

Marina: – on Wednesday, September 26 at Rhodes College for the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art. Mark, could you tell us a little bit about your family, your background? Are you a native Memphian? Did you grow up here?

Mark: Yes, I am. I grew up here in Memphis, Tennessee. I was born in Memphis on Hernandez Street – 378 Hernando – grew up there and went to Leith School – elementary school – went there from actually the first through the eighth grade. And then I went on over to Booker T. Washington for the ninth through the twelfth grade. After – I believe it was when we were in the third grade, my mother moved to the **Foot Homes** housing project.

I was raised by my mother without a father in the home, and then later on my grandmother moved in. She lived in Greenwood, Mississippi.

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And she moved up to help take care of my sister and me. After finishing Booker T. Washington High School in 1960, I went to Lincoln University in Jeff City, Missouri for a year and a semester. And actually when I was in the twelfth grade, I went up to Lincoln to a journalism conference. A radio station, W-DIA, had sent me up there, and while I was there, I took a course in photography.

And then when I went back as a student at Lincoln University, I took a course in photography, and after my sophomore year, I did not have enough money to stay in school, and I was gonna have to drop out, which I did. But before I came back to Memphis, I wrote Ernest Withers, a photographer – renowned civil rights photographer –

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And told him who I was and that I would like to come and do an internship with him. Although I did not know Mr. Withers that well, he welcomed me to come and work in his studio, which I did. And while working with Mr. Withers I met everybody from the Chairman of the Board down to the janitor, and I enjoyed photography because I got an opportunity to meet a lot of people, including several presidents of the United States.

Mr. Withers got Secret Service clearance for me, and I worked there with him and enjoyed it and didn't even think about going back to college. And Mr. Withers said, "Son, I have seven sons and one daughter, and you are just like my eighth son, and you

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need to start thinking about going back to college so you can get some letters behind your name so you can open the doors of some other people.”

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And Mr. Withers got with Mr. Thaddeus Stokes, who was the editor of the *Memphis World* Newspaper, and later the *Tristate Defender*, and contacted Nat D. Williams, who was the South’s first Black disc jockey at radio station W-DIA, and also A.C. Williams, who was the community relations director at W-DIA, who had formed the group called the W-DIA Teen Town Singers.

And the three of them wrote letters to Dr. Chester Kirkendall, who at the time was President of Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee about 85 miles east of here. And Dr. Kirkendall – they had told Dr. Kirkendall that here was an outstanding student who could write, who could take pictures, and he could speak, and asked to give me an opportunity. And Dr. Kirkendall wrote me a letter and told me to come on to college.

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My mother was a domestic worker – never made more than \$5.00 a day – and had it not been for Mr. Withers doing the deed that he did, contacting Dr. Kirkendall, I would not be here today.

Marina: Can we back up just a little bit?

Mark: Sure.

Marina: How did you get started in photography? Did you have a camera as a boy? Were there pictures in your home? I mean, how did that original trip with W-DIA get started? Was that because of you?

Mark: No, I remember – yeah, well, my mother had bought me a camera – I think it was called an **Anso** – it was a small camera – box camera – and I was just taking regular pictures because then I didn’t know anything about developing anything. But I always had an interest in journalism, and W-DIA sent me – I had mentioned the W-DIA Teen Town Singers – we had a group.

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Carla Thomas, who was the daughter of Rufus Thomas, and Marvel Thomas, who was Rufus's son, were in the W-DIA Teen Town Singers, and Mr. Williams always tried to do something to inspire young people, and there was this opportunity – they had this journalism, as I said, conference in Jeff City, Missouri. And I think it was he who suggested that I go to it.

And that's where I – I had always been interested in photography, but I didn't have a professional camera. I just had that little box camera. And then after getting with Mr. Withers, I did remember buying my first camera – it was a Yashika – two and a quarter, used 120 film.

Marina: Did you continue to take photography at Lane College?

Mark: Well, after I went to Lane College, I was already far enough along that I was – had learned the art and had taken gobs of pictures for the *Memphis World* and the *Tristate Defender* when I went to Lane College.

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And I did become the campus photographer. I did the pictures for all the yearbooks and publications. And I even shot some that the *Commercial Appeal* and the *Press Semiter* used also.

Marina: So were you working as Ernest Withers assistant or walking –

Mark: Yes.

Marina: – working alongside of him where both of you were covering the same event?

Mark: Well, yes and no. We covered some of the same events, and sometimes he would send me out for him. A lot of times Mr. Withers was out of town on other assignments, and I would take care of the studio – did his processing, the printing and all, and go out and shoot jobs for him.

Marina: Okay. And the sense I'm getting is that you were at that point shooting photographs for both the *Tristate Defender* and the *Memphis World*.

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Mark: The *Memphis World* – right.

Marina: Okay.

Mark: Because I was not an employee of either one. I was a freelance photographer, and when something was coming up, maybe I would go to Mr. Withers and we would shoot something, and then the paper would call and say, "Hey, Ernest, do you have such-and-such a mark? Do you have a picture of such-and-such?" And then other times, they would give assignments. But most of the times, we would go, and they would call and see if we had it.

Marina: Did they send you out periodically with reporters where you were working with the person writing the story as well or usually they just send you out ? -

Mark: No, just sent out to the event because with Black publications, you very seldom had a photographer going along with a reporter. Usually, the staff was so minimal that they did it right there in the office, and they would take -

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You know, if you sent them some information, usually they would print it word-for-word. Sometimes they would rewrite it.

Marina: So in other words, when the photographs appear in the paper with the captions, it was likely that you -

Mark: Would have given them - would have given them the information.

Marina: All right.

Mark: Would have given them the information - the photographers - and even today, the photographer is responsible for getting the correct spelling and then identification of the person. And then you would just write a line or two of what is happening in the photograph.

Marina: How did he decide what events he was gonna cover?

Mark: I don't know. He just had that instinct, I guess, about himself and knew - it's just like with me - things that were taking place that you felt were important, you would go to them. Like I'm shooting pictures now and remember a few months ago when they renamed the federal building the Cliff Davis/Odell Horton Federal Building, I just went down and shot gobs and gobs of pictures because I knew it was an historical event.

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Also when Bishop Graves – William Graves – was the presiding prelate of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, the first district, which is here in Memphis – when he was sworn in as a commissioner for TVA, the first African American, the same thing happened. I went down the City Hall and shot it, and I have it in my files. Maxine Smith recently put out a book – I can't recall the title of it now.

But I remember they had a book signing down at the National Civil Rights Museum, and also out at Joseb's.

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And I went to each place and shot pictures and put together a book and took them to Maxine just to let her see what I had taken. And she was just tickled to death and asked me if she could buy. And that's the way you do it as a freelancer. And that's the way it was back then, although resources were so rare that we didn't have the funds – Ernest nor I – to splurge to take and print a lot of pictures as you do now.

You know, with the digital, it's a different thing. Everybody has a camera and wants to shoot photographs, and everybody thinks he or she is a photographer. But it's not, as Mr. Withers always would tell me, that there are a lot of picture-takers, but not many photographers.

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Marina: When you were interning with him, did he spend a lot of time talking to you about composition?

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Mark: Yes, he did. He did, and then I also read a lot of photography books and had an eye, and right now I do a lot of photographs and sharing of photographs with Dr. Bob Kennedy, who is the husband of Dr. Shirley Raines, the President of the University of Memphis. And Dr. Bob is an artist by trade – a trained artist – and any time we're together, he always likes to view my work.

And he always commends me, and I think it's great when I get a compliment from him because he says I'm an artist also because I have a great eye for pictures. I like to shoot the expressions and all

– it’s more than just snapping a picture, but you just have to – as they say, a picture says a thousand words.

