

Meet former Mayor Johnnie Mosley

IN HIS OWN WORDS

All Six installments have been combined in this pdf file

By Lee Raynor, Editor

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Mosley, 62, is a graduate of East Carolina University. He moved to Kinston from La Grange in 1965. He retired from DuPont, where he was a computer programmer, on Oct. 31, 1998, a year after winning his first mayoral term.

Mosley is remarkably frank about racial problems and attitudes in Kinston, how Ritch came to be his opponent in the primary, his accomplishments during the past 18 years, the things he wishes he'd done differently, the mysterious \$2 million said to have gone missing from city coffers and other topics.

The interview with Mosley is presented in a question-and-answer format and contains his complete answers to every question.

KinstonPress: Mr. Mayor, you spent 18 years in city government. How does it feel to be a civilian?

Mosley : I don't know. I haven't been out long enough. I do miss, so far for the three days I've been out, going to City Hall because I go down there every day. I miss that. I walk every day. I normally walk around 6:30 every day, but now I've decided I'll walk around 8:30 or 9 to take up some of that time I was in the office. So I try to walk four miles sometime after 8:30. I have told some people I may have to start walking eight miles vs. four so I can pass some time. (He laughs.) I could kill some time in the mornings. But I have already missed getting up, taking my walk, coming back and dressing and going on to the office and spend an hour, two hours at City Hall.

KinstonPress: Do you plan to stay active with the city, with clubs or any type of organization?

Mosley : All the organizations and civic clubs I belong to, I plan to stay with them. Not with the city. I don't know of anything that I'll be active in with the city – boards or commissions. I'm not on any. The mayor's committee that we had – the Mayor's Committee for Disabilities – Buddy will probably take over on that. That's part of his responsibility. The commission that we created, Jim Godfrey and I, was the Appearance Commission. We had our last meeting in November. We don't meet in December, and they asked me to come back as a board member, but I told them I'd make a decision on that later.

KinstonPress: You've got so much history, it would be a shame to lose all that.

Mosley : Well, people may not want it.

KinstonPress: There's this thing that's been going on between Tommy Lee (the city's planning and inspections director) and the boat. Is the city trying to take over Neuse II?

Mosley : No. That is not our thinking. The thing between Tommy and the boat is the code enforcement that the city is responsible to do. The owners of the boat are not participating as they are instructed. This boat is not in the water so the Coast Guard has no authority. The problem that occurred was the use of the boat by visitors. The owners of the boat, those that build the boat, don't feel that the city needs to inspect it and the safety of it for the people in the city limits rests upon the housing code.

KinstonPress: The fire inspector said the state has no jurisdiction over it.

Mosley : But the city does.

KinstonPress: The fire inspector said there's nothing in the code that would give jurisdiction to the city.

Mosley : It is a structure that people enter and exit from and it has to be inspected. Now, the city may consider it a boat, but it is a structure and a structure must meet the criteria of the building code. No, it's nothing between Tommy, per se, or the city, per se, and the boat owners. The boat owners are just determined not to abide by city policy.

KinstonPress: You were Kinston's first black mayor, yet black voters did not appear to turn out to support you. Why do you think that happened?

Mosley : There are many reasons, I guess. Some who are black and supported Buddy have never supported me during my career. Any time I ran for anything, or whatever, they were always in opposition, but that was a few. Many of them had no idea of what we've done. Then there was some who'd rather have anybody other than me.

KinstonPress: Do you think it was because you didn't get your message across?

Mosley : No, I don't think the message had anything to do with it. I really don't. I think the only thing that had anything to do with it, from the black perspective – because I never have gotten the white vote and I knew I wasn't going to get it this time. When I say I don't get any, I mean maybe three, five. That's about the most that I get. I guess when I ran for re-election for the mayor last time, I had probably the largest number ever to come out in the open and say, "I support you." For the most part, in all of my career, the few whites that supported me said, "I can't be open. I support you, but I can't let people know I support you." That's the way it's always been in my career and this time I didn't get any white support in the open. Out of 3,700-and-some votes, we had 2,142 blacks and 16 or 17 white votes. You can do the numbers. Buddy got 20 percent of the black vote.

KinstonPress: What do you know about the deal to elect Buddy Ritch and have him resign later so the Council could appoint someone else?

