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Joan Beifuss- This is July 20th we are interviewing Jim McGinnis, interviewers are Bill Thomas and Joan Beifuss. Mr. McGinnis served in the national guard during the spring months here in Memphis. Ok since you said you had only been in Memphis for a year, what were you doing in Memphis, where do you come from?

Jim McGinnis- My wife and I came down from St. Louis and I am a teacher and I was going to spend a year at Christian Brothers College before going back to St. Louis to get my degree.

Joan Beifuss- Were you teaching at Christian Brothers?

Jim McGinnis- Yeah I was teaching at Christian Brothers throughout the year.

Joan Beifuss- What were you teaching?

Jim McGinnis- I teach philosophy.

Joan Beifuss- So you were just a down here a year to teach before going back to St. Louis?

Jim McGinnis- We were pretty sure we would be going back at the end of the year when we came down but since I am a member of the national guard and you can't take a year off from the guard you have to find a unit.

Joan Beifuss- So which unit are you attached to?

Jim McGinnis- When I was in Memphis I was attached to the, I can't remember the name of the unit now, I have been away for two months.

Joan Beifuss- Where did it meet?

Jim McGinnis- At the armory on Central 2125 Central.

Bill Thomas- There is an armory there Jim?

Jim McGinnis- Army National Guard and artillery unit. There is an A battery, 3rd battalion 115th. Artillery Division I think and then unit. Thursday 28th of March I finished class early that day with the march being scheduled that day, some of the students asked if they could take time off from class and go down to the march, if they could miss class. I told them it was fine with me I didn't feel personally was where I belonged that day I personally thought my teaching at that time was more important so I didn't go down to the march.

Bill Thomas- One thing, these were all white students were they who wanted to go to the march?

Jim McGinnis- Yes.

Bill Thomas- Did they say why? Or did you know why?

Jim McGinnis- I knew why they just felt this was something they had to stand up for. They saw this not so much as a garbage strike but it was a racial question and they felt they should witness to the fact that every man deserves the same.

Joan Beifuss- Well let's backtrack a minute Christian brother's college then during late February and early march was there any involvement with the students and the OCME organization or had the students marched before at all?

Jim McGinnis- No I don't think so, I am not aware of any involvement of the students from Christian Brothers, in the garbage strike itself. My impression always was that this was a labor question and I think most of the students had ever said anything about it they never really saw it as a civil rights issue until Martin Luther King began to involve himself in this. Then it wasn't so clear in people's minds at least in my mind and in the minds of a couple of students I was able to talk to but really what the issues were involved were much more than a labor dispute and at the time of the first march I felt that the march was in sympathy with a labor dispute and this is my own impression some of the students who marched felt differently. MY own impression at the time as that is why I did not march personally was that it was basically a labor question and my marching wasn't going to be of any real significance, I didn't really have an issue to march on.

Bill Thomas- You didn't want to march in favor of the union or anything like this.

Jim McGinnis- Well I felt there may be an issue here as far as the unionization of the men involved but I didn't feel it was significant enough of an issue to take the risk of possible violence which I felt was very real and in my own mind and as I told my students that day in class, before I will do something, I have to see the possible consequences and if I feel that the issue doesn't warrant the possible negative or violent consequences that I personally could not involve myself in that issue and I felt that at the time the issue wasn't as, I was going to say desperate but desperate is not the right word. The issue wasn't so vitally important as to merit the possible consequences.

Joan Beifuss- Is what you are saying to the students would that also be true of the brothers and the administration? That there was no involvement on the part of the brothers?

Jim McGinnis- The student brothers. The student brothers, there were several student brothers that called me the night before and asked me if they could miss class so that they could go down and involve themselves in the march and I think there were a couple of the teaching brothers, I think there were one or two of the teaching brothers down there. There were several teachers who went down to the march that day too, who called off their classes and I would say 6 or 7 students I had that missed class that day, I think 5 of them were student brothers.

Bill Thomas- And did you tell them yes they could as teacher?

Jim McGinnis- Oh yes, I feel everybody has to do their thing and I feel that is up to them to make their decision.

Joan Beifuss- Had the administration set any policy?

Jim McGinnis- No there was nothing set on this at all, a lot of things came out afterwards but at the time nobody made a statement no you cannot miss classes as a teacher or a student.

Bill Thomas- You said you also felt the possibility of some sort of eruption was there, how did you have this feeling? I had the same feeling but I am wondering how you got it?

Jim McGinnis- Well, wherever there is a large number of people gathered together there is always the possibility of a few people who can disrupt in the emotional pitch was high and the fact that the schools that they would, the negro schools the students that day were told not to go to school I was afraid there would be a lot of people available and I wasn't too sure of what was going to happen that day.

Bill Thomas- Then your feeling didn't come from anything about the previous practice by the guard that was said there or the awareness that, or was there an awareness that the guard might be called out or..

Jim McGinnis- Well if there was this awareness it was not communicated from the officers in our unit to ourselves before the, at our meeting that preceded the march. Nothing was said we were on this practice alert which involved oh maybe 20% of our battery of about 65 men only about 10 to 15 were involved in the alert. Most of us stayed around I think 15 fellows went over to the armor center to secure that. This was there part of the alert. Our unit was to send over a detachment of troops to the armor center and hold it until the troops from outside of Memphis and West Tennessee and then once they came and moved into the armor center we were to vacate and go back to the armory. So the practice alert itself involved only 20, 25% of the troops in our particular battery and I spent the day during the practice alert in the office where I spend all my meetings usually answering the phone and typing. And so there was no sense of urgency on the practice alert on the 9th of March there was really no you know we were as you approach the spring and the summer, you know everyone was talking this summer labeled as one that couldn't help but erupt and so we were being prepared for this, but there was no sense of urgency there was no, as far as Memphis was concerned. We hear in Nashville this caused some negative reactions because Nashville was a little tense at the time and they felt the guardsmen on alert might service the occasion for the real thing.

Bill Thomas- In fact I believe there was some civil rights observers of that particular alert there in Nashville and some type of report on it. Then your feeling sprang really because of a situation.

Jim McGinnis- Yeah it just seemed like it could be a volatile situation and I just, I wasn't sure. You can be pretty secure in your own feelings and how you would react

in a situation but when you have thousands of people you can't control thousands of people personally.

Bill Thomas- Can I ask you one thing, did the mace at all a part of a guardsmen in this type of situation is that part of a guardsmen's equipment?

Jim McGinnis- No the mace is something that I only have witnessed it being used by a policemen it has never been something that the guardsmen even in my one year in Memphis, I am not sure if mace is even a year old I am not sure. We were never given any information about how to use it or its effects. The only time I heard about mace was reading it in the newspaper and seeing it on television and the news as far as being developed but as far as being the guardsmen equipment all we have is a gas mask.

Bill Thomas- Does that mean then that tear gas is?

Jim McGinnis- Well we had tear gas grenades as part of our equipment as we would go out on our patrols and we were called up during the two weeks which followed the initial march. We had a couple, each battery in our national guard in Memphis is one battalion, artillery battalion is broken up into 4 batteries and each battery is 65 to 70 men. Each battery had its lead jeep but it would go out in the patrol would have oh half a dozen of these tear gas grenades but I had never been shown how to use one. I only witnessed the negative effects of tear gas when I was trained, at least familiarized myself with it, I had to go through it and cough in and all like that but we were never trained to use it as far as an individual guardsmen our weapons consisted of our rifle, our bayonet and the ammunition we would be issued and that was it.

Bill Thomas- Alrighty well to get you back to that day, some of the students asked to go down and march and then what happened?

Jim McGinnis- Well after class was over about 10:30 I went to play tennis with a friend of mine and I had a student to see at 1 so we came back early. I drove up to my office at about 1:00 and one of the other teachers said you have gotten a phone call from the armory I think the national guard has been alerted. And I called back and they had been alerted, and I didn't know this at the time but the march had broken out into a riot of sorts and we were all called up so I ...

Bill Thomas- You didn't know about that?

Jim McGinnis- No I didn't know about that until I got back so I started home which is about a half block from school. I was walking, this fellow had dropped me off back at school and I go through the Christian brothers scholastic on the way home and I stopped there and saw several of the student brothers as well as Brother Tom McCarper who was the head of the scholastics at the time had just gotten back from downtown and they told me what had happened and that things were a little bit out of control at this point. So I went on home and changed and went over to the armory and left a note for my wife figuring I would not be home for dinner, I wasn't sure

what time I would be home that night. Almost certain it was going to be a temporary thing, this had never happened before so I didn't know what to expect but I figured I would be home that evening. So I left her a note to let her know where I was.

