

SS096.mp3

Bill Thomas- We are listening making with the possibility of question keep right on following your thought.

David Yellin- I am Mr. Yellin we are in councilmen's Tom Todd's office at (muffled) plaza, this is Wednesday June 5th 1968 and we are conducting an interview for the oral history office at Memphis state and the Memphis search for meaning committee.

(Tape Break)

David Yellin- We are now on the air.

Bill Thomas- How you happened to get interested in the...

Tom Todd- You want me to start with college?

Bill Thomas- The very beginning your family.

Tom Todd- Well I am from near Charlottesville Virginia. I have lived in Memphis now for some 22 years. I attended Episcopal High school near Alexandria Virginia. I got into the university of Virginia and graduated there in 1943. I served in the navy as a naval aviator in the second world war.

David Yellin- What course did you take at the university of....

Tom Todd- I graduated with a BS in economics. I am not an attorney but a lot of people think that being in politics that I probably am an attorney but I never had quite enough time. The war came along and I was fortunate enough to get my BS and I went into the service and I never went back to college. I went into the textile business at the end of the war over in Gastonia North Carolina and from there I was sent to Memphis to learn the cotton business and I have remained in Memphis ever since. I thought it was such a fine town and the future looked so much brighter over here than it did in Gastonia that I severed my ties over there and decided I would just go on my own and stay in Memphis.

David Yellin- When was this Mr. Todd?

Tom Todd- This was back in 46 .

David Yellin- 46, you have been in Memphis for 20 years.

Tom Todd- And I have been in Memphis ever since. I have married a Memphis girl, I have 4 children. Three boys and a young daughter of 8. My boys are all older, the oldest boy is a at the university of Tennessee his first year. I have two other boys one is 127 and one is 14 that are going to school here in Memphis.

David Yellin- How about your own family were you the eldest?

Tom Todd- I am the oldest of 5 children. I have two younger sisters and two younger brothers. One of my brothers, my youngest brother is here in Memphis with me. I encouraged him to come to Memphis. My next brother, brother next to my age had already married and moved to New York and....

David Yellin- You mean he went wrong?

Tom Todd- He made a mistake and he is living in New York and he says it is great and how he can stay that I don't understand and he wants to live up there I am not about to change anybody's mind.

David Yellin- It is amazing isn't it.

Tom Todd- So he is up there in the insurance business and has been very successful. My brother myself over here in Memphis he is in the real estate business. I am glad to say, both of them have done real well. My mother is still alive and she lives in Charlottesville, or just right outside Charlottesville.

David Yellin- Is your family just Virginia all the way down the line?

Tom Todd- Yes.

David Yellin- I mean Todd of Virginia, Todd is a common name.

Tom Todd- Well I have a lot of forbearers up in that part of the country.

David Yellin- You go back pretty far?

Tom Todd- You mean as far as genealogy goes?

David Yellin- Yes, it is always interesting you know, you may be Charlemagne's son or something.

Tom Todd- I am not that much on it, I had an aunt who died several years ago and she is very interested in this and she has all kinds of records which she passed on to me. But I really haven't had time to go through it but theoretically you read all this and they go back a long ways and my wife and my mother and my daughters. I mean my sisters are in the what do you call them, various porders of the American Revolution, Colonial Dames this sort of thing. So they have to do a lot of ancestor searching I suppose. I say my wife she happens to also be in this too, not because of me but through her own, it doesn't go along, when you marry somebody is on your own antecedent so to speak.

David Yellin- Right.

Tom Todd- So we have been around for awhile.

David Yellin- Now let's go back to Memphis what business are you in now?

Tom Todd- I was in the cotton business. I was in the cotton business up until 1958 when I more or less retired. I still maintain a membership on Memphis Cotton Exchange although I haven't used it really for some years since 58. I kept thinking well maybe I want to get back in and it just never has gotten to the point where it looked like it would be desirable and I have gotten to the point where I have forgotten so much that I don't want to get back and so at the present I am doing real estate, farming interest.

David Yellin- What kind of farming and where is your farm?

Tom Todd- In Mississippi just over the state line I have 1200 acres down there.

David Yellin- Are you active in that yourself?

Tom Todd- Actually we are not doing, I haven't been active in anything for the past 6 months in fact we have rented out most of the farm about 600 acres which we raise cattle on. Our cotton allotment is now, I rent it out and we have 600 acres of bean is rented out, I mean the soil the land.

Bill Thomas- Is that soy bean?

Tom Todd- Soy bean. So we have very little other than we keep about 600 acres, I like to shoot and we have some big fields down there where we like to shoot dove and we have enough acreage, 1200 acres where we can shoot quail.

David Yellin- We know what has been keeping you busy the last 6 months.

Tom Todd- Well I haven't had a chance to do any of these things in fact I went quail shooting twice and went dove shooting twice in the past two seasons and by that I mean the dove season and the quail season. In other words I didn't get out very much.

David Yellin- Well now to Bill's question how did you get interested in politics?

Tom Todd- That is a funny story really. I fussed and fumed and criticized and condemned for years about the lousy politicians. And my father and law and myself used to get along great and discuss politics and he just hated politicians. Finally one day back in 62, 61, 62 I can't remember exactly. There was an editorial in one of the newspapers here in Memphis saying that there wasn't enough candidates running for these public offices and why don't people step forward and offer their services. I had been fighting and fussing all these years about this thing and this gave me the impotence or the push to say well I am going to get in this thing, they say they haven't got enough people to run, so I am going to run.

Bill Thomas- This was before the mayor council formed?

Tom Todd- Oh yes. And this was for the state legislature this particular thing. So we had two days to, I guess this came the last two days before filing deadline and I have never been involved in politics and knowing no politicians I had to do some hustling.

I found out I had to go get a petition signed, I had to go found out where you get the petition who do you see.

David Yellin- How did you do this do you remember who did you call?

Tom Todd- I went down and I called up the election commission first and found out to whom I had to go and this was to a man named Charles Black who was head of the democratic election primary here and I had to go get my petition, I was running ads a democrat at that time. So I went down and he gave me the forms and I didn't know him from Adam and he didn't know me and he said now get 25 names and bring it back before the deadline which is tomorrow night at 12. I said fine, I walked down to the cotton machines and got 25 names and I walked back up there and gave them to him and he said that is fine but you better go back and get 25 more names. I said why you said I only needed 25. A lot of these people will not be registered you will find, so you need more names to ensure you will be on the ballot. So I walked back and got 25 more names and came up.

David Yellin- How long did that take you about 2 hours?

Tom Todd- About 2 hours. See where his office was and where the cotton exchange was is just 2 blocks apart so it is very simple. He was in (muffled) The falls building I mean. So I went back and got it filed with plenty of time and as I say I didn't know anybody then and I didn't have any campaign manager and I figured after reading the paper, everybody has a grand opening you know. You have got, now you are running, so I decided with my wife that we will have to have our grand opening. So we had an announcement that, and had some of our friends down and one of the newspapers showed up and they asked me a few questions and I was interested because I was being just as honest as the day was long and answering questions. One of the questions they asked me why are you running as a democrat. I told them, because this state at the public time a republican cannot be elected. And I also told them I have never voted for a democrat for president. I found out later this republican was a very strong democrat.

David Yellin- You mean this reporter.

Tom Todd- I mean this reporter excuse me. So I thought when I found this out boy my goose is cooked these guys will never support me. Well to make a long story short this reporter and I have become really good friends. He has his ideas and I have mine and that paper supported me which was a tremendous asset because in races of this kind the public isn't able to get to know the candidates and you have to have the news media really to make suggestions. They used me as a man they thought would be worth putting into office. So with the help of the paper, this paper I was able to get into the primary, I mean the finals.

David Yellin- Which was it the Commercial Appeal?

