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Bobby Doctor- A minister led organization and when the young people were finally brought in they were brought in to sort of take the word from the leaders and carry it on to the peons. And of course this was not in keeping with their new found philosophy and new found concerns. And therefore they rejected all of this. So when King was invited in here he was invited in here by the monsters leading the community on the move for equality. COME. When he came here the first time he did not meet with the other elements of the community, he only met with the ministers of the community and therefore the other elements of the community felt left out as they have always felt. And so when they marched downtown this elements decided for the first time in the history of this city that it was going to make a decision and it was going to control the action.

Bill Thomas- Before you get to that Bobby can I go back just a little bit. Dr. King came in on Monday I think anyway we can get the date, whatever date it was. It seemed like a sort of a invitational thing just to use his name and that sort of thing, but as I understand it he decided kind of spur of the moment to come back and lead a march and this type of thing. Did the young people feel that this was a rejection by King?

Bobby Doctor- No they don't feel it was a rejection by King they just feel and felt that the overlying leadership was doing what it had always done, excluding them. King came in here totally unaware of the various elements in the community, he admitted it himself. He said that he was not aware that you had militant elements in this community and that few people were aware. Except for that leadership in COME.

Bill Thomas- But they knew?

Bobby Doctor- They knew, you can bet on it. They knew. So and other people in the community knew too but the general community did not know and persons outside of the community certainly did not know. So when he came in here he came in sort of blind not knowing what was going on and just sort of assuming that those persons that had invited him in here were in fact speaking for the total community. And so when he came in here and you know the rest about the rebellious activity that took place on Main St. on what date was that?

David Yellin- 28th.

Bill Thomas- The mini riot.

David Yellin- March 28th.

Bobby Doctor- March 28th.

David Yellin- Now we have gotten tot eh 18th that was when Dr. King first came in, that was when he made the announcement that he was coming back. On the 18th he made a speech.

Bobby Doctor- yes.

David Yellin- And then he said he was coming back to lead a march and that was supposedly the 22nd and that was when the snow came and so on. What were the young people, how were they involved or they weren't involved at all?

Bobby Doctor- They weren't involved at all in the decision making progress.

David Yellin- Had they been invited by reverend Lawson and his group to participate at any time?

Bobby Doctor- They were invited after it became obvious that they were there and they would not tolerate exclusion, they were not invited from the very beginning, no.

Bobby Doctor- When was it obvious, or when just to clarify, was it obvious before the 28th?

Bobby Doctor- Yes it was obvious before the 28th, but they went invited.

David Yellin- Not at all to any meetings or any...

Bobby Doctor- Certain meetings were arranged and they were told certain meetings were taking place and they would come to these meetings and many times though when they attempted to speak they were rejected or passed over. Little things that tended to..

Bill Thomas- They had no say.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah, tended to make them even more angry.

David Yellin- I see they were kind of invited but sort of as poor cousins..

Bobby Doctor- Observers, they were invited as observers. And I would say that they were not officially invited at that point but they were aware of meetings and started attended some of the meetings and after that it became obvious that they had to be included in the group. It became even more obvious after the 28th.

Bill Thomas- Well can you tell us was that a planned thing?

Bobby Doctor- I, no , I say it was a sort of sporadic sort of thing. I don't mean to imply that the invaders or the black organizing project was responsible for what took place on the 28th.

Bill Thomas- Even though they did take the blame for it.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah certainly you had to have somebody to blame, you just couldn't say the thugs did it or the pimps did it, or the prostitutes or the hustlers. You had to have an organization to blame, and organization to make a bad guy out of. But first of all it should be pointed out that there were many guys off of Beale St. that took part in that incident. A lot of these guys were young guys, young guys who were not philosophically inclined you know towards blackness. Young guys who were still

straightening their hair, young guys who were wearing I don't know whether you have seen the loud colored suits. Young guys off the streets, the drop outs and the disadvantaged and the rejected.

Bill Thomas- I really don't get the implication there is that good or bad to wear the loud colored suit?

Bobby Doctor- My point is that these guys had not reached the philosophical sophistication that the militants had reached. Their concerns were the same, the degree of rejection was much the same, and the degree of seclusion, of isolation was much the same. But I am saying now that they were not philosophically in tune with the militants.

