

SS052.mp3

Tom Beckner- Fred let's start off if we could, if you could give a biographical sketch some of which I already know, but let's put it on tape you know where you are from and where you went to school, how you happened to be involved in this thing as you were.

Fred Williams- Well I am from Kingsport Tennessee. I went to Diamond's Middle High School in Kingsport, and East Tennessee State University in Johnson City 4 years and I got a degree in biology in 1965 and started medical school in March of 1966. I have been in medical school since then and that is how I happened just by chance to be here right now because I was at, I was working at St. Joseph's hospital the night all this happened.

Tom Beckner- Now were you a, what were you, what service were you working on. You were a 4th term student then.

Fred Williams- Yes I was a 4th term student and I was in medicine at school but I was working at St. Joe as an extern and I worked every 4th night over there. I just happened to be on what they call floor call, or second call. Which means you just do medial tasks on the floor, like start iv's that the nurses can't start and read skin tests and stuff. This job also includes surgery call. So if there are any emergency surgery in the night we are to go up and assist and do whatever. We actually scrub if needed. We assist and do whatever needs to be done, mostly holding retractors and stuff like that nothing big.

Tom Beckner- What was going on if you can remember before any of this, the excitement got started. Do you remember what you were doing say at, what time did you get to the hospital that day?

Fred Williams- I got to the hospital about 5:45. A quarter of six I guess and I went to eat. That is what I usually do I go and sign in, then I go to eat, and then I go upstairs and I go into the interns lounge and there will be a department up there and that is where the externs stay. There are three beds in this one room and there is a television. So I sat down about 6:00 maybe 10 after six and I started watching rawhide. It is a western on TV. Just as it was about to end about 6:15 or 6:20, I don't really know, they made an announcement that Martin Luther King had been shot. They didn't know any details so they sent us, well they put the show back on. We didn't even think anything of it.

Tom Beckner- Before you get too far Fred, is there a shift change or something like that, you said you just came on?

Fred Williams- Well the medical students are supposed to sign in the ones that work nights. The night externs sign in at 5:00 and they work until 8:00 the next morning, but we rarely get there before 5:30 and we usually leave at 7:30 the next morning.

Tom Beckner- But this would be true only for the med students?

Fred Williams- I don't think anybody else, the nursing shift, they work 3 to 11.

Unknown Male Interviewer- So the administrative people...

Fred Williams- They get off at 5 or 4:30 or something.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Probably as early as they can.

Tom Beckner- At the time you came in the hospital as a business operation was closed down.

Fred Williams- Yeah it was settled down for the night basically. There may have been the few, well there was a few people there.

Tom Beckner- What time do they feed?

Fred Williams- This was a hospital cafeteria just for employees and such as that and they open from 5 and they stay open to 6:30.

Tom Beckner- How about as far as the patients go when were they fed?

Fred Williams- Patients are being fed about this time.

Tom Beckner- I see so and this is a busy time in the hospital?

Fred Williams- As far as dinner is concerned yeah, as far as nursing and doctors there are no rounds or anything so it is more of maintenance business rather than professional. I don't know exactly how busy they do get, they don't seem to be overworked at that time, not a rush hour in other words.

Tom Beckner- Was anybody else watching television with you?

Fred Williams- Yes there were two other externs there I believe, yeah there sure was.

Tom Beckner- Do you remember their names?

Fred Williams- One boy was I my class Rusty Sooter and he was working on the same call that I was and there was another boy name John Fitzgerald and he works mostly during the day and he has since left town.

Tom Beckner- Was there any reaction to this announcement?

Fred Williams- Well yeah, you know you just sit there and you don't have too many feelings you hear it and say well that's, I figured he would get it sometime like that. I really don't even know what I said, I just listened to it. I remember reading in the paper that morning that they didn't want him to come back because they couldn't guarantee his safety, or they said something to the effect that we will do our best if you start another march but we fear for your safety.

Tom Beckner- So this wasn't really too great a surprise?

Fred Williams- It is a surprise every time someone gets shot. The first thing I thought is I really didn't think he was, when you hear this you don't really think he is dead you just think he is wounded, well you don't know. They just said he was shot there is no other details.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Been shot through the arm or something.

Fred Williams- They couldn't have been shot at.

Tom Beckner- And then Rawhide came back on?

Fred Williams- Rawhide came back on and it never did, they came back on before the end of the show. Before the end of the show they were about the time of the end of the show the door was shut, but I heard some nurses or somebody saying out front that they brought him down here or something but I didn't pay any attention to it because they didn't know and I knew they didn't know it was just a rumor.

Tom Beckner- You didn't hear any sirens then or anything?

Fred Williams- No. No sir.

Tom Beckner- So how did you find out that indeed he came to St. Joseph's?

Fred Williams- Well I walked out the door and somebody said something, you know you could hear people saying something about Martin Luther King being shot. Then this nurse came up to me and said is it true? I said it is true he is shot, I don't know whether...she said is it true that they brought him in, I said I don't know. I said I haven't heard anything and I knew I was on surgery call.

Tom Beckner- Did you wait until Rawhide went off?

Fred Williams- I never associated the fact that when he was shot, it never even entered my mind or anyone else's mind that it was around, that he might even be brought there or that there was even a possibility that he would be brought there. So one of the nurses said somebody said he is here, and I said, I don't know. She said, well why don't you find out, and I said, I usually change from my street clothes to scrubs and I work in my scrub suit, and so I said I have to go up and get my scrub suit and when I get up to surgery I will find out. Well when I got up to surgery and I put on my scrub suit and I walked back to the nurses desk back in the emergency, surgery room, surgery hall. She said Martin Luther King is down in the emergency room and they have us on standby. I didn't think they would call me to scrub for this but I was at least on surgery call so I would get to see it.

