilize the population. I personally subscribe to the tenets of zero population growth, but I continue to work for family planning because I am anxious to see "every child a wanted child," even though I realize that this will not solve the population problem. There are too many people that want three children or four children or five children. And not to mention these leading families of America that I believe are families–have an organization composed of

people with more than six children, and they preen themselves with delight over the fact that they're contributing so much to the population.

Ramsay [00:57:41] Lately, I've been working on the League of Women Voters Committee on Pollution. Air pollution, water pollution, solid waste pollution–all of these are things that are going to engulf us. We're stuck on this planet. It's impossible–the idea that people are going to be able to emigrate to space, that there are frontiers the way there were in this country, is ridiculous. Also, it's equally ridiculous for people to say that there's plenty of open land in this country. Yes, there's open land in this country. Most of it is not very agriculturally advantageous, but even if it were, even if we could accommodate a larger population–and a much larger population–the fact of the matter is that the other countries of the world in Latin America and in Asia are so horribly overpopulated that we are trying to maintain an island of affluence in a sea of misery. And this is impossible. I think Paul Ehrlich put it best when he said that it's just like people saying, "Well, we're in the bow of the boat, so it doesn't matter if the stern's sinking because we're still above water." And I don't think that we can continue to have one-sixth of the world's population and consume upwards of 50 percent of the world's goods. And that's what we're doing, and we're rapidly depleting the world's resources with our high standard of living.

Ramsay [00:59:15] And people say that to–You can't change people's habits. You hear people say–the Gas Electric Co. will tell you, that the consumption of electric power is doubling every 10 years, well the population even isn't doubling every 10 years. The reason it's doubling every 10 years, it's a self-fulfilling prophecy. They want it to double. They keep on inventing more gadgets, they push more air conditioning on you. You go into the stores or buildings at this time of year, when the temperature outside is 70 or 71, it's supposed to be the ideal temperature in winter, and you're nearly blasted with the cold air that comes at you from these air conditioners. They run the air conditioners full tilt, regardless of whether there's any need for them or not. And I complain every place I go into when it's freezing cold, unnecessarily cold, with my loud foghorn voice, I say "This is perfectly ridiculous." They're consuming power for no reason. It's been estimated that our fossil fuels will be exhausted by the year 2000. So then people love to tell you that we can turn to nuclear fuel. Well, indeed, so we can. And that will heat up the Chesapeake Bay and other bodies of water and pollute our streams with radioactive materials. But people are determined to make money or find an excuse for anything.

Ramsay [01:00:50] And also, people are determined to indulge themselves. I go to town on the bus all the time and I preach to everybody else, "You don't need to drive the car to town." And the parking fees are so terrible. Don't get me started on the parking garages. I think that's the biggest steal from the taxpayers I've ever known. I said that years and years ago, that the idea that we should subsidize–the city taxpayer should help people like _____(??) to buy parking lots to make mints of money at our expense while they charge huge parking fees: it's the worst betrayal of the public trust that I can imagine. At any rate, apart from what you save by not taking the car, you're not polluting the atmosphere, at least. I've just gone on a transportation committee for the Citizens Planning and Housing Association, and I've undertaken to explore just what is supposed to be the emissions from automobiles. It was mostly in the morning paper. I've got a book here called *Vanishing Air* that's full of it. And that book also tells about the rank and cycle engine that's been developed that's possible to drive a car without any pollution at all. But of course, the oil companies don't want it that would stop them selling gasoline. But the fact is that at this stage of history, it's interesting that you're putting this on an historical society tape. If there's anybody alive to read it in 20 years, they'll say, "Oh dear, if only somebody had paid attention back there in 1971 to the fact that we're polluting this planet at a ghastly rate." I mean, you can look around you now and see the quality of life is being destroyed. That there are too many automobiles, too many

highways, and too much electricity; too much of everything that's artificial and too little concern for nature and conservation.

Ramsay [01:02:43] And though people are becoming aware of it, I don't feel that they have much influence on it. Mr. Bill Ruckelshaus makes a statement every day in the paper about what he's going to do to cut down on pollution, but I don't see how he's going to be able to enforce it. This business about, beginning today, that a car may not have any visible emissions or he'll get a warning and then he'll be arrested or fined or something. Well, how many cars are they going to get? How many cars are they going to stop? They can't even tell you the cars that park or tag the cars that speed or anything else, how they're going to pick up every car that's emitting pollutants, I'm sure I don't know. It's enforcement in every single one of these things that as long as the people won't cooperate, it's–I can remember prohibition times when my father used to say that you cannot enforce a law that people are not in sympathy with. If the people want to drive their cars unhindered, they're going to do it. Whether we can stop the highways, I don't know. I have a button now that says, "Stop the road," and people say, "What road?" and I say "Any road. We don't need any more roads! The more roads, the more automobiles you have, and the more it pollutes the air." And my husband said to me the other day, "Well, let's face it; you can't blame the gas and electric company, you have to have more power." I said, "Why do we have to have more power? We live a whole month of the year in Canada, in our camp in the woods, without any power at all. We don't have any electric connection or any of any kind. We live perfectly, happily without power." It's just a question of changing your point of view and your value system.