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Marina: Were there any particular kinds of events that you especially like to photograph, or were you happy to go to anything?

Mark: Well, yeah, I liked news events. I have a lot of news events in my files that I went to because I just had a nose for it. And a lot of society events back then – we also, in the Black community, took a lot of church events. But that was the least thing that I liked about the photography because I’m a person that likes to be on time. I got that training from A.C. Williams.

He believed in being a man of your word, and if you tell somebody 4:00 p.m., you’re gonna be there at 4:00 p.m. You’re not gonna come in at 4:45 p.m. and have an excuse. And at churches, they would tell you to be there at 10:00 a.m., and you would let the pastor or the person in charge know that you’re there.

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And they would say, “Okay.” And maybe 11:00 a.m. or 11:15 a.m. they’re ready to take the picture, and then they’re rushing you. You know, you want to take two or three different pictures – now you have digital, and you can look at the photograph immediately after you make the exposure to see if you have the right expression or if you have the right exposure or if the person’s have their eyes open – most of them – you know.

But back then, you didn’t. You had to shoot it and go to the lab yourself and process it or you sent it to a lab. But Mr. Withers did his processing, and he taught me how to process, and so I did a lot of processing for him.

Marina: How did the shooting of the social events come about? Were people from the various organizations calling you up and asking to attend their events?

Mark: Right, right.

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They would ask you to come and shoot it. I can remember one in particular, the J.U.G.S. was a big social event back in the ‘60s and

'70s. It was called "The Living Ads," and young ladies – it was Josephine Bridges – you may or may not know, but she was the founder of the J.U.G.S., and they would wear the board – like the movie theater boards would have, and they would advertise for various organizations.

And Ernest would usually get the assignment. We would shoot those. Other times, we maybe would go down to Club Handy or the Flamingo Room, as I can remember, and we'd just take people sitting at the tables enjoying themselves.

Marina: How was the *Memphis World* perceived within the community at that point in time?

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Mark: At that time, the *Memphis World* was the – actually the *Memphis World* was the first African American paper in the Memphis community, and it came out twice a week, as I can recall, on Monday's and Wednesday. I could be wrong about the days, but I know it came out twice a week. And there used to be columns that the various high schools students would write and *saelly* – it was a well-respected newspaper.

It was owned by the Scott Family out of Birmingham, Alabama.

Marina: So they owned a chain of newspapers.

Mark: It was a chain of newspapers.

Marina: Okay. But –

Mark: I know that there was a *Memphis World* and *Atlanta World* – and I don't remember, but I know they had those two.

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Marina: What was the difference, from your perception, between the *World* and the *Tristate Defender*?

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Mark: Well, the *World* – I remember there were two – the *Memphis World* and the *Atlanta World* – the *Tristate Defender* was a larger publication after it got started because I believe the *Tristate* is about to celebrate its 55th Year in existence. It was part of the

Sengstacke Family publications. They had the *Chicago Daily Defender* out in Chicago, the *Tristate Defender*, and there was a lot of information from the *Chicago Defender* that the *Tristate Defender* used materials to fill.

Marina: And did the *Memphis World* do the same thing, pulling from the Atlanta paper?

Mark: I can't remember that much of the Atlanta paper being in the *Memphis World*. But back in those days, there was a lot of emphasis on society – Black society.

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There was always pictures of debutantes, some of the balls that were going on in town, and usually each one of those papers had a society column and a columnist, **Jewel Gentry**, as I remember, was a columnist for the *Memphis World*. The *Commercial Appeal* used to have a society column. I guess the closest thing to a society column now is what **Michael Donegahue** does.

Marina: But did they seem to cover the exact same territory? You know, the –

Mark: You talking about the *Tristate* and the *Memphis World* or the *Commercial* –

Marina: Uh-huh.

Mark: Yes, they did a lot of the same.

Marina: One of the things that I read was that the *Tristate Defender* was a little more radical and became more Democratic, and it ended up pushing the *World* out of business?

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Mark: Well, I think you're absolutely right. They had more aggressive editors at the *Tristate Defender*. Mr. Stokes, as I said, used to be at the *World*, and he left the *World* and went over to the *Tristate Defender*. And then Luttrell Palmer, who was a renowned editor, after he left here, he went to Chicago and made a big name for himself – was a big reporter, working for the *Chicago Tribune* – Luttrell Palmer.

And then there was another fellow by the name of **Burley Hines**, who was at the Tristate, but even prior to Burley Hines, you had **Elbow Swingler**, who was another name that goes back in history, who was the editor of the *Tristate Defender*. I remember Mr. **Beechum** – I can't remember Mr. Beechum's first name offhand – that used to be an editor of the *Memphis World* prior to Mr. Stokes going down there.

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And **Stanley Scott**, who was one of the grandsons of Mr. Scott, the founder down in Birmingham. Stanley worked at the White House for President Richard Nixon – I believe it was President Nixon he worked. And then he was also – he worked for the Associated Press, and he was the only reporter that was there at the assassination of the Muslim leader –

Marina: Malcolm X?

Mark: Ooh, was it Malcolm? I think it was Malcolm. I believe it was Malcolm X – the assassination in Chicago – Stanley happened to be at the meeting, and he was the only reporter there that covered it.

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Marina: Was – Malcolm was killed in New York.

Student: He was assassinated in –

Mark: New York? Well, that's where it was New York.

Marina: Okay.

Mark: Yeah, he was – Stanley was there.

Marina: Was there a sense of camaraderie between the reporters and photographers between the *World* and the *Tristate Defender*, or was it problematic that you were doing images for both?

Mark: No, it was not problematic at all – not problematic at all.

Marina: What about relations with the White papers?

Mark: It was little to non – non-existent. I had a lot – not a lot, but a few reporter friends at the *Commercial Appeal*, and it was through that

friendship and knowledge of them that Mr. Algrin – Frank Algrin, who was the long-time editor of the *Commercial Appeal*, offered me a job at the *Commercial Appeal*. George Hardin, who was a photographer at the *Tristate Defender*, was the first African American, as I can recall, hired at the *Commercial Appeal*.

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Everybody back in the day who went to work for the *Commercial Appeal* had to start off on the copy desk – that’s rewriting stories and writing headlines. And George recommended me to Mr. Algrin, and Mr. Algrin personally called me and recruited me, interviewed me, and after they hired me at the *Commercial Appeal* as a reporter, took me around and introduced me.

Marina: And when was this that you joined the *Commercial Appeal*?

Mark: I worked on the staff of the *Commercial Appeal* back in ‘67 – I believe it was ‘67 – ‘67 – during the summer of ‘67 I worked at *Commercial Appeal*.

Marina: So you graduated from college and then went back into newspaper work.

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Mark: Right, right.

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Marina: Okay.

Mark: Right – because I remember back in ‘68 when Dr. King was assassinated, at that particular time I was working for Lane College, and I remember Mr. Algrin calling – I don’t know how he found out where I was – maybe he contacted my wife and she gave him – but I was over to a teacher’s home, and we were watching the news.

And shortly after 10:00 p.m. that night, I got a call from Mr. Algrin because he had heard that there was an African American photographer at the scene of the Lorraine Motel during the assassination of Dr. King. And he knew that Ernest Withers and I were the most active photographers at the time. And the way it was – the person was described, it could not have been Ernest.

And Mr. Algrin thought it was me, and he called me and said that if I had the pictures that he would like to buy some.

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And he would offer me \$500.00. I did not have the pictures, and I would not have sold the pictures for \$500.00. If you recall in history, a young man by the name of Jim Lowell, who was on the scene, shot those pictures and sold them to Life Magazine, as I recall. And he received \$50,000.00 for the pictures of the assassination of Dr. King over at the Lorraine Motel that Mr. Algrin was gonna offer me \$500.00 for.