Tom Beckner- Surgery is on the what floor?

Fred Williams- 6th floor, emergency room is on the ground floor.

Tom Beckner- And what they had called up to surgery?

Fred Williams- They had notified surgery and I asked the nurse are they going to bring him up here and she said no. She said, they may but they hadn't said anything yet and I realized if they didn't bring him up...

Tom Beckner- You probably wouldn't be able to...

Fred Williams- Well I realized it was pretty serious if they couldn't get him up to the emergency room. So about that time the phone rang and the nurse said, she said, they needed a surgery lamp. Then she hung up and she looked around at all these colored women up there....

Tom Beckner- Yeah, do you know who the nurse was?

Fred Williams- No, maybe I could point her out but I don't know her name. So she said, would you mind taking this lamp down, you know all these colored girls up there, they were just attendants and all that, maids or something they clean the rooms and they are pretty upset.

Tom Beckner- And were they?

Fred Williams- Yeah, well you couldn't really tell, they were sort of hiding it but you could tell something was wrong.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Were they going about their business?

Fred Williams- Well,

Unknown Male Interviewer- They were sort of standing around?

Fred Williams- They weren't standing around they were working. So I got this lamp and we pushed it out...(Tape Glitch). So I took this lamp and I went to the elevator and waited on the elevator, and waited on the elevator and it took a long time. So I pushed the lamp on the elevator and took it down to the basement which is directly below. By the time I was on the elevator one of the nurses said, one of the other externs had seen him and he said he was shot through the head, you know half his face was gone. Well I still didn't put too much stock in that because you know how rumors are. So I got off, soon as the elevator door opened there was I guess oh a lot of people the room was just jam packed.

Tom Beckner- On the elevator up and...

Fred Williams- On the basement floor, right and the elevator right across the hall from the emergency room door, the swinging doors.

Tom Beckner- This is all (muffled).

Fred Williams- Yeah this is a big lamp as big as....somebody said make way, they must have thought I was a doctor because I had this scrub suit on. Everybody got out of my way and lights flashed and I heard cameras.

Tom Beckner- Quite an amusement, I didn't know who it was but I remember this scrub suited figure walking through the doors...

Unknown Male Interviewer- With a big lamp...

Fred Williams- Yeah they recognized me by my bald spot everybody at home. I was on national TV. All three networks. I pushed that in the room and there were a lot of cops back there of course and a lot of doctors too. That is about all there was back there, no newsmen at all. Cops lining the door with guns and everything.

Tom Beckner- Now were they inside?

Fred Williams- Inside the emergency room, not inside the actual treatment room but they were inside....

Tom Beckner- The emergency area?

Fred Williams- Yeah, this was off limits to reporters because it is several rooms back there. So I walk in and there this big old colored guy (muffled). He as big, he was 6'6 or 6'8 or something like that and he was guarding the door while they were in there. So he let me in and there was 20 or 30 doctors in there...

Tom Beckner- Really that many?

Fred Williams- Well they weren't doing anything. There was another extern in there, the extern that was working the emergency room and all he was doing was he was starting an IV. I saw him laying there, the report was right, half his head was gone.

Tom Beckner- Was he, Fred do you remember had they taken his, he had a coat on when he got shot. His clothes were off, he was undressed. He as covered with a sheet up to his chest but he was undressed. There were several doctors in there, Dr. Joyam, Dr. Riggs and a couple of the residents, Dr. Brown, and Dr. Borasso who actually pronounced him dead officially.

Tom Beckner- Dr. Borasso, what is he?

Fred Williams- He is a surgeon I believe.

Tom Beckner- Is he chief surgeon?

Fred Williams- No he is just....the chief surgeon is Dr. Peon.

Tom Beckner- I see.

Fred Williams- I don't know if he was there or not, he probably was. But Dr. Borasso, he is a surgeon who just happened to be in the emergency room when they brought him in. You said something about a shift change well the extern on the, that worked the emergency room that night he is a 6 term medical student now. He

wasn't even in the hospital when he heard that Martin Luther King had been shot. He was in the parking lot, he was just getting ready for work.

Tom Beckner- He heard it on his car radio or something.

Fred Williams- Yeah. He didn't know that they were going to bring him there either. And when he walked into the emergency room, no one was there, except Martin Luther King was there, just got there. He walked in and Dr. Borasso had just come in. I heard him say that he had just come in for an aspirin and they said they needed a doctor and he went and looked at him.

Tom Beckner- Borasso came in for an aspirin?

Fred Williams- Yeah he just happened to be down at the emergency room to get an aspirin or something and they said you know will you come in right now please and he walked in there. Also, I remember when I was watching television I kept hearing all these calls for the surgeons, the residents and a couple of the other surgeons and they were all stat calls. Stat meaning immediately or emergency you know.

Tom Beckner- That is key.

Fred Williams- If you get a stat call like they will say Dr. Brown, Dr. Rufus Brown stat call. That means get to it right then, immediately, or emergency, it is an emergency.

Tom Beckner- Do you know if 6 terms had any trouble getting into the building or not?

Fred Williams- No they didn't nobody had any trouble at that time. If it wasn't shortly after that everybody had trouble.