Tom Todd- This was the evening paper.

David Yellin- The Precimeter.

Tom Todd- Yeah. And so then I was able to, I had 3 opponents I think it was in the primary.

David Yellin- Yeah, what district is that?

Tom Todd- This was at large, when everybody ran at large. I had three opponents and I won, thanks to the newspaper support. Nobody knew anything about us, this is how important the paper is in my opinion for this type of race particularly and then I ran against a very strong republican he led the ticket and here again I had the support of both papers. No I didn't I take that back, I had the support of the evening paper again, but I was able to win.

David Yellin- Who was your opponent do you recall?

Tom Todd- He is an attorney here in Memphis and I really don't know him, or hear much about him now. At that time he was a public, not a public defender.

David Yellin- Had he held the office before?

Tom Todd- No we were all, this was a new post, I was running for the senate too and this was a new seat. So there wasn't any incumbent this always helps. So anyway to make a long story short I won and went to Nashville and served legislature 2 terms. I got fed up with the democratic party and I changed my affiliation and I ran for the county commission two year ago and lost.

David Yellin- Is this in the, and in the presidential election did you support the republicans?

Tom Todd- Yes.

David Yellin- But you, yes, 62 you were elected and then you..

Tom Todd- Ran again for the senate and I was elected again and then I ran for he county court or rather county commission and I lost that race, fortunately and things happened so fast I can't keep up with them.

Bill Thomas- You say fortunately, could you go into that a little further explanation?

Tom Todd- I don't think I had want a full time job in politics.

David Yellin- And the county commission is?

Tom Todd- The county commission was a full time job. So I lost that race and then I was asked if I would not run again fort he senate in the state legislature as a republican. They already had their primary and the man who had won republican primary they found wasn't old enough, I guess you have to be 30 I believe and at the time he was 29 and needed a candidate and wanted to know if I would run. This time I think there were three weeks before the finals. I said, alright I will run, but I

can't win this race unless I have both papers. I have got to have both papers to win this thing. Well I ended up getting one paper and that killed me, I lost by 3,000 votes.

David Yellin- Again was this the same paper, the Precimeter?

Tom Todd- No the other paper the Precimeter didn't support me this time, the morning paper support me.

Bill Thomas- What were the aspects that made it more important the second time for you to have the support of both papers to win as oppose the first time when you needed the support of one paper to win.

Tom Todd- I had changed forums, so the democrats were very much upset about if Tom Todd is switching and I had all the negroes very upset and all the labor very upset and I only had one paper. So when you have a block vote of negroes and the block vote of labor and at this time they were pretty much, they had the one leader and they had the ballots were numbered and they could block vote and they were very effective at it.

David Yellin- They block voted in essence for party did they.

Tom Todd- Yes.

David Yellin- There was not other element, no other aspect of it that made them a block vote other than for democrats as oppose to republicans.

Bill Thomas- In other words if you were a republican and had the same platform as the democrat they would still vote for the democrat.

Tom Todd- They probably would have yes. But I was singled out in particularly because in the legislature I had been opposed to things that these minority groups wanted for example, I was told if I didn't vote to repeal council punishment he negroes were going to vote against me. I said well I am going to vote for keeping capital punishment on the books, I think it is apparent that my opinion, I am going to vote that way and I don't give a damn what you people say you are going to do to me. And they also wanted a minimum wage, and I said I am not going to vote for a minimum wage. We are going to have a federal minimum wage and have a state minimum wage and a federal minimum wage and the bureaucracy that goes along with this is awfully ridiculous I am going to vote against it. So the labor and the negroes said we are going to wreck you. I said this is your prerogative. So I was beaten and I hear again this is the best thing that ever happened to me. So that left me with nothing to do other than to get back to work.

Bill Thomas- You mean full time.

David Yellin- Oh Horrible.

Tom Todd- And so then they had a new city form of government come up which I supported from the beginning. Here again, and this is the interesting part, you

always hear of politicians their friends wanted them to run. I don't have any friends I guess, no one ever said Tom Todd why don't you get up there and run for something. Nobody has ever told me that, I just get up and run on my own. And so this time I decided I was going to run. The guy who needed, pardon my English the man I wanted to beat was the only spot really left he others had been filled with good people, good qualified people. I had to run at large because the district I live in is totally negro. So had to go into an at large district and the man I chose was the man who had led the ticket in the democratic elections just the previous 6 months before. So he was a strong contender. Nobody had gone in there to oppose him.

Bill Thomas- As long as this is public information would you mind mentioning..

Tom Todd- This man's name is Drew Canale. Canale's name is known, not this man in particular but the Canale name is an old established name here.

David Yellin- He is a state senator also.

Tom Todd- and he was at the time a state senator and he had a great deal of publicity and it was a cinch to win and I was a real underdog. He did some things in the legislature fortunately that I was able to utilize, to hammer him over the head with. He went up there and he is in the cigarette vending machine business and he introduced a bill, of course he denied it but I had the bill with his name on it and we were able to clobber this guy every time he opened his mouth because he just made so many misrepresentations, but it wasn't his bill he had nothing to do with it, and he was opposed to it and yet Canale's name is leading the list of responses to this bill to lower his taxes on his machines, not lower them but take them off his vending machines completely, throughout the city of Memphis. We lost the city, we lost the state, we lost the county taxes. He was then able to reduce sales tax 4 ½% the 4% sales tax remove that so that all he had to do was pay a 2 ½% grocery fee tax. So this guys ended up feathering his own nest so to speak. Now I didn't think he was sent to legislature to go up there and pass legislation effecting him so generously. So I was bale to utilize this in my campaign and hammer him over the head pretty good with it and this is what I attribute my winning too was being able to get the voters aroused because this caused a tremendous amount of talk around town. But my name wasn't known, you can be in the state legislature and be not very well known. But Canale had all the negro vote, all the labor vote, because in the legislature he had done everything they wanted so to speak. So he had this plus all the catholic vote and this is a big vote in this town. Well to make a long story short I managed to win the race.

Bill Thomas- What were his explanations for eliminating the sales tax and the taxes involving vending machines while not eliminating them from say over the counter.

Tom Todd- I don't think he really had, I know I had heard, I don't think he really had an explanation.

David Yellin- It was a home built one you might say.

Tom Todd- He and another cigarette vending machine operator from Chattanooga apparently got this bill together, and they sponsored this they were the only two people that were on it. And say I used it against him because I think the people should know, and nobody knew this in Memphis. Having been in the legislature I am aware of what is going on I know I have a lot of friends up in Nashville. And I was able to use, take advantage of the situation because I was close enough to know what the hell, excuse me, was going on. I think when you are in politics you have got to be just as above board bending over backwards, just like this man who called me asking me to tell him who had the park committee so he could get a man assigned a job. This is just as wrong as it could be. I don't it is not our prerogative to recommend people to be hired by any agency in this city and he may well have gotten hold of this point but I don't think he will now. Unknowingly this man may say well to the park commission chairman, please hire Joe blow because he is a good man. There are many good men but I don't think it is up to the council to get themselves involved. And I think everything should be above...

David Yellin- He wasn't just asking you for advice was he?

Tom Todd- He wanted to know who to go to see, and I told him who he could see but I suggested that he not see him, if he wanted to talk to the park commission go see them, go talk to them. And that way nobody would be, you couldn't carry a stone at anybody.

David Yellin- Mr. Todd have you lived in the same neighborhood since you have been here?

Tom Todd- I lived originally, when I first came down here I lived in Mississippi part of the time I lived the first couple years after we were married down on this particular piece of property and 18 years I have been living here right in the same place.

David Yellin- And your neighborhood has changed? Or has it changed?

Tom Todd- It has deteriorated to a certain extent. Part of it has and part of it hasn't. Part of it has been upgraded and part of it is still going down but I think it has reached as low as it is going to where the only place it can go now is back up. When property gets in such a state it is usually time to buy it.