Marina: Well, how much were you getting for your photographs during that period?

Mark: Getting about \$5.00 or \$6.00 for an 8" x 10".

Marina: It must have been hard to make a living.

Mark: It was. It was.

Marina: Were your photographs sold to newspapers out side of Memphis?

Mark: I did not sell any, but Jet Magazine –

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Johnson Publishing Company – I did stringer work for them, and they would call me to go on various assignments outside of Memphis. I remember once going to Little Rock – you know, they are celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Little Rock Nine, and I remember going over with an editor by the name of **John Britton**, who did a story and it was a cover story, and it was called *Five Years After Little Rock*.

And I went over there and met Daisy Bates and some of the other people. Met Minnijean Brown – I can remember she was one of the Little Rock Nine – and shot pictures of her. I can remember another time – I'm trying to remember – '66 was when I got married, and shortly after I got married, Jet Magazine called and wanted me to go down to Jackson, Mississippi after Medgar Evers –

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After the assassination of Medgar Evers, who was the Field Director for the NAACP down in Jackson, Mississippi, and I went down and covered his funeral. **Rafflph** Bunch was there, and Dr. King was there, and Dick Gregory was there. And then another time, I can remember Jet calling and I was not in. My wife took the call, and they wanted me to catch the next flight to Jackson, Mississippi and – no, not to Jackson. This was when we went down to Clarksdale, Mississippi.

Dick Gregory – if you go back in history, the comedian, Dick Gregory had what he called a Turkey Lift, and they took turkeys – I believe there was about 40,000 pounds of turkeys that he distributed in the Mississippi Delta, starting down in Clarksdale, Mississippi, going down the Greenwood – all that area giving people turkeys.

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And I remember when we went over to Greenwood, they were having a demonstration out in front of the courthouse, and Dick Gregory called – back in the day, you didn't have any African American police officers. And I can remember Dick Gregory calling this White police officer everything except a child of God, and I was praying that there would not be any repercussions on our part because of it.

And Larry **Stihl**, who was the editor that was assigned to me – I was assigned to down in Mississippi – all reporters want to have, as they say now, “breaking news” – want to have an exclusive.

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And so Larry invited Dick Gregory to ride in the car with us from Greenwood after he's been arrested that evening. Again, now, to ride from Greenwood back over to Clarksdale where they were having a civil rights rally that night. And I shall never forget it. When we got over there, the church – it was called the Fourth Street Baptist Church – and it was on the Square down in Clarksdale, Mississippi.

And Blacks – there were Blacks and there were a few European American college students who supported the Civil Rights Movement, and the reporters from the networks were there. Richard Valeriani I remember – he was a reporter from NBC – and someone threw a hand grenade in the church.

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And if they had not failed to pull the pin, I would not be able to sitting here today talking to you because I would probably be dead. And I remember when the bottle came in – rather the object came in through the window, everybody was running and Dick Gregory was the one trying to get everybody under control. And he was talking about he dumb Mississippi cops, and because he felt it was a police officer who had thrown it because around the block of the church, they had a ring of police officers.

And he was saying the dumb cop failed the pull the pin – because in order for the grenade to go off, you have to pull the pin. And I can remember the Police Chief coming by the church talking – because emotions were running very high – coming by the church and telling Dick Gregory and Larry Stihl and myself that he could not be responsible for our safety.

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And we needed to get out of town. But instead, we were afraid to get out of town ourselves that time of night. It was late – about 9:30 p.m., 10:00 p.m. as I recall. And Dr. Aaron Henry was the President of the Jackson NAACP at the time. He was a pharmacist. He had a drug store there in Jackson. And we stayed at his house that night.

And I remember the next morning we got up and drove to Memphis because we were afraid to be on the highway at night driving. I can remember another time when I was down in Mississippi on assignment.

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I was down in Greenwood, and here again, I was with Larry and wanting to have that exclusive. And you know, if you watch television, Channel 5, **Joe Birch** will say, “Such-and-such was the only reporter covering that story.” And it was the same way back then. You know, you wanted to have the exclusive.

But this particular time, we had let some of the civil rights activists use our car, because it was a rental car – **Carl Carson** – that was even before Avis and Hertz. I can remember we had a local businessman named Carl Carson. He rented cars, and we rented our car from Carl Carson.

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And I can remember, we were at this little tavern where we were having something to eat. At that particular time, I think I must have been about 19 – maybe 20 years of age, and when we left, they were watching – they used to watch every move that the participants in the civil rights movement did, and as soon as we left and were driving down the street by **Broad Street** High School, the police pulled us over and asked Larry for his credentials.

And he had all kind of press credentials. And that man, he was real nasty to him and put him in the car. And he asked me – at the time, he said, “Boy, can you drive?” I said, “Yessuh!” I didn’t say, “Yes, sir.” I said, “Yessuh.” And I had an uncle that lived around the street at 611 Avenue J.

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And I drove around to his house and told him that my editor had been arrested because I had taken about – as I can recall – eight or nine rolls of film, and the magazine was planning on using that as a cover story. And back in the day, you couldn’t just decide today that this was going to be the cover. You had to do it a week ahead of time – deciding.

And they had decided this was going to be – and anyway, I went down and my uncle took the film and hid it throughout the inside of the car because I was afraid that I would be stopped by the police and they would take the film and expose the film. And somewhere along the way, I had a flat or something coming back to Memphis. And I was afraid – I didn’t stop. I just came on.

You know, it was – and any time I would see the light of a car, I would think it was the Ku Klux Klan coming after me.

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And I was just praying, praying that I would get back to Memphis alive. And I remember stopping on Third Street having to call a Carson service truck to come and change the tire on the car. But when I got back to Memphis, I had to catch a plane and go to Chicago. That’s where Jet Magazine – Johnson Publishing Company – is headquartered – 820 South Michigan – and went there and wrote the story that came out in the magazine.

VIDEO CUT: 33:36:24

Marina: That's a really – I don't even know how to explain how I feel sitting here hearing you telling this story and trying to imagine what that must've been like at that time.

Mark: Yeah, it was. And then I remember also going down – this was after the *World*. This was doing for the Tristate and also Johnson Publishing Company.

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Going down 51 – that's the way we would go – down to Jackson, Mississippi, I remember on one of the marches with Dr. King. And I remember we were going to Jackson, Mississippi. At this particular time, I was doing something for Jet and also for W-DIA. The news editor at W-DIA was a Caucasian by the name of Bob Richards, and I rode down in the W-DIA station wagon.

And I remember we went to some hotel – I can't remember the name of it now – in downtown Jackson. This was one Sunday morning, and we went in. I was the only African American in the group to get served, and it took them forever to serve Bob and me.

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And then when they finally came to serve us, I can remember getting some ham and biscuits, and the waitress dropped the biscuit and then she picked it up and put it right back on the table. But I was young back then, and I guess had a lot of fire, like most young people today, and you can't tell them not to do this. And you don't realize that you are in danger because – especially if you have a knack for news, you want to get the story.

You're not caring about whatever. You know, here recently when the miners got trapped, I remember a CNN reporter, and maybe some of the other reporters, went into the mine to try and see what was going on.

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And they could have gotten killed like those rescuers did. I believe six rescuers got killed.

Marina: I'm done with background questions. Did anybody want to fill anything in before we shift over and go straight into the – Mark's photos?

Student: I've got some questions for Mark.

Mark: Okay.

