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David Yellin- This is Wednesday May 29th 1968, and we are in the office of squire Jesse H. Turner on Main St. and with me, this is David Yellin and with me is Anne Trotter. Well Mr. Turner we like to start usually at an odd place and that is the beginning. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself where you were born and your background?

Jesse H. Turner- Well, yes I was born in Mississippi, Longview Mississippi, and finished high school in WestPoint Mississippi and came to Memphis in 1937 to attend Lemoyne College, where I was graduated in 1941.

David Yellin- At Lemoyne what did you take there were there any courses?

Jesse H. Turner- Yes I majored in mathematics at Lemoyne and there I was drafted into the armed forces and after getting out then I went to the university of Chicago and studied business administration.

David Yellin- Was that in graduate?

Jesse H. Turner- Yes that was at the graduate level.

Anne Trotter- When did you come back to Memphis?

Jesse H. Turner- In 1947.

Anne Trotter- Did you come to work with the bank, tri-state?

Jesse H. Turner- No, I came and set up a public accounting office and then in 1948 I started doing some work with the bank. I actually started doing some accounting work for them and started working full time for them in the early part of 1949.

David Yellin- Could I just get back in the armed services where were you or what services were you in.

Jesse H. Turner- I was in the army and we served over in a tank battalion and we served over in the Italian campaign.

David Yellin- Oh you were in a tank.

Jesse H. Turner- Yes.

David Yellin- Ok now we have you back not jumping to Memphis and you, where did you start your career in Memphis?

Jesse H. Turner- Where did I start what now?

David Yellin- Your career.

Jesse H. Turner- Well I started here started as I indicated I started in an accounting situation and then of course got called to the bank to be a cashier, that was in 1949, I

have been there ever since and of course I have made my accounting office ever since. I suppose most of the, I suppose most of my civic point form the standpoint of here I believe started somewhere around 1948, 49 also. I did a considerable amount of protesting in the forces, the discrimination that we found which was...

David Yellin- That was why I was anxious to get back to the armed forces but even before then can you recall, Mr. Turner, how come you selected Memphis how come Lemoyne college, can you go back?

Jesse H. Turner- Yes well the reason I selected Lemoyne college is that we had an instructor, I guess this happens frequently at my high school who was a graduate of Lemoyne and he supposedly, I supposedly came to Lemoyne on a football scholarship but I didn't play much football, I suppose I was much better student I perhaps stayed on the football team because I was a good student.

David Yellin- Now Lemoyne doesn't have a football team.

Jesse H. Turner- No they don't but at that time they did.

David Yellin- What were you a back?

Jesse H. Turner- No I was an end, and...so as a result of this instructor Mr. Cecil Goodlow currently teaches t Melrose.

David Yellin- Oh he is here now at Melrose? I she a math teacher?

Jesse H. Turner- Yes, he is a math teacher and it was a result of that I came to Lemoyne.

David Yellin- Had you ever been to Memphis before?

Jesse H. Turner- No.

David Yellin- This was the first time?

Jesse H. Turner- Yes.

David Yellin- What was your conception way back as a 17 year old tall lanky football p-layer.

Jesse H. Turner- Well of course coming from Mississippi it was a small town and the largest place I had been and everything looked nice and my biggest problem then and my biggest interest then was to get an education and certainly coming from what would have been, of course you didn't talk about it much then but they talking about poor people campaign and such things like that, this was really from the poor. A very poor situation, so kind of my biggest problem was to try to get around those conditions was to try to get an education. This is of course my parents were forcing it and then our parents were insistent that us children would get an education and even insisted that they would stay I school. My father incidentally was a minster we were not farmers in the sense and this was one thing that my father insist that the

children would continue school. The school I went to incidentally was a private school it was not a public school, it was a religious school.

Anne Trotter- Which denomination?

Jesse H. Turner- Baptist. A strong Baptist and WestPoint Baptist school and they also have a Presbyterian one at that time for negro. So my parents were insistent then and in fact the only reason we moved to west point was the fact that there would be no difficulty in our getting a high school training.

David Yellin- How many were there of you in the family?

Jesse H. Turner- There were 9 of us 9 children and...

David Yellin- Where do you stand?

Jesse H. Turner- Well I am number 2. (muffled) 7 of us through college.

David Yellin- No kidding that is wonderful, do you have an older sister are you the oldest boy?

Jesse H. Turner- No I have an older brother.

David Yellin- Yes, the second boy and about 7 of you went to college.

Jesse H. Turner- Yes, 7 of us finish college.

David Yellin- Ok well now how was Lemoyne, were there any experiences you wish to share?

Jesse H. Turner- Well Lemoyne was yes well of course I enjoyed my stay at Lemoyne. I would suppose that, well I had a tremendous challenge it was a tremendous challenge to us at Lemoyne because coming from a school in Mississippi which was substandard, which was even substandard as compared with the substandard negro schools here see. It presented quite a challenge and it gave us quite an opportunity.

David Yellin- Were you aware of that then?

Yes oh yes.

David Yellin- You saw it as soon as you came to Lemoyne?