Mosley : I was told in early January that a group of whites had met.

KinstonPress: Do you know who was in that group?

Mosley : I don't know. I've never been able to find out who it was. I was told by a white that they were meeting to find out who in what community they could run that could beat me. In that meeting it was said, why don't we run Buddy Ritch? He has close ties with the black church. And, from what I was told, from that meeting, they left and went to Buddy's house and asked him – this was in November (2004). And I understand he said no, he didn't have any interest at that time. Then, some time in January, late January, early February, he accepted. But I was told, "This is the plan. Buddy plans to run and go to the black church and get enough votes to kick you out."

KinstonPress: How did that make you feel?

Mosley : It hurt to know, which I've always known, how we as blacks can be manipulated like that. It had nothing to do with what I was going to do. I was black and the city shouldn't have a black leader.

KinstonPress: Did you ever hear any talk about the plan to have Buddy Ritch win the mayor's race and resign later so the City Council could select his replacement?

Mosley : Yes.

KinstonPress: What did you hear about that?

Mosley : In May, when I first heard it, that information was given to me that the plan was for him to go to the black church, get their votes, and stay [in office] for a while and then resign and the Council would appoint Gordon Vermillion. Buddy actually called City Hall and asked the deputy clerk. First, he said if the mayor resigned who would appoint his replacement, The second question he asked was if the Council makes an appointment, did it have to be from the same party.

She came in my office and said, "I just got a strange phone call from Buddy." I said, "Oh, yeah?" and she proceeded to tell me. And what I did, "Poo" Rochelle [city attorney at that time] had the office next to mine. I said, "Poo, come here." And she told him what was said because I didn't answer her. I told her to go ahead and call him and give him the answer. I thought it was stupid of Buddy. It was stupid twice. It was stupid of Buddy to call himself and second, it stupid because he was mayor for 12 years and he should have known the answer.

Yes, it happened in May. If you recall the article in [The Free Press], Gordon said he would not run for mayor or the City Council. "My political career is on hold [Vermillion said]." The impression I got, Buddy called and [that was it]. Buddy would go in, resign and the Council would appoint Gordon. Everybody on the Council wanted to get me off the Council, except Joe Tyson. So I'm assuming that all along, they were working together.

KinstonPress: I've been told that Joe knew about this plan.

Mosley : I think a lot of people knew about it.

KinstonPress: Do you think everybody on the Council knew it?

Mosley : Oh, yeah. Remember, of all the years I served down there, I've gotten along well with everybody. We were working together for the City of Kinston. Then they started hating me. White people started moving away [from me]. I became a skunk. And it all started, in my opinion, when several people started saying, "Johnnie's not communicating with the staff. Johnnie didn't do this and Johnnie didn't do that." Gordon said that. Jimmy started talking about running for mayor. He said, "Johnnie's done a good job, but I would do it different."

At the time, I didn't know they had that animosity toward me because of what I said [at a church meeting earlier] until a work session later on. Gordon jumped all over me. It seemed like I was the worst person in the world all because of what I said in that church meeting. All the whites started turning against me. I was told by [a white person] – remember when we had the prayer breakfast? It was headed up by Pastor Brent Watts. They were selling tickets for tables, trying to get the churches to buy tables. They put pieces of paper on the table for people to make comments and write their recommendations about how to make it better.

So, when I got up to speak as the mayor, I said it would be nice the next time we have one, the churches at each table have everybody at that table except one, and go pat someone on the shoulder at another table and change places with them.

We could have more fellowship. And you know what they said? They said they didn't like what I said at that breakfast. They said it was racist. At the time, I didn't even recall what I said. Do you think that was racist? I thought it was a great idea. On the table they had paper to write down improvements. I got up and said it and they said I turned it into a race thing and I said nothing about race. It was human relations. These are the kinds of things that I became a skunk all at once and people wanted to run against me. Everything that I'd done in the past, it was gone. Gone.

KinstonPress: How long were you on the Council when Buddy was mayor?

Mosley : Ten years.

KinstonPress: What's his leadership style?