Student: You've talked about Ernest serving as a mentor to you. Did he tell you go out and look at other photographers or works of art to help you develop your eye? Would he share with you some of his work and say, "This is what you need to look for when you're looking to take a picture?" Could you share a little bit more perhaps about how you were trained by Ernest?

Mark: Yeah, he would just – you know, when I would go out and shoot a picture for him, we would look at the negative – we'd be in the dark room, and he would look at the negative because Ernest could do a great job – and even Ernest is 85 now, but he is no longer practicing. But even five or six years ago, Ernest could look at a negative and just look at it, and he'd say, "This picture was taken over at Rhodes College.

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"This was taken over in the library and they were doing such-and-such." You know, he didn't have to look at the picture. But he would tell me if – I would print a picture, and he would maybe tell me it's too light or too dark, need to burn it in. And then he might would say, "Well, you've got the eyes closed on the most important person here.

"You need to make sure when you're shooting you take three or four and if someone blinks their eye, you shoot another one." And at that particular time we would do a lot of what you call bracketing. And if you would shoot an exposure – and you know from experience with the lighting that you might use an F-stop of F-11, and then you would shoot one with F-16, which is the next lower, and then you may shoot it at F-5.6, which is the next one up.

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So you would have the correct exposed picture. But that's the only – he didn't necessarily tell me – but I did – there were two European photographers, one that worked at the *Commercial Appeal* by the name of Robert Williams. Robert – Bob Williams what he was known as – sometimes they would give him credit as Bob, sometimes Robert – and he had a 35-mm and I used to admire

Bob Williams' work and also Ken Rolse, who worked for the *Press Semiter*.

And then there was another African American, George Hardin, that I mentioned, who was the one who told Frank Algrin about me, he did some work for the *Tristate Defender*. But back in the day, most of the African American photographers used a 120 camera. And we didn't have the telephoto lens which would put you right up on it. We would have to go right into the situation, whatever it was, if you wanted to get the picture.

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I was looking at a picture – some pictures the other night. I ran across a book of my pictures, and one picture ran in the *Tristate Defender*; the Ku Klux Klan picketed some concert out at the coliseum. I don't remember what it was, but I had a picture of about three hooded Klansmen, and had to get there up close, and I was that close when I – I was about as far as from here to outside the door when I took the picture of the Klansmen.

VIDEO CUT: 39:41:09

Student: Mark, did you have a sense that as a photographer you were yourself, Mark Stansbury, "I'm shooting a picture," or did you have a sense that "I'm working from within a community" or for a community? In other words, did you see yourself as perhaps being a photographer on behalf of say the *World*, the *Tristate Defender* or Memphis or something like that?

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Mark: No, at the time, I just was happy to be with Ernest and be out there taking pictures. And I didn't – I guess later on – but when I first started out, I did not have a sense of how important it was. I guess maybe I realized the sense when I took the first president's picture, and the first president I took was Lyndon Johnson. He was here, and at that particular time was down on Front Street near right now where the old Post Office, which the University of Memphis is getting ready to turn into our Law School.

I shot a picture of President Johnson. In fact, I've had the great fortune to shoot the pictures of five presidents during my career. Most people never get an opportunity to photograph one, but I've taken pictures of five presidents and one presidential candidate

who was Ronald Reagan, I shot, but he was not president at the time.

00:41:09

He was campaigning.

Marina: I'm just about to run out of tape. Do you want to stop and flip, or do you want to just pause to keep going? What do you want to do? I need to change tapes.

Student: If it's okay with you, I'll pause it now.

Marina: Perfect. You just holler at me when you're ready, and I'll just hit pause while you flip.

Student: Would you be willing to pause again if mine takes 15 minutes _____?

Marina: Absolutely! No problem. How you doing? Are you okay?

Mark: I'm fine.

Marina: Okay.

Mark: I didn't take that because I don't drink pop. I just drink water, so that's fine.

00:42:00

Marina: Oh!

Student: Well, we have water _____.

Mark: Don't worry about it. I'm fine.

Marina: A cup – do you want a cup?

Mark: No, no – I'm fine.

Marina: Are you sure?

Mark: I'm fine.

Marina: Well, now somebody else come and have this lovely soda _____.

Student: So _____.

Mark: I haven't had a soda in five years.

Marina: Good for you! Now this photograph – how it came about that you were taking it? Why you went to the airport? I mean, I'm presuming that you probably came back and forth a lot?

Mark: Right – let's see – I think – see, James Meredith had family here in Memphis, and he would come up from Old Miss and would stay visiting, and I can't remember Mrs. Meredith's first name now.

00:43:00

And Mr. Stokes – because that's **McCann Reed**. McCann Reed was at the *Tristate Defender* then, and I think Mr. Stokes may have been at the *World*. That was in 1962. I think Mr. Stokes may have been at the *World* and asked me to go out. And I probably – because I did not have a car – rode out with Ernest Withers and took the photograph. And that was at the old airport.

That was before he built the new airport. That was when it was on the north side of Winchester. I remember that much.

Marina: Doesn't one of you have this photo?

Student: Yeah, I do. Do you recall just kind of the response from Memphians at that time when you would come up to visit? This was right after he was let into Old Miss probably, and he was accompanied by all of these federal marshals.

00:44:01

But do you kind of recall just the feeling that was there?

Mark: Yeah, everybody just felt a very good sense of pride because breaking into Old Miss was like, I guess, going to the moon. And the community was very, very proud of James Meredith, as I can recall, including myself – I know I was.

Student: Did you know him personally?

Mark: No, I didn't know him personally. I just met him a couple of times. But –

Student: I think it's curious that – this particular article in the *World* had an interesting caption. It was that, “Meredith gets a haircut during his weekend visit her with wife.” In the photo –

00:45:00

This photo was actually just cropped in half so that Mrs. Meredith was the only person in the article.

Mark: Okay – yeah, because I don't recall James Meredith being at the airport when that picture was taken. He could have been, but I just don't recall him being there.

Student: It's kind of an interesting setup because it shows the – James Meredith and his wife as just kind of regular folks. They've come up for a private –

Mark: Okay – now this is not James Meredith here.

Student: Right.

Mark: Yeah.

Student: You said this was McCann –

Mark: You said this was McCann –

VIDEO CUT: 45:35:17

Student: This is kind of covering more of their private life. This wasn't really the public –

Mark: Right – and the *Commercial Appeal* or the *Press Semiter* nine times out of ten wouldn't have taken that photograph because from time to time, when they're doing stories on civil rights, they used a lot of Mr. Withers' photographs with the articles.

00:46:06

Student: So McCann was interviewing here.

Mark: Uh-huh.

Student: Okay.

Marina: Anymore questions?

Student: I can't think of anymore that would relate so much to this photograph –

Marina: Do the rest of you want to jump in on this?

Student: We have others, though.

Marina: Yeah, we've got some others.

Student: Thank you.

Mark: You're welcome. That's Lieutenant George Lee, who was at Atlanta Life Insurance Company. I believe he was the President of Atlanta Life. He was a big-time Republican, and he was a delegate to the Republican National Convention, and he was with the Goldwater Faction, as I can recall.

00:47:02

He was a very eloquent speaker, extemporaneous. He was a great speaker. That's Mr. Jesse Turner, who was President of Tristate Bank and also he was a big strategist with the NAACP. There's a park over on Elvis Presley – actually it's Bellevue there, and that's where Elvis Presley starts, at Parkway and Bellevue. The park is named after him.

And then there's a bridge about two miles south of there that's named after Mr. Turner also.

Student: Mark, with this kind of a photograph, how much directing would you give to the people – you know, look here, you sit there – I mean, would you interact with them or –

00:48:01

Mark: Yes, yes. Yes, and sometimes I would have them look at the camera. Other times, back then, probably I would want one of them looking at the camera. But as you grow older you learn that looking at the camera is not important. You want to get the actual action shot, and you can go around and shoot it from various angles.