Tom Beckner- Somebody told us that the police got there before King did.

Fred Williams- They may have.

Tom Beckner- Said they just really surrounded the building.

Fred Williams- Since then they have given us I guess they have had some problems with the identification because they did for awhile there for a couple hours no one could leave the building, no one could come in. Since then they have issued those cards right there.

Tom Beckner- ID cards?

Fred Williams- Yeah, and it is just for emergencies like that.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Key person in the hospital disaster procedure.

Fred Williams- Yeah it is really something.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Well it could be you know....

Fred Williams- If they ever have another one..

Unknown Male Interviewer- Or if any type of real serious calamity occurred.

Fred Williams- So after that I didn't leave the emergency room, but I left the immediate room he was in. Because they, when somebody walked in and they said who ordered that and nobody said anything, they were talking about the lamp. So there was a lot of people in there so one of the surgery residents said let's everybody clear out. So everybody cleared out and we stayed back behind the nurse's desk. This is back inside the emergency room, off limits to reporters and everything. We stayed there and they wouldn't let us leave.

Tom Beckner- Did they need the lamp?

Fred Williams- No, they didn't even use it but somebody had called for it. They could have used it because the lamps down there aren't that sharp. They could have used it, then one of the other doctors, Dr. Riggs he is an OBGYN man. He came up...

Tom Beckner- Now what is that?

Fred Williams- He is an obstetrics guy. Baby doctor, woman doctor. He was down there and he said he got two or three of us externs and he just said remember, don't say a word until it is officially because....

Tom Beckner- Well that would indicate that people like you who would recognize the seriousness of the wound and what not would know that he didn't have a chance...

Fred Williams- Well I could have walked out right there and this was, I don't know, I know that I got one of the original emergency room slips that they brought them in on, they threw it away and I picked it up.

Tom Beckner- Do you still have it?

Fred Williams- Yeah, I should have brought it, I forgot it. I just now thought of it.

Tom Beckner- If you could somehow what we can do is just make a copy and give you the original back, but we are also collecting a lot of paraphernalia like that for the archives.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Jonny mentioned that you had a EKG.

Fred Williams- EKG? I got one...it is about that much it shows two contractions that is how it goes. (muffled)

Unknown Male Interviewer- Well that would probably be very close to the last ones I would assume.

Fred Williams- They weren't eh last ones because the last strip that they had, now I am sure they took some official ones where they cut them and plastic or reproduce

them, put them in a chart. I am sure they did that because that is standard procedure for an EKG, but this is just to see if he is alive. They took a strip oh as maybe as long as this tape recorder and I just got this much off of it and that wasn't and of course the last two feet were like that you know...straight line. So these were, the way they looked exactly liked this and that is not even a complex there, that just shows that there is a electrical, it shows that there is no organized beating of the heart it just...

Unknown Male Interviewer- Generalized mushwork...

Fred Williams- Just contraction that is inherit of the heart tissue you know how it contracts by itself. You can take it and isolate it, you can cut a heart out of any dog or anything and sit it on the table and it will do like that, and that's what that shows.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Is this fibrillation, is it (muffled).

Fred Williams- Yeah this is what you might call fibrillation, fibrillation on the EKG, there wasn't even that much. There wasn't even when a person is fibrillating that is a sign he is on his way out, in about 30 seconds or something like that you know. He didn't even have fibrillation , just like that. (Muffled)

Tom Beckner- Coined the quite detailed problem in declaring somebody dead now. Because of the heart transplant situation and what not. Did that occur to you or anything?

Fred Williams- The emergency room slip that I got just had his name and his chief complaint, gun shot wound and all of that and thrown it away. Since then they recopied it and it says everything that was done, but the one I got says on the chief complaint, it says comment, expired at 6:28. His official time of death is 7:15.

Tom Beckner- 7:05.

Fred Williams- Now see 6:28 is when he came in, well he...

Tom Beckner- As we understand it the shot was fired at 6:05 and of course everybody says there was a rather long wait for the ambulance probably because any wait at all would have seemed long and the very quickness with everything with happened, it seemed like the very quickest he could get there was 6:20 if everything was just right, every light and everything was just perfect. And so, that is probably about right 6:28.

Fred Williams- 6:28 yeah that is about the time he came in and one they come back through the door and they have a clock, the nurse that is her job to put it down.

Tom Beckner- Rawhide would have gone off at 6:30.

Fred Williams- 6:30.

Tom Beckner- You had time to go up?

Fred Williams- Well I heard he was shot about 6:15.

Tom Beckner- Right but you stayed until the end of the program and then you went upstairs.

Fred Williams- Oh he had been there awhile before I had gotten down there because they had so many reporters there and they had you know Abernathy and all his bunch was there and they had cops were all over the place by the time I ever got downstairs. They never did question me going into the emergency room.

Tom Beckner- On that admittance slip is there an arrival time?

Fred Williams- No. Doesn't say that.

Tom Beckner- But it does say...

Fred Williams- She just says in comments expires at 6:28 pm, I think that is what it says, I know it was 6 something.

Tom Beckner- Fred why would she do this?

Fred Williams- This is routine.

Tom Beckner- Yeah but does somebody tell her that ?

Fred Williams- I am sure that they did because she sure...

Tom Beckner- She didn't do that on her own.

Fred Williams- No somebody must have said, I tell you what. This is my unofficial opinion.

Tom Beckner- Fine you are recording your unofficial opinion.