Cunningham [01:04:24] Hm. It's going to be hard to sell that. (laughs)

Ramsay [01:04:24] Well, of course, it's hard to sell it. I used to–for 10 or 15 years I've been telling you about finding a national organization called STEPAC: the Society to Exalt People Above Cars. And a man named Chermayeff came to the museum about 10 years ago and gave a talk on the environment. And he said that the two enemies of American civilization were the automobile and noise. And he showed slides of the countries at that time–it was only 10 years ago–at that time, Los Angeles was sixty-five percent paved, and he said that our cities were rapidly becoming parking lots and that there wouldn't be any oxygen because there wasn't any greenery to give off any oxygen. And I went up to him afterward and I said, "You're going to be the president of my national organization," and I explained to him that I wanted to found STEPAC back and he said, "No, I'm not because," he said, "what you want to do is found in anti-automobile lobby." And I said, "That's right," and he said, "You can't do that yet because the American people are in love with their automobiles, they care more for their automobiles than they do for their homes or their families, and they are not going to brook any opposition to their use of their automobiles." So I thought that was pretty discouraging. And he said, "What's more, any politician that tries to interfere with the use of the automobile is going to be defeated because this is what the American people want to do." Well, if they want to, you know, be strangled by a hunk of metal that is of man's own creation, this seems to me the ultimate idiocy; that if we can modify our life so that we don't let the automobile dominate our whole country–this is really what is happening to us now: We're paving the whole United States to accommodate the automobile. And you can't accommodate it anyway if you cannot accommodate the automobile-less highway. In front of my house is–when they started to build it there were eighteen thousand vehicles a day now there're twenty-four thousand vehicles a day or something like that. And in another couple of years, it'll be just as crowded as it was before and as Paul Sarbanes said during his campaign for Congress, when he defeated the head of the Board of Public Works, I'm proud to say, he said, "It doesn't matter if the traffic moves five miles an hour on Belvedere Avenue. This city has no right to take away taxable property, as poor as this city is, for the benefit of the automobile users. They'll just have to drive

more slowly, that's all there is to it. There's no obligation on the part of the city or the state to accommodate automobiles at any particular rate of speed. And if they have to crawl along, they'll have to crawl along, maybe they'll take the bicycles.".

Ramsay [01:07:08] But of course, as I say, he defeated George Fallon, who was the greatest exponent of road building that we've ever seen in the United States and he was tremendously influential in the country and the highway lobby contributed huge sums to his campaign every year, and it was a miracle that Paul Sarbanes was able to defeat him. But what did he do when he went back for the lame-duck session? He was a lame-duck congressman and he managed to get the highway trust funds extended for five more years from '72 to '77. How he did it, I don't know. They weren't expiring til '72. There was no need for it, but it just showed how powerful he was. But that's politics for you. And now the Legislature has redistricted to take most of Paul Sarbane's constituents away from him and put him in a different district. And Governor Mandel said he didn't know anything about it, he hadn't seen the plan; most preposterous thing I ever heard, he hadn't seen the plan. It was designed to accommodate Mr. Garmatz and defeat Mr. Sarbanes. And this will be history, I hope, by the time anybody ever hears this tape, but Paul Sarbanes is one of the ablest, most intelligent people we've ever sent to Congress. And if he's defeated by political gerrymandering, they're going to be a lot of very indignant people in this part of Baltimore. Because we worked mighty hard to get him in there, and we didn't all plan to have him ousted by gerrymandering on the part of the governor. Maybe this is the part of the tape, I should say that I'm not going to say for future generations.

Cunningham [01:08:58] No, it's interesting. It's a fact of life, I'm afraid.