Jesse H. Turner- Oh yes I recognized it then not only recognized it then but I recognized it in high school because I felt in high school you take a substandard high school and you feel that in order to get what you are supposed to get you have to go beyond that which the teachers were offering then. So frequently in our text books we were not maybe cover a textbook during the school year, but I spent a lot of my time covering textbooks beyond the regular amount that was required of the class because this was the only way that you could actually make certain that you were somewhere on power toward it. But certainly at that time I could recognize the well

let me put it like this, I recognized that I felt that our schools there was inferior and then when I came to Lemoyne I found here that perhaps the negroes here had some what of a superiority complex and I am not certain, I had the feeling that I had a feeling that their schools might have been a (muffled) to them in that they felt that their schools was superior and they were not. As well as I took it that mine was inferior and I used it as a means to study harder, I feel that they felt that theirs was superior and generally they didn't study as hard as they should have because they felt that the school, the background was sufficient enough to make it at Lemoyne. I am taking that position all the way through that we are at a disadvantage and the high school levels and a disadvantage in the college level and of course when I went to the university of Chicago having been out of school four years or four and half years, I was at a disadvantage then not only from background but also from not having studied for four years.

David Yellin- How come you and I am just trying to search, how come you were aware of this, your father's influence, your brother's influence, or just your own cognizance you might say?

Jesse H. Turner- I think primarily through the primary reason as I can see is that we did have, well of course certainly we can recognize it from the public schools, that was tremendous failure in our community between some students were going to the public high school and some students were going to our high school which was M.I. it was called M.I. in college and some were going to the Presbyterian school which was mayor Holmes. Now mayor Holmes technically had the best school in the city and of course there was a tremendous amount of competition among all of those groups and I suppose that as the results of being informed and being around in these various groups you did find there were differences there. And I would suppose that just being from Mississippi (muffled) would give you an general idea that things were not up to par that even not having gone outside the state I suppose somewhere you get on the defensive and this has a tendency I think, it could have a tendency (muffled) I think you could use this perhaps as a means of stepping stone to move ahead high if you don't get involved in to the personal, the personal defense of ballots you know.

David Yellin- Because I think just listening to you again the young Jesse Turner explains a little bit of what we are going to meet as we get along. Just the fact that you were aware of this and instead of lying down and saying it is too much for me you are going to bucket and try to make the best of it.

Jesse H. Turner- Well I always felt that well as far as I don't know I have always felt that as far as when somewhere I say I don't know when I began to recognize the problem of the disadvantages that you had, well would suppose though that I would have recognized it probably within the school itself because I was perhaps the best student in my class and yet I would realize how far how much I was being held back because we might have a textbook and we may go no further than to get half of the textbook. But it always bothered me what about the other half of the textbook when were you supposed to learn the other part of the textbook and as the results of that

you are being held back by the remaining people of your class that means that you did recognize that you weren't getting something that you were supposed to get. And of occurs when one looks at the building we were attending and the of course I think one thing we might at that time we probably had some, our teachers then were perhaps comparable at that time to the teachers in the other school although we did not have the building we did not have the equipment which is, we had to take in my year, my graduating year we had a couple of teachers that had finished at Moorehouse and we had one person who finished from Lemoyne here and we had one teacher who finished from Spellman and we had a couple that studied from (muffled) but this mind you back in 1937 is when you could, although I agree those schools then were not as good as they are now, I am talking about the schools from which they finished, but the point is at that particular stage we did have college graduates at that level and I know that the school was in such poor financial condition that it could not keep people, you could not hold those teachers they would come there and teach a year or two and then leave but it just so happened at that particular time we had a pretty fair faculty.

David Yellin- Did you win a scholarship?

Jesse H. Turner- Yes, I came to Lemoyne on a scholarship strangely as I said I came to Lemoyne on a football scholarship.

David Yellin- Oh yes.

Jesse H. Turner- Which was part football scholarship and not full scholarship. My father was providing \$12.50 a month as I recall. But after getting to Lemoyne and then because I stayed in school on scholarship but although mostly it was a football scholarship, but as I said I wasn't here because of my, if I had to, if I had not been such a good school student hey would not, I would not have stayed here on a football scholarship.

David Yellin- Well fine now if we can kind of get back you lived in Lemoyne College?

Jesse H. Turner- Yes.

David Yellin- and then after Lemoyne, did you go right into the armed services?

Jesse H. Turner- Yes I was drafted into the armed services immediately after (muffled).

David Yellin- Well Mr. Turner I think we got a pretty good idea of your background can we get, when you recall you were first affiliated or you first heard of the NAACP, you said in the army your ran across this.

Jesse H. Turner- Yes I first joined the NAACP while I was in the army, during the time I was there. Frankly, I suppose that my civil rights fight, I started doing more in that regard as I can while in the army because I was ordered immediately when I

was drafted into the armed forces. We were sent down to Georgia, Fort Benning. Then from there we were sent to Fort Knox Kentucky. At Fort Knox the only thing they used negroes there for was cooks and (muffled). We too after taking the test I was told that I had a very high IQ and that there ought to be some, with my training, that there ought to be some excellent positions for me in the armed forces but immediately they started trying to make a cook out of me which I, which at that stage I rebelled and I told them I was not going to cook, that I just was not going to be a cook that was something that I just wasn't going to accept. They then tried to get me to be a clerk. I told them I didn't type and I was not going to be a clerk, that they weren't going to get me tied up in it and it was during that period of time and of course even during it I said I was there, I think I said maybe for a month and during that I am a (muffled) and as you are a (muffled) you see in that instance in Fort Knox was a school at that time and had all these whites who we were caring for that had no training at all that is compared to mine and at that stage I figured this was the time to start fighting. Now within another week or so after that they made me a sergeant and put me in charge of a competent of cooks and bakers. Of course after staying there let me see that was in well let me put, within 6 or 7 months and after that I went over to officer candidacy school and of course at officer candidacy school I ran into..