And then you have other subjects when you don't want them to look at the camera, they look – you see Lieutenant Lee is looking

directly at the camera and Mr. Turner is not interested in looking at the camera. Mr. Turner is looking on.

Student: Do you remember this particular shoot?

Mark: Shoot?

Student: Yeah.

Mark: No, I don't. I remember the Meredith one, but I don't remember this one. I do remember being in the presence of Lieutenant Lee at many different occasions and same way with Mr. Turner.

00:49:07

Marina: In an instance like this, would Lee or Turner have called you and asked you to come shoot this?

Mark: Right, right – in that particular instance, right, and I believe it was Mr. Lee who called me.

Marina: Okay.

Mark: Yeah.

VIDEO CUT: 49:37:28

Marina: I just realized I need to be identifying these for the tape recorder. They can't see what we're looking at. So this one is *Union Protective Breaks Ground*.

Mark: Right. That was that building up at 1234 Mississippi.

00:50:00

And that is Harold **Waylen** over there at the left. Harold Waylen was one of the executives of Union Protective Life Insurance Company, and that's what that UPLIC is – Union Protective Life Insurance Company. And that's Dr. **Spate** – tall fella – **Onzy Horn** with the glasses, Dr. **Dinkins** – Charles Dinkins, and I can't think of this gentleman's name right now.

But he was an executive of – oh, that's one of the **Hays** brothers. I don't know if that's **Taylor Hays** – I think it's Taylor Hays – one of the Hays – of **T.H. Hays Film Home**, which was the first Black business in Memphis, Tennessee.

00:51:05

T.H. Hays Film with the pig.

Marina:

That?

Mark:

Yeah, with the pig, uh-huh.

Marina:

Anne Willis told us that Mr. Spate's name was "Trees." They called him Trees because he was so tall.

Mark:

Right – I believe his name was W.O. Spate – his initials, W.O. Spate.

Marina:

There seem to be a lot of images in the paper about life insurance. Why was life insurance so significant?

Mark:

Well, I think that – you know, Blacks had a lot of insurance policies – you know, the smaller insurance policies. They believed in insurance because a lot of the White companies, it's my understanding, would not write. And you had Universal Life Insurance Company and Union Protective Life Insurance Company that did write. Most of them were burial policies.

Onzy Horn there with the glasses on right behind Mr. Hays was a great musician. He was the one who was a conductor and arranger with Isaac Hayes on a shaft.

Marina:

So why this particular group of people for this groundbreaking then?

Mark:

Because they were all associated with the insurance company. Let's see – they're breaking ground – they were breaking ground for that new home office up there. _____~~Thomas~~ McKissack is not there. _____~~Linda~~ Davis is not there.

00:53:00

Marina:

So is that the building that's still down there?

Mark:

No, that was an old building that – no, that was an old building there. And they tore that building down, as I recall, and built that new one that's there now.

Marina:

Okay.

Mark: You know, there's a church there – it's church now.

Marina: Okay.

Mark: I remember this picture. I used to work at W-DIA – actually I still work at W-DIA. This is my 49th year. This was a Christmas party right here that I was invited to. Back in the day, the schools were segregated, and they had the Shrine School here in Memphis for White kids.

00:54:01

And Black kids went to the Keel Avenue School, and W-DIA furnished a bus. We had two bus drivers – Theo Wade and J.B. Brooks – would drive the kids. This, as I recall, was taken at a Christmas party because there are the reindeer back there. And this was taken when I first came back from Lincoln University, as I recall. Burt Ferguson invited me out there and that's where I met my first wife.

We – she was working at the station also, and Mr. Ferguson wanted me to come because his maid was the auntie of the lady that I ended up marrying – my first wife.

VIDEO CUT: 55:05:07

Marina: W-DIA did a lot of things for the community.

Mark: Absolutely!

Marina: Charity work –

Mark: They did – they had a basket – not a basketball – a baseball because back in the '50s and '60s, all the sport of record was baseball rather than basketball as it is now. And they had about 100-and-some-odd different baseball teams as I can recall in various segments of the community. And a lot of distinguished citizens of Memphis now can recall themselves being in a W-DIA baseball uniform.

00:56:03

As I said, they did the Keel Avenue Bus. They had a home that they built a housing project called the W-DIA Goodwill Homes.

And movies where African Americans couldn't go to the movie – you could go, but you went up in what we call the roost – the nest – a bird's nest because you had to go way upstairs in the **Orpheum**. You had to go way up there in the Palace – **Lowell's Palace** and all W-DIA used to sponsor movies in the park.

And what they would do – they would take a truck and take a movie projector and a screen and bring it out to the various parks and have movies in the parks and everything.

00:57:06

Marina: What was he like as a person?

Mark: He was a fine gentleman as far as I can recall. I shall never forget one Saturday afternoon I was doing the news – see, I was the – back in the day, African Americans – although W-DIA was the first African American program station, they announcers did not play their music. The African American was in one room, and the European American was in the control room.

We were in another little small room. And I was a second individual hired to spin the records and to do the news.

00:58:00

And Mark Luttrell, who is the sheriff now, his father worked at the penal farm. And I remember doing the news that afternoon. It was somewhere between 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. because I remember Rufus Thomas and Nat Williams were on. And I did the news and said, "Mark Luttrell (*pronounced with emphasis on last syllable*) such-and-such," whatever it was.

And then shortly thereafter Mr. Ferguson came into the control room and he said, "Mark, I didn't know we had a new director out at the penal farm." I said, "Well, we don't." He said, "Well, I heard you say 'Mark Luttrell,' (*pronounced with emphasis on last syllable*) and I know that the person out there's name is Mark Luttrell" (*pronounced with emphasis on first syllable*).

And that was his way of – and then he suggested to me that I listen to some of the White reporters on some of the other stations to get my pronunciation correctly. And it was a good suggestion – a good recommendation.

00:59:03

But the way he did it – you know, he didn't come in scolding me saying, "You mispronounced the name," such-and-such a thing. But I thought it was a very unique way to do it.

VIDEO CUT: 59:19:07

Marina: Anybody have any more questions on this one?

Mark: Did you want to ask _____ too?

Student: You answered every single question.

Mark: Okay.

Student: Let's just see what comes up next.

Marina: Okay.

Mark: That's Robert Thomas Honeyboy. He was one of our announcers. Great announcer. Very talented individual. His name was Robert Thomas but he had a real golden voice that the ladies liked. And that's why they called him Honeyboy. Mm-hm.

And I can remember this happened one Friday night. This was taken right here. This was not taken Friday night but one Friday night

01:00:05

W-DIA used to have what they called sock hops. It was teenage dances and all down at the Abe Sharpe YMCA at the corner of Linden and Lauderdale. And after the event was over a bunch of thugs jumped on Robert and beat him up very badly and he had to go to the hospital. I can't – I'm thinking this was Crump Hospital where that was taken.

Marina: When you say thugs, are you talking, was this a hate crime? Was this a, you know, theft for money? I mean –

Mark: As I can recall, no, it couldn't have been for money. It could have been for money. I don't recall what it was for because we had the sock hop and they could have thought he had money. They could have thought he had money. But I don't remember if the attackers were ever caught and prosecuted. I can't remember.

01:01:07

But I know W-DIA Mr. Ferguson came out the next morning and like I say that happened on Friday. And Saturday morning Mr. Ferguson came to the station and did an editorial about the thugs jumping on Robert Thomas, one of the most respected radio personalities in the business at the time. And looking here he was doing it for the March of Dimes.