Fred Williams- After seeing his wound, if that shot was fired at 6:05 he was dead at...(Tape Glitch).

Unknown Male Interviewer- Go head you said if the shot as fired at 6:05...

Fred Williams- Yeah I mean the second that shot was fired there was nothing that could have been done.

Tom Beckner- Was that because the bullet or fragment of it severed the...

Fred Williams- That is what Dr. Francisco I believe I heard or read in the paper that he died two minutes after the shot because it severed his cervical cord, spinal cord in his neck. Well also I am sure it did sever his spinal cord but it also took out his carotid artery, about that much of it. The carotid artery other than what comes off the aorta, well that is about the largest...

Tom Beckner- Next to the...(muffled) How do you spell that?

Fred Williams- Carotid, C-A-R-O-T-I-D. About the size of your thumb.

Tom Beckner- This is in the neck, is there one on each side?

Fred Williams- Yeah there is one on each side.

Unknown Male Interviewer- It is the big thumper right here.

Fred Williams- It goes, well the carotid artery is in a sheath of connective tissue and inside that sheath is the vegas nerve, this is a nerve coming out, one of the most important nerves in the body comes off the brain goes to the heart, it goes to the intestines, it ...

Tom Beckner- And does it control these motor activities?

Fred Williams- Well the heart would certainly beat without the vegas nerve. The vegas nerve seems to control it.

Tom Beckner- If I didn't have a vegas nerve what would be wrong with me?

Fred Williams- You wouldn't be able to talk and your heart would, you would certainly have a fast heart rate and you have no intestinal control, like indigestion and all that. It affects all that.

Tom Beckner- lose voice and intestinal control, anything else?

Fred Williams- (Muffled)

Tom Beckner- It is sort of interesting because, well there was quite bit of talk that had King recovered, he would have never been normal.

Fred Williams- No he certainly couldn't have been normal. You had a carotid on the other side and a lot of times, it is not uncommon operation to sever the carotid artery. Vegotomy they call it. Or not the carotid artery, the vegas nerve. The vegotomy they call it. You will see how it controls from the other side.

Tom Beckner- Oh I see how does this affect voice?

Fred Williams- Well you have a branch coming off the vegas nerve goes to your voice box, larynx, vocal cords.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Does it paralyze one side or half of your...

Fred Williams- Oh yeah if you lose half of them you will, like if someone did a thyroid operation, where they took out your thyroid, and one of the most, the biggest hazard of that operation is cutting that branch of the vegas nerve. It is real small and it is in a lot of tissue and if they ever cut it the person is permanently hoarse.

Tom Beckner- But then this wouldn't necessarily be fatal?

Fred Williams- No but losing the carotid artery certainly would be. That's what I would...he extanguinated, you could extanguinate, if someone cuts your carotid artery you know that is what kills you when you cut your throat, you bleed to death. He would extanguinate in just a matter of minutes, one or two minutes.

Tom Beckner- All of this is new but sort of interesting. The carotid artery and the spinal cord. Which would have been...

Fred Williams- Now the spinal cord to be able to have any nerve conduction below your neck goes through the spinal cord. That includes sensory, sensations, motor, any movements, it does not however include reflexes. You can still have reflexes when a person has a, but it does include coordination, in other words you shut your eyes and you could tell what position you are in.

Unknown Male Interviewer- As far as he would have been, if he had not been inflicted such great damage he would have been paralyzed completely.

Fred Williams- Paralyzed, but see he would not only have been paralyzed but his respirations, the muscles that involved breathing were paralyzed and that is why Dr. Francisco said he certainly died within two minutes, it is a theoretical question of when is he dead. When his heart beats last? Who knows, who is to say?

Tom Beckner- Did you talk to Jerry Francisco?

Fred Williams- No I didn't. This is just what I read in the newspaper.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Fred did they do an EEG?

Fred Williams- No they didn't do an EEG, not that I know of. They did an EKG, and they tried external heart massage and they tried, they took a lot of x-rays. They tried to give him fluids and give him I am sure, they tried to give him some ephenephrin, some adrenalin you know, keep his heart going. But the thing about it is even if his muscle, his respiration muscles were paralyzed and everything else was paralyzed he lost all that, according to where that bullet went he would have lost all sensations, touch, all of his motor activities and I mean all of them. Everything except reflexes. He still didn't have any blood, he lost all of it.

Tom Beckner- Through the artery.

Fred Williams- Yeah and it also took off his jaw, his jawbone was completely gone but you can live without that.

Tom Beckner- Well that is what I was getting at which killed him?

Fred Williams- Oh I don't know.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Really which would have done it first.

Fred Williams- I think the official thing, now I may be wrong but I think the official was the severance of the cervical cord. And if that didn't do it...

Tom Beckner- This would have anyway.

Fred Williams- Oh without a doubt.

Unknown Male Interviewer- In other words, if it hadn't been one it would be the other.

Fred Williams- Yeah there would have been several things.

Tom Beckner- But if the bullet hadn't gone on and severed the spinal cord...

Fred Williams- The bleeding, he would have died anyway. One way that he would not have died in my opinion is if he had been on the operating table when it happened and they were ready to repair it.

Tom Beckner- I see.

Fred Williams- That is if it didn't cut the cord. Because I mean he would have bled to death in just a few seconds, I mean a minute he would have died. I don't know exactly how much blood per second flows through the carotid artery but it's a lot.

Tom Beckner- Couple of conflicting stories and really I think probably what we do is..

Fred Williams- That is what I said..