Bill Thomas- You keep using the word philosophical and just to get it on the record, what you mean here is the black power philosophy and all that entails.

David Yellin- Would a better word be black awareness.

=Well you see guys who were operating on an air of black consciousness and awareness they don't straighten their hair, they don't comb their hair., They don't attempt to emulate the physical features of white persons.

David Yellin- Then don't look at me.

Bill Thomas- (Muffled)

Bobby Doctor- Black is beautiful. And so there was many of these guys who were up there, guys for who the most part you know were rebelling against the structure period black and white. They were saying that we are tired of being excluded, can't you have a march that involves the total community and here we are a part of the total community and we have not been consulted. We didn't have anything to do with the plans for this march or anything and so they took over. Then it became obvious to the leadership of COME that they had to include other elements of the black community as well, all their program was doing(muffled). Of course, even at that point you know they did not want to include them. But after some urging from some persons like myself and one or two other progressive ministers. They came around, not like they should have.

David Yellin- Will you tell us who were the progressive ministers and who you urged?

Bobby Doctor- I only know one of them, is the reverend Brown. I don't know his first name, there was a reverend James Smith, I think is his first name. Reverend Jackson is one of the more progressive ministers.

David Yellin- That is reverend Ralph Jackson.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah. And that was just about it. Well reverend Lightfoot and also reverend (muffled) elder Patterson, Gilbert Patterson that's right. they were among

the guys who you know while not overly joyous over the fact that you had to include other elements these were the guys who did not find it too hard to accept. Not only did they not find it too hard to accept but on many occasions they actually pushed to have these guys heard. I can think of a time or two where they even they were attempting to get the floor and they yield to some of the other guys so they would be heard. So these were the guys, and then of course Ralph Jackson has quite a bit of common with the young guys. There is this age barrier.

David Yellin- That is interesting why?

Bobby Doctor- Well believe it or not there is a, it is sort of like professional respect. I don't know really how to explain it they just see certain qualities in Ralph Jackson that are typical of youth today. He is boisterous.

David Yellin- His ;love of life perhaps.

Bobby Doctor- He is a big show man type. Plus he is down to earth, he says what is on his mind.

David Yellin- He has an honesty about him.

Bobby Doctor- So they readily recognized these qualities.

David Yellin- That is interesting., Why would you how could you account and I will say this and then you do whatever you want. How would you account for Jim Lawson who certainly in 1960 was young...I mean has he aged that quickly?

Bobby Doctor- I would have to say this I don't want to criticize personalities but if you promise me you won't quote me on any of this. Jim is a part of the established leadership and Jim although very intelligent and remarkable ability to articulate his concerns, Jim too I noticed this was very insecure in the presence of these guys, he felt threatened quite frankly.

Bill Thomas- In the presence of the young...

Bobby Doctor- Yes, I say that from time to time when I would take it upon myself to invite the guys to these strategy sessions when they were supposed to be secret strategy sessions, little comments that would be made to me under the breath. Jim would make little comments under his breath to me like why did you invite them here.

David Yellin- How did he know you invit4ed them.

Bobby Doctor- I would say, they were being excluded, I would say I invited the guys here and they have some thing they want to say. And the comment well why did you invite them here under his breath.

Well what do you think he was afraid of?

Bobby Doctor- Well they posed a threat, Jim has always been portrayed as the most progressive mind in the community.

David Yellin- You mean they would be too progressive for him now because of what he has learned getting older and so on.

Bobby Doctor- Philosophically speaking they were to the left.

Bill Thomas- Yes I would like to ask Bobby, would this account for, as I understand Lawson was basically responsible for the march in which King first participated which didn't go along very well. And then was he out of touch, was it that he just didn't know the strength and importance of the young people or did he know and just ignore it what do you think?

Bobby Doctor- Well I think I would hate to single him out and again I say that we aren't on the best of terms but I would hate to have or attribute any statements, I will give you some of the insight of what happened and if you will just report it on a general sort of basis without attaching my name to it.

David Yellin- What is your name?

Bobby Doctor- Well Jim knew, he knew the guys, he knew some of the things that they were doing. But as I said and the only thing I can attribute it to at this point is that the guys actually pose a threat. You know in this business if you have ever run across a liberal be he black or white he never wants to admit that he is non progressive. Even though he may be very progressive, a certain vacuum on a certain situation over here, I would say up until about 2 years ago Jim Lawson was the most progressive minded negro in this community.