Joan Beifuss- When you called up on alert like that how much time do you have to get to your unit?

Jim McGinnis- They tell you to get there immediately. We had not been alerted, you can be put on alert which means you are supposed to be able to be reached by phone at all times, and you are ready, your equipment is ready and if you are phoned when you are on alert it should take you no more than the driving time to get there. Well we weren't on alert at the time we were just phoned and told to come, so there is a problem with reaching people, there were people who were in Chattanooga at the time there were people that were in Mississippi at the time. We have a number of people who live in Mississippi in our unit and not being on alert you have to get them at their business usually and sometimes it was hard to get a hold of people and we had, this was 1:00 when I found out and I was at the armory by 2:00 and I would think that by 6:00 that evening all but maybe 5 to 10 of the 65 in our unit were there. There will be a difference the second time we were called up but this time nobody was on alert and we didn't expect anything, we hadn't been told to expect anything. It was a matter of reaching people. When I got to the armory my job was to contact people by phone and we would make 4 or 5 long distance phone calls to get in touch with one person because he wasn't there he was at this job, and he was out on that job and by the time you would finally get a message to a person and he would come it was 6:00 that evening before we had 55 of our men and the next 10 gradually made it by 6:00 the next morning. And they finally could be reached, but we weren't prepared to react instantaneously, this was something that took everybody by surprise.

Joan Beifuss- What time did the guard actually go out on the streets?

Jim McGinnis- Our particular battery of the artillery battalion never did go out on the streets that day. There was one company, there was one battery, I think it was B battery who went downtown. I guess they had the majority of their men at the armory quicker than any of the other batteries, so they were sent downtown. Our particular battery was held back in support we were still assembling and we were ready to go if needed but we weren't assigned to a particular spot or to go downtown or to take a particular location in Memphis somewhere. At the time we were told to be in support to be ready to go out and I am sure that night a large percentage of the fellows did go out, I seem to recall that our battery did go out that evening. I didn't personally I was working in the office that night.

Bill Thomas- What was your job with the unit at that time?

Jim McGinnis- I was acting as company clerk which means I do the typing and answer the phone and...my duties were restricted to the office itself but as it developed we needed, we broke up our battery into 3 squads, and each squad had

approximately 20 men and at the time we had 60 men there and so as each squad would go out into the street there were 3 clerks and each one of these clerks was rotated because their squad was to be out patrolling well the clerk would also go with them. So I did see my...

Bill Thomas- Share of...

Jim McGinnis- Action on the street side. I saw some street side in addition to being a clerk whenever I wasn't out on the street.

Bill Thomas- What was the general feeling amongst the guys?

Jim McGinnis- The feeling really changed there was a growth of feeling here that recedes day by day. When we got there Thursday it was a novelty. We all wanted to go downtown and see, we all wanted to go see what was happening and this was something going on in our city and you read about it in other cities but we hadn't seen it personally and most of the fellows were kind of curious to go downtown and see what was going on and we knew we wouldn't be there very long so let's not just sit around here in the armory. There was a feeling of as long as we are here let's find out something, let's get something out of this let's go downtown, but the feeling in most of the fellows was we might be there for a day or two we weren't sure there was no timeline given we weren't told how long. But we had a hunch that we would probably be going home pretty quick. However that night as we went on patrol and I seem to recall there were a few scattered incidents that night. Friday, Saturday, Sunday there weren't but I seem to recall the first night there were. The fellows began realizing, the officers had no word of how long we were going to be there and nobody could say, so we began thinking well since it is the weekend and it could turn warm and the weekend night would be the right time for some trouble that we would probably be there through Saturday night and possibly even Sunday night. The way it turned out I think Thursday night there were scattered lootings and I don't remember now whether there was any burning. I presume there was a couple of incidents of....

Bill Thomas- Small burnings, trash burnings this sort of thing.

Jim McGinnis- But the fellows that came back that night said they hadn't encountered anything personally. Friday night I went out on a patrol and we were, is it the orange mound?

Bill Thomas- Orange Mound.

Jim McGinnis- Orange Mound, I got my first tour of North Memphis and the Orange Mound and places in Memphis I had never seen before, but we...

Bill Thomas- By night?

Jim McGinnis- By night and by day also. We circled Orange mound that Friday night....

Joan Beifuss- Were you in Jeeps or?

Jim McGinnis- We would ride around in different, it depended. There were limited number of Jeeps there were a limited number of trucks and we would normally have two patrols out, two of the three patrols or two of the three squads of our particular battery was broken up into, two would go out at a time and one would be left behind for support. And there was one patrol would go out in trucks preceded by a jeep. It would be a jeep with an officer and the driver and one other guardsmen, I meant a guardsmen officer and there would be a policemen in the Jeep and then that Jeep would be followed by a truck which would have maybe 14 or 15 guardsmen in that truck.

Bill Thomas- Oh a 2 ½ ton truck?

Jim McGinnis- 2 ½ ton truck and that would be your patrol, one patrol the Jeep and the truck. But and in the other patrol might be using Jeeps. It varied, we didn't always go out in the same, in the same type of vehicle.

Joan Beifuss- Now you weren't taking orders from the policemen just he national guard officer.

Jim McGinnis- Well the command was rather interesting, we took as guardsmen we took our orders from the national guard officer, we had three officers present in our battery during the whole time we were on active duty, and we had three patrols. So there was one officer for each patrol and we took our orders from the national guard officer who was in charge of our patrol and he took his orders from the policemen. So the guardsmen were strictly acting as a support of the police and we ultimately got our orders by way of the policemen who was with us. He would tell the officer of our patrol what he wanted us to do and our officer would give us our orders. In the night we were patrolling in the Orange Mound area, I can recall we were all in Jeeps because one of the Jeeps broke down and we were out in the street, we were out for maybe 2 minutes and one of the Jeeps broke down and we had, we sat on the side of the street, we just stood there for about an hour while we waiting for someone to come out and tow the Jeep back in.

Joan Beifuss- Was this late at night?

Jim McGinnis- This was about 10:00.

Joan Beifuss- Were there people on the streets in Orange Mound then?

Jim McGinnis- Well we saw a couple of people the streets were pretty bare. There were a few cars driving by, I don't believe the strict curfew had been set, it wasn't health and emergency reasons only at that time I don't think Friday night. Saturday night people could go to the movies and go to dinner.

Bill Thomas- That was a fairly, curfew went on at 7:00. On Thursday and it was, of course I don't think people understood exactly for what purposes(muffled) well observed.

Jim McGinnis- The curfew during the second after Martin Luther King was shot, the curfew was definitely health and emergency reasons only but I don't recall how strict the first curfew was, it seemed to be relaxed quite quick. At least Saturday night I know you could go to the movies and go out to dinner. So there were several cars drive by we weren't all alone on the streets, to be characteristic of that second week we were out on patrol we never saw anybody on rare occasion that we see a car on the streets the second time around but this first week there were several cars that would pass us, people going places.

Bill Thomas- Was it the job of the unit at that time to stop any cars?

Jim McGinnis- Well that Friday night people were supposed to have a reason for being on the street, they were supposed to, you had to have a legitimate reason, it wasn't health and emergency I don't think because as we were patrolling around Orange Mound there was one particular block where there were 8 or 9 kids playing out in the front yard. We circled that block 3 or 4 times telling them to go back in the house and we would go back to see if we were out there again, it was like we were trying to catch them outside.

Joan Beifuss- How did that work did you have a bullhorn with you that you could yell instructions through?

Jim McGinnis- No we didn't have a bullhorn we would just pull up, I don't remember us having a bull horn I am almost sure we didn't, no we didn't. The officer would get out and tell them to get off the street. And it was rather interesting because as we were circling the block we spotted on the side street a car with several negro fellows in it right outside this house. And so the next time we circled the block we stopped there and the police officer and the sergeant who was at that time who was in charge of our patrol we had a national guard sergeant that was in charge of our patrol at that time. They got out of the Jeep and I was sitting in another Jeep about the 3rd Jeep back and we were watching what was happening, I couldn't hear what was being said but he asked them apparently what they were doing there and they said they lived there outside that house and they were just sitting out in the car talking. And so the officer, the policemen searched the car and apparently nothing was found and so he asked them well if you fellows live here why don't you go in the house you shouldn't be in the street. It was interesting to watch these 4 fellows go up to the house and a woman answered the door she stepped back a couple feet and she looked rather surprised to see these 4 fellows. We could only watch this, we couldn't hear anything but after maybe 15 or 20 seconds the 4 fellows walked in the house and the door shut. We drove around the block and the car was gone when we came back so apparently, it was quite apparent they didn't live there but they had worked there way into the house somehow anyway. That was the only time I saw,

that was the only time that Friday night in all the 4 hours I was out that anything, that was the biggest incident we had.