David Yellin- As a real estate man.

Tom Todd- Yes, and this is what is happening in this area.

David Yellin- Well could we, now we have a good background. We have gotten you into politics and here you are in this new city council. We have not asked any of the council members this that we have spoken too but this just occurs to me Bill and to what was your feeling? You were in favor of the new government?

Tom Todd- Yes from the beginning, I went to the first meeting that they had and I was with it from the beginning right on to the end. I am glad I am in it I think it is going to be a tremendous asset to Memphis.

David Yellin- Were you apprehensive at all when it began as to?

Tom Todd- No, I thought as all of us did that we would spend a little more time than some people anticipated, at least for the first 6 or 7 months learning what was going on, getting to know each other and getting to know the various functions of government and how they operated and how we were supposed to operate. Of course no one had any idea what happened might happen. Of course, I don't think it would have changed anybody, everybody would have run, everybody would have done the same thing I believe.

David Yellin- That is how you did the things at Memphis state? The breakfast sort of series of find out more about the job?

Tom Todd- Yes we were then and still are just as interested as could be and I say they this (muffled) most of these people have attended every meeting they have done everything to learn more about the operation of government to help themselves and of course help Memphis too.

David Yellin- But you would include Tom Todd in that too?

Tom Todd- Yeah I would include Tom Todd because I have put in a little bit of time on it. All of us have. I am not saying a thing about anybody because they have worked at it. We have one man, and I don't think he has done the city a service and this is Patterson. It's on the record I said this publicly in the paper. This man is a negro and I don't think he is doing his citizen's as a whole the job that he should be. For example he is a legislature and I don't think you can do a good job and do both because part of the time you are in Nashville and part of the time you are here. Well he says I am only here in Nashville, only in Nashville just a few days a week. At this particular time when he was in Nashville we needed him here, we were going through some very trying times and he was not here and I just feel that you cannot serve two masters and this is what he is trying to do carry water on both shoulders. Right now he is boycotting the city council because he says we should have all of our meetings in the afternoon if it takes us until 12:00 at night. I don't see any reason to go until 12:00 at night if we quit at 6:00 in the afternoon by starting at 9:30, we start at 9:30 in the morning. Mr. Patterson said we shouldn't start at 9:30 in the morning we should start at 2:30 in the afternoon and then go into the night. So he boycotts the morning sessions. So we start at 9:00 and we break up at 12:30 and then meet again at 2:30 but he won't come to the morning sessions. So he has no idea what's going on and he gets in their at 2:00 or rather 2:30 session and he doesn't know what he is voting on or why.

David Yellin- Was this from the beginning or was this recent?

Tom Todd- This has been from the beginning after the first couple sessions, he decided he wanted them to go on into the evening as long as it took, and fortunately the rest of the council feels this is not in the best interest of the council or the city of Memphis because we have to hold all these people, the extra cost would be considerable because we have stenographers and all the fitting personnel have to stand by to be able to answer questions. And to keep those people here all hours of the night just doesn't make sense.

Bill Thomas- What is his reason for, or what is his objection to a morning..

Tom Todd- He says that the public isn't as well informed in the morning session. I am not sure that I understand it because the paper is there, the television cameras are there and the public can be there if they so want to come, the public doesn't come though to any extent, but this is his reason he feels there is not enough publicity given to it.

David Yellin- In other words more people would come if there were evening sessions.

Tom Todd- That is what he feels, I presume. But they don't come as it is unless they have a particular complaint or beef.,

David Yellin- Well perhaps when we talk to Mr. Patterson we will ask him further.

Tom Todd- So he feels that these sessions are more or less secret but it is saying that no intent. The old city commission had secret, I say secret, they had executive sessions where the public and the press were barred.

David Yellin- Closed sessions.

Tom Todd- Closed sessions, but the first thing we did was to open these up so that we have had all of our sessions in public with the exception here I will say, with the exception I will say of 3 ill-advised sessions that I was very much opposed to and I went and I left and I voted against what they were doing. Had it been in the legislature I feel and at that time was a big exponent of the press being at all functions, all committee hearings. I just feel, I want everything on the table where you can see it I can see it and everybody knows what is going on. And we had a bitter battle up there and we finally we won it. My first year we had a group of about 7 people and we fought for two years this interim period to get more people to join us and the next time we got more and finally the 3rd session they opened it up completely. My second session it had gotten open pretty well, but it took three sessions really to get it open and of course there is some point they may close them back up, I don't believe they can do it until public opinion is up to date and they won't.

David Yellin- Now these sessions that you said were ill-advised closed happened during the strike?

Tom Todd- Yes.

David Yellin- Now this gives us a good transition...

Tom Todd- The first session..

David Yellin- Excuse me Mr. Todd I just wondered if we could come to it, and we will remind you again if you don't I think you would in the natural course. If we can sort of look at the strike if this will be helpful to you, more or less chronologically but not necessarily. Because it would be interesting to note for instance how you were first, your first inkling, your first idea, your first exposure to the fact that there was going to be a strike, or that there might be, do you recall that?

Tom Todd- I don't really recall those details very plainly. We had heard rumblings that there may be a strike in the sanitation department we had only been in office for a month and a half I think it was. And I was told that it was a particular grievance that some of these men had that involved letting them go on rainy days. However, when this was brought to the attention of the new department head Charles Blackburn the very next day he posted on the bulletin board that if a man reported to work he would be given the option of going home without pay or he could stay there and work with pay out of the rain, he could do what he wanted in other wards, he didn't have to go home. So in all fairness to this department they did, as soon as they heard what the problem was, what these so called union representatives asked, what really precipitated this was that the union wasn't told this was going to happen this notice was posted on the bulletin board, well we didn't have a union and I don't feel now and I didn't think then it was any of the union's business. If the men wanted this and the department was willing to give it, and he posted it on the bulletin board that's it. But this irked this negro named T.O. Jones who was the so called president or leader of this group and so he was very upset because he wasn't consulted. He doesn't work in the department and there wasn't any reason why I should see even now, why he should be told of this, because there was no union and this was a grievance that a group of men had presented and it had been solved, it was on the bulletin board and people could do what they want. So everything was rosy so we thought.

David Yellin- Were you aware of this or did you find this out later?

Tom Todd- I found this out just before the strike started before they called everyone out.

David Yellin- On the 12th? Is the date?

Tom Todd- Somewhere in that area I don't know just when but I recall they posted this, everything should be alright now.

Bill Thomas- I just want to clarify something in my mind if you will. These men, if it rained, and the men reported to work they had the option of staying all day and working if they wanted?

Tom Todd- No they didn't at that time. They were sent home because they didn't want to send them out on the trucks and get them wet.

David Yellin- But they were given two hours pay.

Tom Todd- They were given two hours pay in lieu of working all day. This would give them their money to get home and save them their transportation. However they complained that we want to work some of these people are working but most of us aren't. We want to be able to work all day if we want to and so when this was presented Blackburn posted on the bulletin board the next day, this is alright.

David Yellin- Do you recall how it was presented?

Tom Todd- No I can't.

David Yellin- I mean as member of the council this is not your province of this.

Tom Todd- No this was just a procedure in the department, how they handled it at that time was just posting things on the bulletin board, they had no form or set form I don't imagine.

David Yellin- Now to the best of your information did Mr. Blackburn consult anyone about this, about this bulletin board announcement in effect altering the policy if not changing it.

Tom Todd- He consulted with may or Lobe on it.

David Yellin- I see.

Tom Todd- There wasn't any problem, see the city government these people, this new form of government came in determined to rectify anything that they found that was wrong. The council wanted to do everything they could to try to resolve problems that had been going on in the old administration. Everyone was eager willing and trying, and to say this grievance was handled forthrightly and then all hell broke loose, because apparently this isn't how they wanted to handle it. Make this union look like the union is doing this for you.