Marina: Well, was it a racial, racially motivated?

Mark: Oh, no. It was black on black.

Marina: Okay.

Mark: It was black on black. As most crimes, even today is black on black.

Student: Mr. Stansbury, I don't know if you mentioned it but do you know about how old Mr. Thomas was?

Mark: At that particular time, let's see. Because Robert now is in his – is about 72, 73. So he was probably in his late '30s, early '40s at that particular time.

01:02:24

And the sad thing right now is Robert doesn't even know that he's alive. He has Alzheimer's and he was such a great talent and most advertisers wanted him to do their commercials and he was very versatile. He used to do a Gospel show and then he would – that was in the afternoons, 2:00 p.m. I remember it was called The Glory Train. He ran the control board himself for his show.

He was the first African American to do his own show. We had a program on there they called Quiz 'Em On The Air which is similar to the one where they have over Channel 3. I can't remember the name of it. It comes on Saturday morning around 10:00 where they ask questions that appear in the commercial appeal that particular week. Robert used to do it.

01:03:24

He used to – we used to do football games. He was our play-by-play announcer at the football games. And he was a member of Olivet Church, Reverend Kenneth Whalum who was one of our

city councilmen and outstanding ministry at Olivet was his pastor. He was director of the choir there.

And then later on he went to work for Memphis City Schools teaching radio to young people.

Marina: And did he continue to be a disc jockey while he was teaching as well?

Mark: No. After they made some changes at the radio station and they phased Robert's shift out at the radio station he started, you know, went to the Memphis City Schools.

01:04:14

Student: _____ ask some questions?

Student: Sure. Was this picture published because he was such a public personality?

Mark: Right. Right. That was the reason.

Student: It wasn't common to publish pictures of _____? [attacks?](#)

Mark: Right. They wouldn't have done it but because he was an outstanding, you know, personality. Very popular. Kind of like Bobby O.J. is today. He would be the Bobby O.J. of that era.

Student: You also mentioned that you worked with Nat Williams at the Royal and at W-DIA?

Mark: Right.

Student: Could you speak a little bit about how you knew him or your relationship?

01:05:00

Mark: Right. Well, Nat Williams was also a teacher. He was a teacher of history at Booker T. Washington High School where I attended. And I ran the board on Saturday afternoons on the shift. I ran the board for Nat and Rufus. They had a show called The CBS Swing, no. The CBS Swing was Rufus' show. They had a show on Saturday afternoon and the name of it fails me right now. But they joked and played rhythm and blues music.

Nat D. was also very active in the Memphis Cotton Makers Jubilee. He was the ring announcer when the parades, the parades used to come down Beale Street and Mr. Williams was there at Beale and Hernando where Handy Park is now and would announce the floats and the bands as they came through.

VIDEO CUT: 1:06:12:24

I can remember having a paper to write and I could spend hours and hours trying to get started writing and if you ever have been a writer it has to come to you. You have to get in the writing mood and I'd go to Mr. Williams and tell him that I need some help on something and he would go get at the typewriter and start typing and he wore these big glasses. I used to call them Coca-Cola rim glasses or Coca-Cola bottles because they was so thick. And he would get at the typewriter, bending down and he could come up with two or three pages of copy just that quick.

01:07:09

Mr. Hunt, who was the principal at Booker T. Washington High School, one of the two premier African American high schools, used to call Mr. Williams a black genius of the mid-south.

Student:

The description says, "As he left the YMCA," as though there weren't multiple branches of the YMCA then?

Mark:

No. There was only one. It was called the Abe Sharpe branch. If you know where Mount Olive Church is, CME Church right there at Linden and Lauderdale, that's where it was. Back in the day Memphis was very segregated. You had one YMCA. You had one YWCA. You even had one library. You could only go to one library in Memphis. And that was the Cossett branch over on Vance.

01:08:09

And during the time when we had the police strike in Memphis, did you know we had a police strike? We had the police strike in Memphis, I don't remember whether the fire department struck too. They may have struck too. They set it on fire and destroyed that library. And then they rebuilt it and shortly thereafter we had the sit-ins downtown. A lot of students from Lemoyne-Owen College were involved in the sit-ins including Mrs. Johnny Turner who is the Executive Secretary of the Memphis Branch NAACP

now. Was one of the sit-ins at the library. But you talk about one Y. One YM. One YW. And one library that we could go to.

01:09:08

Student: Did you have more?

Student: I just had one more. Also in my files I had some pictures of Robert Thomas when he wasn't beaten up and more professional looking photos. Was it your decision to put this one in the newspaper? Or how would –

Mark: Yeah. That was – see, the other one was taken the next morning as I can recall. Or maybe a couple days after when he still had the bandages up and this one right here was taken after the bandages were taken off and shows just how badly he was beaten.

But it was not my decision as a photographer, you know, the editor would call and say, "Mark, I want you to go over to," such-and-such, "And get a picture of" such-and-such. And then I would have to go to the nurse's station to get permission and actually to get permission to go in to talk with the subject. And Robert gave us permission to do it. And then it was the editor's call to run it.

01:10:20

The same way it is now. If a editor tells me to go out and shoot a picture I know from experience that you shoot it and you shoot it all kinds of ways to give them an opportunity to select. They like to have more than just one to say this is it.

Marina: Was it your memory that this was – we didn't find it in the paper. Do you remember where that was run?

Mark: I sure don't.

Marina: Okay.

Mark: How did you get it?

Marina: It came with all the photos.

Mark: Oh, from the *World*?

Marina: Uh-huh.

Mark: Okay. Now that could have been, you know, they may have probably had me shoot it and then they just decided not to run it. You know?

Marina: Did that happen often?

01:11:11

Mark: No. Not often. Because I have even had assignments from *Ebony* magazine. Have taken pictures. We talked about *Jet* earlier. From *Ebony* magazine and we shoot and the pictures come out fine but something would change. Just like for example if the TV stations had promised you that they were going to cover the story that you're doing on the because that is not a priority story and then say the Mayor of Memphis were to get involved in a car wreck or were to get killed, anything. That would be a big story and they would have what they call team coverage. They would have one reporter here, one here, one here and they would not be able to come.

I can remember, my son is an actor, and he had a screening of a movie here in Memphis back in the summer and I give a lot of tips to the various news people here in Memphis so, you know, it's kind of one of those things. I pat your back. You pat mine. And from time to time you will call in an IOU.

01:12:45

And that day, I can't remember, something happened. I can't remember what the story was now but it had something to do with the Tennessee Waltz as I recall. And Joe Birch called me the next day and he said, "Mr. Stansbury I got your email and I realized what it was but it was nothing I could put on that day because everything was on the **John Ford**." It was something – it was about four or five months ago. On John. Whatever happened back then.

Student: Thank you.

Mark: You're welcome.

Marina: That may be –

Student: _____ I'm not sure. I'll see. ~~Katie~~ ~~you~~ said you wanted to talk about some that _____ we have ~~them all~~ that are as yet un-identified. We're hoping you might be able to –

Mark: Okay.

Student: I have a photograph at Medgar Evers' funeral. Of his wife and brother and two children. And they're sitting in the front kind of looking off. And the photographer has not identified any of his children.

VIDEO CUT: 1:13:49:01

Mark: Okay. Because I was at Medgar's funeral down there. In fact when I went to Medgar's funeral I think I told you *Jet* magazine sent me down and I had the week's best photo. Yep. Yep. This is Charles Evers. It's Medgar's brother. And then that's Mrs. Evers. I think these would have to be the children. Yeah. That's one of my – that looks like a picture of mine.