David Yellin- You went back to Fort Benning?

Jesse H. Turner- No I stayed at Fort Knox.

David Yellin- Oh that is where they had it.

Jesse H. Turner- Then of course, there we ran into all types of racial discrimination there where one they had a swimming pool there and they did not want to let us swim in it and I was not of the first class of negroes in officer candidate school but when they wouldn't let us swim in the pool and me and a good student there, and I could afford to tackle these problems because they couldn't get me on a matter of grades. So I decided I would take the argument then, I took it to the commander arguing about why couldn't we swim at the swimming pool and of course as a result he issued an order that the swimming pool had to be open to all officers and there would be no discrimination.

David Yellin- Who was that?

Jesse H. Turner- I don't recall the name of the commander but this was a result so that of course I couldn't swim I had to go buy some trunks to sit in the water. Almost immediately following that we had another incident where the, when you would go out on and practice with your tanks and usually after you are finished fine, they would let the officer candidates and somebody officer would command the tank to bring the tank back to the post. Well we are lining up one day he said all the (muffled) he asked that all the candidates line up and the first 20 people were to be used as tank commanders. There were two of us, two negroes in that 20 and he told us to get out the end of the line, so he selected 20 whites. So I went to the

commander again and told him that this may be because my men losing their lives because he refuse to let us be tank commanders and of course the commander got on again about that and he called the officer in charge.

David Yellin- Was this about I 42?

Jesse H. Turner- Yeah this was in 1942.

David Yellin- So this was early before the army and Eisenhower and..

Jesse H. Turner- That's right. As result of that the officer came to me that was in charge and of course you had to be very careful in the armed forces of how you dealt with your superiors and how you went through channels but it so happened that on our post our commander kept reminding us the fact that if you had any complaint you come to him. So that meant the instructor was in one line but where we stayed was in another. He said if you have any complaint that is why we want the ability so that you can let us know. So I would go to him and this would get me outside of having to go through that line of channel and then it would come from him back down through the post commander back down to the training officers and of course this is something that he stopped and so these as I can recall that the first two but after we were commissioned, we ran into all kinds of problems then. Almost all type.

David Yellin- So this was in a sense your own battle you did it yourself, you were not propelled by an organization, there was nobody you could join except yourself.

Jesse H. Turner- That is right, well yes we did, I did this, I could do this no the basis once, after I got to be an officer then you ran into all kinds of situation where they would teach you as an officer you are to be a gentlemen and you are to expect this and to expect that. Well you had that behind you and this is propelling the situation you had then as to the discrimination as to they would treat an officer and a white enlisted, you had the discrimination of the negro officer and the white officer and then you had the discrimination as they treated the negro officers worse than they treated the white enlisted men. So that meant that this presented yet these are all against the things that they taught you in the officer training, in training camps.

David Yellin- So you became an officer and where did they assign you?

Jesse H. Turner- Well after an officer I was assigned to 758 tank battalion. That was the first negro tank battalion, and they used that tank battalion as a training battalion. It would go across the country and train almost all of these were white regiments and divisions who had never had tanks and they used our battalion as a training battalion. That was down in Camp Cleveland Louisiana out there and from there we went out to Fort Hood or Camp Hood, and on to Fort Witchuka and back to Hood and finally in Italy.

Anne Trotter- When you came back form the war did you decide there was going to be some changes made.

Jesse H. Turner- Yeah because as I said you had all kind of problems we had so many in the during, we had so many problems from where we went. See like Fort Jackson South Carolina, Fort Wood Texas, everywhere we went, fortunately incidentally we had some good commanders of our unit but we were a separate tank battalion but fortunately we had some tank commanders some battalion commanders who stood up for our unit and as a result of that we stayed into it almost every place we went, because take for instance in some place where we would go where we would be on guard and they would not permit negros to have ammunition while they were serving on the yard. Our commander said that anytime our men serve on guard they were going to have ammunition. Then we had the problem when we got to a post say I may be an officer of the day for the battalion and then you into your white officers that say some of our men have trouble with their men and then they have got to deal with me on it at that particular situation and then you had trouble with them so you had all of them (muffled) or you may have a situation where why at that time I may have been 1st lieutenant, 2nd lieutenant white didn't want to salute, we had all kinds of problems we ran though. But anyway we of course going over seas and overseas and then coming back from overseas and then after coming back I was taken out of the army at Campy Shelby, got there on my way out a German (muffled) was telling me I couldn't sit with the white officers, now this was after coming back from the war. But as I say the results of having fought in the war I would say that my situation then was that things had to change and we had more problems that that because we had problems in the army but we had problems in traveling where we could get on the trains and at that time they didn't want to serve you in the dining room, they wanted you to sit behind the (muffled) you are going through that period of time and you are going through the period of time they didn't want to give you, you didn't want to give you a poor men's service. This is what we were fighting through as a matter of transportation, so we just had then a number of cases of incidents such as that.

David Yellin- Did you come out a 1st Lieutenant?

