

Entry Date 5-18-93
Data Base HDOCNDX
Index # INS. 0206153

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

DATE OF DOCUMENT [Date of Interview] = 10-12-67
OFFICE OF PRIME RESPONSIBILITY = JSC
NUMBER ON DOCUMENT = 00
TYPE OF DOCUMENT [Code for Interview] = 1
PROGRAM [3-letter Program Archive code] = INS
AUTHOR [Interviewee's Last Name] = SOMMERS
LOCATION OF DOCUMENT [Numeric Shelf Address] = 091-34

SUBJECT OF DOCUMENT: [use relevant bold-face introductory terms]

Oral history interview with John P. Sommers (see also
[full name of interviewee] Marvin B. Kaplan)
about Temporary Quarters - Gulfgate ~~Hotel~~
[main focus of interview]

Title: 1961- Manager, Gulfgate Shopping Center
[interviewee's current and/or former title and affiliation]

Interview conducted by Robert B. Merrifield - Staff
[interviewer's name/position]

Historian at MSC
[location of interview]

Transcript and tape(s). [for inventory only: # pages 3; # tapes —]

Summary of notes only.

CONTENTS:

Biographical - [date/place of birth; family background] _____

Education - _____

Career Path - _____

Topics - *Houston Chamber of Commerce role helping
Space Task Group re locate; Gulf Gate location
buildings offered advantages; NASA site
selection team's visit; terms included
no rent, utilities only; NASA request for removal
display; Tailor Shop*

Entry Date 5-12-93
Data Base HDOCNDX
Index # INS. 0206031

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

DATE OF DOCUMENT [Date of Interview] = 10 - 12 - 67
OFFICE OF PRIME RESPONSIBILITY = JSC
NUMBER ON DOCUMENT = 00
TYPE OF DOCUMENT [Code for Interview] = 1
PROGRAM [3-letter Program Archive code] = INS
AUTHOR [Interviewee's Last Name] = KAPLAN
LOCATION OF DOCUMENT [Numeric Shelf Address] = 091-3

SUBJECT OF DOCUMENT: [use relevant bold-face introductory terms]

Oral history interview with Marvin B. Kaplan ^{See also John P. Sommers for Summary}
[full name of interviewee]
about Temporary Quarters - Guefgate Mall
[main focus of interview]

Title: 1961 - Advertising Manager, Guefgate
[interviewee's current and/or former title and affiliation]
Shopping Center

Interview conducted by Robert B. Merrifield - Staff
[interviewer's name/position]
Historian at MSC
[location of interview]

Transcript and tape(s). [for inventory only: # pages 3; # tapes 1]

CONTENTS :

Biographical - [date/place of birth; family background] _____

Education -

Career Path -

Topics - _____

Nov 11 MO 5-2747

Radio Station
K401C

EA 2-2535

John Summers - says Marvin Kaplan -
Advertising mgr of Gulfgate Shopping Center
^{suggested}
~~had~~ idea of having MSC setup office in Gulfgate.

October 12, 1967

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INTERVIEW WITH JOHN P. SOMMERS
AND
MARVIN B. KAPLAN

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During the summer and fall of 1961 Mr. Sommers was Manager of Gulfgate Shopping Center and Mr. Kaplan was Advertising Manager. Local newspapers had carried a number of news items announcing the visit to the area of the site selection team, ^{AND} the prediction by the Texas congressional staffs in Washington that Houston very likely would be chosen for the Manned Space Flight Center, ~~etc.~~. The announcement also was made by the newspapers in late August or early September that if Houston was selected for the site, the Space Task Group would need temporary facilities, and that the Chamber of Commerce would be used by the Space Task Group as a coordinating agency in the Houston area to compile a list of available space. Sommers or Kaplan (interviewees were uncertain) contacted Marvin Hurley of the Houston Chamber of Commerce soon after this announcement appeared. He told them that he had received about 70 other offers of free office space from other Houston businesses. However, he was interested in the two stores in the Center offered by Gulfgate. These facilities were respectively 1,700 and 2,300 square feet (4,000 square feet total), about 200 feet apart, and were between leases. The location was good--on the Gulf Freeway, in an area where other facilities could be obtained as required, near the location of the permanent site, etc. Hurley suggested that they send him a letter formalizing the offer and prepare for his use a synopsis of essential information that he could use to brief the advance party from the Space Task Group.

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Sommers and Kaplan complied with this request with a cover letter explaining the benefits of the location (ample free parking, excellent location, proximity to banking, shopping, and other facilities, etc.) and sent both aerial and city maps showing the location. As they afterwards noted, they spent far more time and expense on this preparation than for their normal rentals. They did this because although pride and altruism were involved, essentially it was good basic public relations for Gulfgate.

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About three to four weeks after they gave their presentation to Hurley, he called Sommers and said that Gulfgate was among the locations that appeared most desirable for MSC temporary offices and a Mr. Byrnes from NASA and he would like to look over the space. Hurley accompanied by Byrnes, Parker, Peck and McLarty, the local GSA Administrator, toured the shopping center and examined the two stores offered by Gulfgate. At the time, Gulfgate was celebrating its fifth anniversary and as part of the celebration activities, hired a variety show that entertained customers in the Mall area. The visitors arrived after the close of the show-- around 9:00. After completing their examination, they went to Sommers' office, where the final arrangements were drawn up. There was to be no rent charged; the agency would pay only for utilities.

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Rex Braun ("Rex the Tailor"), who later became a state legislator, had a shop in Gulfgate, and used as a display case the windows of one of the two stores offered to NASA. Initially, it was agreed that a screen of some type would be erected to separate the MSC office from the display, but later Byrnes insisted that commercial implications could be

drawn between the MSC and the display and asked that the latter be removed. Braun did so, although unwillingly.

59 Other than this minor incident, Sommers and Kaplan experienced no problems as a result of MSC's presence in Gulfgate. They thoroughly enjoyed their association with MSC personnel. Kaplan helped Parker find a home in Timber Cove, and Sommers helped Peck locate an apartment in Park Towers.