Tom Beckner- Some historian can make up his mind which one they want in the future. One of them is when King is shot he fell and stared, looked at Abernathy. The other one is he fell and moved his legs. Would this have been possible?

Fred Williams- If it severed his cords? Oh sure.

Tom Beckner- It would have been?

Fred Williams- Sure I guess.

Tom Beckner- But would it have been probable?

Fred Williams- I don't know. I really don't.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Was the spinal cord completely?

Fred Williams- I don't know, see if it was completely severed it could still be possible, deep tendon reflexes would still be intact. But I don't think, I may not be right but unless that bullet hit it right dead center that it would have gotten all of the spinal cord.

Unknown Male Interviewer- It has to go through a lot before it gets to the core.

Fred Williams- Yeah and the bullet fragmented too. I wouldn't think that the whole spinal cord was cut in two just like that. You know if there was just a little bit

connecting those are nerve fibers, depending on where it is it can carry sensation or motor activities. So I don't know what happened with him at the time that he got shot, but I am sure that he would have kicked a little bit.

Tom Beckner- The hard thing for people to understand, and two or three other people said well he is probably dead, "dead", the minute he hit the balcony after the shot. But then the hard thing to understand now is between that saying dead like that and then a medical pronouncement.

Fred Williams- Well this is just one person's opinion. Everybody has their own different ideas on death,. I personally feel like human life is a little bit more than the sum total of its parts. In other words when a person is dead, his heart is still living, tissue is still alive, his eyes are still alive, his kidneys are still alive, they can be transplanted, t hey can work in some you know. So those cells are not dead. You can get a heart to beat, a person could lose his whole head, it is possible to get shot through the head, you know it is your brainstem not your brain that keeps you alive, that is your vital functions, that is the center of your vital functions, your brainstem not the brain. You know without a brain what kind of a person are you? You are just a vegetable you know. As far as I am concerned as a person he is dead, as a biological life...

Tom Beckner- You mean in totality, I see.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Martin Luther King he was dead when that bullet hit him.

Fred Williams- Yeah no doubt about it. If you had seen it you would have, well there is just no question.

Tom Beckner- I understand it was a massive wound.

Fred Williams- I never did, I never seen a wound like this. Actually I don't know if I have ever seen a gunshot wound other than some good photographs, Dr. Francisco has a bunch of them. He showed me on time.

Tom Beckner- I imagine those are some grizzly photographs.

Fred Williams- This was grizzly enough. I didn't realize that it would have done this much damage. I can sort of realize now or sort of imagine how Kennedy was when he got shot. You know you hear the cop behind his car got splattered with blood and there is some brain tissue on the car and, well I believe it.

Unknown Male Interviewer- You know where the entry of the bullet actually was?

Fred Williams- Well when I saw the wound I couldn't quite figure it out, but the way I figure, he is looking over the edge of the balcony the bullet is coming at an angle about like this so it hit him about right here on his chin and his....

(Muffled).

Fred Williams- Right around the zygomatic bone right here, this big prominence.

Tom Beckner- That angle would be about 30 degrees, a 30 degree elevated angle.

Fred Williams- It wouldn't be more than 30 degrees, and he was looking down so that is how it got all this. Took his jaw bone off, went through, he still had a piece of intact skin right here and then he had another big hole right here. It got his collar bone and the apex, and he had a big hole here and a big hole here and one little piece of skin. Here is where you could see his teeth and his tongue and his jaw bone was completely gone.

Tom Beckner- But the uh, what do you call this protuberance the..

Fred Williams- The zygomatic arch bone.

Tom Beckner- But it hit that did it?

Fred Williams- It either hit it, or right below it, I don't recall. I know that right at his parotid gland makes you salivate. That is what gets swollen when you get the mumps. It went right, all that was gone and there again he had some more nerve losses because of his facial nerve, and your that is another cranial nerve and your trigeminal nerve is another cranial nerve. All these go right to the face, just like putting your hand like these were major branches.

Tom Beckner- And all these were gone?

Unknown Male Interviewer- Which would have ruined him, he couldn't blink his eyes if I remember right...

Fred Williams- It was his lower lid.

Unknown Male Interviewer- He had droop eye didn't he.

Fred Williams- Yeah.

Unknown Male Interviewer- And he wouldn't have been able to move the right side of his face at all.

Fred Williams- Well he would have any muscles.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Or what was left of it.

Fred Williams- Plus the fact he would have lost his sensations. So I don't know what kind of a plastic job they could have done.

Tom Beckner- We had one fellow, Billy Kyles, who was there and Abernathy ran out and Kyles watched him and then he ran in for the phone but he says I guess he was passing just right moments after the shot, he was sort of convinced that King was looking, actually looking and he indicates seeing Abernathy. Would that have been

possible? This idea would the lids of the eyes would that have any, would he give that impression?

Fred Williams- Well I guess if he got the facial his eye would have been like this, that his lower lid sort of drooped a little bit. The facial is served the muscles of facial expression and not the ones of chewing.

(Muffled-all talking)

Unknown Male Interviewer- Muscles involved in chewing, these are deep muscles. So he would have had a, because this nerve here the obicularis oculi closes like that.

Tom Beckner- I didn't know that. (Laughs)

Tom Beckner- But I will take your word for it..

Fred Williams- See he didn't have anything he lost his nerves, he lost his muscles, his lost the whole thing, he lost his skin, he lost his jawbone, lost his teeth, a few of them I am sure. I don't know if he could have seen or not if he did it wasn't for more than a second. This is sort of a...