Mosley : That was one of the reasons I wanted to run for the Council. He had no concern about the Council, the agenda, the management. In my opinion. His thing was, he was very, very involved with economic development when Ron Baker was here and (the city) had a part in it. Going to civic organizations. Going to church. And telling the civic organizations how great they were doing, telling the churches what a great job they were doing. The council, the things we had to vote on, that's the manager's job. And, you know, the other night he kept asking the manager what he had to do next. I would have thought he and Mary Mac would have went over that agenda before he got there, and wouldn't have had to ask.

KinstonPress: Is he a person who likes to keep the workings of the city behind the scenes?

Mosley : No, I don't think he cares one way or another about that. I really don't.

KinstonPress: Why did the powers-that-be believe that you, as a black mayor, should be replaced by a white

mayor? The city is predominantly black.

Mosley : Whites don't care about that. Whites think they need to be in charge. I'll give you an example. I don't need to give names to give an example and I'm not going to give names. When the Sampson School issue came up, and the Council was looking at trying to come up with a Human Relations Department (that's been several years ago), and I was talking with a gentleman who wanted to help me come up with something structural to pull race relations together, including the Council, and I went to this gentleman's house and we sat down and talked. This gentleman made a statement that if you had another black like Walter Jones, he's saying that if we had a black Walter Jones, then the whites would support him. I asked him, I said, "We've been in discussions for the last hour here in your house about how to bring race relationships together and you're telling me that a black is not credible unless a white says so." So what we were trying to work on at that time, I just forgot about it. I left. But what he was saying is that if the whites don't sanction something the black are doing, it's not going to happen.

KinstonPress: This city has a monumental racial divide. What can be done?

Mosley : Well, it's like he said and basically, that's true. Every time we bring up race relations in this city, what do the whites say? "There's not a problem." As long as the whites say there's not a problem, there's not a problem.

KinstonPress: Has this divide always been here or has it opened up in the last couple of decades?

Mosley : Always. And we were talking about how do I feel about Buddy sending me that message? A man and I were going to Raleigh and he asked me if I thought Buddy was going to get the black vote. I said, yeah, he was probably going to get 10 percent. I didn't think he was going to get 20. To be honest about it, I didn't think he'd do that. The whites can't touch certain blacks in the community on race issues. And everybody else that are concerned are troublemakers. How is Johnny Lyles seen in the white community?

KinstonPress: I'll tell you what my personal feeling on Johnny Lyles was. I thought Johnny Lyles was a racist.

Mosley : Because he always talked about issues that affect black people.

KinstonPress: Because he didn't talk about issues that affected people – just people – not black people or white people, but people.

Mosley : The issue that Johnny fought for was the children of the inner-city schools. The only way to address that is to talk about it. Those problems in the county schools were not there. You can't address people. You've got to address the problems. We sit and talk in a calm kind of voice, like George Graham communicates with everybody. Whites just sit there and listen. The only way you're going to get any feedback, you got to raise hell.

KinstonPress: Did you raise hell in the city?

Mosley : As a councilman, total hell. I wouldn't have gotten anything. When I first became a councilman, I didn't run on a platform. I never have on reelection. I don't throw anything out there. I always consider that if everybody else's ship is tied up in the harbor, you stay there too. If somebody else leaves the harbor, you leave with them. You put issues out there. I always ran on my name. I don't put those issues out, but people know.

I fought for over a year trying to get the city, we had seven miles of unpaved streets, dirt streets, in East Kinston. None of them had been paved in over 40 years. Dirt streets. Seven miles. And I talked to the Council and talked to the Council, asked the manager, until one night I said, we used to meet in a work session in a little conference room right there in the corner where my office was, and the press didn't come.

And I just simply raised hell one night. I said, "You-all are going to give us the money to pave those streets." And Steve Raper said, "We just don't have no money to pave these streets." And Eddie Kornegay – he was the other black city councilman – said, "Well, you see, Johnny, all our obligations." I didn't say anything to him. I told the Council, "I'm not asking Steve to provide the money. I'm asking you to tell Steve to find the money."

Ole Eddie came back and said, "Well, Johnnie, our obligations ..." I said, "Goddamn it, Eddie, when did you become a financial genius?" When I said that, Mansfield Creech said, "Give the man the money." Aaron Brooks said, "Give the man the money." Eddie didn't vote for it. Buddy didn't vote for it. Herb Spear didn't vote for it. That's the time the program started paving the streets. It started with \$150,000 and that paved a block. But I got it started and we paved right on until

'99. And people said I was arrogant.