Jesse H. Turner- No I came out a captain. And we had in the 758 hours as a tank commander over confident one of the fine companies I ever accompanied out of the unit stayed over there for a year 1944-45. And so from there, this I suppose is where most of the fighting I mean most of my arguments or desire to see that something had to be done came from this.

David Yellin- So you came out of the army, I just want to enter one little biographical note, when I came out of the army I was on a radio program with Roy Wilkins in New York and that is the first time I met him. Now well when you came back 45...

Jesse H. Turner- Yes 45.

David Yellin- As a captain where did you go then?

Jesse H. Turner- Well I went to, I didn't know where they went. I knew I could say this is one of my situations as I said I wanted more education I had said money for

education and but at that time the G.I. bill of rights meant that I didn't have to use the money that I had in a normal sense. So I decided I would go to one of the best universities I decided I would go into business then because I had forgotten so much math during that period of time that I almost had to start over.

David Yellin- What did you want to be way back? A teacher?

Jesse H. Turner- Well I had to, well I would suppose generally back then I would have gone into the teaching field if I had followed through on that line because I wanted to get far more training than being at the college, I would not have agreed to teach with just stopping at my training at the college level. I didn't feel that was enough training even at that time, but after coming back I went to decide to go to school I had decided actually I had the university of Michigan in mind but because of their scheduling situation I believe they were on a semester and I, we got out in October and then I went directly to, I could get in there at the university of Chicago and this is where I happened to be there because I happened to have a brother this is the reason I happen to get there because I can start immediately after getting out rather than having to wait. Chicago starts a little later than most schools as far as their semester starts around the 1st of October and of course I got out about the 6th of October and then I could get started there.

David Yellin- You were there during then president Hutchins.

Jesse H. Turner- Yes. Yes.

David Yellin- And you went tot Chicago for how long?

Jesse H. Turner- That was in 65 I finished Chicago in the spring of 1947.

David Yellin- 2 years.

Jesse H. Turner- 2 years yeah.

David Yellin- And where did you live then?

Jesse H. Turner- In Chicago first we had a problem there too. They wanted, I applied for, they said they had no places to stay and so they said they could put me in a private home, negro. After getting the run around, I say run around maybe not eventful maybe several weeks well actually I stayed there until the end of the year and I went and told them look I have been in the armed forces, I have been fighting and I just didn't understand why I couldn't get on the campus some place, I mean I just didn't like the places where they lived and I just thought since having giving 4 ½ years in the armed forces that they ought to find some place of folks who come back to stay on the campus. So they shifted me over to the national house and this was the beginning of the first section of 1946, and I stayed in the international house all the way through my stay at the university of Chicago.

David Yellin- And at the international house well that is interesting. And then can we go on? Let's get to the NAACP if we could.

Jesse H. Turner- Well yeah I started working here in the NAACP well at first I worked primarily with the voter registration and the political situation but I started working in the NAACP after 1955 or 6 somewhere after the 54 (muffled) and my first work with them came as after they started a suit here and then they were in financial difficulties as far as raising money was concerned. Me and in the back around Dr. Walker and Mr. Walker, I had a good base on which to go out and to talk and to help them to raise money.

David Yellin- Did they have a chapter here, do you recall when that was started?

Jesse H. Turner- Oh yes they do, oh yes there had been a chapter here, they have had a fairly sizeable chapter here this chapter here is about 50 years old.

David Yellin- oh.

Jesse H. Turner- Yeah we have had a chapter here a long time.

David Yellin- And who was the leader then?

Jesse H. Turner- At that time Mr. Ullis Phillips was leader and then finally there was reverend Ban Malone, I don't know what year it was then reverend Malone then succeeded Mr. Phillip, then Mr. Lockett, (muffled) Lockett succeeded Mr. reverend Malone and I started to work and during the time that Mr. Lockett was president.

David Yellin- And that's 55 and then..

Jesse H. Turner- 55 or 6 somewhere right in there.

David Yellin- Then you were active in it then.

Jesse H. Turner- Yes.

David Yellin- Mainly it was that you were raising money?

Jesse H. Turner- Primarily at that time I was raising money and then from there I went and sat on the board and chairman of the board and chairman of the board and then from there president.

David Yellin- And what were the early battles?

Jesse H. Turner- Well the early battles we had primarily I believe the earliest battle that we had that was on a larger scale was a matter at Memphis state university trying to get negroes out there at Memphis state. Well actually it had started earlier, attorney Estes started out there but they didn't get very far and finally Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Sugarman went out to Memphis State and they were rejected. And then we picked up there to file suit on their behalf and we picked up information and getting information out at Memphis state where they were saying, I mean some of their charges, well actually we were checking to see where were all the students coming from and they were checking their records out there. We got involved primarily in that degree. But that was one of the first battles.

David Yellin- Do you want to talk further about that because I think that was very significant and nobody else mentions it.

Jesse H. Turner- Yes well Memphis state was Memphis state if you know was a very difficult and this is one reason that I don't have any love for Memphis state and perhaps it would be years until I would because of the first battles that we had out at in getting students in Memphis state. Now after, I don't have a year exactly, but after we started on that level that they did indicate probably that they would, and we had some reason to believe that they would accept negro and then that first year they say they would and then they turn all of them down and it was the following year before we were able to get I believe some 10 or 12 students to go out there and this was quite a battle to get them to go and take the tests.

David Yellin- You went in and selected students.