Bill Thomas- That is what I would have thought in fact I would have thought...

Bobby Doctor- He was pinpointed as being crazy, the crazy red liberal. And then these young guys come along talking some stuff that is way out there, that is to the left of Jim. It is a hard thing to take it is like walking up to a liberal and calling, a negro liberal anyway and calling him an uncle tom. He will never admit he was an uncle tom.

David Yellin- And put him in the position of being one.

Bobby Doctor- And saying that he is a martyr. He is no progressive.

Bill Thomas- Well your knowledge of the militant, the black power group, do they consider Lawson and uncle tom?

Bobby Doctor- No they don't consider him as an uncle tom but I am sure they view him as a stumbling block.

David Yellin- is it somewhat because he is too articulate, let's put the shoe on the other foot?

Bobby Doctor- No I don't think it is that because he can't he can't even begin to relate to the people that they being to relate to, so there is no concern about...Jim relates to the middle class negro.

David Yellin- he doesn't relate to the people that they wanted to bring up. Now again I am going to ask you this and hope you understand why I am asking this and you answer. What you mention that Jim didn't understand, or didn't relate, or didn't want to hear about he things that they were doing. What were they doing that they didn't want to hear about. Were they making Molotov cocktails were they doing those things?

Bobby Doctor- They weren't actually doing them but they again recently in one of he newsletter as diagram of a Molotov cocktail. But they weren't really doing those things at that time and they aren't really now but they weren't even making things like that.

Bill Thomas- It's the ice cream lady.

Bobby Doctor- It was more philosophical.

David Yellin- Again.

Bobby Doctor- That word keeps popping up I know but that is the best way I can explain it. It was more of a philosophical thing you know. They were sitting around talking exchanging ideas, and talking about how beautiful it is to be black and while the leadership in the community was concerned about the problems which were concerning negroes they were more concerned about the physical problems. They were concerned about economical and politics, they weren't really concerned about the psychological needs of black people.

David Yellin- These are interesting because I can understand this because obviously I guess we are philosophically attuned. It is interesting however that these young people who are doing this are called militants, not philosophical militants, they are called physical militants. And from what you are telling us if nothing else they were not physical.

Bobby Doctor- No not at that time. Now let me point this up maybe you are unclear. The militants you know recognize the need to deal with economics, politics and social changes and all, social structures and all that bit,. They just simply say that you must place the psychological needs, and the psychological thing on an equal level with this other thing. All before the old line leadership had been placing like economics and the need for a job and the need to get people elected to certain offices, they were placing this up here, nobody was really dealing with the fact that somebody had to say to the brother who had been exposed for 300 years to this rain washing which you know tended to rob him of his everything,. No one was really saying to him psychologically that you could be proud of the fact that you are black. All of the emphasis was on integration and all the emphasis was on jobs and politics and that kind of bit. Nobody sought to prepare black people psychologically.

David Yellin- In other words they were concerned not with the over acts that everybody could see give a little bit here and give a crumb here and that would be satisfactory but what they were concerned were the things that you couldn't see that really counted. In the darkness of a persons inner soul.

Bobby Doctor- Right, building a foundation that was what they were concerned.

David Yellin- And this is a very difficult concept to sell to anybody. Very difficult to sell to themselves so they had to sit around and talk about it for a long time.

Bill Thomas- Well I don't know the black power thing is really beautiful.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah it is a beautiful thing. And I always try whenever I am speaking I always try to point out the beauty of black power and the beauty of white power. And I always try to point out the fact that violence is violence. And you can have white violence and you can have black violence. And white violence has never been called white power. It has always been called violence, but the minute black people (muffled) it is called black power. So....

David Yellin- Can you promise not to tell that we said...(laughs)

David Yellin- I was going to say, now all of this fine. And I am just trying to make a transition clumsily. Can you tell us a little bit about the confrontation because Dr. King of course is so important in our story and the fact, the idea of Dr. King. The meetings that they had did you attend the meeting Wednesday they had Wednesday April 3rd at the Lorraine?

Bobby Doctor- Well there was several meetings that day I attended the one that was held that morning, not the one with Dr. King. No I didn't attend any of those meetings I was down in Birmingham. I am thinking of some other meetings that were held.