01:14:23

Student: Could you tell me a little bit about what the atmosphere was like? What was going on? I know I read in the caption that there were over 4,000 people there. At the Masonic Lodge.

Mark: Yeah. It was at the Masonic Lodge down on Jackson Street as I can remember. Well, it was real tense because that was Byron De La Beckwith as I can recall had shot Medgar that night. Maxine Smith was the last person to see him alive. And this was on a – was this on a Sunday? I think this was on a Sunday when they had his funeral. Well, they don't have Sunday funerals now but I believe this was on a Sunday. I could be wrong.

01:15:13

And a Saturday. Come to think of it. And I remember all downtown Jackson was closed because the marches and the funeral cortege went through downtown. Tensions were high because you had a lot of African American. Kind of like **Jenna** was last week.

And Ernest Withers was there and the police arrested him and put him in the trucks that they had they would take you to jail in. They call them the "**Black Maria**" because most of them were black. The Sheriff's Department has some now but they are green and white. Mostly white with a green insignia. But back then they were black and had gold letters on them.

And I can recall they took the protestors out to the stockyards. That's where they were booking them. They kind of roughed Ernest up and they exposed two or three rolls of his film. I can remember that taking place this particular day down there in Jackson.

01:16:38

Ralph Bunche – I think he was a delegate to – what was Ralph Bunche's title at the time? But anyway, he was a high-ranking federal official. Ralph Bunche. And I just can't remember what his title was. I think he was Ambassador to the United Nations. I believe that's what he was.

Student: We have a .question.

Student: I'm researching a photo of Carla Thomas and Lloyd Price backstage at the Sixth Annual Starlight –

Mark: Starlight Review?

01:17:29

Student: Do you remember if the Starlight Review – it was to benefit the Goodwill Homes? Can you talk a little bit more about W-DIA's presence in the community?

Mark: Yeah. W-DIA had a very strong presence in the community because we were as I said earlier the first African American program station in the nation. Not just in Memphis but in the nation. And radio personalities would come from across the country to observe how we did things.

01:18:05

The review was we used to have the W-DIA Goodwill Reviews and then later on the Starlight Review. The Goodwill Review was always in December. The Starlight Review was during the summer. And the reason they called it Starlight because they would have it out in the park and the first one I remember was in Martin Stadium which is down at the corner of Lauderdale and Crump. Near LaRose School.

And most record companies at that time would do anything to get their product played so they would let their artists come and they would even call the station. A.C. Williams was the person who

was the coordinator of that and would volunteer their talent to come because that was the only station back then at that time – WHBQ and WMPS were also the major stations but they would not play African American music because things were so segregated.

01:19:08

But then later on I think it must have been in the '70s when we stopped the reviews talent was so expensive that you couldn't make it because the radio station was not trying to make money off of it. They was doing it small because I can remember when W-DIA was 730 on the dial we were a sun-up to sun-down station and then later on it became a 50,000 watt station and it changed from 730 on the dial to 1070 and there was a big promotion. You only paid \$10.70 to go to see these artists.

And I can remember taking pictures of Diana Ross and the Supremes. We had the Stevie Wonder. And who were those other fellows? The Miracles. Smokey Robinson and the Miracles. And all those for \$10.70.

01:20:18

And now you pay \$80.00, \$90.00, \$100.00 and some odd dollars to go. I remember going to see Prince. It must have been five years ago. When he was at the – maybe it wasn't five years ago. Whenever. It was shortly after – no. It was at the Pyramid. And the tickets were \$85.00 to go see him.

VIDEO CUT: 1:20:41:28

Student: It was worth it though. He was good.

Mark: He was. You're right. You're right. It was a great performance. And he didn't have anybody to open up the show for him. He did it himself. He did the whole show.

Also at a W-DIA Goodwill Review that was the first time I got an opportunity to see Elvis. Elvis came to two of our W-DIA Goodwill Reviews. The first one I was not in the Teen Town and I remember having a date and when Elvis came out she beat me all over she was so excited.

The next time I was in the W-DIA Teen Town Singers and we were doing backup for the various artists that would come and

George Klein brought Elvis and I had my picture ~~tooken~~(sic) with him. Mr. Withers took my picture. I'm an Elvis fan by the way.

01:21:43

And Bill Burk who used to work for the *Press Secimitear* did a lot of stories on Elvis and did I don't know how many different books and three of Bill's books have some of my pictures of Elvis in there. In fact I was looking at some pictures of Elvis just last night that I had taken. And on my radio program almost every Sunday I'd play a Elvis record. I'm about the only African American that plays Elvis all the time. And I love his Gospel music. And that's what my program is. It's a Gospel music program from 3:30 until 7:00 on Sundays. Where I like Elvis, people also call and ask me to play Elvis and I do.

01:22:34

Student: You say Elvis came to two of the reviews.

Mark: Mm-hm. The Goodwill Reviews.

Student: To the Goodwill Reviews.

Mark: Down at Ellis Auditorium.

Student: Were these events segregated? Would white audience members? Did they attend the reviews or were they solely for African American?

Mark: Solely for African American. The only white people there were staff members at the radio station and all of us had to go, you know, the staff. We were required to go and we were required to buy our own tickets. It was completely charity. And we enjoyed doing it. And didn't mind paying. Most of the time if you're a part of an event you feel that you should get a comp ticket but on the Goodwill Reviews and Starlight Reviews we had to pay our own way.

01:23:26

Marina: I'm about to run out of tape again. How much longer do we have the room?

Student: We have the room for another ten minutes or so. There's a class in here at 6:00, ~~for _____ density.~~

Marina: Does anybody else have questions that they want to ask? Okay. Hang on. Give me two seconds.

Mark: Pictures of Dr. King. In fact I was looking at one last night with one of the elders of the Church of God in Christ, Elder [McEwCuen](#), and James Lawson, who was one of the big architects of the civil rights era. Jim Lawson. Have the Supremes. The Beatles. Elvis. Mohammed Ali.

01:24:19

And as I said earlier, five different presidents and I have the mayors. In fact right here's a book with a lot of my pictures of current mayor A.C. Wharton and some people in there.

Marina: [Crystal?](#)

Student: I have another photograph of Lieutenant George Lee. Not this one but a separate one. And it's of him returning from a business trip in Atlanta at the Memphis Airport with a crowd around him. Now we just see the picture of him as an insurance business man and we see this picture with him and Bishop Patterson and the sheriff.

I want to know can you

Mark: This is Bishop [J.O. Patterson](#).

Student: Yes.

Mark: Not Gilbert Earl². This is Bishop [J.O. Patterson](#). He's in. That's [Sheriff Mel Hinds](#). And that looks like [Frank Auburn](#) right here. The one I was talking about who was the editor of the paper and this is [Clark Podias](#) who was a reporter for the *Press [Sciemitag](#)*. And you were about to say can I. That was taken at Mason's Temple too.

01:25:23

Student: I want to know if you can talk a little bit about the different roles that Lieutenant Lee played. I know politics and business and things like that. What was his general reputation throughout Memphis?

Mark: He had one of integrity and honesty. And he was a man who had contact and if you were supported by Lieutenant Lee, Lieutenant

Lee could call the sheriff or he could call anybody downtown and not necessarily downtown but he also had contact with the Republicans. I said he was a big Republican and I remember he and his daughter Gilda went to Washington once and met with President Eisenhower. I can recall a picture. That was an Associated Press picture that was taken. I took a picture once of Lieutenant Lee and his daughter Gilda too.

VIDEO CUT: 1:26:19:03

Marina: Do you know if this photograph was published or about when it might be so we can go back and try again to see if we can find it?