David Yellin- In other words then Mr. Blackburn was not fully aware of this being new in office and then he found out the situation which had been the practice for, do you know how long? At least several years.

Tom Todd- I guess for many years I don't really know.

David Yellin- And then he found it out and there was a grievance or protest form the men and then he put out this announcement.

Bill Thomas- The grievance was solved.

Tom Todd- Yeah.

Bill Thomas- And then the union objected to it not being solved through them and this was the spark that ignited the strike.

Tom Todd- Right. So then T.O. Jones took it upon himself, and I am now quoting more or less Jerry Worth of who I am no admirer. I am probably more familiar with what happened during the strike than any councilmen and most people in the city of Memphis in that I was directly involved in the negotiations. I am just trying to get to a spot where we can start. This is where we should bring in now. T.O. Jones called the men on strike.

David Yellin- Yes, if it is any help to you since we are a little bit familiar with dates, we could tell you.

Tom Todd- I couldn't tell you a single date.

David Yellin- But we will just insert them as we, this was February 12th when the strike was called, Monday morning.

Tom Todd- And one of the things they said was grievances, that was a problem, then we are not getting enough money., So they went out on strike and the mayor at that time said we are going to continue to pick up garbage. Well the next day they had 5 trucks out on call, certain number out on the call, and there were more trucks each day but then there was this secret meeting called and I don't know who called it but it was held at Fred Davis' house, this is one of the negro councilmen.

David Yellin- A council secret meeting?

Tom Todd- Yes a secret council meeting. How can a secret be in the council? Which I said I was very much opposed to but I went and at that meeting and of course not all of the councilmen were there, some were out of town and some didn't come for one reason or the next. I think there was 8 people there out of 13 and at that time a vote was taken and it was brought up that we should give these people more money and I objected to it very violently. How are we going to give these people more money all we know is that we are in dire financial straights, we have fox meadows golf course on our back, we don't know if we own that, we don't know if we need any monthly pay for it. And here we are talking about giving a pay raise which in my opinion isn't even our prerogative and I was voted down. So I said okay, go on you all are doing something that is illegal, you have to be in the council chamber to do this, but I was one out of a group. So I left.

David Yellin- Was this considered an official meeting?

Tom Todd- Apparently members of this group thought it was because they immediately went out and told the negroes that we are going to give you this raise and I think the three negro councilmen contacted all their friends and told them this is what you are going to get. This immediately made all the negro community feel like all they had to do was come to the council and we are going to get what we want and so this got the council involved and everybody was inexperienced at the time.

We really were reluctant but they had gotten themselves into the mess and the negro leaders in the community knew that the council had this meeting, the public didn't but the oppress didn't at this time.

David Yellin- Did mayor Lobe know about this meeting?

Tom Todd- Not until I told him.

David Yellin- What was his reaction?

Tom Todd- He couldn't believe it but never the less it happened.

Bill Thomas- Well did the council have the authority to give this raise without consent of the mayor?

Tom Todd- The council has the budgeting authority so to speak, they do have control of the budget. The mayor recommends and the council agrees or cuts or increases. But we have a unique situation here in our community. There is no way for us to get money. If we don't have the money we can't lawfully go out and say we are going to go into deficit finance. We have to be able to prove where the money is coming from, how we are going to pay it back, we had over borrowed the bank and that is why Fox Meadows fortunately fell through because we were overdrawing at the bank and the bank, the city didn't cancel the check, the bank did because there wasn't any funds. So the council had no authority, no legal right to make this thing, make this suggestion we already knew that the city hospitals were a million dollars in the hole because they had been over spending their budget to the tune of a million dollars. So we knew what financial state we were in and yet these guys were give them what they want. I say give them what they want but some of the council members suggested well we will give them 15 cents. And this is the figure that was finally resolved.

David Yellin- Mr. Todd again, since we are having our eye on history without begin too precious to ourselves the details become so fascinating. How did you tell the mayor, did you call him on the phone, you know we are searching for this kind of thing to give it the human element and so on.

Tom Todd- I told the mayor that very evening, because as a matter of fact I was due at 7:00 at St. Mary's cathedral to enter into negotiations with Jerry Worth. So I left this meeting which started at 2:30 in the afternoon.

David Yellin- Do you recall the date of this?

Tom Todd- This was a Sunday.

Bill Thomas- I don't recall the date.

David Yellin- It's not the end of the first week?

Tom Todd- You can check back by determining the first day that Jerry Wroth came to Memphis, this would give you the date. And I went to that meeting that night and we didn't break up until I got home at 6:00 that morning, 6:0 am. We went from 7:30 until 6:00 am in the morning.

David Yellin- I see, and the council meeting was that Sunday.

Tom Todd- That very Sunday that afternoon.

David Yellin- And you left to go to the meeting with..

Tom Todd- I left, the others were still there, and I told the mayor that we had a real problem on our hands because wasn't anything the mayor could do and he hoped that there wouldn't be any outcry what was going to be paid him. All this was going to do was make it more difficult to talk to these people.

Bill Thomas- Did the newspapers come out with this information do you remember at that time?

Tom Todd- There were rumors, I don't know at what time. It wasn't that next day no, but the mayor never mentioned what I told him.

David Yellin- This was the 18th. Right because obviously the 23rd was the other council meeting which ended in the macing and so on. This was before. So we are tracing it just, the 18th. And you saw the mayor at this meeting, had he..

Tom Todd- He didn't know anything about this meeting.

David Yellin- Had he designated you to talk to Mr. Worth as his representative.

Tom Todd- No, he asked me to come down, not as a representative so much of his, as somebody from the council to sit in and see the preachers had gotten together, the minister's association had gotten the union and the mayor together and they were trying to iron it out. You see there had been some meetings earlier that had been broken off, the union had broken off negotiations because they said the mayor wasn't being, I don't know what word just use, he just wasn't cooperating I will put it like that. I don't know whether you were aware or familiar of the tactics the union used when they came to town, told the mayor to shut your big fat mouth and a few other things.

David Yellin- Were you there then?

Tom Todd- I wasn't in this particular thing I saw it on television, television cameras were there but I didn't see this except on television. And one thing the mayor and I see eye to eye on was open meetings and he wanted open meetings and he had one closed meeting at the union's request, this was the first one and I wasn't there. Mayor Lobe wouldn't have any more closed meetings, the union wanted all meetings closed. They operate better in the dark, this type..

David Yellin- Was this a closed meeting with Mr. Champa or with the negro...

Tom Todd- This was the white ministers this Sunday night.

David Yellin- The white ministers.

Tom Todd- Well there were several negros there, but I think the predominant, they were predominantly white. This was covered by the press the television and the news media were there.

Tom Todd- And was that the meeting that they subsequently said there are too many of us could you send a smaller group to meet with me later, or is my memory faulty.

Tom Todd- I don't recall that.

David Yellin- Ok, let's get back, there are so many meetings I don't know how you can recall any of them and that is why we are trying to help to clarify the sequence and we don't want to confuse it. But the 18th Sunday you left the council now you went with the mayor to attend a meeting with the union.

Tom Todd- Worth was there.

David Yellin- And the ministers.

Tom Todd- Yes. This is the first time h had entered see Champa had been in town all the time before but this is the first time Worth had gotten into the negotiations.

David Yellin- This was in sense a closed meeting but the ministers, Mr. Worth..

Tom Todd- It was closed in one sense that the ministers had gotten it going but the media and the news reel cameras were there, so it was covered as far as the press.

David Yellin- It was an invited meeting then, from the mayor and you and Jerry Worth and Mr. Champa and I guess T.O. Jones.