KinstonPress: On this racial divide, how can this be fixed?

Mosley : I don't think it really can and I'll tell you why I think that. The slave mentality that is embedded in blacks, I don't know how that can ever be de-programmed. I don't know whether you can de-program that. Slavery was 'way back there, but everything that has transpired since slavery is embedded in us.

Some of us fight it. Some of us don't. You say, "Well, how do you come to the civil rights movement in the '60s?" Because there was a group of youth – a lot of people say, well it was blacks. It was the church. But if you go back, the church got in it after youth jumped in there and started protesting, marching. I was part of that youth. And you've got the black church leaders started stepping out. But that is embedded in us, in the black race, in African-Americans, that slave mentality. If a white comes up to somebody in the black community – and you can check this – a black would just humbly go along with whatever was said. They won't speak out and say, "Naw, I'm not going to go along with that." We use the excuse, "I'm scared of my job. If I speak out, I'm going to get fired." And white people understand that. Whites understand that more so than most of us.

That's just one excuse. As long as leadership can touch different blacks in the community, different ministers, to keep racism in the pot and the lid on it, that's what they're going to do.

KinstonPress: When you say the leadership, what leadership are you talking about?

Mosley : Church leadership, the ministers, the elected leadership. I want you to think back just since you've been here, what elected official has been out front on issues. What leadership do you see out there? Johnnie Lyles. Keith Seaforth. I was always there. Joe Tyson. Now, do you see any others? You didn't see any support from the other elected officials. Those others aren't hands-on and they make things difficult.

I'll give you a good example: Martin Luther King's name, re-name Tiffany Street. When it first got started, [County] Commissioner [Jackie] Brown was on TACC 9, whatever that show is in the morning. She was co-hosting it. We went to the Council and had out little fight and we lost 4 to 1. What she said the next day on that Rick Vernon show was, "I don't see why they wanted Martin Luther King's name anyway. They got one in La Grange." What I'm saying is, when you have black speak out against what blacks are fighting for, we can't do anything together. There are certain people in our community that the whites can reach out and touch and say, "Hey – we want you to speak out." It looks like we are fighting among ourselves versus trying to fight the white people.

And that is true. Whites won't admit it, but if you go back and analyze things that have happened, just look at what I've said.

KinstonPress: Why does it always have to be a fight? Why can't we just come together and accomplish something?

Mosley : Ever since I've been elected, I've been working toward that. I have gone into meetings when I was with the Tourism Authority. There was a group of females there about Grainger Hill. Mary Ellison (Turner) was there back when she was trying to get money – it was a long time ago. We met at the Chamber [of Commerce]. Two white ladies and Mary Ellison and somebody else, they didn't say anything to me, but we had the meeting and everything because they were trying to get me to give them the money. And Jan Barwick came back after the meeting and said, "So-and-so" I forgot who it was, "said she didn't expect to see a human being from me because of all the things she'd heard." She didn't see me as a person prior to that. I thought that was kind of strange.

I'll give you another example. Remember when we had that Martin Luther King Day at St. Augustus Church? They considered that a big success because they had about 15 to 20 whites come. They had a white minister to bring the message. And I told someone that most of the blacks didn't see it as a success. They said, why not? I said because nearly every white that was there was in some form of authority, in some organization or had a business that was selling products. You don't see the lay whites. You only see the business, those who had companies with something to offer the blacks. The average white that goes to church don't come. The preacher and his wife were there, but the congregation wasn't there. Gordon Vermillion was really pissed at me because I got up and made some reference to it.

I've always been open and candid with my remarks. I never try to use flowery speeches to tell a person something. A lot of people didn't like that. I talk like it think it is. That's the reason I was "arrogant." That's how I developed that, because

I've always been upfront. And you know George Graham: "Yes, sir. I'll do it." He don't have no confidence of doing anything, but when you leave, you feel good.

So, race relations I don't think will ever improve because of those factors. It's sad.

KinstonPress: What about other black leaders in this town?

Mosley : When you're talking about black leaders, who has chosen those black leaders? Do you ever get the question, "Who are the white leaders in Kinston?" You never do. But we always get the question, "Who are the black leaders" from the whites. But who are they? Name them as black leaders. An elected official automatically takes on that [role] as a black leader because of the position they currently hold.