=Oh yeah we found students we went out and found students. We went to schools and got the names of the top students in school and we actually got the names of them and went out and talked to them, actually they may have been 6 or 8 but we had the names of all of the top ones and then we then had to make certain in fact we took them out to take the test and then we paid for the test that is when they decided to start within this realm of when they say they were going to accept negroes and this is when they started giving tests. And of course we took them out to take the test and not only that the ones who decided they would go and some of them decided they would not go. The ones that decided they would go then we provided them with a scholarship, we raised money for their scholarship and as I perhaps raised some money to provide some of them who were not able with bus fare and things of that sort.

Anne Trotter- On what grounds was Sugarman denied admission?

Jesse H. Turner- I don't know, just what grounds he gave, but as I recall, it was as I recall it was something about the school I believe they used if I am not mistaken now they used the schools that they had not finished from a satisfactory schooling.

David Yellin- Accredited.

Jesse H. Turner- Accredited schools as I believe. I know this is what was used on Mike (muffled) But I have forgotten whether or not they used, because she was from Spellman but I don't know what they used for Laurie Sugarman, I am not saying whether they used that same thing or not.

David Yellin- Well you mean Maxine was a transfer.

Jesse H. Turner- Yeah well you see Maxine had to finish, see she had to finish at Spellman and then had gone on to another and gotten a masters degree. But she was not coming there as an undergrad, but I have forgotten they had some kind of technical excuse, about the undergraduate school.

David Yellin- Now Mrs. Sugarman though was coming as an undergraduate or as a graduate?

Jesse H. Turner- See she was coming as a graduate, see she had finished college but I don't know what excuse they gave for that but whatever it was it was a pretty silly excuse.

David Yellin- It could have been that accredited business.

Anne Trotter- Yeah but Johns Hopkins took her.

David Yellin- We know that. When you said he or they do you remember who?

Jesse H. Turner- I know there was Ben Clark I believe, Be Clark was a man who was that (muffled). My wife and her sister and I have forgotten two or three more, were sent over to look at the record because they wanted to see the records where the students were coming and they went on in and I know they were dealing with Dean Clark at that particular level, now at these other levels of course we were dealing with the president but it was a terrible situation what we had to go through.

Anne Trotter- Was it worse than integrating the public schools?

+Well from the standpoint of actually integrating it was not what I would say worse because we, I wouldn't say it was any difference in it the only that I say I know one of the disturbing things because we it was our opinion and from what we had got here that we had got to a place where they were going to accept negros a year earlier and then something that they did in that period was delayed this thing.

David Yellin- Just to clarify the two, the now Mrs. Smith and the Mrs. Sugarman applied as graduates by themselves. And they were turned down and this called your attention to it?

Jesse H. Turner- Well you see they had already been some attempts to get some negros into Memphis state.

David Yellin- Individually?

Jesse H. Turner- Prior to that, individually yeah. Attorney Estes had taken some students over there perhaps a year or two earlier. But Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Sugarman when they went over there this was reviving this whole situation you see. Of course being of the students that they were, it then meant that it gave another image to this situation then what it had been previously.

David Yellin- Well then after that you then went to them and were under the impression they were going to accept students and you were turned down with selected students?

Jesse H. Turner- We were turned down in other words it was just as I recall they were the administration or at least he press indicated the fact that they were going

to accept students one year but prior to, before we could get any negroes in some other rules had been instituted which prevented us from getting negroes in that particular year. We had to go over to the next year before we could have got that.

David Yellin- and this was in the next year that you gathered together about 12 or so and 6 or 8 of them actually did go.

Jesse H. Turner- That's right.

David Yellin- Do you have any lists of those names anywhere?

Jesse H. Turner- Well yes I am sure that the office has them and if not we know some of the students that were in that group who could...

David Yellin- The history of Memphis we should get and talk with them. Then once you got those 6 or 8 in however many from then on did you as an organization have to escort other negroes into Memphis state.

Jesse H. Turner- No after that we worked with those students and we told them that we would provide them tuition for a year and we told them we would do that and which we did. It so happened that the drop out ratio of that group was very high, but I do recall I believe perhaps 1 or 2 of those persons perhaps did finish but we made no particular efforts after that particular year further than trying to encourage negroes to go and start the campaign, we started a campaign there showing the fact that the tuition out there it seems to be out there if any negroes going to Tennessee state when he could get a go out there and get the education with the same, as far as rates were concerned the same registration fee without having to pay the boarding fee, without paying the board fee on it. From then on we did not push it from then further, like the personal effort we made.

David Yellin- So the increase of students sort of just happened because students themselves applied and the school let it go through.

Jesse H. Turner- That's right.

David Yellin- SO that now, actually we have discovered that Memphis state has one of the largest enrollments of negro students of any university in the entire country.

Jesse H. Turner- (Muffled) I am not saying that it ought to be, there are negroes around here and I am not saying whether or not from the standpoint of say looking a the south as any other city that has a university like this that is at that stage I am not certain of that situation. Then when you consider they have to go now to where most of these students would have been going to Tennessee state, this is where a large number of them would have been going.

David Yellin- Well we are just trying to find a little light somewhere.

Jesse H. Turner- I don't see any light.

David Yellin- Well the fact that Mrs. Sugarman became a professor and so on I think this is a small little thing that could be larger.