Joan Beifuss- Now when a car is searched and the people get out do they put their hands on the car and they search the occupants too?

Jim McGinnis- The normal procedure in searching a car is to ask all the occupants to get out and put their hands on the hood of the car the roof of the car and they are searched and the car is searched as well.

Bill Thomas- Was this done that particular time do you remember?

Jim McGinnis- I am sure it was done that particular time. A remark was made by the sergeant who was with the police men that the thought the policemen was too nice. He said he didn't give him a rough time, that he asked them too politely to get out of the car and he asked them what they were doing, and he said the thought the policemen was a little too polite that time, which was a rather interesting comment. The same sergeant later on made several comments in the next few days that he was just itching for action and he was hoping he would run into some trouble because he had ammunition in his rifle and he wanted to use it and he thought it was just a waste of time just sitting around in the armory if he could actually use his weapons. This was a kind of the attitude of some of the fellows as long as we are there let's see some action.

Bill Thomas- What was the attitude of the negroes that you saw in the streets and this particular group?

Jim McGinnis- There was no reaction from those 4 fellows in that car. Their reaction would have been a little bit silly with 16 national guardsmen there with rifles.

Bill Thomas- How about with the youngsters was there any reaction there?

Jim McGinnis- Oh the youngsters would dart in and out and try to fool you and as soon as you would go they would be back outside. They would try to anticipate they would try and hear the truck or the Jeeps the noises of the jeeps coming around the block and they would dart back in. They were trying to outfox us and we were trying to outfox them. It was more of a game really. At the time, nobody, we never, in our unit all the fellows in our unit and anytime we went out into the street we never really encountered anything in those patrols over that weekend we never really saw anything really. One time I think it was Saturday night I think one time a fellow started running and a couple of guardsmen from that particular patrol in this unit surrounded this fellow and stopped him. That was really only, you know the only action that we saw it was more like a game and we were just out riding in the streets, never really saw anything. There was a few people, there was nobody, the times I was out that was doing anything, those 4 negroes sitting in the car was as close to action, and it just seemed like it was very quiet we would just riding around it was more like a game more than anything and after 3 or 4 days it began to become a nuisance and we wanted to go home.

Joan Beifuss- That was I was going to say didn't people think it was a waste of time after...

Jim McGinnis- Yeah the only justification we could feel for being there was well it is the weekend and some thing might happen so I guess they will keep us through Sunday just in case but as we would ride around the streets it seemed like it was a waste of time in the sense that we never encountered anything. Maybe the fact that we were riding around the streets was one of the reasons we didn't encounter anything. It just seemed like we were playing games for awhile there were a few people who in contrast with some of the other cities later on, it seemed like there were few people involved in looting and things like that, we never encountered any over the weekend and we felt sure we would be going home by Sunday night.

Joan Beifuss- Well now I am not clear how it works when the guard is out, do you sleep in the armory?

Jim McGinnis- We were sleeping in the armory right. our particular unit because we were from Memphis, lived in the armory, our headquarters were the armory. The units that came in from West Tennessee, I was told spent most of their time, well I was told they would sleep in the fairgrounds or over at the armor center which was a couple blocks from the armory on Avery across from the board of education. But we would, nobody was prepared for this. People just showed up Thursday as they were called and didn't know what to expect and Thursday night there was the problem of sleeping and where just sleeping on the ground. Friday they let us go home for an hour, they would stagger the number of people going home so there was always at least 2/3's of the battery was present but they would let us go home for an hour or two to get bedding and clothes and things like that. Nobody came prepared to stay we figured. We didn't know what we were being called up for we had heard there was a riot but we figured we were going home and nobody was prepared for 2 weeks of staying in the armory to say the least.

Joan Beifuss- Now the armory there, they don't have cots there or anything they aren't prepared to house people overnight at the armory?

Jim McGinnis- No they have, each guardsmen has as part of his equipment a shelter half which is his half of a tent and he has two blankets and a helmet and that was the bed for most people. They put their tent on the ground so they weren't sleeping on the cement and maybe one blanket on the ground to cushion it and used their helmet or their pistol belt with a canteen on it as a pillow. And we just, that night fellows just sat on the ground.

Bill Thomas- (Muffled)

Jim McGinnis- This is in the armory in one of the big rooms within the armory.

Joan Beifuss- What about food?

Jim McGinnis- Well where they got it I don't know. But we had food. I don't know where the mess gets there food for our normal meetings but apparently they went through the same channels, the food was brought in each day. As a matter of fact it became apparent after while that we could tell how long we were going to be there by how much food was brought in the morning because they would bring food for 3 meals at a time. The food truck would come later morning and would bring lunch dinner and breakfast for the following day. And depending on how much food was brought we knew we would be there at least through breakfast the next day.

Bill Thomas- But was this the food was brought in already prepared?

Jim McGinnis- No.

Bill Thomas- I see.

Jim McGinnis- The cooks themselves prepare it was we would at a normal meeting.

Joan Beifuss- And how about sleeping did you, did they give you 8 hours straight of sleep?

Jim McGinnis- Well it depends you get sleep whenever you can get sleep. Myself since I was a clerk and then had to go on my patrol as well. During the day I would be stationed in the office and then if I went out on patrol that night I would have to find sometime somehow to sleep. The fellows who just went out on patrols would go out on a 6 hour patrol and then had the next 18 hours to catch some sleep whenever they wanted to, but I was working about 8 hours a day in the office and then if I had a patrol that night I would have to sneak in any hours that I could. But after we went home, the Friday we got home for about an hour we picked up underwear and shaving equipment and a cot and things like that, and mattresses. Living in the armory wasn't too bad except myself I lived one half block from the armory. It would have been no problem to go home and my wife was sick at the time and it would have been also easier if I would have been able to go home. I think that made it more frustrating than anything because I lived only a half a block from the armory and couldn't go home.

Bill Thomas- I am sure that the concern was more later on, but at that time was any of the fellows concerned about their families in this situation?

Jim McGinnis- See we were under the impression all along that this was going to be so temporary that fellows would be coming into the offices and phoning their wives say dear I am not coming home tonight we thought we were it will probably be tomorrow and it was always it will probably be tomorrow don't worry we haven't encountered any trouble yet. We were told Sunday that the troops from West Tennessee were going to start going home Sunday afternoon and we would be on duty until they cleared out and we would be around until they left the Memphis guardsmen. So we figured maybe we will be going home Monday. But as the food truck Monday brought lunch, dinner and breakfast for Tuesday we knew it wasn't going to be Monday that we were going home and then again everybody would have

to come in and phone their wives and say it is not tonight dear it is probably tomorrow. So it was always this, it was going to be the next day and there was no problem t just happened in my case there was a problem because my wife was very sick at the time and it worked out well, she had to go to the hospital on Tuesday and my captain happened to be very understanding he would let me out as much as he could to go down to the hospital and see her. But by Tuesday everybody from West Tennessee was out of there and we didn't know why we were staying in the armory but they kept us on duty.

Joan Beifuss- Were you still patrolling?

Jim McGinnis- We would go out and patrols at night, the patrols were, we did we went out on patrol every night and we were on patrol all the time during the day. Out of our particular company, our particular battalion, each battalion of the Memphis battalion has 4 batteries. They would break up the patrols into four 6 hours periods and each battery was in charge of a particular 6 hour period during the day. And one day we would be out patrolling from 6 till noon and the next day it might be from noon until 6 at night. And then from 6 to midnight we would alternate the patrols but we kept out patrolling north Memphis around the Hollywood and Chelsea and Jackson area primarily, orange mound, south of the parkway in south Memphis and then downtown. These were the patrol areas generally that we had. Our particular patrol, our particular battalion was assigned to north Memphis and we would rotate in that area. So most of the time I was patrolling I was up in the Hollywood, Jackson, Chelsea area.

Joan Beifuss- Now what were the men doing at the armory with all this slack time?