KinstonPress: Julian Pridgeon?

Mosley : He's a pastor. He's the church.

KinstonPress:If you step up to do things, don't you then become a leader?

Mosley : No. I guess what I was saying about black leaders is that whites pin us as "black leaders". We don't pin ourselves as black leaders.

KinstonPress: I didn't mean for this to be a racial conversation.

Mosley : But everything that happens is race related, even though we don't look at it that way.

KinstonPress: Was the announcement about Workhorse opening at the GTP delayed until Buddy Ritch took office?

A: Do you think that the announcement couldn't have been made earlier? And not only that, the city had no participation in it.

KinstonPress: You mean, in ironing out the details?

Mosley : Correct. We provided nothing. Everything was already there. The hangar was built. It had been going on for a long time. I'd been knowing about that. In economic development meetings, we'd been talking about it. The TransPark's been talking about it all along. The county put money into the project. Was the chairman of the county commission on the program? No. The one that was involved in it was not asked to speak.

KinstonPress: Why?

Mosley : Well, I really don't know why. I just say, "Race." That's the only thing it can be. You cannot say George Graham is not an excellent speaker. He is an excellent speaker. I'm not a good speaker. I've always known that. I always thought I could get my point across, but I'm not a good orator. I never let that faze me. That's been another criticism I've gotten from the whites.

KinstonPress: What other business announcements are coming?

Mosley : (Laughs) I won't say. But it makes sense [that announcements were held off until Ritch was sworn in] - now all these industries start rolling in.

KinstonPress: While you were on the Council, about \$2 million went missing. Whatever happened to that money?

Mosley : It didn't actually go missing.

KinstonPress: What was it used for?

Mosley : It wasn't used. It was a shortcoming in one budget year that was moved to the next budget year, so it appeared that it was missing. But it never was missing.

KinstonPress: I heard that the money was used to do some type of construction at the GTP. Is that true?

Mosley : The money was allotted for - I don't recall exactly what it was, because that was seven years ago. It was allotted for something in one calendar year that wasn't used, and basically had to be moved to the next calendar year so it appears that that \$2 million for that budget year was missing. It's kinda like when you roll a project over to the next budget year. That's what it was.

KinstonPress: Why do people in Kinston pay so much for electricity?

Mosley : I don't know how to answer that question other than that they're paying for the increases the city receives from Progress Energy. During most of the '90s the city was willing to absorb most of the rate increases. In the late '90s, or 2000, the revenues from electric sales, a bunch of it went to the General Fund. But the state local commission said we had to stop using revenues from electric to put into the General Fund or other projects.

I don't know the year, but I think it was 2001, when the only thing we transferred to the General Fund was around \$900-and-some thousand from the electric fund. That was what we considered the tax, in lieu of what we would have gotten from our distribution center. That was the only money we could transfer out of there. Now we were down to the very bare bones on the revenue, so when the new increase came we had to pass it on. Last May, when the 6 percent, 6 ½ percent came for the coal, 5 percent of it, we couldn't absorb it. Now, a 1 percent increase means, at that time, means \$360,000 that we had to absorb.

In '88, when I first became a Council member, the rates were lower than CP&L. I think when it crossed was in '92 or '93 when our rates started moving beyond CP&L. Some of that was because of the escalated cost of the nuclear plant. Some of it was because of mismanagement by CP&L. ElectricCities sued CP&L some time in the late '90s or mid-'90s because of mis-management. That stayed in court for about a year. We finally got \$400 million. Most of that \$400 million went to the lawyers. We've been fighting it ever since our forefathers decided to get into it because of the escalated costs of the nuclear plant that was built. I don't see anything we can do now or in the future that's going to reduce electric rates other than have a large-use energy industry come here.

KinstonPress: Aren't industries discouraged from coming to Kinston when they see our high electric rates?

Mosley : No. The peak generation savings we're capable of providing to industry can make industrial rates comparable with other rates in this area. That's what good about the generators industries can purchase to reduce that peak load.

KinstonPress: I just keep remembering that poor little man over in East Kinston who was on a fixed income. It was three or four years ago. You remember him. He had to borrow to pay his electric bill.