Tom Todd- Yes and there were 3 or 4 others that I don't remember there names, and Myron Hallie and Frank Gianatti were there for the city, and mayor Lobe. I didn't say a thing I was just asked to be there. IO was more or less an observer I guess.

David Yellin- Can you give us a sense of that meeting and how it concluded if you recall.

Tom Todd- Well I recall so well rabbi Wax chastising Mr. Worth for improper behavior he showed at this meeting and Mr. Paul Tudor Jones also an hour later getting up and repeating. This man was so vile and so rotten this Jerry Worth and his (muffled) and in his manner and in his talk, and his threats that even these ministers spoke against what he was doing to Mr. Lobe.

David Yellin- Were they directed at Mr. Lobe or the chamber?

Tom Todd- They were directed at Mr. Lobe, the statements that Worth was making . The Statements that the ministers were making were directed to Worth. They were very upset because of what worth was doing. Mr. Lobe, it was just appalling to see what this guy, I suppose that is the way he operates or had operated previously in other places, he comes in and he tells them what to do, and if they don't buckle he lets them have it with both barrels. Verbal abuse, threats, foul language, just most unattractive. They say these two ministers got up twice one at each time and told this man that they just weren't going to stand for that kind of talk. They didn't care who he was talking to (muffled) That nobody should be talked to like they were talked to mayor Lobe. Mayor Lobe he conducted himself, you have seen it himself, he conducts himself very nicely in all of these functions and he didn't do anything in here to deserve any of the abuse that was heaped upon him by this creature. So the preachers sided with mayor Lobe that night, very definitely and the union broke the meeting up whatever around 6:00. We had several other meetings by the same group that I was asked to attend. I guess you would call it as an observer. I was not taking part of any discussions, I was just there.

David Yellin- Maybe I missed at 6:00 pm this meeting broke up?

Tom Todd- Am.

David Yellin- Am. I mean the ministers and everybody stayed through the whole thing?

Tom Todd- All night.

Bill Thomas- It was 7:00 at night until 6:00 in the morning.

David Yellin- And this was smothers brothers and all of that?

Tom Todd- Oh we had quite a show on our own, and it was on TV they recorded it and I don't know if any pictures came out but some of the dialogue in there would be great if the public could see this man Worth.

David Yellin- Well alright what did he say do you recall.

Tom Todd- I can't recall and I couldn't repeat some of the things he said, he is just so...

David Yellin- This is not a family tape...

Tom Todd- Oh what I can't repeat, I couldn't do justice to the way the man carried on because t his man is a master at doing what he tried to do that night.

David Yellin- Alright so it broke up at 6:00 in the morning.

Tom Todd- Right and then they agreed to have a meeting that evening again and we had meetings for 2 or 3 days.

David Yellin- Now with the ministers?

Tom Todd- With the ministers, as the mediators, they were serving as the moderators or mediators, moderator I would say. And we were on one side of the table and the union were on the other side and the ministers were at both ends of the table.

David Yellin- And the whole thrust of these meetings was to arrive at some relationship, or was it to arrive at some conclusion tot eh situation?

+Well of course what the union wanted was dues check off. This is what is started off, and this is the interesting thing. When, Worth first came to town in this little private huddle he said all we want is the check off. You give us the check off and we will fire T.O. Jones and we will leave town and Mr. Lobe wouldn't go for that. And so naturally he had to get started on another tactic. A couple days later he came in and said, Mr. Lobe, if you weren't an honest man this strike would have been settled a few days ago.

Bill Thomas- If you are not an honest man?

Tom Todd- Yes, if you weren't an honest man this strike would have been settled, we could have paid you off.

David Yellin- Did he mean that literally with money?

Tom Todd- Money. I don't know how else you could mean it.

Bill Thomas- Political, I am sure he is referring to possibilities...

David Yellin- Or he could have meant we could have made a deal or something.

Tom Todd- Well he meant money but you cant prove it. Everything this man wanted to do smack of illegality or under the table, anything but open and above water.

David Yellin- Could I ask you some thing now that might be better later, but this is kind of such an open discussion and a good one and we don't have to stand on too much protocol. If there were another kind of man involved do you feel that there could have been some sort of settlement.

Tom Todd- It would have made it a lot easier if these creatures had come down here and acted as men and not come down here and acted as gangsters. You know you can attract a lot more flys with honey rather than vinegar.

David Yellin- So again it was a matter of protest, not again, in your opinion a good deal of it was a matter of procedure rather than.

Tom Todd- Well we would not, I mean they could have come down here and been sweet as pie but we would have been very reluctant to have had a union because we feel, I feel I will put it and I think the mayor feels that there really isn't much that a union can do for these people that the city can't. The city can really do more for these people, than the union. The union actually all they wanted were the dues, this

is what was so pathetic. They came to me, we don't care about T.O. Jones, we will fire that guy. Give us a check off and we will leave you, we want that money. And this is what is so damn maddening with these people. They weren't interested in the workers (muffled), forget them all we want is the check off. And I have been through this same thing myself right in this hotel, we had a strike here, we had the same hype thing come down, came down here after Chicago give us a check off and we will leave town. We fought them and we beat them. We fought them for two years but they are the same rotten characters.

David Yellin- Could T.O. Jones if he had been involved or even the state people do you think they might have handled it better with you all?

Tom Todd- I don't thin the state and anybody could have handled it any better. The city would have won this strike had not Martin Luther King been murdered. The strike was over as far as the city was concerned we were licking up, we had some 90 trucks going out over half the trucks. The strike was gone, this man was desperate.

David Yellin- Now this man being...

Tom Todd- Worth was desperate, he had no, he was beat, and then this man was shot. And this was a new ball game. We had it licked. Our big problem at the time was when were they going to start using force on the trucks that were going out. The union was getting desperate and we were controlling the trucks, we had policemen with them. We couldn't put out more trucks because we didn't have more policemen and we didn't want to send these trucks out, because we were afraid of the goons coming in here and messing or shooting or trying to stop these trucks.

David Yellin- Were these local or outside?

Tom Todd- The goons that these unions bring around with them

.David Yellin- Was there any overt threat that you were aware of that t his might happen.

Tom Todd- Oh yeah, Worth made this threat.

David Yellin- He did.

Tom Todd- Yeah, he said I can do this, I can stop you all.

Bill Thomas- Did he make this at a meeting?

Tom Todd- Yeah at a meeting.

Bill Thomas- What was it, what were the advantages that the city (muffled) In other words what were the advantages of them working for the city instead of being unionized.

Tom Todd- First of all they wouldn't have to pay dues, they talk about dignity. Now I don't see how in the world you get dignity with money extracted from your pocket if

you can get the same thing from the city, the same grievances, the same benefits, why have a union? As I say Mr. Lobe has promised these people and all city employees he was going to give them these raises. He didn't have it at the time we were unable to give it to these people when the strike was over. These people are going to have to work over 3 years to get back to where they were before the strike started and yet if they had waited 2 months they would have been able to do the same thing and would not have the privilege of paying union dues perhaps.

David Yellin- Oh in other wards..

Tom Todd- But we had the same things that they have now, other than the grievance procedure, we didn't have a full grievance procedure. This is the funniest part of the whole story in my opinion. We had been studying grievance procedures and this union presented theirs, we took their grievance procedure almost word for word and we took it so fast and accepted it so readily they called a recess for a day and a half to figure out what's wrong with our grievance procedure. Trying to figure out why did we accept it.

David Yellin- And you had been studying...

Tom Todd- We had been studying others of these union agreement things, a lot of them are very similar. We had gotten contracts from other areas.

David Yellin- Just to make certain Mr. Todd your statement that they would have to work 3 years to make up where they are going. You mean because they pay dues their salary is forthwith depleted?

Tom Todd- No see they were on strike for two months they didn't get anything.