Jim McGinnis- Well playing cards, just killing time really. Outside of those who worked in the office that 3 or 4 of us who worked in the office. It was getting to the point where if there was something that needed to get done it was easy to motivate people, they can see that there is a job to get done and they didn't mind doing it. I mean nobody really enjoyed being on active duty at this time but we felt as long as we were needed we would do our job. But as the weekend ended we didn't see any purpose for us being there. We would go out on patrol but it was a sight seeing trip really.

Bill Thomas- Kind of got boring probably.

Jim McGinnis- Well the whole thing was you know you are trying to find a car load of girls and that would be the most thrilling moment for the patrol and for me it was just a chance to see Memphis. We would stop off and take a break at a drive in and chat with people around there with, we were just riding around and people were just going to work, it was that week the Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday of that week and Thursday until Thursday night there was just nothing going on so finally they let us go home on Wednesday, that would be the 3rd of April.

Bill Thomas- So you didn't leave I had understood that most of the guard had left on Tuesday?

Jim McGinnis- Most of the guard had left on Sunday. All the west Tennessee guardsmen were gone Sunday and Monday as far as I know and they just kept the Memphis troops around until Wednesday in case on Wednesday and they let us go home I think it was late Wednesday afternoon we finally got to go home.

Bill Thomas- So and was your unit one of the last then?

Jim McGinnis- Yes.

Bill Thomas- I see.

Joan Beifuss- Was there any negroes in your unit?

Jim McGinnis- There is one in our particular battery, again that is one of the 4 batteries in the Memphis battalion, artillery battalion. There was our particular battery there was no negroes. There was one negro sergeant in the whole battalion but other than that there are no negroes in the Memphis.

Bill Thomas- So...

Joan Beifuss- When you went home then were you still on alert?

Jim McGinnis- When we went home we were not strictly on alert that would mean we would have to be always reached by telephone. We were not strictly on alert but we were told to since Martin Luther King was coming back, I take that back, can I answer I don't remember really. I am not sure if we were on alert or not. We knew that Martin Luther King was coming back.

Joan Beifuss- To lead the second march.

Jim McGinnis- To lead the second march and we knew there was at least the possibility of something happening. We may have well been on alert at the time. I don't remember if we were or not. We were definitely told not to store our stuff away, I remember that. To be ready, but if we were technically put on alert I don't know but we were at least notified that we may be called pretty quickly again, we were prepared to be called again anyway. I don't know if technically we were on alert or not.

Bill Thomas- Then you got home that Wednesday on April 3rd in time for dinner.

Joan Beifuss- Your wife was still in the hospital?

Jim McGinnis- My wife was still in the hospital. The funny thing is my mom had called from California and that she was, she told us she was flying into take care of my wife since I was on active duty. When I met her at the airport on Thursday morning after I went back to school, I told her to turn around and go back home it was all over she was not needed and she said I will stay as long as I am not in your hair. So we went down to the hospital and spent Thursday down at the hospital with my wife and we were eating dinner, my mom and I about 6:30 decided to go down

and eat dinner at the hospital restaurant and we had just heard on the news, it was the 6:00 news and I don't even remember the newscasters on channel 5 in Memphis now. He said he had received an unconfirmed report that Martin Luther King had been shot but as of 6:25 it was unconfirmed so we went down to eat dinner and a friend of mine was walking through the hospital.

Bill Thomas- What hospital?

Jim McGinnis- Baptist.

Bill Thomas- Baptist. Could I ask you if this is too personal just say so, what was the matter with your wife?

Jim McGinnis- She had an ulcer, at least the doctors thought it was an ulcer and it was as a result of at least the final straw was a result of my being on active duty.

Bill Thomas- That was what I wondered did this have anything to do with it?

Jim McGinnis- Yes this was, if I hadn't have been on active duty she wouldn't have been in the hospital.

Bill Thomas- So she was really concerned is she from this part of the country?

Jim McGinnis- No she is from St. Louis and...

Joan Beifuss- She teaches school there?

Jim McGinnis- She teaches school right here, here in Memphis, she taught here in Memphis.

Bill Thomas- Whereabouts.

Jim McGinnis- St. Louis school.

Joan Beifuss- What grade did she teach?

Jim McGinnis- She taught 7th and 8th grade.

Joan Beifuss- That's not (muffled).

Jim McGinnis- That was part of it sure was, that was a part of it. And this just kind of was like the last straw.

Bill Thomas- Do you have children?

Jim McGinnis- No we don't. She was all alone and that was basically the problem because we had been married at the time about 7 or 8 months and this was the first time she had been all alone. Her parents came down over the weekend to stay with her. But they left Sunday night and then being all alone this, and she was worried about what was going on and things like that and this was basically the reason she was in the hospital. But that Thursday night as my mom and I were eating dinner

this friend came by and we chatted and then he left and then about 7:00 he came back and said King was dead.

Bill Thomas- Now where were you do you remember, you had heard, were you at home when you heard this on television?

Jim McGinnis- We were watching this in the hospital room.

Bill Thomas- Oh I see.

Jim McGinnis- We just went downstairs.

Bill Thomas- In that cafeteria.

Jim McGinnis- Yea the cafeteria in the hospital and he came back around 7 and said that king was shot and I knew where, I phoned the armory immediately and I knew that I had to go. And I phoned and I phoned just as our captain was getting there and he says report immediately. So I went upstairs and said good bye and then took off for home and my mom stayed here in the hospital and just spent the night there because she couldn't get out.

Bill Thomas- Curfew and everything.

Jim McGinnis- Curfew and everything and she really didn't have a place to go unless she wanted to go back to our Memphis apartment and she was scared because she didn't know Memphis and you know she didn't want to stay alone that night so she just took a pillow and a blanket and slept in the hospital chair that night. But things were different we had spent a week on active duty prior to this. Now it wasn't a curiosity thing or a novelty everybody as I mentioned the first time around it was 6:00 in the evening before we had 80% of our men there after being notified the first march and that was as of being notified at 12:30. So practically 6 hours to get 80% of our men there. Where as this evening we began notifying people around 7 an by 9:00, two hours later we had one of the batteries was already on the street and our battery was at 80% strength at 9:00 at two hours. It was just different we had spent he week on active duty and we were afraid now. We were more [prepared we knew how to react, there is nothing like on the job training. You can practice alerts and stuff like that but it is not the same thing as having patrolled the streets and knowing what to look for and having already reacted a few times and stopped a few people and you knew what you were doing now and you knew what to look for and as you would be riding around you would be watching the rooftops of buildings and things like that. Your eye was trained, you knew what to look for and the fellows and I knew as soon as I heard he was dead that Memphis was going to be on fire that night. I think everybody had the same feeling.

Bill Thomas- It was areal feeling among the men.

Jim McGinnis- Yeah everybody knew that this was serious and they were there again immediately. There was fellows again that were 50 and 60 miles into Mississippi

were there by 9:00 that night. Our particular unit was out on the streets by 9:30 or a quarter of ten really. Everybody that was there was out on the streets. They left a few scattered personnel, there was two left behind that night but anybody that was there was out on the streets patrolling. Again it wasn't the scattered haphazard type of thing, each unit was assigned a particular, each battery in Memphis was assigned to a particular area.

Bill Thomas- What was your area?

Jim McGinnis- We again were up in north Memphis and again the troops from west Tennessee hadn't arrived yet but they were on the streets too. I think in Jackson I think they were there later that night and by the next morning everybody was back in Memphis again. But that particular night we were out in the street within 2 ½ hours after the time the first calls were made. That was, I can remember that night because it was bitter cold out. We were out from about a quarter to 10 until about 4:00 in the morning until 4 or 5 in the morning until we were, no it was 6 in the morning before we would leave and we were riding around in open trucks in the big 2 ½ ton trucks that we re open and I think it was about 35 or 36 degrees out that night which was in our favor this kept people off the streets to some degree. I mean I think looking back on it we were glad it was that cold but we froze riding around in the back of those trucks.

Bill Thomas- Were frost mornings out. Incidentally since you are on the subject of weather this reminds me, Wednesday night when you went home or relieved was the storm. The tornado, do you remember anything particular?