Mosley : His electric bill was \$700.

KinstonPress: Right, and I kept wondering how he was going to pay his next electric bill when he had to pay off that \$700.

Mosley : What you didn't understand about that situation, that young man probably had about a 2,000-or-greater-square-foot home and had the most expensive electric service. He lived alone and he heated the entire house with baseboard heating. Now, that's the most expensive.

A lot of these high utility bills are because of the way the homes are constructed. Most of the homes in East Kinston don't have insulation. I can give you a good example. Mine doesn't have insulation. My house was built in '67. I was in the Army when my house was being built. The contractor didn't do it since I wasn't here to check it. About five years after it was built, I decided to close in my carport. When I closed in the carport and took the living room wall bricks out, that's when I found out I didn't have insulation.. If I had been there when they were putting up the sheetrock, I would have known.

That's why the majority of people in East Kinston always said their electric rates were higher. That thinking process is not going to change. [They say] "I got such and such over here and her heating bill is \$200 and mine is \$300." They don't look at how much they use. They look at the cost.

KinstonPress: Is there some way the city can help people like that? Maybe send out somebody to do an energy use assessment and make recommendations on savings?

Mosley : They just created a kit that will help with the costs. They can insulate with plastic on the windows, different type foams you can seal around your doors and windows. That will be in the kit. People got to call and say they want the kit. I think we're going to make about 220, or something like that.

KinstonPress: How much will the kits cost?

Mosley : I think about \$4,500 for all of them.

KinstonPress: If I want to go up there and get one of them, how much will I have to pay?

Mosley : I asked that question when they made the presentation, but they didn't have a figure. It will be expensive because some of that stuff is not cheap. I think the kits are good. There are so many ways people can reduce their electric bill.

One of the main contributors to high electric bills is the hot water heater. I tell people when they first get up in the morning, after they use the hot water they need, turn it off. When they come home in the afternoon, turn it on. When you finish using it, turn it off and you will save probably about one-third.. We are a society that believes everything's got to be there right now.

Many people come to me with utility concerns and I tell them, "You need to lower your thermostat." The first thing they tell me, if it's in the summer and they're having a high bill, "I'm not going to be hot!" And then the same thing in the winter: "I'm not going to be cold!" They complain about high electric bills when they would not do anything to help lower it. I think, with all the expectations of the heating oil and natural gas [prices] - it's going to be rough for a lotta, lotta people.

We were talking about that man with the \$700 electric bill? He passed. But he said he wasn't going to turn [the thermostat] down. He said, "I'm going to stay warm," and warm to him may have been 78 degrees. Somewhere, logic needs to come in. If I have a house as large as (the public library), and I don't have it sectioned off where I can just heat a portion of it, and I'm going to heat the entire library, it's going to cost me some money.

KinstonPress: Why does the city seem to be so reluctant to force owners of downtown buildings to either clean up those buildings or tear them down? Look what the city is trying to do with the old shirt factory [condemn it]. Why don't they use that same kind of muscle downtown?

Mosley : The code's different. We can't force the owners to do it. See, we're not going to force the owners to do anything to the shirt factory. We can set it up, condemn it and have it demolished. All that cost would come to us. We can take a lien out but you don't have any way to force them to pay. That's the same thing that's going to happen with the shirt factory, most likely, because the owner is in Charlotte. I had high hopes that was going to be the location for Dobbs training school. I worked many hours with (two other men) trying to get that site, hoping the owners would have it ready to build so when we got ready to build, that would be ready. But I found out after a couple of months that that wasn't going to happen.

KinstonPress: How are things going with the Dobbs expansion?

Mosley : We are going to get those 32 beds out at Dobbs.

KinstonPress: When?

Mosley : They should be coming to the city next month to present the plan. I did a lot of work on that plan. When it first started, it was very convenient and the [state] Senate allowed it be be changed to a 65-bed unit and all of it going to Nash County. I had to go see Sen. Albertson and Sen. Thomas until we got it switched back so we could have one of those units.

KinstonPress: So 32 beds will come here and 32 will go to Nash County?

Mosley : Right.. That's the way it originally was planned by the health and human services department - to spread them out. But I had to go several times to see Sen. Albertson and Thomas to get it switched back. But nobody cares about that.