David Yellin- Well were you ever at one with Dr. King and the young people?

Bobby Doctor- Not Dr. King no, but when his staff came in here on the second, just before, well the second march didn't ever go off but before coming in here a second time.

David Yellin- The 1st, 2nd, 3rd of April.

Bobby Doctor- He made sure that he had his staff people come in here and contact the militant community. I arranged a meeting in fact a couple of meetings with the militants and his staff.

David Yellin- Who did you arrange it with from his staff? Did they contact you or did you contact them?

Bobby Doctor- Now first of all I, we had a strategy meeting over at the minimum salary building this particular night. I went over to pick up Cabbage and Charles

Ballard to take them over to the meeting. And I ran into Jesse Jackson from Chicago one of King's aides. He caught a ride with us over there. We talked and we talked and we finally got to the most part he was telling us about his operation breadbasket up in Chicago. But we got over to the minimum salary building and after the meeting was over José Williams and two other guys got together and we had breakfast. Well first of all I took they car ride with me over to Lorraine and then we decided we would get some breakfast from there. So in talking you know he, we just I don't know how it came about, I don't know whether I suggested it or whether he suggested it, but we talked about the situation here in the city and we talked about the various elements and we talked about the personalities and we talked about the structure of the group and then he asked. He asked, I believe this was it, if I could set up a meeting.

David Yellin- Jesse Jackson?

Bobby Doctor- No this is Jose Williams, Jesse went back over and went to Billy Kyles I think. But later on that night we went back to the Lorraine and the guys were under such tremendous pressure at this time that they actually had to take a couple of rooms over at the Lorraine because they were being constantly harassed and arrested by the police you know. They were actually hiding at this time.

Bill Thomas- John Smith arrested several times.

Bobby Doctor- So they were in the Lorraine and I took Coby up there to introduce him to the guys officially that is. We talked about setting up a meeting that next morning a breakfast meeting. Of course the meeting came off and we talked about the fact that the group was there and the group had to be given certain responsibilities and certain recognition, the group had to be included if this was to be a community project. A project that was directed towards the total community. And of course SCLC those guys, the younger guys anyway and they recognize this fact even though many times they talk down at the guys like they didn't really know what was going on in the country and they didn't know anything about this whole thing.

David Yellin- (Muffled).

Bobby Doctor- Sot here were some battles, and we finally got that out of the way.

David Yellin- Do you remember if it was Monday or Tuesday or...

Bobby Doctor- I really don't remember the date, I just remember that well what date was that...

Bill Thomas- The mini riot.

Bobby Doctor- Not the second thing came off in April, was to come off rather...

David Yellin- April 8th.

Bill Thomas- On a Monday.

Bobby Doctor- was it April 8th?

David Yellin- Yeah and there were here then the injunction...

Bobby Doctor- Well it had to be sometime I guess around the 1st of April but I don't remember the exact date. But I do remember that a couple of days or a day or so later I left going to Birmingham and I left on the 3rd going to Birmingham. Dr. King got in the 4th.

David Yellin- So you might have met them Monday night and had breakfast Tuesday morning.

Bobby Doctor- It was probably Monday, yeah. Or maybe before that time, I don't know. Wait a minute the 28th that was the march. Well it had to be the Monday I think you are right.

David Yellin- So you met Tuesday morning, now we are at Tuesday morning...and Jose Williams was anybody else with him?

Bobby Doctor- Jose was there, Jesse Jackson was there, James Orange was there, who else was there. Oh about 3 other guys, I don't remember there names.

David Yellin- Was Bevel there?

Bobby Doctor- Bevel was there too. Bevel was there. I guess there must have been about 8 SCLC staff members and there must have been about 8 or 9 guys.

David Yellin- Was a girl there?

Bill Thomas- Edwin?

Bobby Doctor- No Edwin wasn't there.

Bill Thomas- So what was he upshot of that meeting?

Bobby Doctor- Well there was a general agreement that the guys would work with the movement that for the most part they would do their best to ensure that it got off the ground.

Bill Thomas- Why did they agree to that?

Bobby Doctor- Not to ensure that it got off the ground, they said for the most part that they wouldn't be responsible for anything but we pointed out the fact that there were other elements that had to be included too. The guys off Beale St. the prostitutes the pimps, the hustlers.

David Yellin- Well how were they to be represented?