Jim McGinnis- No I remember that night, I have forgotten something that is rather interesting. I was scheduled to be a part of a panel discussion that Wednesday night and it didn't look like I was going to be able to participate. Two teachers from CBC another one of the brothers and myself. The wife of one of the teachers and one of the sisters from Cieena were on a panel at St. Louis parish and we were supposed to be talking about the subject t of vocations, religious vocations and taking it from different people looking at the subject. I wanted to participate in that panel I remember I had some things that I wanted to say and it didn't look as if I was going to be able to participate I wasn't relived from active duty until late Wednesday afternoon and we didn't know but an hour before that we were going to be relieved. But I remember going out to St. Louis that night after I had seen my wife in the hospital and was funny the panel, each one of us talked for about 10 minutes and then they opened it up for questions and answers that night and after the first question every other question was somehow oriented toward the march and the participation of the religious.

Joan Beifuss- Oh was it were there alto of people there that night?

Jim McGinnis- There were a couple hundred people there that night and some rather vehement negative comments were made about the participation of nuns and priests.

Joan Beifuss- What was this panel for, what group was this you were speaking too?

Jim McGinnis- We were just speaking to a group of the parishioners this was a PTA meeting I think. I am pretty sure it was something like that it was just a panel sponsored by the parent teacher association. On a particular topic because they thought it might be of interest and it was open to all the parents of the school kids.

Joan Beifuss- I must have missed that entirely.

Bill Thomas- Do you remember the storm?

Jim McGinnis- Yes I remember the storm because afterwards, I hadn't eaten dinner, I was flying, I was trying to see my wife at the hospital and get to the panel on time, I can remember it was pouring out and I stopped in at the Pete and Sam's on Park it is an Italian place. I stopped in there for dinner about 11:00 that night and it was just storming and I knew that my mom was flying in the next day and I knew there were tornado warnings and things. I remember asking somebody can a airplane fly through a tornado. What are the effects of a tornado on an airplane. Or how high up do tornadoes originate. I remember I was concerned about my mom coming in the next morning.

Bill Thomas- Ok lets get.

Jim McGinnis- Back to Thursday night.

Bill Thomas- Back to Thursday night. So you your group went out on patrol I guess shortly after 9?

Jim McGinnis- It was about 9:30 or a quarter to ten that we were out on patrol.

Bill Thomas- And what was the scene?

Jim McGinnis- Well our basic assignment as it was throughout the time we were on active duty was to be in support of the police, the police and the highway patrol were to be the ones who made the decisions, the ones who were in immediate contact with trouble when it occurred and the guardsmen were to be in support of the policemen and the highway patrolmen and the sheriffs and the deputies. As it would happen there would be one guard patrol would be in support of approximately 4 different police units who would be patrolling specific areas and the guardsmen would be patrolling a broader area and could be called in at any time by any one of those police units.

Bill Thomas- We are in trouble and need your help.

Jim McGinnis- Yes we were available for I think it was at least 4 units. So we would patrol a broad area and they would be going up small alleys within their own restricted area looking for trouble and we were ready to come to the aid when we were needed. I can remember that night getting a call we got called to a particular spot by a policemen that there was sniper. We were rushing to the scene and there

were about 10 different squad cars there when we got there and this was the only time during the two weeks of active duty that I had encountered, that I was being shot at. And there was apparently one lone sniper who fired a couple of shots. That was the only time that I was ever given to load my rifle. At all other times we carried our ammunition with us but we were not told to load. It even happened once that same night that we thought we...there was two liquor stores across the street from each other I think it was on Hollywood, North Hollywood. We were told to get out and surround these two liquor stores, there was about 12 of us and so there was 6 to each store but we were not told to load. We put our bayonets on our rifle every time we would hop out of the truck we would put our bayonets on our rifles and we would never load unless we were specifically ordered to load our rifles.

Bill Thomas- Did you have M1's?

Jim McGinnis- M1's right. And I can remember surround this store 6 of us and taking , setting up different positions around this store with just our bayonets and with no ammunition in our rifle wondering if someone was going to come out shooting we weren't really prepared to counter them but in one instance it may have been a wise order because we weren't really trained to react. A policeman who faces the possibility of somebody shooting at him all the time, and who has encountered this knows basically how to react, they won't over react at least he has the opportunity to learn to not over react in a situation but I think there was a little bit of fear that the guardsmen who didn't face this constant necessity of reacting to possible gun shots there was a little bit of fear that if we all had ammunition at all times, somebody might panic and I think it was a very legitimate fear and at the time we discussed this afterwards we felt a little naked without bullets in our rifle but at the same time we felt that it was probably a wise decision not to have us load up at that time.

Joan Beifuss- Do you recall where you were when the actual sniping incident.

Jim McGinnis- No I don't recall the street at all, again if I were from Memphis I might remember but I have trouble remembering a particular incident that I was very involved in later on I had to go up and spend two hours searching the area to figure out where I was because I just didn't recognize the streets, this was my first.

Joan Beifuss- You say there was someone sniping, where was he sniping from a house?

Jim McGinnis- This was the problem we really didn't know where.

Joan Beifuss- I mean there were no tall buildings?

Jim McGinnis- No. it was a residential area and when got out of the truck because we were told to load and I remember it was kind of funny because one fellow didn't know how to load his rifle and he had to ask somebody for help to load his rifle and myself I was, I had panicked a little bit and I was trying to put in my bullets

backwards. It dawned on me after not being able to load my clip of bullets that I was doing something wrong and I finally got that loaded and I remember stationing myself behind every guardsmen because I was more afraid of being shot by a guardsmen than by some sniper. I was serious, I wasn't too sure how we would react in the situation. So I wanted to make sure I was behind everybody else. After the policemen shot out the street lights we didn't hear any more shots fired and apparently the sniper had gotten away and so we all loaded up and started patrolling.

Bill Thomas- Why did he shoot out the street lights with a rifle or a pistol?

Jim McGinnis- I don't know I think he may have borrowed one of the rifles from a guardsmen or used his pistol I don't remember Bill.

Joan Beifuss- Well the men were kind of frightened.

Jim McGinnis- Well let's put it this way I don't know, I was not really frightened of the sniper, we just didn't know... I wouldn't say we were frightened this was something new. When I heard a gunshot being fired it seemed unreal that somebody was shooting at me I had never thought about being shot at. It was like it was an unreal experience, it is still more of a novelty than anything as far as my own reaction was concerned I just never, it never got through my head that I could be shot that somebody might be shooting a bullet at me again we heard a couple of shots being fired but you never really get it through your head unless you are a policemen or soldier who is being shot at. This was the first time that anybody fired a bullet that could have been intended for me and I had never really thought that this could be real, it was still like it was an almost unreal situation. So there wasn't really a fear, at least then if we had been, there were shots being fired all around then the fear would be real, but we heard two shots and then we didn't hear any more shooting so we were talking to a policemen who was back there with us and we were still at least 10 squad cars from you know we weren't the first people to arrive on the scene we were at least 10 squad cars back, our national guard truck.

Bill Thomas- Was there a house to house search or anything like that?

Jim McGinnis- I don't think there was a the time Bill but I don't remember again the police may have stay on afterwards but we loaded up our truck about 5 minutes after we got there after apparently, it was apparent that the sniper was gone we loaded up our truck and started back on our patrol again. What the police did after we left I am not sure but I don't think there was a house to house search for the fellow.

Bill Thomas- Then did the fellows unload there ammo?

Jim McGinnis- Yeah we unloaded as soon as got back off the truck. They just wanted to make sure, that was the only time that the ammunition was ever in my rifle. Made sure that is wasn't there incase we were making a mistake.

Bill Thomas- Accident right.

Jim McGinnis- So that Thursday night what we would do is we would ride around for maybe an hour or two hours and we would stop at a fire station and get a cup of coffee and warm up and we would stay there for maybe 15 minutes and then we would be back out on the street. But really by 11:00 that night we saw a couple of gutted buildings that had been burned down but we didn't see anybody, there were no people on the street it was too cold really.

Bill Thomas- I was wondering about that apparently you didn't have field jackets did you?

Jim McGinnis- We had field jacket about when you are riding around in the back of an open truck I don't care if you have a fur lined field jacket.

Bill Thomas- It was still cold.

Jim McGinnis- It was still cold. What the fellows did for the next night we got home Friday for an hour and we grabbed long underwear and the next night we went out we wore blankets, we took blankets with us. But we weren't really prepared for 35 or 36 degree weather again when we hopped, when we came into the armory we were told get your gun and get your ammunition get your equipment on and get out into a truck. You know just come and go and nobody thought about how cold it was that night we were just running. And I presume, I think all of us had field jackets on that night but we weren't wire for 35 degree weather.