David Yellin- Well it is so small and with one member of faculty I don't know how many they have over there and the problems we still have the complaints at Memphis state and some of them will be more difficult to deal with such as the grading system, we are still getting the complaints, I know there was an article in the paper the other day about Mr. Gilliam and I don't know hwy Mr. Gilliam didn't do a little more checking, he could have had an article which could have shown the other side of the situation which he failed to do. But we still get a lot of complaints from Memphis state.

Anne Trotter- Who do you have to deal with?

Jesse H. Turner- Say that again?

Anne Trotter- Who do you have to deal with?

Jesse H. Turner- In which regard?

Anne Trotter- When you are dealing with complaints at Memphis state?

Jesse H. Turner- Oh well frankly most of the time we deal with the president. Most of the time ours is at the president level.

David Yellin- Well ok of course naturally we are interested. I am on the faculty too and we are interested in this and perhaps we...

Anne Trotter- Concerned might be a better word.

David Yellin- Yeah concerned that is true but let's get back to the main purpose here and that is we want to get back again to the NAACP. We asked you I believe what were some of the areas of concern that you had to get interested in and you said Memphis state, now what were the others?

Jesse H. Turner- Oh we had so much well from now we have stared, as soon as Memphis state we went to the transportation situation that is one, we started a suit against it. Segregation of the busses, in our fight in 1956-57. And from there of course we have just pushed ahead and we had a whole history of going back and forth on that case as far as the courts are concerned. Fact is this is one of the tragedies of our community here and that is the matter of the fellow court in which we haven't one a single case at in the federal court, at the federal court level. At the district court level, we lost every case. Every case we had here we los tit at the district court level.

David Yellin- What is your opinion as to the reason?

Jesse H. Turner- Because of Judge Boyd.

David Yellin- Because?

Anne Trotter- Judge Boyd.

Jesse H. Turner- Judge Boyd.

David Yellin- Yeah I still didn't.

Jesse H. Turner- Judge Myron Boyd the judge, see this is one of the worst federal juries is that we have anywhere as far as well we say prejudice in the whole country and we lost every suit we had we lost it at the district court level, every suit against racial discrimination.

David Yellin- And you pinpoint it there?

Jesse H. Turner- Yeah because we won all of them up the line but the point is he used every technicality, he tore us out on technicalities, then you have to go back and fight the technicalities and then you have to come back to him and he would hear the suit and then you lose the suit, then you have to go on up to the supreme court to win it. So for that reason our transportation suit that was filed early in the game, when I say early in the game I mean early in when they was trying to file suits. And of course it never was adjudicated I am just talking about because we won we got that by other means and filed a suit on Memphis state but I am not sure it was ever adjudicated from the standpoint because he held them in court, he would hold them so long until that certain time that the pressure ahs been put otherwise that they had to start correcting those actions then.

David Yellin- Now I would like to ask you one kind of general question that could maybe encompass all of this. The whole point that people make about Memphis was that there were good race relations. Now we discover that probably they weren't as good as people think. What is your feeling about the and I put in quotes much like the newspapers, "good race relations." Where they good?

Jesse H. Turner- No I don't think that the race relations, I do not think that they were good and I think this was one of the tragedies of the whole situation we have here and this is that, first, that everything that you have won here has been won as a result of pressure. In other words, fortunately around here there are two things that have been in the favor that would give the image of good race relations. One of them is that the negro vote, this is area here negros have registered to vote, in fact 73% of the negros now are registered to vote, this is one thing here negros have voted here they are registered an the negro votes have been in the hand of negros and generally the negros have voted as a block, this has put some pressure on the merchants. Secondly, you had a very good NAACP branch here and as a result, with a good branch and with good intelligent leadership, of course I am president but I am not talking about that, we have had some good leadership along the other way. This has meant that they have kept pressure applied on the power structure. Now with the pressure from the votes and the pressure from the power structure, it mean that.

David Yellin- Pressure on the power structure.

Jesse H. Turner- Yeah it meant that they have instead of being adamant and doing a whole bunch of talking as they have done in most other instances, in most other communities, well let me say as a 3rd factor on that too is that somewhere along the way we stumbled, I believe this may have been in the late 50's, we stumbled upon a boycott of the newspaper here particularly the Commercial Appeal and this boycott was because of not using courtesy talk. As results of that I think the papers had not been stirring up racial hate because of the feel of this type of language and not stirring up racial hate even though they have not been the paper that we think you should be but still didn't stir up racial hate as some of the papers do.

David Yellin- Do you remember that boycott when it was?

Jesse H. Turner- I would have to find the, I would have to get the date on that but this is, was a poor men and it was a fairly effective boycott for the time.

David Yellin- And it was effective?

Jesse H. Turner- Yes for the time. And because of that, that meant that your newspapers didn't stir up hate, your politicians couldn't get out here because of the tremendous negro hope and then you had the NAACP applying the tremendous pressure to them. As the results of that, it meant that in most cases and once we started moving, these politicians would move, they would give to the extent that they thought was necessary and that would mean as a result of that where in most communities you have had to fight, well I don't mean to fight you had the confrontation. Well they would never let the confrontation get there because they would move before the confrontation would get to that particular stage.

David Yellin- How far would they move?