KinstonPress: Maybe you didn't blow your own horn enough?

Mosley : Yeah, but I still don't believe in patting myself on the back. I believe that what I'm doing is for the community.

KinstonPress: What are you most proud of accomplishing during your 18 years of service in Kinston city government?

Mosley : Working with, and helping, individuals.

KinstonPress: What did you do during that time that, looking back, you'd do differently today, if you could?

Mosley : (A very long pause.) I really don't think I'd have done anything different. Maybe, like you said earlier, I should have tooted my horn more but other than that, I think I would probably would have taken the concerns of the individuals as I did.

KinstonPress: It's good not to have regrets.

Mosley : Nah, I don't have any regrets.

I think that wastewater facility – the new wastewater facility – I feel my participation was key to receiving that \$32 million. When we had the Floyd flood in '99, and James Lee Witt from FEMA, and Carol Browner, the EPA director, they came on a tour with FEMA personnel from the Atlanta region and the state people. We toured and I sat behind Carol Browner. Once we toured the wastewater plant, I asked Mr. Witt if there was any way they could replace our wastewater plant. He said, “Yes, I think we can do it. I think we can do a recovery wastewater. We can do it under a recovery because the wastewater has flooded.”

We got back in the bus and started on with the tour and we continued to talk about that. A person from Atlanta was taking notes so they could go ahead and start working on it. We came back and stopped at (a junkyard). I was telling James Lee Witt, this is an eyesore and all this. We talked about it and Carol Browner said – and she had a deputy director with her, he was black – and she said, “Well, we ought to be able to help you with that, maybe clean up these junkyards.” We couldn't go across because it was flooded. And I said, we got one here and one across there and one on down west 70.

We went on down to the bridge and turned around. When we started back, we could see an oil slick over at Webb's, the auto junkyard, and Carol said, “We're going to do something about that.”

Everybody left and they did the same thing at Tarboro. Promised Tarboro a replacement plant. They left, went back to D. C., Atlanta, and a week, week-and-a-half went by. Witt's lawyers called “Poo” Rochelle and told “Poo” that James Lee Witt was not authorized to promise me. And they called Tarboro and told them the same thing, because he had promised both of us. And when I went in “Poo” was telling me about that and he'd told the manager and everybody about it. And they said, “Well, we'd better forget it.”

I said, “No, I'm not going to forget this.” I said, “That man promised me.” (Laughs heartily.) I got up and I called his office and I called his office and he finally called me back in about a week. I called him every day. And he called me. I told him, “This, the city's got to have.” And he said, “Well, I'm going to get the regional people from Atlanta to come back down here and talk to your people.” That's how we got it.

That's why they say the mayor had a lot to do with getting that \$32 million. If it hadn't have been for me, we never would have gotten it. One year later, James Lee Witt, he was down there in 2000 and had that \$32 million, he and Gov. Hunt. Now, Gov. Hunt worked with us. He worked just like I worked. He was calling too. But that's how we got it.

And then, to get back to the junkyards, I talked by phone to a deputy director several times. In December, when the General Assembly was called back to create a package for the Floyd flood, \$833 million package, \$3.5 million was allocated for junkyards so the EPA didn't have to do anything. The state provided it. No other city or county or entity applied for \$3.5 million. So we got it all. We applied for all six of our junkyards.

Now, the junkyards are not in the city. They're in the county.

KinstonPress: Did the county say, “Thank you, Johnnie”?

Mosley : No, they don't even acknowledge it. But anyway, we got the \$3.5 million. Nobody else even applied for it. And do you remember when Easley took money from everybody for the budget crisis? He took \$2.5 million from that money that was already awarded from that \$3.5 million. You didn't know that, did you?

I went to the governor's office. I was there all the time trying to get the money back. Finally, I met with Rep. Wainwright, La Roque, Charlie Albertson, John Kerr – I had them all to meet me in John Kerr's conference room right behind his office with DENR, the budget office – David McCoy. I basically told them I was the one that called the meeting and I was here to retrieve the money that Kinston had that the governor took.