Bill Thomas- Did it seem pretty eerie riding around empty streets?

Jim McGinnis- It did, it really did. That night you didn't really get a chance to sense the eeriness because you are constantly looking for things. It was the following night and Saturday night, it was Friday and Saturday nights and we would be riding around the streets and nothing would be happening. We weren't constantly, you had a chance to sit and think about what was going on and just look and the streets were just dead. Friday night we were out at 8:00 at night and the streets were just dead. The corner, we stopped at Jackson one time, it was a rendezvous point, we were waiting for the patrol who was out to come back and then we would take over their vehicles and go out and patrol. We were just standing on the corner of Jackson and I don't remember the cross street but there wasn't any cars going down Jackson it was completely deserted.

Bill Thomas- That is very unusual for Jackson.

Jim McGinnis- Any 5 or every 5 minutes or so a car would drive by you know and that was eerie.

Joan Beifuss- Were these dark nights were there moons out at all?

=I don't remember Joan I really don't remember. They were cold nights.

Joan Beifuss- Now did you have a chance to talk to people from other units who had seen burning. When you were back at the armory did people compare stories?

Jim McGinnis- Well again within our patrol. Within our battery the three different patrols would compare stories. But I didn't know anybody else in any of the other batteries and I just knew the fellows in my own battery and I never heard stories from the things that went on in other batteries. Friday night I can remember this, I can remember one of the stories that was told. Friday night was the night that our particular patrol had the armored personnel carriers. Those are the tank looking things that don't have the big artillery piece but they are a tank in every other way and they carry about 6 or 7 people in the belly of it. We were using those that night and again our patrol had about 15 people and we had two of these armored personnel carriers and so there were 7 of us in each of these two carriers. I think you will remember that night we stopped at a gas station just to get a coke at about 10 or 10:30. A car of a couple reporters were following us at all times you know in case we encountered something they wanted to be there to see it. I can remember after that break one of the reporters wanted to ride in one of these armored personnel carriers to see what it was like. I remember the driver decided he was going to show that reporter what the ride could be like and he braced and he told all the guardsmen inside what was going to happen and then they were braced and he just gave them a ride took the turns a little bit quick. It is like a subway John, you know you have those things you hold onto and you are riding down a subway at a high speed and that car jerks or sways on the track a little bit.

Joan Beifuss- Are you standing up?

Jim McGinnis- No you are sitting down and the lights are out and you don't know what to expect all you hear is this big rumbling noise and when it turns it doesn't turn in a gradual arch it turns as any tractor it has to shift and it turns at angles. The turn isn't a continuous arch it is a series of angles as the tractor part has to shift a little bit into your turn. This thing just throws you, jerks you inside and you are holding onto this thing not knowing when to expect it. You can't see anything that is going on you can't see outside. You really don't know what to expect and then when that thing turns you are just braced for you to be thrown within the carrier itself and apparently this reporter didn't realize what he ride could be like and the driver wanted to make sure that he had a good ride and I think he lasted about 15 minutes and then he got out. That it is a rather strange feeling inside one of those APC's. We would cruise at about 25 or 30 miles per hour and it makes all kind of noise, you can hear it miles away 2 or 3 miles away they are not really to deceptive. They are more for, it is a psychological weapon as well as it is to protect the men from being shot at by a sniper but it is probably more psychological than anything and maybe it was an example of over reacting I don't know if it was necessary at this time to use these things. The impression I got thinking about it afterwards I think we over reacted here and people get the impression that we need tanks to solve our problems and I don't know if these carriers were necessary it seemed like it was a police state at that time. I never dreamed that we would be pouring tanks into our cities. I mean

they are not tanks but they look like tanks and people think these are tanks and these are the impression people get that these are tanks.

Joan Beifuss- Do these armored carriers belong to the national guard or are they police?

Jim McGinnis- No they belong to the national guard they came in from Jackson I think.

Joan Beifuss- Now during this time did you know what was happening in the rest of the city or did you know what was happening in the rest of the country for instance did you know Chicago had gone up.

Jim McGinnis- We watched it on television. We had a television in our orderly room which was our office and whenever we weren't on duty we were watching what was going on television. That Friday night I can remember as I started to say about riding around in these APC's these armored personnel carrier. You cruise at about 25 or 30 and you never that something is the matter until that thing picks up to about 60 and when you are going about 60 miles per hour you are going somewhere and I can remember one time in there we were going we started going about 60 miles per hour, it can go that fast and for ten minutes we kept up that speed and then all of a sudden we stopped and so we figured we were somewhere we figured something was going on and we were here. So somebody asked the driver what was going on and he said well the train is just crossing the tracks. We were called to an apparent shooting at Hollywood and Broad St. and we got there after the train passed ten minutes later and nobody was there. but again in those, that night we didn't see anything, we didn't see anything at all.

Bill Thomas- Jim were you all surprised or did this seem pretty natural the first time you found out they were going to use the APC's or when you get in them.

Jim McGinnis- Well it was kind of other people had ridden in them before, they had been used on patrols before you know it was our turn to use them, and the guys were kind of excited to see what it was like to ride in the back of them and I had never been in one and was kind of looking forward to riding around in one, and again the feeling was there was not really, after Thursday night after the first couple hours Thursday night there wasn't really much going on. Again the feeling was well we are not really needed so I guess we are there just in case something happens, so let's make the most out of it, the novelty of the whole thing. I wanted to ride in an armored personnel carrier I had never ridden in one before. I figured as long as I am on active duty I might as well.

Joan Beifuss- Were you aware that Frank Holloman had come on television that Thursday night and announced that the city was in a state of anarchy. He came out with a very strong statement Thursday night and gave the impression that if you were not in the area, it gave the impression that the whole one section of the city was about to go up into flame.

Jim McGinnis- Well no I wasn't aware of that statement. Again we didn't have much time to listen to anything Thursday night we were just flying around. We caught the newscast on Friday morning we watched the today show on Friday morning and got brought up to date on what was going on saw everything that was shown Thursday night as it was repeated on Friday morning but I didn't know that Holloman had made that statement. Again after 10 or 11:00 that night, it was just too cold that Thursday night and we didn't encounter anything, and Friday night we didn't encounter anything. Saturday night, I was out on another patrol and that particular night we were riding around in a 2 ½ ton truck and this time we had the cover on it which made it a little bit better and we were all carrying blankets and can remember that some thing happened that night which I thought was quite significant. We were at Hollywood and Chelsea and we just rounded the corner and we stopped and the jeep that was in front of us that had our captain and the policemen and the driver and other guardsmen and our truck full of about 14 guardsmen and we just topped there we had rounded the corner and we were maybe 50 yards up the street. And we were just sitting there for a moment and this car turns the corner and again it was rather deserted that night, the streets were all deserted. The car turns the corner and there was one negro fellow driving the car he was by himself and he stopped and he just sat there for a few moments 10 or 20 seconds and we wondered why he just sat t her and I guess the policemen who was in front of us noticed him and the guardsmen, the captain noticed him and they walked aback and a couple of fellows hopped out of the truck to go back and find out what this fellow was doing. Again it was health and emergency reasons only for being on the streets. I was watching this from the truck, I was maybe 50 yards away 25 yards away from what was going on and they asked him to get out of the car and as it was the custom he put his hands on the roof of the car and they searched him and searched the car and apparently asked him for his driver's license and he didn't have a driver's license. So they asked him, I was being told this, he was asked by the policemen why he was on the streets and didn't have any reason apparently for being on the streets and policemen asked him he said do you know what the penalty for this is? The fellow apparently replied and said no I don't and the policemen took out his can of mace and he was about a foot away from him and he squirted him in his eyes and our captain at that time had turned his back he had started to walk away and this incident was rather revealing because the guys who were there from out truck there was about 6 of them who were down there around the car and saw this happen. These fellows I had heard them you know we would talk in all the free time we did have back at the armory we were talking about the whole situation and these fellows were not in sympathy at all with the negros, they weren't in sympathy at all with the strike. Something they were very negative about but when they witnessed this one case of this fellow for no reason being squirted with mace when they hopped back in the truck they were really disturbed about this, this was seeing it in the concrete, you know it wasn't just an opinion they picked up from here or there but they saw something first hand and they were sympathy with the negro, they were really upset with what the policemen had done. Whereas you know in the other statements made back in the armory you know every negro is a nigger and the whole thing, very negative there was no sympathy for the negro cause at all here.