Unknown Male Interviewer- It would take a second or two for him to lapse into unconsciousness wouldn't it?

Fred Williams- Yeah, I'm sure for a second he knew that he was you know.

Tom Beckner- Would there be any pain involved?

Fred Williams- Probably not. I don't know. I wouldn't think there would be but if their was it wouldn't last but you know just like that. Maybe something like a sharp blow or something, I have no idea. No one has ever lived to tell of it.

Tom Beckner- Well and so then they ask most of the doctors to leave the room did they?

Fred Williams- Yeah they asked a lot of them none of the big doctors. All the doctors came in and looked at him and everything. They were standing there behind the counter saying well what are we going to do, who is going to tell them and this kind of stuff. Who is going to make the announcement.

Unknown Male Interviewer- This was still right back off the emergency room wasn't it?

Fred Williams- Yeah this was still just. I guess we were back there about 30 minutes.

Tom Beckner- Do you know Abernathy? Or didn't you know Abernathy?

Fred Williams- No, on my information slip it says information given by Ralph Abernathy and I didn't know him and I am sure I saw him while I was there. As a

matter of fact, I know I saw him but I couldn't have pointed him out there were a lot of negroes there.

Tom Beckner- But at the, I guess the only reason I am wondering, he was apparently in the emergency room at that time.

Fred Williams- No,no. Well he was in the emergency room, waiting room, emergency waiting room where everybody else was, no one but the medical personnel was back there.

Unknown Male Interviewer- What was the type of activity going on back there?

Fred Williams- Everybody just standing there thinking, what's going to happen?

Unknown Male Interviewer- What about the, during the, when you first got there what were the personnel in the emergency room doing?

Fred Williams- They were running. They were, they were excited and everything and you know you are right off of supper and everything is routine and all of a sudden this is thrown...you don't even realize the implications. I didn't even realize that it was such history at the time.

Tom Beckner- Yeah, so fast.

Fred Williams- It was just later, actually weeks later that I realized. They took him out of the hospital at 9:00 that night. At 9:00 that night so I went upstairs and watched it on television, saw it.

Tom Beckner- Before you get too further, nobody left I guess? None of the doctors.

Fred Williams- No one was allowed to leave for awhile.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Who told you this?

Fred Williams- One of the doctors, I am not really sure.

Tom Beckner- Who was in charge? Was anybody in charge?

Fred Williams- No no one was there. No one was in charge.

Tom Beckner- There is no senior position or anything like this.,

Fred Williams- Well there is the head of medicine, there are different heads of different departments, medicine, surgery, and all that, but they weren't there. At least if they were there I didn't know it. Dr. Peon may have been there. This is a private hospital, its not like Gaston where Dr. Stollaman is the head of everything. These are just private physicians. They let Dr. Joya and Dr. Barasso, like I said he is a surgeon I believe. He was working with them and Dr. Joya went in there and looked at him. Someone sent me upstairs at that time for a headlamp. It is some sort of a

neurosurgical tool you put a lamp on your head and it is like a miner's hat almost. When I got back down there they didn't need it either.

Tom Beckner- One of the doctors asked for this?

Fred Williams- Yeah one of the doctors.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Was this just to...

Fred Williams- Well everybody was working real fast and trying this and that, but I mean the only reason they were trying it was because of who it was, not that, so they can officially say they did everything they could. Well no one could have done anything for him.

Tom Beckner- Did the emergency room, because as I take it the evening wears on in the hospital the emergency room picks up for a period somewhere along in there.

Fred Williams- Yeah because everyone who gets sick during the night they don't have a doctor to go to so they go to the emergency room.

Tom Beckner- So was there a stack up?

Fred Williams- There were some other patients in there and I don't know what happened to them, all I know is there was a guy out in the hall, I can't remember now I think he was in a car wreck or something. Then there was another kid up there in there and they I think eventually let them leave and no one else could come. I mean anyone who was coming to the emergency room had to go to Methodist or Baptist.

Tom Beckner- Oh they just closed the emergency room to other patients.

Fred Williams- Closed the whole and a lot of the nurses two-thirds of the nurses worked double shifts, they didn't go home at 11:00, they worked on it till 7 the next day.

Tom Beckner- Why is that?

Fred Williams- Transition, earlier they weren't allowed to leave, and no one could come in. But they lifted that earlier and of course they had police guard all night. We thought really, we didn't know if they were going to attack the hospital or if there were going to be riots downtown or anything. Turned out to be a relatively quiet night compared to what we were expecting.

Tom Beckner- Where did you go to get the headlamp?

Fred Williams- Back up to surgery. They got the material up there.

Tom Beckner- And then you came back down and the announcement had not been made then?

Fred Williams- Oh yeah-well no the announcement had not been made that he was dead. Oh I don't know if it had, but I am sure it hadn't or they wouldn't have sent me after the lamp.

Tom Beckner- What is that guy's name?

Unknown Male Interviewer- Hess.

Fred Williams- Mr. Hess, did you all talk to him. He is the man who made the announcement.

Tom Beckner- And where you there when this was done?

Fred Williams- Yeah I was standing right behind him when they made the announcement.

Tom Beckner- Do you remember anything about, can you describe that scene?

Fred Williams- There is a lot of people. There was this desk and he was standing behind the desk with all these reporters out there and the lights were shining on him and I was standing off, he was standing right by the door going behind the desk and I was standing right to his left behind him. He made the announcement that at 7:05 pm, April the 4th 1968 Martin Luther King was pronounced dead. Formal announcement type stuff.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Did he answer any questions at all?