Ramsay [01:09:06] Now you spoke about–what did I think about urban renewal, that also ties in with the highways. The case of Rosemont is a dramatic one. Case in point. They planned to run the East-West Expressway through Rosemont, and there was such a clamor on the part of the residents and the citizens who thought that it was the wrong place for it to be. And with some help, I guess, from the Greater Baltimore Committee, they managed to defeat it and get the rule change, but not after some–a lot of the properties have been condemned by the city, and they're now going to have to spend $5 million to restore Rosemont to what it was before they started to tear it down. And the thing about urban renewal, one of the things that makes it so difficult for Bob Embry to do his job, and incidentally, I think Bob Embry is one of the most intelligent and not to say brilliant, dedicated public servants we've ever had, the one who is now head of the Housing and Community Development Division of the city, but he is handicapped all the time by the fact that we're still in this state of indecision about where the East-West Expressway is going to go. Of course, as I say, the highway funds were supposed to stop at the end of '72 and some of us thought if we can keep on holding this off or keep the fight going on until 1972, by then we won't have to have it at all. But, I guess we're going to have it. I don't know whether–Governor Mandel said the other day if they don't pass the ordinances that are necessary to complete the East-West Expressway through Baltimore City or across the harbor, that he's going to spend the federal funds somewhere else so that we don't lose them because the federal funds, so-called, are matching funds in which they put up nine dollars for every dollar that the city has to put up. And the people think this is a bonanza that the money falls from the trees. Nobody ever realizes that the federal money comes out of our pockets, that we send more money to Washington than we get back. And because contrary to most belief, Maryland is not one of those impoverished states that it's always saying it is. So it isn't money growing on trees; it comes out of the taxpayer's pocket, no matter how much of the federal money is in it.

Ramsay [01:11:35] And it's hard for the urban renewal people to go ahead and renew the city or get rid of the dilapidated parts of the city when they don't know where the condemnation is going to be, the roads or the schools or anything else. Now they have this so-called plan for joint development, which they say–put this down to say because I'll be interested if somebody hears this tape twenty years from now to find out if it ever happened–that the expressways are going to be beneficial to the neighborhoods that they run through because they can have auxiliary development, that they can maybe have overhead schools built on platforms above the expressway; it's going to be hard to study with the noise like the roar of big waterfalls. And they can build shopping malls and residences along the expressway. I don't know who'd want to live in the residences, and I guess the shopping malls will have to be closed to the outside world the way they are now.

Ramsay [01:12:43] That's another one of my pet gripes: why they have to build these blind buildings with no windows in which you can get light or air, you're not using nature's light and air. You've got to use more that the Gas and Electric Co. produces for you. A tree fell down in Ruxton here last week and all the lights were out all over Ruxton. So the people were groping around in the market, which has virtually no outside light. And of course, the people in the beauty parlor were at a standstill, they came running out with their curlers and their pink nets on because all the dryers had gone bad on them. That's just a little bit of humor on your historical record.

Cunningham [01:13:23] (laughs)

Ramsay [01:13:23] But uh, I think that Bob Embry and his Commission are making a valiant effort in the Gay Street section in the Uptown section, and they've come around to the concept of trying to restore and trying to shore up old dwellings and not just tear everything down and build those high rise projects, which we did for a while, and which have become a menace. They're not safe for children; terrible things happen to them in the elevators, and they're really not viable living quarters, except for older people without children. And so we're having to have a new concept of urban renewal than we did just a few years ago. But the worst thing, of course, about urban renewal, was that it was all directed at the cities. And by the same token, the worst thing about FHA was that they kept making loans to the people in the suburbs. And so they stimulated the white exodus to the suburbs, and they kept crowding more and more black and poor people into the city. And this has happened in every city in the country, and the federal government is as much responsible for it as anybody else. And now I heard just the other day that the people that want to get FHA mortgages for properties in the city are usually denied them because they say, "Well, that isn't a good risk." The FHA says that they're engaged in underwriting good risks and the city property by and large isn't good risk, so they're just driving the city further and further into debt because the people who want to live in the city and keep up the tax base are being discouraged from it. And–of course I'm still living here in the city–people that live in the county think we're absolutely crazy to live in the city. I have a friend who was instrumental in building this road, who was one of the engineers for it. He always says, "What a lovely road I built in front of your house." I said, "Yes, so I can't sit on the porch." He lives in Sparks, Maryland, and tells me he gets to town in twenty-five minutes over what? Over roads that the taxpayers of Baltimore City are paying for. So, uh–

Cunningham [01:15:38] I assume, then, that you're against the road near the Fort McHenry.

Ramsay [01:15:43] Yes, certainly, I'm against all roads. I don't think we need any more roads to make it easy for the people that live in the county to come in and get into the city at large inconvenience and turn around and go back out to their green acres. _____(??) is the man that I

speak of that lives way out in the county. And he comes into town and to his office over roads that were built by you and me. I don't know, you may live in the county too, for all I know. But the thing that interests me is how Indianapolis got a metropolitan government. Of course, this is what every city wants, is to try to annex the counties and the rich people. I was told the other day that Baltimore City only has 100,000 taxpayers left–that all the other people are tax-exempt. This is how full the city is, of course, some of them–lots of them are corporate taxpayers and large taxpayers. But I went to a meeting yesterday discussing rapid transit and one of the men there very properly said, "Well, before we go into the best means of rapid transit, whether we want subways or old-fashioned railroads or whatnot, we'd better look into whether there's any–whether we want rapid transit at all. What is the future of Baltimore? Are there people who want to use the rapid transit to get into Baltimore?" The county executive in Baltimore County says they have no need to go to Baltimore at all. They've got their own shopping centers and their own business and their own office buildings, in Towson and they don't need to go–need Baltimore City at all. He said–this man said, "We've got to look into what is the future of Baltimore City?" Well, of course, you're concerned with the past of Baltimore City. Maybe it hasn't any future. Who knows? That'll be interesting to find out.