But to witness this thing first hand, I am not saying everybody felt this way but anybody who commented the 6 or 7 fellows who made comments when they got back on the truck they were all rather negative towards the policemen. We talked about this when we were riding away and when we stopped 10 minutes later at the fire house we got out and asked our captain if there was any justification for what the policemen did. The captain said none at all. The fellow was belligerent he didn't resist, he said if I had seen it happen I would have said something at the time. As I said he didn't see it happen as I said he had turned his back. So when I got back to the armory late that night, the next morning when I got up I was talking about this with one of the other fellows who was on a different patrol who was one of the two fellows that was the only other fellow besides myself who was really in sympathy with the negro. He was a social worker and the two of us was very much in sympathy with the negro situation in Memphis with the negroes and what they were after and we were talking about this and Paul told me that same night he had come across the same type of a thing. They had stopped a car with a negro fellow in it and they got out and told him to put his hands on the hood of the car and put his face down on the hood of the car while they searched him and he raised his head up and the policemen hit him over the back of the neck and shoulder with the butt of the rifle. He raised his head up again and he did it to him again and he did it a 3rd and 4th time and the guardsmen hit him one of our fellows in our battalion hit him over the back of his neck with the butt of his rifle and when they got to a fire station that night Paul who saw this who was there with the fellow challenged the guardsmen and said he didn't think it was necessary for him to hit this guy. This other guardsmen reacted rather negatively to that comment and he calls the policemen over and he says we have a flower boy over here. He doesn't think we should do these like that. The policemen said fellow you haven't seen anything yet. He said we have had these reporters following us all night but they are going home now, so you are really going to see some action. He says now, the implication being that as long as the policemen is there the policemen had to react in a rather restrained fashion but with the reporters not there they didn't have to watch themselves they could cut loose. I mentioned these two situations because there were my, as far as first hand experience, well my first and second hand experiences, these are the only two times that I was aware of harassment on the part of the police department.

Bill Thomas- The policemen who sprayed the mace, did any of the guardsmen have any conversation with him at the time.

Jim McGinnis- He sprayed him with mace as a kind of gesture of get lost. It was finished the guy, apparently the policemen wasn't going to arrest him we were leaving and apparently the guy was going to take off and as a final thought he sprayed him with spray.

Bill Thomas- This really was the penalty of being out with out a driver's license, a faceful of mace.

Jim McGinnis- I ended up, Paul and I decided at that point that we would have to make a statement and file a complaint and we didn't really know who to turn it in too. So I about a week after the whole thing was over after we were finally released from the 10th of April about a week later after Easter I decided I have to do something about it. I thought this is a citizen I should say something and I phoned several priest friends of mine who I felt might know who I should get in contact with and eventually I got down to the NAACP with and made a statement with them. This incident and filed a complaint with them and as a result of this I was called to testify at the.

Joan Beifuss- Civil rights committee?

Jim McGinnis- The Tennessee advisory committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights.

Joan Beifuss- Did you talk to Maxine Smith down there?

Jim McGinnis- Yes we spent several hours that day talking and she was telling me about the different cases that we had and in fact all was about number 50. The 50th complaint and she was saying how so many of the negroes have felt intimidated for so long that many negroes would be afraid to bring a complaint and for the 50 that are on file there must be many more legitimate complaints.

Joan Beifuss- Was she surprised that a national guardsman, a white national guardsman would come down?

Jim McGinnis- Oh yeah and she said, she refers to me as he is a guardsman but he is a good guy. That is how she referred to me later on when I let her introduce me to friends of hers, that he is on our side.

Bill Thomas- Before you get away from that, were there quite a number of stories or do you remember anything from Friday night or thereafter about the activities, or confrontations with the negroes. What was the general mood of the guys or what were they talking about how to handle them or how they should be handled or?

Jim McGinnis- Well the remark that was made several times which would reveal the kind of frustration of the guys being here for two weeks and only being needed for maybe 2 of those days of the 14 days we were on duty. It was kind of a frustration of an action and you hear remarks saying let's go out and get me a nigger. Everyone wanted to bag themselves a nigger. They wanted to shoot someone. It was probably made in jest but it reveals a kind of deep seeded attitude more than anything else.

Bill Thomas- Kind of joking about this?

Jim McGinnis- Yeah, but at the same time revealing that I think how their deep seeded attitude of the people involved that there really was no sympathy at all with the negro cause and I think there was a cause here at this time I think it was rather obvious it was cause.

Joan Beifuss- Did they talk about Dr. King at all?

Jim McGinnis- Yeah this, the reactions to Dr. King were extremely negative. I and this other fellow Paul who also worked in the orderly room were constantly on the defense of, well we had a rather interesting group of people who worked in the orderly room, have the officers and two or three others who were always in and out and there was a little community of about 8 of us. And we would do a great deal, we talked about this and with everything on television and with 2 weeks of just living with each other of course you are going to do a great deal of talking and Paul and I were always in a position of defending Dr. King and what he stood for. My own personal reaction was that he made a mistake in Memphis. That apparently the black young black militant negro wasn't, he was apparently assured that there wasn't going to be any problems but I guess the people in Memphis hadn't taken care of this and maybe he had made a mistake and I think he had acknowledged that a mistake had been made, that the preparations weren't sufficient that the, and that this I would possibly say that I admit that Dr. King made a mistake but as far as his basic ideals and his basic orientation as a person I would have to support what he is after but you know the comments were constantly that he was a communist and that this highlander folk school in Tennessee that it was identified with was constantly brought up and everywhere he went he created violence, caused violence and how could you call him a disciple of nonviolence and there were...

Bill Thomas- That is what I want to ask, they generally do you feel like they generally blame King?

Jim McGinnis- Oh yeah he was at fault., If he was an intelligent man, even if he didn't directly encourage the rioters being an intelligent man he should have been able to control them and at least he is not directly responsible. He was at least indirectly responsible for what happened.

Bill Thomas- Was there any tendency to for the guys who blame king for them having to be there.

Jim McGinnis- Well, I guess everybody kind of felt that but I don't ever remember it being verbalized as such. I am sure if everybody felt this if it weren't for him we wouldn't be here now. And being here now being on active duty really cut into some fellows pocketbooks. Because some employers did not pay the fellows for the time they were on active duty. And most employers what they do, like our two weeks of summer camp per year. Most employers do it this way they will make up the difference. If you normally make let's say \$400 over that two week period and your guard check is only \$100 they will give you 300 so that you maintain your full salary. But in this situation since this had never happened here some employers did not do this and some fellows who were making \$25 to \$30 a day at a \$3 an hour job, were only making \$5 and their employers were not making up the difference and this was cutting into fellows pocketbooks and this was another reason for a little bit of frustration.

Bill Thomas- Would that be, what does a guardsmen make? Difference in rank and everything...

Jim McGinnis- Differences in rank. I am a specialist 4th class which is probably about the average pay, around the middle I finished almost 2 ½ years as a guardsmen on a 6 year stint so I am about in the middle I am almost the average, and for the full 13 days we were paid for my check was \$61 and some odd cents. Which is a little less than \$5 a day, which isn't. Now you see my teaching salary wasn't taken away from me so I didn't suffer I made a few dollars as a result of this. This was not the case for lots of fellows they lost their salary.

Joan Beifuss- Do you have any idea about some of the occupations of the people that were the closest o you.

Jim McGinnis- This fellow Paul that I referred to was a social worker and a few salesmen. A couple of fellows who worked a clerks, a couple of fellows who worked for a trucking line.

Joan Beifuss- Kind of a cross section.

Jim McGinnis- A real cross section of people. I am trying to remember specific jobs, I write out on their permanent records the name of their employer and the address and I have written down the job of every fellow there at one time or another but I don't remember specifically right now the jobs.

Bill Thomas- (muffled) was Jim Sharon, do you know Jim Sharon?

Jim McGinnis- I don't know Jim Sharon.

Bill Thomas- Jim Sharon is captain but I don't know of which unit.

Jim McGinnis- Oh I have heard the name now that you mention it he is with the Memphis the national guard in Memphis.

Bill Thomas- Right.