David Yellin- Oh I see, in order to make that lost money plus the money that they pay for dues by getting raises it would take them 2 or 3 years catch up.

Tom Todd- Right I figured it out mathematically but...

David Yellin- At least it is an approximation.

Tom Todd- Figuratively.

David Yellin- In other words if they had been dealing with the city they wouldn't have been laid off and they would have eventually gotten that.

Tom Todd- Right they would have gotten their pay with the exception that they have gotten two since more now then they would have gotten at the time, but that is a hell of a lot to go through for two cents an hour.

David Yellin- 7 ½ to 10 is that the difference?

Tom Todd- It is 2 cents, there was 2 cents difference over what they get now over what they would have gotten. They get 2 cents more. It doesn't start however until October. So it was just so stupid of course Worth even admitted it he said this guy

Jones pulled this strike, we really hadn't planned on it at this time because we wouldn't pull a strike in the middle of winter time with all the cold weather we want it when it is hot and smelly. So he was quite put out with Jones and was ready to fire him right on the front end.

Bill Thomas- Exactly what was the big objection to the approving of the dues check off?

Tom Todd- We feel that this is something if the union is so great the workers ought to pay their own dues. The city has enough problems without collecting and pulling out money for this, pulling out money for that. We recognize unions for years and we don't collect anybody else's dues and why should this union be any different. We have umpteen unions, and they, we have never had any problems. So why should we give preferential treatment to this scalawag who comes from Washington or wherever it is and tells us, well I am not going to say some of the thing she told us, but who comes in and says we want these union dues.

David Yellin- I wish you would Mr. Todd. I mean we are not here to, because I think it is important, your story is exceedingly important, perhaps your story is not being told.

Tom Todd- Well it has been hard to get it across because.

David Yellin- Well that is why we are here sir.,

Tom Todd- It is just difficult to get so much across and with all that went on.

David Yellin- Because quite properly any relationship has to deal with a personal involvement of the people concerned and if this was significant to the relationship why I think we ought to try to get at it from a historical point of view. So please feel free to tell your, what your version of it is.

Tom Todd- The worst thing that happened was when the council decided it would hear some of the grievances. We had heard the union say that these people were being discriminated against, or having to work in the rain nor this or that, or not being able to work in the rain. So Davis one of the negro members decides he should hold a hearing.

David Yellin- I see, now we are coming to the 22nd.

Tom Todd- Yes. So his committee unbeknownst to me or to any of the councilmen other than the chairmen, the chairmen and one committee member and Fred Davis decided it would be fine to hold a public hearing and hear the grievances of the sanitation workers. Well they held the hearing in a public council chamber there but none of them showed up, none of the workers it was just union representatives. So Mr. Davis said well we want to hear the union, the workers grievances. So I guess two or three hours later they brought about 400 people who were reported to be

workers but then they wouldn't let them talk. The only people that could talk were the union people.

David Yellin- Now you weren't there.

Tom Todd- I wasn't there until they called us in, and I guess it was about 5:00 when I got there and there was a mob of people in the lobby and plus in the room and they had Fred Davis and Lewis Donelson up on the podium, up on the rostrum there, and Neders was the other negro member. He wasn't a member of this committee but Bill Hyman who was a member was out of town and was not taking part in it. And they were more or less trapped in there they didn't know if they could get out alive or not., These people had been talking about we are going to burn the city down, we are going to take the council chamber apart. If you don't give us what we want we are going to make this place a shambles.

Bill Thomas- Now this was the union?

Tom Todd- Some reported ministers and they were howling in there and I came in and I was just dumbfounded to see all this going on. I set up the press box there and I watched it, I just couldn't believe it. I watched down there and I saw Gerald Fanion. I thought my gosh what is he doing here, he was patting them on the back and getting them water and conferring with them. Gerald Fanion is, or was at that time the Shelby county public relations (muffled). Then I looked over and I thought what is that red headed fellow I thought he was human relations council man from Nashville, what is he doing over here, he is one of the agitators. An so the strikers said well they are going to stay here all night. So I left I said I am not going to stay here all night.

David Yellin- You were in the...

Tom Todd- I was upstairs, in the , we have a little press box that you can see into the chamber. So I went on home and they finally moved them out that night and then the next day they had a special meeting of the council was called and at that time it was decided by some of the members that we should give the strikers what they want. I begged and pleaded not to give the strikers what they wanted that the mayor should be allowed to handle this thing and to make a long story short a resolution was passed saying the union has sent a list of demands and they incorporated these demands in this resolution, that the council was about to pass, 7 or 8 of them. Along with it they didn't mention anything about the mayor and I got madder than hell, I said well you all passing a resolution for something that in my opinion we don't have any right to do. This is the mayor's prerogative and for us to become involved in it is just, we just open a Pandora's box but they went on and passed it anyway and we opened Pandora's box. Because they all thought well this is the councilmen we are going to save them, the council is going to do everything that these people want. So each week or every two days we would be called to hear their grievances and every Tuesday of some weeks they would descend on city chamber, on city council chamber. This mass of people and they would come down there and they would

threaten us, we are going to tear the town apart, we are going to burn the city. I remember so well that negro Ezekiel Bell. We are going to pull the chamber seal off the walls, we are going to tear the chamber apart, we are going to destroy the whole town we are going to burn it. If you don't like this, what is the problem.

Unknown person- Your phone is off the hook.

Tom Todd- I know it is off the hook. I want it off the hook, thank you. Ezekiel Bell, fellow minister so called by the name of Moon, Lawson, a fellow James Lawson I believe a reverend or so called all used these threats we are going to tear up the town, we are going to burn the town. I think another one made the statement in this tremendous gathering, there are no toilet facilities in here, since we can't find any toilet facilities we will just use the floor. And this these creatures and they are all purported to be ministers and say Lawson, Bell, Moon, and half a dozen others whose names escape me were doing this. Even people haranguing this mob, tear the town apart if you don't get what you want, and this came back 3 times, three different occasions.

David Yellin- Now on the 23rd which was the Friday, this was a full council meeting.

Tom Todd- All these were full council meetings where these people were coming in and telling us.

Tom Todd- And this was at the, was this at the auditorium on the 23rd?

Tom Todd- No, let me stop and think. At the auditorium we didn't give them an opportunity to speak.

David Yellin- But that was the morning, was that the morning where the council passed the resolution saying that we would acquiesce to the demands of the union.

Tom Todd- Yeah, that was.

David Yellin- What was the nature how could you do it? I suppose that is public record?

Tom Todd- Oh yeah I am just trying to think where that, I got that file right here with a date on it.

David Yellin- Well in other words you remember however the essence of it was that the council would meet with the union to conclude this?

Tom Todd- The union thought the council was going to agree to what they wanted. But these people had come down there and gotten a bunch of the councilmen upset to see what was going on and that they weren't going to give in to the union. So when we got over there to the auditorium, they had all these people waiting for the council to capitulate, and say the council was going to say they were going to take it away from the mayor but the council didn't quite go to that extent. The council wasn't firm enough however in what it said and the union kept hoping well we are

going to break the council down. And they kept hammering and then the statements about the money started coming out. It was told the council had agreed we are going to give you 15 cents or whatever fine figure it was 10 cents, 5 cents, and then several of the council members wrote to Jerry Worth. This is very damaging, the council has decided we are going to give you this money. And we got into during the negotiations this just got hit over the head with this everyday. About the council is going to do this and this is what dragged this thing on.

Bill Thomas- All these councilmen write this letter without knowledge it was one councilmen.

Tom Todd- Two councilmen wrote it but one of them was white and should have known better, the other councilmen I had no, I can't fault him because he would do it anyway. The other councilmen had knowledge, he is smart enough to know what he did.

David Yellin- Did they write this officially or just personally or...