Cunningham [01:17:26] What do you think the chances are of getting a regional government?

Ramsay [01:17:30] Very poor indeed. That's just what I said, it fascinates me how–I saw a young girl who goes to college in Indianapolis a few days ago and I said, "Tell me, tell me, how did Indianapolis succeed in annexing all the surrounding counties?" "Well," she said, "would you believe that it's now the 12th city in the country." And imagine little Indianapolis being the 12th largest city in the country. I said, "Well, I wouldn't think that would lure those suburban taxpayers into being included in the city and wanting to accept any of the responsibilities." And this is the plain fact here. Baltimore County, Anne Arundel County, Howard County, it doesn't make any difference–they don't want to be bothered with our problems. We've got all the problems. We've got the problems of crime and disease and the poor and the uneducated and everybody else. And they don't want to be bothered with it. They want to drive from their enclave into town, do their business, and go back out to the green countryside. And the politicians are not just before wanting to be running a citywide election. You can imagine what would happen to the county politicians in a city election after the way they've treated the people in the city. In fact, I understand that numerically–not numerically, but percentage wise–there are fewer blacks in Baltimore County than there were a hundred years ago; that Baltimore County has been systematically pushing the black people back into the city by not giving them any place to live. And of course, they refuse to have urban renewal or a housing authority, or any development that would benefit the low-income people because they don't want the low-income people in the county. So the idea of being annexed to Baltimore City and taking on their problems of police and fire protection and education, all the expensive things that we have–I guess their education per capita is just as expensive as ours is, and they have a burgeoning school population there isn't any question about that. But this is happening in every city in the country, practically. You have a black core and a shrinking tax base and the county is becoming more populous and more affluent all the time. And now they're dominating the legislature so that you haven't got any chance in the state either. It used to be that the city had enough muscle in the state legislature to get some attention from the state, but now the populous counties dominate the state government, so you can't get any relief out of that.

Ramsay [01:20:06] I don't know what's going to happen to the city. Obviously, the mayors think the only thing that can happen to the city is that they get help direct from the federal government. And I think that's why most people that are really concerned about the cities are opposed to President Nixon's revenue-sharing plan because it would let the money siphon through the state. And you

and I know perfectly well that plenty of state governors would siphon off a lot of money for subdivisions that didn't need it. And the best chance for the cities is to deal direct with the federal government, I think. But the cities are in a sad state. What with their traffic problems and their parking lots and their–

Ramsay [01:20:54] We had a–this might interest you–we had a regional council of the League of Women Voters for a few years, and even it fell apart. They had so little in common and each county was concerned with their own government and their own charter and their own elections and their own problems, and there really didn't seem any viable way to work on a regional level. We have a regional planning commission now, you know, but they have no power. They just have advisory and the subdivisions don't pay any attention to them unless it suits the subdivisions. It's sort of like the sovereignty in the United Nations. Nobody will submerge their own interests for the greater good of the whole. And until we do sometime we're going to find ourselves either choked to death by the population or in a nuclear war. They're the only two alternatives. You know with the planet gets overpopulated it'll be nature will weed it out with famine, pestilence, and war: the Four Horsemen that have always taken over.

Ramsay [01:21:54] There's some new organization called Plain Survival. There's is a new organization every day, but they're always the same people. Ever since I've lived in Baltimore–and a lot of the people are as old as I am now and they just change their hats and go somewhere else. I remember one day I met Guthrie Speers three times in one day and I said, "This is a joke, you know. We all the same people do everything. We just change our hats and go around and grind different axes or support different causes." But I always loved what Frank Beirne–and then again, of course, they're by and large, they're not the Baltimoreans that are doing it, you know. That thing that Frank Beirne said in *The Amiable Baltimoreans* I always loved. He said that in most cities, if you came from out of town and you came into the city of your adoption and started telling me how to run things, they'd say, "Well, you can go back where you came from. We'll run our own city. Thank you." Not so in Baltimore. If you come from out of town and start telling them what to do about how to improve their city. They say that's fine, just roll up your sleeves and go to work, and then they go back out to the country and get on their horse and let the peasants do the work. And I've always thought that's the way the Baltimoreans regard us people from out of town that we're the peasants and we're supposed to do the work and they're supposed to enjoy pleasant living in the land of pleasant living.

end of interview