Fred Williams- I don't think he did. He said there will be time for that later or something. Now he didn't stand there long if he did he did answer questions.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Then he held a news conference later, maybe an hour later or something.

Fred Williams- Well that's the way he did it.

Tom Beckner- D you remember the reaction to this announcement?

Fred Williams- Well I think everybody expected it. They didn't know whether, they didn't pronounce him dead for an hour, hour and a half while they were in there, and I am sure there was speculation when they saw me pushing that surgery lamp in. Whatever how people would think, they are going to do surgery on him down there, or something like that.

Unknown Male Interviewer- I guess too like most hospitals with people sort of officially going in and out word had probably filtered out of the extent of his injuries.

Fred Williams- That's just it they heard it on the news, one network on the news announced he was dead I know before the official statement because they were still working on him. What had happened somebody had said like I would have probably said to myself, somebody probably said it to themselves and some newsman overheard him, he's a dead man. My goodness look at his head, so the news was out

that he was dead on one network somebody said. I guess even before I got the surgery lamp down there or about that time.

Tom Beckner- There was even one report that he walked into the hospital.

Fred Williams- One what?

Tom Beckner- One network that said he walked into the hospital.

Fred Williams- He didn't walk in anywhere.

Tom Beckner- Yup that was obviously wrong. And so after the announcement was made did the crowd leave?

Fred Williams- Not for a while. You know how they mill around and everything, Then of course the cops and the FBI got there a little later. FBI I guess, they took x-rays for a long time.

Unknown Male Interviewer- After....

Fred Williams- Yes, after the announcement.

Tom Beckner- And this was the direction of police authority rather than doctors...

Fred Williams- Yeah I am sure they got, I don't know really. I just know they took a lot of them and a lot were kept.

Tom Beckner- They will show up at the trial I am sure. What is the procedure then Fred on a, and this would be a murder victim is an autopsy in order?

Fred Williams- I think so, I think so and they took him to Gaston where Dr. Francisco does his autopsies, he is county coroner you know.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Do they do them in Gaston?

Fred Williams- Yeah, but it is under lock and key it is not in the regular autopsy room, Dr. Francisco has his own autopsy room, he has two of them I think, two tables. All of the legal stuff is taken there and he does them these aren't for students to watch or anything.

Unknown Male Interviewer- No prosecutors or anything.

Fred Williams- No prosecutors.

Tom Beckner- So this was just normal procedure.

Fred Williams- Yeah this is just because he is a...like I said they didn't take him out of the hospital until about 9:00.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Do you know why they waited that long?

Fred Williams- Things to calm down besides that they did, they wanted to make sure they got a lot of x-rays and they worked on that for you know a while, quite awhile.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Did they do that in the emergency room?

Fred Williams- Yeah portable x-rays and then they had some police director or some police official to look at the body again to make sure they got a professional opinion on the trajectory of the bullet.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Did they take a lot of pictures too, photographs you know?

Fred Williams- I don't remember I am sure they did.

Unknown Male Interviewer- You didn't go back in?

Fred Williams- Yeah I went back in 2 or 3 times, more, I went in with a, the last time I went in one of the surgery residents and Dr. Riggs the OB man I was telling you about went in with some policemen, I don't know who he was, he may have been the particular police in Memphis he was a plainclothesman. Or he may have been FBI but I think he is a local man.

Tom Beckner- You can tell the FBI agents they all look like liars. They are all liars.

Fred Williams- They were explaining the trajectory of the bullet.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Did you hear this explanation?

Fred Williams- Yeah but I wasn't listening too close because I just walked in there and I didn't have any business in there, they looked at me and...

Unknown Male Interviewer- You didn't stand too close?

Fred Williams- Stayed over to the side. No I just wanted to see the wound, I was interested more medically than the official.

Tom Beckner- Fred you don't have any idea do you, what might have happened to King's clothes?

Fred Williams- No idea what so ever.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Do you know if a list of his personal effects was made, you recall?

Fred Williams- I don't ever remember seeing one but I am sure there was, oh I know there was.

Unknown Male Interviewer- I know that normally in a case like this it would be made immediately, but I just wondered if in the excitement...

Fred Williams- Oh yeah a list of his clothes, I am sure it is procedure. I don't know I haven't heard one way or the other what happened to them.

Tom Beckner- Well so it was 9:00 before they moved the body to Gaston.

Fred Williams- Yeah about 9:00, 9:30.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Do you know who moved it? You didn't see it?

Fred Williams- I was upstairs.

Tom Beckner- On your admittance slip it doesn't, anywhere, what we are trying to do is find out who drove the ambulance.

Fred Williams- I don't know.

Tom Beckner- And this wouldn't appear anywhere in hospital records.

Fred Williams- No, I don't even know what ambulance brought him. Sure don't know. You might check with somebody at the Lorraine Motel. They made a monument out of his room have you all seen it?

Tom Beckner- Yes, have you been up there?

Fred Williams- I went up there about a month ago just out of curiosity.

Tom Beckner- Was there anybody left in the halls or anything when they moved the body.

Fred Williams- No, this was after everything had quieted down and they were allowing few people to come here because I know some nurses came in and some left but most of them stayed on to double shift and most of them, the ones who were off and were supposed to come in at 11 didn't, but I am sure some of them did.

Tom Beckner- Did the regular emergency room activity ever be resumed?