Jesse H. Turner- Well they would move, well that all depends, for example at the hotel we got the hotels open here before the civil rights bill, fir instance you see this is the results of pressure. For instance we got the theatres open here before that. Now there were degrees to what they were going to open them and then we had to fight one individual, one individual and we would try to figure out some way to get around it they wouldn't move much but they would move enough to keep you off balance from the standpoint and move up enough to put up and show that we have got our hotels open. Well when they said that the hotels is open they didn't talk about the issues that they did and they didn't want you to have, they did not want you to have...(Tape Break).

Jesse H. Turner- Now I think we were discussing this matter of race relations saying in Memphis what has happened is that the power structure so to speak has always given a little bit and we have made these demands in the hotels and theatres and of course the restaurants as far as that concerned and also during the city demonstrations I think where the matter of political power came to be in was that in most of the communities during the sit in demonstrations you had confrontation and some type of violence. Well you never had that here because of commissioner Armor and because of the negro vote. He did not permit that form the citizenry. In

addition, well what commissioner armor did was he initially started arresting the people but after some of our persons talked to them, he decided that they would make the businesses swear out warrants. Of course, most of these businesses were hesitant about swearing out warrants and as a result of that we didn't have as much confrontation on those things, except after the initial shock of the sit-in demonstration. As quiet as it was kept most people don't know it. But the sit-in demonstrations around here and that type of direct actions were carried on here for 18 months.

David Yellin- Really.

Jesse H. Turner- Yes beginning in February 1960 and it went on for 18 months. This was demonstrations, and within that 18 month period, as far as the stores are concerned very little effort was made, but we did make efforts, and we did make success in the area of public facilities. But as far as the stores are concerned as far as the job situation is concerned, very little effort was made, and by the end of that 18th month before they finally started conceding. And during that period of time we had the boycott, the picketing and demonstrations and almost during that whole period that was carried on. I think another thing as far as Memphis is concerned that made it a little bit different from most places, as far as activity in this field is concerned is that in the city and demonstrations in most communities in the early 60's were carried out by students. But in here in Memphis you had adult participation in sit-in demonstrations almost all the way through after the initial shock.

David Yellin- Why was this?

Jesse H. Turner- Well, I think it was because of the, I would say primarily because of the different type of leadership that you had in this community and we felt that the students and also maybe the fact, well I would say several facts. One, Lemoyne is not a student boarding students school, so that meant that your students were not as close together as they were in other communities. Secondly, is that our success was not immediate, so we had a harder nut to crack, so to speak. That meant that when the schools, when the schools out most of our merchants were hoping that the sit-in demonstration would die down as well the adults either we were going to fail or the adults had to pick it up and what happened is that the adults did pick the thing up and I think the primary reason why the adults were involved would have been the thing would have failed and all of what the students did would have been lost unless the adults had picked it up and of course we did pick it up and carry on the sit-in demonstrations during the period they were out.

David Yellin- Now those 18 months you said there were demonstrations and so on. Is this where you are referring to commissioner Armor's approach that he first started to arrest people, but then people talked to him, you people talked to him and then he said he would only arrest people if they swore out warrants against them?

=Yes, yes, that was during that period of time.

David Yellin- So there was 18 months of picketing and boycotting but it was peaceable.

Jesse H. Turner- Yes that is right.

David Yellin- And it ended up somewhat effective?

Jesse H. Turner- Yes it ended up, and this is another way that almost invariably when these things ended and this one, this one ended in the fall of 1961, when the stores for instance, the demands at that time were negroes would actually see the matter of jobs for negroes in the sales category. The amount of, oh if you take the amount of theatres this was apart of it we had an overall goal, and we didn't appear at the time they were giving on some of them but they weren't giving on other. And what they would decide to do in most instances we would start the boycott and then they would make some kind of announcement shortly there after in which they would agree to hire people or agree to do this, this is generally the type of situation but it did break the backbone of the resistance we had, the initial resistance. Now with the almost all of our game here was (muffled).

David Yellin- Mr. Turner could you recall when you say they? Who did you deal with.

Jesse H. Turner- Well let me say this, when the apparently back in the earlier part of the, I don't know when, but the earlier part of this fight in Memphis had a committee called the Memphis committee on community relations. Now I don't know who started it but you can check perhaps with Mr. Orgill he could perhaps give you some kind of idea on that but initially I think this was started as a group of moderate whites and moderate negroes, and I used the term moderate in quotations as far as negro is concerned because I don't want to use that this is not a term I used to use, but the point is this is what they called themselves started with but as the fight for this social change came into being, they found that is the white son the committee found that unless they were going. They could not be effective unless they brought into this committee some negroes who were carrying on some of this clamor for change and as a result of that they did bring into the committee some of the persons from the NAACP and of course a number of us work with them so most of the time what you would have is that the NAACP and it's group would be starting the fire so to speak and NCCR would come in and try to put out the fire. And usually the discussion would be between the leadership and the representatives from the MCCR. What MCCR would usually do as soon as there was a confrontation or problem, just take for instance the hotel they would go out and get some of the hotel men to call the hotel men people together, they would appoint a committee to go and talk to the hotel group and that committee would come and talk to MCCR along with NAACP and then on that basis then they would try to work out some kind of an agreement.

David Yellin- Now they being, Ed Orgill and who else.