Mark: No. That had to be – I would think – that’s at Mason’s Temple and during the height of the civil rights movement and we can probably back into it. It was probably back in somewhere between ‘66 and ‘68 I would assume that is. Because that’s at Mason’s Temple.

Marina: Crystal, did you have any more questions?

Student: I also have another picture of the Tennessee Funeral Directors Association and I wanted to know if you can talk a little bit about the roles of funeral directors in the _____city of Memphis. It mentions N.J. Ford in the caption.

Mark: Yeah –

Student: The Ford family was a _____highly involved with the funeral homes and the politics,

Mark: Yeah –

~~*Student:* _____The funeral homes, the politics, the~~

~~*Mark:* _____Right.~~

Student: Was it ~~C~~common for those people in the funeral business to be involved in other aspects of the African American community –

01:27:27

Mark: No. Un-uh. You see, you had funeral homes. You had R.S. Lewis & Son. You had T.H. Hayes. As I said earlier was the first African American business and you had the Oates Funeral Home

and you had the Ford Funeral Home but the Ford Funeral Home was not – oh, also you had J.O. Patterson Funeral Home who was – it was owned by Bishop Patterson’s family.

But the Ford Funeral Home was not very prominent until I think it was late – it must have been the early ‘70s before the Fords became prominent with their funeral home because Mr. Lewis was more prominent. Mr. Lewis was the one who had Martin Luther King’s body. His body was embalmed at Lewis Funeral Home and I can remember *Newsweek* magazine with a photo in it of the people viewing the body and Mr. Withers did take a picture also of Dr. King in the casket over at Lewis Funeral Home.

01:28:44

The Fords came into prominence because they had, I think it was 12, 12 or 13 other kids and they were all outspoken. John and Harold especially. And I think they really got their niche fighting for the down trod and minorities with Memphis Light, Gas & Water because bills were so high and everybody was saying that in the black community bills were higher than they were in the European community but, you know, research doesn’t hold that to be true.

The reason the bills might be higher was because in the African American community the homes were not well insulated and all that heat was going out. And the other homes were well insulated.

01:29:53

Did I answer your question?

Student: Yes. Fine.

Mark: Okay.

Student: Do we have additional questions? For our distinguished guest?

Student: You said you were a member of the Teen Town –

Mark: The Teen Town Singers. Uh-huh.

Student: And that’s where Carla Thomas got her start.

Mark: Carla Thomas uh-huh.

Student: Did you know her personally?

Mark: Yeah. We were in there together. I used to like Carla Thomas. But she wouldn't give me the time of day. And then when she was interested in me, I was interested in somebody else.

01:30:29

Student: That's how it works.

Mark: That's how it works. Yeah. In fact I have a letter in my office today that I was looking at where she had sent me – that must have been about four or five years ago and in fact when Carla did Gee Whiz that was back in 1960 and I was going off to Lincoln University. And Jim Stewart, one of the founders of Stax Records, was a very kind and very approachable person and because of my love for Carla and all, I took about six or seven copies he gave me to take to try to promote the record and I remember going to radio stations in Jefferson City, Missouri taking to promote Gee Whiz which was Carla's first big hit.

Marina: Did it work?

Mark: No. We never did have, you know, we just friends but we never did have anything romantic. We were just friends.

Marina: No, but I mean did the radio stations –

Mark: The radio stations. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah. The radio stations did. Yeah.

VIDEO CUT: 1:31:36:14

Marina: You're gonna ask next.

Mark: And then before she asks me, and then in the book *Soulsville USA*, that Bob Bowman I believe was the writer of that book. *Soulsville USA*, there's a – one of the photographs in that book is a picture that I took of Carla Thomas. She was over in the Satellite Records shop in the early pages of the book. Yes, ma'm?

Student: I notice that you mentioned that you'd often cover a lot of community events. Did you ever cover the ____ City Pools Project? By any chance?

Mark: No. Never did.

01:32:19

Student: The photograph here is the winner in 1962 and it was _____.

Mark: Mm-mm. I never did.

Marina: How great is that?

Mark: Hm?

Marina: How great is that photo?

Mark: That's great isn't it? It's a nice photo. It's a nice photo. It looks – I don't believe it is. It looks a lot like Dr. Harrington's wife. First wife. Dorothy. It looks a whole lot like her. I don't think it is her but it looks a lot like his wife.

Marina: _____?

Mark: Ha?

Marina: Dr. Harrington?

Mark: Dr. Harrington's wife. Let's see. No. I'm sorry. I said Dorothy. His sister is Dorothy. His former wife is Ida. He's divorced. Her name is Ida.

01:33:24

Rufus Jones, the fellow that used to own Jones Big Star Supermarket which was right across the street from Stax where David Porter who was a collaborator with Isaac Hayes on Soul Man. You remember Soul Man? _____? David worked over at the Big Star Store with Mr. Jones who is Rufus Jones and Rufus Jones is Ida's brother. I happen to know David and Isaac and all of them. I have a lot of pictures of Isaac and his Cadillac. I don't remember when that Cadillac.

01:34:09

And then last night I found some of my pictures and I was looking because my wife had Ruby Dee – you ever hear of Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis? She was the president of Delta Sigma Theta sorority and they were the stars in a movie called *Countdown at Cassini* that the Deltas were the executive producers on. And it premiered at the Town-Two Cinema Theatre. That's the theatre downtown at Beale and Fourth Street. They call it – I think it's the Plush – where the University of Memphis basketball players had their ruckus. It used to be called the Mohammed Ali Town-Two Cinema Theatre. It was named after Mohammed Ali.

Anyway, to make a long story short, that picture premiered there and my wife was president of the Deltas and she was in school at Manassas with Isaac and Isaac loaned her his limousine and driver to pick Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis up and they were over to our home for dinner. Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee. And I was looking at a picture with the limousine and all the people from the neighborhood in my yard. Just last night.

01:35:42

Marina:

So it was it the solid gold Cadillac that they got to ride in?

Mark:

No, no, no, no. This was the limousine he had. This was a gray limo. But I do have pictures of that gold Cadillac. I rode in it. Yeah. I remember when he got it.

Marina:

Anyone else bring any of their photos that they want to share?

Student:

I'll share one. I think you mentioned earlier about the penal colony.

Mark:

The what?

Student:

The penal colony?

Student:

Yeah. The prison.

Marc:

The penal farm?

Student:

The penal farm. Yeah.

Mark:

Okay. That way – are you familiar with Shelby Farms?

Student:

Yes.

Mark: Yeah. I'm on the board out there at Shelby Farms. We trying to redevelop that. Make it – it's 4,500 acres and it used to be called the penal farm and now we call it Shelby Farm. Got rid of him.

Marina: I'm sorry. But actually I don't know if this is right but someone suggested to me that this photograph – his name is **Cleveland Wise?** Might be taken at the penal farm. It said in the caption in the newspaper that he worked for county government?

Mark: Yeah. That's logical. I don't know him and I'm one of those persons that if I don't know I'm gonna tell you instead of trying to pull your leg and say yes. And I don't know.

Marina: Okay. Good.

01:36:59

Mark: And it's unfortunate that we don't have Ernest Withers to be able to, Mr. Withers just celebrated his 85th birthday on August 7 and Dr. Harrington had a little celebration for him down in the Hall of Mayors down at City Hall and unfortunately that he is no longer able to take pictures and all and he goes a little in and out with dementia now. Yeah.

Marina: We just timed this very poorly.

Mark: Absolutely.

Marina: I'm so sorry.

Mark: You know it's just like I remember when I came over Vasco Smith said to you that we had just about two weeks or a month late and we could have had Carlotta Stewart Watson here. You remember that? Yeah.

Marina: Well, if no one else has any questions I think we'll stop for today. I do want to –

[End of Audio]