Wainwright said, "DENR, did they have that money?" And DENR said, "Yeah, they had it. They were working on a project." And he said, "David McCoy, was that part of the money that was taken?" He said yes. David McCoy and I met about four more times and with the governor No. 1 man. This was in about May (2000). David McCoy was looking for the money in the budget office. We e-mailed. I called his office and couldn't get him. Send him an e-mail, called his office. I have always been persistent. I'd talk to somebody in his office and they'd say, "Well, he's done this," and I'd say, "Well, send me a copy of it. If he's done it, fax it to me."

And finally, by June, they'd found it, they got that \$2.5 million from other places that they'd taken it. At the same time, each one of those departments had to give up a half of a percent at the same time. Phil Robey said, "Now, how could you get that money when they were taking from everybody else?" But that's how we got rid of Wells, Harper and the others we got rid of. I worked to get that money back. Nobody ever said it.

B.J. knows about it. Ask B.J. B.J. was right there with the Pride and he didn't think we were going to get it. That's why, when he made those statements about me, about being the mayor, I just couldn't understand why he was doing that. He was right there for some of the things I was doing that affected the city and county. And then he makes those negative statements. I just couldn't understand that. I thought he was working with me trying to do these things.

But that's something I'm proud of – those two things about the money. The money we got for the wastewater facilities, the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, if I hadn't been on the board, we never would have gotten the money,

KinstonPress: The public perception of the mayor's job is that he kisses babies and cuts ribbons. What does the mayor's job actually entail?

Mosley : Well first, the mayor is the chief executive officer of the city. He presides over all the City Council meetings. He doesn't have a vote unless there's a tie. From that point on, I think the mayor creates what he does. I think part of his job is to guide and lead the Council. As a council person I fought for the issues I put forth, but as the mayor I couldn't fight for any specific issue. I had to lead the Council to the goals and objectives set by the Council. I think that's more significant than anything – to lead the Council. I was very successful my first three years. We had a cohesive group.

That all changed when a Council member decided they wanted to run for the mayor of Kinston. That divided the Council. Those who supported the Council member who was running and those who supported me. After winning that election, that same group was divided. The last four years, the harmony within the Council was never back. It never came back together. That, I guess, is something I regret because we had such a beautiful working relationship the first three years and we were all working for the same objective.

I think what coalesced us was in January '98 our river was above flood stage. We had the sludge all out there all around the Peachtree plant. We were fined the highest fine ever. We bonded on that one issue in June of '98 and that was a bond that kept us together for the next two years. We worked and we accomplished a lot. Most of our sewers were decayed and we had a problem. We had infiltration. Broken lines. We had the water greater than flood level for almost five months. Our sewer plants kept flooding all the time. We couldn't treat what was processed so it kept going out there and it settled out – all that sludge we had out there.

But that kind of united us as administration and we worked together and we started correcting that problem. It would take us eight years, but we finally got the majority of it corrected. We spent about \$14 million on sewer lines and outfall lines. We probably had about seven or eight grants and loans. But that had to be corrected and that's what I was left with from Buddy's administration.

KinstonPress: There's been a lot of talk about ways to keep young people here after they graduate from school. What has to be done to keep young people here?

Mosley : This concern has been in Kinston ever since I've been here – in '65. We were saying the same thing when my kids were growing up and finishing high school in '85, '86. People who stay here after high school normally don't have a desire to go other places and work. The jobs are not here to retain those that don't go to college. Those that go to college, for the most part, never return.

The small business owners, family members, stay because they have that. When you talk about retaining – keeping our young people here – it's jobs. And we'll never have enough jobs for our young people. That's not a new story. They talk like it's a new story, but it's been here. And I'm not sure if we can keep the kids if the jobs are here. I went to college for a couple of years but I didn't come back home. I went to Washington, D.C. I went in the Army. Vietnam. Came back to Ft. Bragg. Of course, I was married then. I was fortunate at that time. I got employed by DuPont.

I don't think we have a panacea for keeping young people here. I don't think we have enough jobs. The job market won't accommodate it. We're not going to have the 1,000-1,500 job industries coming, in my opinion.

KinstonPress: You don't think the GTP is going to take off and do that for us?

Mosley : Not really, not 1,500-2,000 jobs all at once in one industry. I really don't. If you look at how modern technology is reducing the size of industry, you don't have those large employers. I think most industries and large manufacturers that have that large an employee base are going overseas to get cheap labor. I believe we'll continue to have industry coming because of the low wages here. That's an incentive.

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