Fred Williams- Not that night. I don't think. I know they didn't that night because they had a police guard all night there. They had police guards all night so they didn't have any emergency room activity that night.

Tom Beckner- And the hospital I guess was rather an exciting place that night.

Fred Williams- I went upstairs and watched it on the television when I could. Later on my sister called and she said she had seen me in Pennsylvania.

Tom Beckner- She called from Pennsylvania?

Fred Williams- Yeah so what she did, she called my apartment she heard it was in Memphis so she called my apartment, my room mate was there and he said well he is working tonight. She said, he works at St. Joes and she knew I worked there, so she tried, she said she tried for 2 or 3 hours to call and couldn't get a line and they

did tie up the switchboard at first and they gradually let it back. So she called me back, I got to talk to her about 11:00, 11:30. It was an exciting night. I didn't make it to school the next day. I stayed up most of the night and I just didn't make it the next morning anyhow.

Tom Beckner- Did you see them when they took the body out?

Fred Williams- No I left, I left long before that. I went and looked at the x-rays and not really too much to see.

Tom Beckner- How about the negro aides and this sort of thing.

Fred Williams- They got a little bit upset, some of them did. I don't know though they sort of kept it to themselves, you could tell they were upset.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Most of them are still functioning as workers?

Fred Williams- Most of them you didn't want to give them too much work to do anyhow, it was a touchy situation.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Do you know any patients that became upset about it, or ever hear anything about this?

Fred Williams- No not as far as patients are concerned. I knew as far as the sick patients they still had their problems that night and I still had to take a lot of calls. That is why I was really up all night because I had a lot of calls.

Tom Beckner- Probably many of them didn't know I guess.

Fred Williams- Well then I would go to stick an IV or something and there t hey were watching it. Some of them, some of them didn't.

Tom Beckner- Oh I see. Why would there have been so many doctors in the....

Fred Williams- They were in the building, I am sure no doctor got out of his house to come you know, those were doctors in the building.

Unknown Male Interviewer- A lot were making sort of informal evening rounds, on their way home more or less, after office hours...

Fred Williams- A lot of them do that...after office hours and after surgery, if they are in surgery that afternoon especially with the internist they make evening hours they are around for supper, some of them are. It just depends there is no set schedule. But like I say, every doctor in the building wanted to see him I am sure.

Unknown Male Interviewer- The office building right next door to the hospital? Where the offices are?

Fred Williams- There are a bunch of doctors there and that is where their offices are.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Is Joya's office there do you know?

Fred Williams- Yeah I think so.

Tom Beckner- So the doctors went by out of medical curiosity?

Fred Williams- Yeah I would have if I were allowed in. You know it is just human nature to see what is going on.

Tom Beckner- How many, are these big rooms the treatment rooms?

Fred Williams- About the size of any other hospital emergency room if you have even been in one.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Are they a multi patient rooms where you...

Fred Williams- No one patient per room in all of them. That is one thing Central has.

Tom Beckner- When they, I don't know, what is the procedure from an ambulance, and emergency patient and an ambulance?

Fred Williams- They bring them on a stretcher....

Tom Beckner- A rolling stretcher?

Fred Williams- Yeah and they just swing them on back in there and then the guy at the desk pushes a little button that says patient coming back. The nurse goes out there and sees him and hollers for a doctor, she is the one that puts him in a room and all that.

Tom Beckner- And then is he transferred from that stretcher to a bed?

Fred Williams- To a bed.....to a table I mean.

Tom Beckner- This is what happened in this case?

Fred Williams- I am sure it did.

Tom Beckner- Anything special strike you about that night?

Fred Williams- I was worried about my car it was parked out on the street, I didn't think it would be there in the morning but it was.

Tom Beckner- And nothing happened to it?

Fred Williams- No.

Tom Beckner- Did anything happen to anyone's car?

Fred Williams- Yeah there was some cars broken into, windshields busted and stuff like that. I was more interested in the news at that time to see whether they had

caught the guy, and what had happened. You seen when all this had happened I didn't know, I didn't have the slightest idea what happened.

Tom Beckner- We had heard and I can't remember who told us this, I think now I do remember, nurse who wasn't there. Something like the hospital got a call that a patient was coming with a neck wound or something like this.

Fred Williams- That very well could be true.

Tom Beckner- So you don't know...

Fred Williams- No, not for sure but I that probably was true, I wouldn't realize it. I think the night extern in the emergency room when he came in he didn't know it was Martin Luther King until he walked in the door. Of course he got there just about the same time King did. I think now and I am not sure if that is positive.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Who is that?

Fred Williams- Ernie Sandwich.

Unknown Male Interviewer- I know him, oh yeah he was in our class.

Fred Williams- Yeah he was in your class.

Tom Beckner- Which class is this?

Unknown Male Interviewer- The class he is going to graduate in December.

Tom Beckner- Where are you?

Fred Williams- When they graduate I will be studying the head (muffled) (Laughs) Ernie Sandwich, yeah I want to talk to him because he...he is the guy, he was really the man of the hour because he was in the emergency room the whole time King was there.

Tom Beckner- He was the externists son who was in the emergency room that night.

Fred Williams- He can surely tell you more about what they did and about his wound than I can. I think what I told you is true, it is the best I know.

Unknown Male Interviewer- Can you think of anything else. (Tape Break)

Tom Beckner- Tape, he said that the nurse misspelled King's name and crossed it out and rewrote it.(TAPE END).