Tom Todd- He personally wrote to Jerry Worth as a member of the city council and said that city council has recommended that we give you this money and it went back to this secret meeting that was not a legal meeting at all. In an official meeting we had never agreed to give anything to anybody.

David Yellin- That is that Sunday meeting that you spoke of at Fred Davis' house.

Bill Thomas- He had not been authorized to send the statement out.

Tom Todd- No, he took this upon himself.

David Yellin- It was his personal.

Tom Todd- Of course the union used this to one great advantage, we have a letter from one of your councilmen but from this particular one and as I said we got clobbered over the head every day by the union, about the council can do this here is a letter and even though I explained it is illegal and we brought out the code and showed him the council can't do this we weren't even official. In order for us to do anything official we have to be in our chambers and all we can meet and adjourn that day and go into the auditorium but we still have to start there in the council chambers.

David Yellin- Now the auditorium thing broke up in other words the council left and then the people left and this is where..

Tom Todd- The council left and I don't know what the people did, I think they milled around and then they had a march down the street.

David Yellin- Yes that was the day that the first macing took place.

Tom Todd- Yes when they went down and tried to break the windows at Goldsmith's.

David Yellin- Ok then can you recall the next or should we...

Tom Todd- Well that particular day I suppose I spoke out and voted against that resolution. And I caught a great deal of criticism from a great number of people until they realized why I had done it. The resolution I don't remember the wording and all that is in there. Didn't support the mayor a bit. I still felt that the mayor should be supported in this thing but the resolution didn't indicate any support for the mayor and the paper just said I voted with the three negro voters like I was all for what they were for. When actually I had another reason entirely I felt that this man should be allowed to handle the job and keep the council out and I explained it at this meeting.

David Yellin- And the three negroes voted against it because it didn't go far enough?

Tom Todd- They wanted to give them everything the strikers wanted and I voted against it because it didn't give the mayor any authority. So I caught a great deal, I thought the roof lifted a couple times they started screaming and hollering, they were really to get us. They were really comical. Those people out there they were shaking their fist and hollering at me, and I was the last man. I am the 13th man and so when I made my speech all (muffled) broke loose and so we were fortunately protected by the police and we were walked back to the auditorium, I mean from the auditorium to the city hall. So a few days later, the mayor called me and wanted to know if I wouldn't assist in actively participating in negotiations with the union, along with Frank Giannatelli and Tom Pruitt and Jim Manilla and Myron Hallie and Harry Woodberg, excuse me. This would be the city's negotiating team and the union had their people. So that is when we started negotiating.

David Yellin- How were these meetings run, who was the moderator of these?

Tom Todd- This was Frank Miles, was...

David Yellin- Oh so this is subsequently this is later...

Tom Todd- This is getting later, yes.

David Yellin- I see.

Tom Todd- So we held several meetings but we couldn't get the union, we thought the problem was a dues check off and we couldn't get. But when we got in the first day they said forget the dues check off they decided they wanted recognition. Official recognition. So we talked about official recognition for two days and the next day was to be Martin Luther's march and we figured well they have got to do something to dramatize this thing. So we were just doing everything we could to keep them negotiating we didn't want them to walk out and say we had done something wrong. We just agreeing with everything they could think of. They had been

complaining earlier about a news leak, they said somebody leaked the story to the newspaper, that the agreement had been that no statements were to be made other than through Frank Miles and some things came out in the papers that discussed what had happened in one of these meetings. Well we hadn't given out anything and we were hard put to understand what the problem was but this was something that had built up in (muffled), we didn't think about it for a couple of days. Anyway, 2:00 rolled by the day before the march and we were going on pretty good so they weren't able to walk out, they weren't able to walk out, we were trying to keep them there because we were waiting for the newspaper deadline to get by...

David Yellin- This is March 27th.

Tom Todd- And so we said there is not much point in walking out now because the paper has gone to the press and they won't get any publicity. And we forgotten about the television coverage and so about 4:30 or 5:00 it was getting sort of disorderly and sort of getting mad for nothing, and said we are leaving, you are just not bargaining in good faith. So they walk out and they come rushing back in and now you call the press down here and you have the photographers and the news cameras the newsreels and you all are just telling all these things you are not supposed to be telling. We didn't know what in the dickens they were talking about. So they storm out and we go out in the hall and sure enough there is the press, the television cameras. Henry said how in the world did you all know that these people were going to stage this march.

David Yellin- This walk out?

Tom Todd- This walk out. They said well Gerald Fanion called us at 4:00 to tell us to come down here because the union was going to walk out at 5:00, which they did. And all this time they have been haranguing us the day before about news leaks and this and that when they were just building this thing up to stage themselves a march so they could get more publicity on the paper to focus attention on the march the next day.

Bill Thomas- And he was the public relations...

Tom Todd- He was the public relations man, we also found out at this time...

Bill Thomas- For the union?

Tom Todd- No he was supposed to be promoting peace and harmony between the negro community and the white community and he worked on the county payroll he was an employee of the county. We found out that this fellow was working with the union and he was attending their, I don't know if you want to call them skull sessions, their briefings each day each morning they would meet in there in a room at the Peabody and he was meeting with them and they were informing him of what was going on apparently and he was telling the negro community what was going on, inciting them and keeping them stirred up.

David Yellin- By this time had he resigned?

Tom Todd- Oh no he was still on the payroll.

David Yellin- But he as also assistant to Baxton Bryant at human relations.

Tom Todd- He wasn't at that time publicly doing any of that. He may have been assisting but they were still separate at the time. He was, one of them was on county payroll and the other was on the city.

David Yellin- Right.

Tom Todd- On the state of Nashville. So that was real interesting to us.

David Yellin- Now that was the 27th and the next day was the 28th was the disorder or the mini riot broke out which was led by Martin Luther King.

Tom Todd- Right, then the meetings broke off, I recall at this time because the union walked off and said we weren't bargaining in good faith any more. And they wouldn't bargain anymore. So we were just at a standstill there and it took, well then Martin Luther King was shot, came back and then they sent this federal mediator in Reynolds from Washington to get us back together. He and Frank Miles. And so we started bargaining again and let's see.

Bill Thomas- This was after the assassination?

Tom Todd- This was after the assassination. We had stopped negotiating because the union had walked out and said we were not going to negotiate anymore. We were ready, we hadn't walked out and we were still ready and we made it known to the papers and everybody that we were still ready to go ahead.

David Yellin- Were there any efforts made between the 28th which is the mini riot march and the assassination, were there any efforts made by anyone that you knew of to bring you two together.

Tom Todd- Well the mayor had been trying to.

David Yellin- Oh well the mayor and how did he do that?

Tom Todd- Through Frank Miles.

David Yellin- Oh Frank Miles was still involved trying to get the union back again?

Tom Todd- Yeah.

David Yellin- Was there anybody else involved in this representing the union?

Tom Todd- I don't really know.

David Yellin- I see, and the union refused to do it on the basis as you said that you weren't bargaining in good faith.

Tom Todd- That was the story they used.

David Yellin- Bargaining in good faith for what reason that you didn't recognize the union?

Tom Todd- We just weren't bargaining in good faith period, the didn't have any specific things, we just weren't bargaining in good faith.

David Yellin- But you were ready as the mayor's representative to sit down any time that they wanted to come back.

Tom Todd- Oh yes.

David Yellin- Which would indicate your good faith.

Bill Thomas- News leakage was not blamed on you and that...

Tom Todd- This was blamed on us.

Bill Thomas- Not good faith.

Tom Todd- But they had been the ones leaking it and then of course they blamed us again when the television people came down and then we found out that they called them down there.

David Yellin- Now when you say they is was this Jerry Worth and others?

Tom Todd- Yes, well Worth wasn't here at this time he had left town.

David Yellin- Oh yes.