Bobby Doctor- Well Dr. King it was agreed and suggested I would say that Dr, King would go into the Beale St. area into the pool halls and the barber shops and talking with people you know in that area and trying to solicit his support.

David Yellin- When would he do that, say sometime before the march?

Bobby Doctor- No this was agreed, well it was suggested, let me say this first of all. I strongly suggested that even if they got the black organizing project and all the affiliated groups to cooperate that there was still a need to go and get the other elements of the community as well. And so I think with this in mind (muffled), I think Jose suggested in that strategy session that night, it must have been a Monday night that he would recommend to Dr. King and generally agreed that it would happen.

Bill Thomas- This is before Dr. King got in on that Thursday.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah. That he would go into this community and solicit the poor, seek out the leadership and include them in anything.

David Yellin- Is there a leadership among that group?

Bobby Doctor- Oh there is a leadership among anything.

David Yellin- I guess anything.

Bobby Doctor- Natural leaders.

David Yellin- There is a Memphis fats in the pool room somewhere.

Bobby Doctor- Who shoots pool well, he is highly respected, a guys who rolls dice better than anybody else, a prostitute that makes more money than anybody else, a hustler who is better than anybody else.

(Muffled)

Bill Thomas- Do you know if that suggestion was ever indeed made to Dr. King when he came back.

Bobby Doctor- I don't know I left on the 3rd, I left the morning of the 3rd going to Birmingham and I got the word that evening about that shooting and then finally got the word about the death.

Bill Thomas- So you were in Birmingham when you heard?

Bobby Doctor- Yeah I was in Birmingham.

Bill Thomas- How did you hear down there?

Bobby Doctor- Well actually I had been talking, I called my wife before, apparently I just happened to call her before the lines became tied up and before it hit the

national press. I guess it hit right after it hit locally, but she just indicated to me that she had heard that Dr. King had been shot. He had been shot with a rifle.

Bill Thomas- Do you remember what time it was?

Bobby Doctor- Apparently a high powered rifle in the head is what she told me. I knew he was dead because that is impossible to survive. Unless you graze. That type of wound from a high powered rifle.

Bill Thomas- So it must have been between 7 and 8 when you called her probably.

Bobby Doctor- I don't know the exact time but I believe it was around 6:30. 6:00 or 6:30.

David Yellin- yeah because it happened at 6:01.

Bobby Doctor- And so I remember later on trying to call into the city and you couldn't get in here you couldn't get any calls in here. So I called before the word had actually had gotten out and I just happened to stumble upon it really.

David Yellin- Had you ever met Dr. King?

Bobby Doctor- Yes, I have met him, I met him first when they had the Meredith March and they were in here and they had strategy meetings and I just happen, I attend them and no one else questions my presence. Of course I know a lot of the guys (muffled) and an old friend of mine was in there Stanley Wise, he and Stokely were there together. Stanley is with SNICK.

Bill Thomas- Were those meetings, were those strategy meetings held at the Lorraine?

Bobby Doctor- At the Lorraine in the conference room.

Bill Thomas- Can I ask you this Bobby after the unsuccessful march by King when everything broke lose. There was a press conference the next day, but didn't he call in the militant leadership...

Bobby Doctor- Before he left.

Bill Thomas- Yes.

Bobby Doctor- Yeah.

Bill Thomas- and when was that?

Bobby Doctor- You mean after yeah, after the incident took place and they rushed him to a car and took him to Rivermont.

Bill Thomas- Do you know who rushed him to a car, this seems to be a mysterious thing.

Bobby Doctor- Well let me say this, surprisingly I was you know assigned to cover the thing, I was assigned the left side of the street and I just happened to be on that side anyway. When everything broke I ended up down to that street next to Haverty's you know that little short street there next to Haverty's?

Bill Thomas- I have heard that street name.

Bobby Doctor- Well I happened to end up going down that street and I looked behind me and King was completely surrounded by persons who were seeking to protect him.

Bill Thomas- Who were these people do you know?

Bobby Doctor- Some of the ministers in COME and some of the other people, I couldn't identify any of them.

David Yellin- But no police?

Bobby Doctor- No police no. They escorted him down the street and off to some other street, I don't know what happened to him once they got to Front St. I think at Front St. they turned left, I don't know what happened to them then. I got caught by police...(Tape End)