Jim McGinnis- I have heard the name mentioned. As long as we are talking about the attitude of the men towards Dr. King and those associated with the ideas of Dr. King there are several incidents that I think will be worth while to mention. I asked permission of my captain to march in the memorial march for Dr. King. I just felt that the national guardsmen shouldn't be there. Personally I wanted to be there but I thought a national guardsmen should be there but I didn't expect him to say yes but I asked him anyway and he said no you cannot march. That was that I wasn't going to, I didn't feel at the time I would accomplish anything by making a spectacle here because it would have caused a lot of problems if I had marched so I didn't and I watched it on television and I was sitting there during the funeral, watching the funeral on television too I wasn't out in patrol. I was watching it with a captain and with a sergeant major. We were watching it, the three of us were watching the funeral and then my own sergeant who was there and who works with me in the

orderly room who I assist was there and we were watching this thing. These fellows were making comments about they were hoping, they would like to see Mrs. King get shot too, and they were hoping that the...they were completely negative, it was just hate. I take this back it wasn't the funeral we were watching, we were watching the march and they were hoping that something would happen to Mrs. King too from the balcony.

Bill Thomas- When she was here?

Jim McGinnis- Yes in Memphis and she was talking that day they were every other word they were using in a comment was nigger and a comment was made, the best thing they said the most logical thing that I heard that afternoon listening to these two fellows talking was that they hoped that the killer would not be caught because King deserved to die since he was responsible for the death of so many. That he personally deserved to die but that they hoped the killer would never be found but they were making remarks about Mrs. King and the children hoping that they would all get wiped out and they were all niggers and they were all responsible for his whole thing; I could only take so much of that, after while of arguing I would discuss this thing with people who were intelligent I didn't care if they disagreed with me we could talk about nonviolence we could talk about civil disobedience we could talk about the wisdom of the march and things like that but with these fellows I couldn't even talk I just had to walk out I got sick after a while. Not being allowed to go to the march I really felt that I should publicly demonstrate how I felt and so the only way I could do it at the time was I wrote a letter to the editor and I wrote it as a guardsman and I knew it was going to be printed, because I knew this was the type of thing that would be printed coming from a guardsman and I said as a national guardsman who has not been able to make his feelings known publicly I feel I must state how I feel now and I said, I sat down and typed this thing out, that I thought Martin Luther King was a great American, that he was not endowed with infallibility that he has made mistakes but that what he stood for was American at that every man has the right to be treated with dignity as a human being and I had heard so much hate and glibness and smugness and ignorance, past two weeks that I felt I had to protest against that. Well I sent that in to the newspaper Tuesday night and figured it might be printed within several days and as of Tuesday night we were still on active duty. Well Wednesday afternoon late Wednesday afternoon I went in for supper and it was about 5:00 and I walked into the mess hall and since I worked in the orderly room I waited until everyone else ate until my replacement came and then I would go in there and all the fellows was in there eating and I was the last one to get my food. As I was walking in to get my food I heard comments somebody say nigger lover. I thought it was strange and I didn't associate it with myself and as I walked out I heard the same comment made by several other people real soft, nigger lover. I said well I wonder if they know how I felt I thought maybe the remarks were directed at me but there is nothing special why start now. I mean you know...

Bill Thomas- You didn't know your letter had been printed?

Jim McGinnis- I didn't know my letter had already been printed and they had seen it. As a matter of fact I got back and one of the fellows this fellow Paul whose more or less my running mate the two weeks more or less, came in and said hey, he said I found something up on the bulletin board here. Here is that letter you wrote. I didn't tell anybody else about it but I did tell Paul about it. He said her e is that letter and on it was scribbled nigger lover. I said well I had never been called this before I should have expected it but I kind of felt a little butterfly in my stomach and didn't know what to expect. We knew at that time that we were going to be released that night and I said I will just have to ride this out for a few hours. Paul said what should I do with the letter, I said put it back up on the board I don't care. I wrote it for a reason I guess this is the reason I wrote it not realizing that this was the reason I wrote it I will just have to ride some of this stuff out.

Bill Thomas- Now who put it up?

Jim McGinnis- No I don't know who put it up, but I felt that maybe...it was kind of strange because I was thinking of all these grandiose things that if I were to be in the march wearing my uniform which I had really planned on doing, I thought this would really be effective, but when I wasn't allowed to I said I guess that is alright I wont make a big deal out of it. I think I really realized at that point where my witness was and it was right here it the armory. That this little letter was going to be my contribution to this thing. That night we had to go out to the grass area, there was a big grass field the drill field outside the armory buildings and we were policing and picking up the papers and guys had walked by and made snide remarks here and there. We got back into the building and Paul and I and two other fellows were playing bridge that night for a couple of hours and Paul over heard a couple of fellows saying if, that they were going to strip my car and split my tires and stuff like that. We were kind of afraid that I should hide my car, you know I never expected a reaction like this because I never said anything in the letter I said I thought King was a great American and you know but the title of the article was Guardsmen praises King as great American and I signed it and they filled in the rest. So I gave Paul the keys and he hid the car for me and the sergeant for whom I worked really thought this might be serious and they were going to sneak me out of there before everybody else went home. And then we decided that wouldn't be right, and I didn't want to run away from it, So I decided to just wait until everybody went home. So when they released us a t 11:30 that night we didn't feel that anybody would want to stay around and look fro my car after two weeks they just wanted to get home.

Bill Thomas- Now this is what day?

Jim McGinnis- This is Wednesday, the 10th... the 10th of April. So it was rather interesting that night to personally feel the reactions of these people it was, I can say there was an awful lot of hate really looking for an object to hate and I think that Martin Luther King was that object of hate, he happened to be the one nigger that they could hate. I think it revealed the basic attitude of most of the men. It was funny that I found out about a month and a half later as a result of this, just before I left Memphis the first of June I was making up a couple of meetings. I had June meetings

that I wanted to get credit for but I wasn't going to be here so they let me go over to the armory during the week and get some credit as a clerk to get credit for some meetings that were coming up in June and each battery has one person who is full time employed there. He works there during the week as well as on drill days. And each one is a sergeant and my sergeant needed some forms and he sent me to another sergeant's office to get it and the other sergeant got all upset because I wanted these forms and he wrote this letter and he said you give this to Holloway your sergeant, sergeant Holloway who you are working for. I went back and I said to the serge, serge I got you into some trouble I am sorry. I said so and so sergeant reacted really negatively and it sounds like he is after you. Because he is not mad at me he hates your guts, it is you he hates. He has been seeing red ever since he read your letter. This is the end of May and it goes back to the 1st of April. he said the sergeant even feels that your working here during the week, you are afraid to show up on weekends when the men are here because you are afraid to face them. And then the second thing I didn't have my name tags on my uniform because I have a white name tag that stands out at night and they told us to take these off and most of the fellows have camouflage name tags the same color as their uniform. And so I had taken mine off during the two weeks I was on active duty but I had never replaced them with the camouflage name tags and he thought I was afraid to where my name tags so people wouldn't know who I was. So I thought that was rather amusing. I received letters in the mail and things like this.

Joan Beifuss- I was going to ask you that what was the reaction from people not in the guard, did you receive nasty letters?

Jim McGinnis- I received a couple that, I received all the communist hate sheets that James Lawson and Barrett Ruston and King were communists I received all those things in the mail, I always called hem communists because anybody who would ever said anything would be called apparently down here.

Joan Beifuss- Did you get any phone calls?

Jim McGinnis- No I didn't get any phone calls I got one letter for a lady that she was glad I said something and my wife's students I taught reacted favorably but it is no big deal. I is funny when something says something anything, everybody comes out and reveals how they really feel you challenge them to reveal their feelings and this is where I really sensed the deep seeded hate among so many of the fellows that were in the guard.

Bill Thomas- But you hadn't really known...

Jim McGinnis- Yeah I hadn't really known before and when it is directed, it, looking for a target you know you can't hate in general you know you do but you can't reveal hate in general you need a specific target then you really reveal you know.

Bill Thomas- What was your wife's reaction to your letter writing?

Joan Beifuss- Her ulcer got worse.

Jim McGinnis- No no no, she wanted to do the same thing, she was really happy I did. The two of us, had I not been on active duty the two of us would have marched in the memorial march for King. Again neither one of us were going to march in favor of the garbage strike we are in sympathy with it but again we didn't feel it was justified.

Bill Thomas- Before we reach the end of the tape, do you have a degree in philosophy?

Jim McGinnis- I do I have my masters.

Bill Thomas- And where was that.

Jim McGinnis- From Catholic University in Washington D.C.

Joan Beifuss- Where was your undergraduate degree then?

Jim McGinnis- It was at catholic U also. I am trying to remember there were several other things... (Tape End)