Jesse H. Turner- It would be the members of the MCCR, well some of the members of the MCCR as I can recall were Ed Orgill, Lucius Birch, Frank Aldren, Ed Nieman, Carl

Carson, (Muffled), (Muffled) Jones, then of course you had the negro members, there were some negro members, now those were not all the members, Bert Ferguson, those are just some I can think of now. What you did have, I sat on the committee and Dr. Smith, and reverend Kyles and I believe on the committee Mr. Orgill and Mr. Price, and those are some of the negros I can think of.

David Yellin- And it was done generally in conferences, arranged meetings between and among all you people?

Jesse H. Turner- That's right.

David Yellin- And then they went ahead and organized whichever group or at least talked to the hotel owners.

Jesse H. Turner- Whatever group and that particular group they would find somebody, who would be the best one to talk in that particular group, and then they would get that person and they would use that for the basis of trying to enlarge the support in that particular element in that community.

David Yellin- And so they would be as effective as they could be but they would at least do something?

Jesse H. Turner- That's right.

David Yellin- So that you might say in Memphis the establishment was reachable.

Jesse H. Turner- That's true and I think this. I think that the reason we use the MCCR which was not an official, actually MCCR was a human relations commission in essence that is what it turned out to be but it was unofficial. And I think that they used it incidentally they worked in connection with the schools and desegregation of the schools down there in fact they worked in connection in most of the areas in which we have worked in, they have served as an intermediary between negros and whites so to speak, I think that as I said one reason I suppose that they worked at that time, was knowing our form of government we had our commission form and the commission perhaps would not, I think perhaps they had some fears as well as not the commission would vote for a human relation council. But also this MCCR also worked with the elected official. Although the elected officials, they would invite them in at various times as individuals incidentally and to work with them. But it never had the official sanction of the government body but they work with them unofficially.

David Yellin- Now would you say this is an effective way to work, preferable to picketing and using the force of numbers in some way even a nonviolent way?

Jesse H. Turner- No, well I think this, well let me put it this way they were only effective because of the fact that someone was out stirring up trouble. I do not think the organization was as effective as it should have been in that we negros on there in particular the NAACP took the position that the MCCR should have gone out and

looked for errors or racial discrimination rather than waiting until we start find and put it out. Now it may have been though if you look back at it at that particular time its ideas were good and its objectives were good, of course its objectives would not stand in this day and time because when the fire starts now it is too big for them to put it out and they ought to be trying from getting the fire started. Now I do not and I might have said maybe at that day and time it did an effective job.

David Yellin- I think it is important to judge it in that day and time.

Jesse H. Turner- Yeah at that day in time yeah because then as I said, we were always technically speaking they were always trying to find some way, in other words they did try to find some way to placate both sides. Primarily and maybe unfortunately, but they were not nearly as concerned with sovereign (muffled) they were more concerned with trying to keep violence from starting in the community. This was their primary, this was their primary purpose.

David Yellin- Somebody had said through the years that their primary purpose in Memphis was not to make waves.

Jesse H. Turner- Well I think perhaps that is true.

David Yellin- And not so much what the water was like.

Jesse H. Turner- That is probably so.

David Yellin- So that in essence they did not go out and take the initiative, only when you started the fires as you say.

Jesse H. Turner- No.....That's right.

David Yellin- Which you really don't mean literally, you are speaking figuratively.

Jesse H. Turner- Yes that's true, yes, yes,

David Yellin- You had to prod them and you had to say look here's this and you better do something about it.

Jesse H. Turner- Yes.

David Yellin- Do you now even look back and think maybe if they had looked ahead and taken the initiative could they have done it in other words?

Jesse H. Turner- Well I think that they could have, I think they could have taken more initiative then they did take. And now let me say this, probably in a real sense they couldn't have taken them because maybe they could not have gotten those people that they did get to come and work with them. Now this is probably so because as I can recall in the initial, work of the MCCR that their idea was that they should only work in connection with public facilities. Taxpayers, I am talking about public facilities in the sense of that which is owned by the taxpayers. For instance they worked readily let's say with desegregating the library, the busses the parks

and the playgrounds. But they were, there was some that were violently opposed to working with say telling a store that he had to desegregate his facilities. So I am saying they first after the, after we got to the era, got to the acceptance that they should work in the area of public facilities, taxpaying public facilities then they (muffled) and recognized that they had to work into the in air of the stores and incidentally there was one man who perhaps was instrumental I think in that he is a man by the name of Mr. Sam Bloom from Dallas. I don't know what, he had some connection with the federated stores. I think that he probably did as much as one man in settling with them out there that they had the responsibility there to work as in the air of private business.

David Yellin- The Goldsmith's here.

Jesse H. Turner- That's right, that's right. And then as I said they finally got over in that particular area you see.

David Yellin- An outside agitator.

Jesse H. Turner- Well yes, I think he was an outside agitator to the extent that he was interested in his store here, so I guess you could state that he was a...but from that then they moved over into these other areas so I am saying that the committee did not initially intend to go as far as it did go in those areas that it did it perhaps did a fine job from the initial stage in it.

David Yellin- Well now how do you account therefore in the same token for the ability you might say of the negro community to go along with this?

Jesse H. Turner- Well I think, well you must remember at that particular time, Memphis was moving ahead at about the same pace as, well as the country in general. I think at that time, it might have moved ahead farther in some areas, then some for instance I think we got our theatres open long before most of the theatres were open. They got the hotels open and I am just talking about in a limited sort of way, more than most of the hotels there, so then at that particular time because of the...(Tape End).