Tom Todd- At this point.

David Yellin- Who was it then who led the assault?

Tom Todd- You had Champa, Champa and Jackson who was the church, see they got the church and I guess we let them...

David Yellin- Reverend, reverend Jackson.

Tom Todd- They came in and as I say they had lost this fight and then they hit on the best idea imaginable. Let's pay the preachers. So they got these preachers involved in this thing and as I say the money rolled in, they had meetings twice a day, three times a day one in the morning, one in the afternoon, and once at night and they got people coming in there and pouring out money the negro community. To support the poor sanitation workers and they made a real good deal about it they worked that thing for (muffled).

Bill Thomas- You mean the ministers were paid?

Tom Todd- These negro ministers.

Bill Thomas- They were paid to influence?

Tom Todd- Yes, they decided we have got the ministers involved, whether Worth thought it I up I don't know who thought it up but it worked, it was magnificent. The ministers as you know in negro community are the leaders so to speak. These are the people who go out and tell the community what is going on because so many of these people don't read the papers, can't read probably and they depend on these people to a certain extent for guidance. So the ministers as I say became involved and made a wonderful deal out of it, a money making deal. They met 3 times a day and they used to pass the hat and they used this big church out here on Port St. I think it was and passed the garbage cans. And as I say even though they got the ministers involved in it the strike was over they had lost. We had 95 trucks going and it wasn't until the death of Martin Luther King that there was any hope for them they were just falling by the waste side.

David Yellin- Can we talk about hat a bit, how did that in your opinion affect the situation?

Tom Todd- The death?

David Yellin- Yes sir.

Tom Todd- It affected it drastically, it was the whole story. I will give you a good example. Two days before Martin Luther King was assassinated the white community, chamber of commerce for example, the future Methodists, downtown association etc. Had congratulated the mayor on handling the situation. Picking up the garbage handling everything, doing a good job. King was assassinated and a day later they came in and said give them anything they want. This makes it real tough on a guy, one day he is doing a good job, two days later you are an SOB give them anything they want. And the death is what changed the ball game, if he hadn't died, hadn't been killed the union would have been out because.

David Yellin- In other words what you are saying was that the mayor was influenced.

Tom Todd- The mayor was in a position of where this death had solidified the negro community to a point where we would just have more riots it looked like. And more trouble. We bargained in other words with a gun at our heads. Not that we thought it was the right thing to do, in order to try to relieve the situation, we had the president of the united states, vice president of the united states, (muffled), Worts. All of these people got to settle the strike to save the country.

David Yellin- Did you as the mediators get any official message or any indirect message about the feeling of the president and these people that you mentioned.

Tom Todd- We didn't have direct contact with them. We didn't have voice communication with them ourselves. These people the mayor was contacted and the mayor was talked to about it.

David Yellin- By the president?

Tom Todd- By the president, the vice president, Will Worts and (muffled).

David Yellin- They called the mayor directly and indicated their concern about this.

Tom Todd- Right,

David Yellin- So the mayor then of course conveyed this to you as his best representatives. And you were at the bargaining tables with Mr. Reynolds and Mr. Miles again after the death with this in mind of course. It did take some 10 days or so, now why was that? What happened there, is what I was saying, not why?

Tom Todd- Yes...The union as I was saying was just so unreasonable, see, they had the ball game won. Even though we had these pressures put upon us we just didn't feel like we could capitulate and give them (muffled) to rape the city which is what they wanted to do and we had to make out as best as we could and we did the best we could which ended up being a victory for nobody really other than the man who shot King. I guess. Of course it helped Worth more than anybody. It made a King maker out of him. He has now mentioned his meaty successor and in fact the reason the strike ended, or we finally reached an end to negotiations after ten days because they got tired of it dragging on so long in Washington. And Worts and Meety and the president told this guy to go on and settle the strike even if you don't get all you want, just get the thing settled it has gone on, dragged on for too long we are having these riots in Washington, we are having these troubles in Detroit and we want it settled and if you expect to be vice president of this union movement you are going to have to settle it.

David Yellin- Was there ever a relationship between what happened in Memphis, or the relationship to the strike to other cities, did you feel they were putting pressure or at least indicting to you that this strike did have affect in other cities?

Tom Todd- Do you mean the union?

David Yellin- No sir, I mean nationally. That what was happening.

Tom Todd- They innovated that this is what was causing it, things in other cities. Of course, this was just an excuse I think of what caused these things in other cities, this man has been killed here in my opinion.

David Yellin- Well not so much the assassination now but the fact that the strike was, did the strike have any significance nationally now? In addition to the assassination,

Tom Todd- I am not sure if I understand the question, the strike what it did was open the doors for this union to take over every city in the county.

David Yellin- I am trying to figure out on what basis the president and other the secretary of labor and vice president would say to you all settle the strike because settling the strike might alleviate the situation.

Tom Todd- Oh yes this is their reaction, it will stop the riot in Washington for example.

David Yellin- So they did assign some relationship.

Tom Todd- Yes, see the whole country was burning at t his point other than Memphis. Memphis was the quietest city in the country.

David Yellin- Did you feel there was any relationship between the strike and the rest of the country, did you and the mayor and others?

Tom Todd- I thought they used it as an excuse, I still can't get it through my thick head what happened in Memphis was why they went haywire in other cities., They were going to go haywire it was just a question of whether it was this week or next month, the timing in my opinion. That is the way I still feel.

David Yellin- So that your settlement was based on, I don't want to put any words, why then did you settle in essence when at one time you said that perhaps you wouldn't, or why did you and the mayor, I am trying to find Mr. Todd give you so that you have in your words no in anyone else's...

Tom Todd- Well we really didn't have any alternatives. We had lost the support of the papers so to speak. Editorials all against us, The public opinion was such as far as the business community went well we got to settle this thing at any cost, give them anything they want. The mass of the citizens however, the white community, was solidly behind us. Boy Henry Lobe got over 10,000 letters and telegrams. People did not give into this union after he was killed.

David Yellin- After the assassination. But you, in weighing the forces, the pressure of the united states government...

Tom Todd- Well we felt that the death of this man has so solidified the negros in this community, even if we wanted to fight it out what would we accomplish and it would be a fight. I mean it wouldn't be a peaceful thing it would just be a fight and then we wouldn't accomplish a damn thing even if we won.

Bill Thomas- So the assassination really was as far as the rioting and the situation nationally, the race situation nationally, the assassination here in Memphis was merely the straw that broke the camel's back, it was there waiting for to be brought into the forefront.

Tom Todd- As far as the rest of the country went right. What happened in Memphis had nothing to do with the rest of the country. If it hadn't happened in Memphis what happened in these other areas wouldn't have happened in my opinion,

sometime sooner or later. But it happened in Memphis and it changed the picture, it won't be the union their strike (muffled).

David Yellin- Could you say, would you say that you settled with the union in this to make more peace, again I don't want to put words, I am trying to have you say so your motive in that sense, your need your desire to make a settlement.

Tom Todd- I don't think we settled it for more peace, because you don't settle things under a gun and have peace. I don't think this, all you have to do is look at history where you have a gun on a guy and say we are going to have peace, it lasts, it is a temporary peace.

David Yellin- So you settled under pressure.

Tom Todd- We settled under pressure yes. Not to get peace as such we settled under pressure to try and resolve these things so we would be in a position to go on about the city's business and get this city rolling again. They have been off this two months.

David Yellin- Are you sorry you did it?

Tom Todd- Did what?

David Yellin- Settled.

Tom Todd- Well I don't know if you can say you are sorry or not, I am sorry that this man was killed here. As I say if he hadn't been involved in it, we wouldn't have settled, we wouldn't have had to settle if this man hadn't been in it. Now I don't know if this is answering your question or not but King's death made the difference between whether the city won this...(Tape End)