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Carolyn Yellin- This interview is with Mr. Ed Ray, managing editor of the Memphis Precimeter. The interviewees are Joan Beifuss and Carolyn Yellin, we are recording this on April 23rd 1969 at the offices of the Memphis Precimeter. Mr. Ray I think maybe let's get onto the record the story of when you came to Memphis and your view of the city at that time. I think that would be a good starting place.

Ed Ray- I came to Memphis from Houston Texas 5 years ago. I become managing editor of the Precimeter, I was with the Scripts Howard paper in Houston and it was sold and they transferred me to Memphis. I always had a great deal of interest in Memphis and was delighted when I got the assignment because in my newspaper career, 20 years in Florida and 12 years in Texas and then 5 years in Tennessee. After beginning my career in Georgia.

Joan Beifuss- Are you from Georgia?

Ed Ray- I ma a native Macon Georgian and grew up on the Macon Georgia Telegraph and as a young man, married I went to Florida and was there 20 years.

Joan Beifuss- Was that with Scripts Howard also?

Ed Ray- No this was with the Tampa Times and the (muffled). And for background I have always been greatly interested in the relationship in the races in the south. AS a matter of fact I was head of the Florida interracial commission at one time and I had campaigned through our newspapers both in Orlando where I went after I was in Tampa to get those simple things for the negro that he should have. First things first, homes, education, opportunity. All of those things which the (muffled) president of in Tampa and which went into the work that I did for the state, it was a hobby. It was a hobby, but not a hobby but a city enterprise.

Joan Beifuss- And it was something that you got interested in at that?

Ed Ray- Yeah.

Joan Beifuss- Was that in the 1940's?

Ed Ray- 1930's is when I started I became the managing editor at the Tampa Times in 1935. I was about the youngest one in the country at the time and I have had a close relationship with negros my whole life in my home town and elsewhere. And this subject has always intrigued me why we would let negros cook our food and wash our clothes and take care and rear our children and yet put them off in a corner when it was time to educate them. So I had a natural interest in it and I presume that my attitude as a young man was radical although....

Joan Beifuss- Yes I was going to say how did the...

Ed Ray- I was radical, yes.

Joan Beifuss- How did you get radical?

Ed Ray- By advocating that at least if they had to be segregated at least they should be equal but separate.

Joan Beifuss- Did you go to school in college in the south?

Ed Ray- I went to Mercy university a Baptist university in Macon Georgia that is my home town. So I became very interested in it then and gave the newspaper in which I worked was the leader in Florida, the Tampa Times in giving negroes those many opportunities in the south and in some places still don't have. Resulted there in the single salary schedule for teachers for instance. Florida was the first one to adopt it Texas and Tennessee since have adopted it and many other states.

Carolyn Yellin- That was very early on for that wasn't it?

Ed Ray- Back in late 30's early 40's and it was interesting that while I was in Tampa I got to know Frank Aldren the editor of the commercial appeal. I was head of the urban league and also on the state race relations committee they called me one day and said we are having a (muffled) meeting with the urban league in Memphis and would I come up and speak to them. And he had known that I had been to various urban leagues and meetings around the south and one in St. Louis and had talked about the subject that we had wanted to have black friends as first class citizens. I guess Frank Aldren and I were pretty radical in those days for him advocating that we had negro policemen and negro firemen, and people pay for teachers (muffled) and all that sort of thing.

Joan Beifuss- Were these, did you do these things through the urban league or sometimes were you able to do it through your newspapers.

Ed Ray- Well both our paper was thoroughly in sympathy with what we were trying to do and it was the Tampa Times had sparked away for many of the reforms that Florida put in ahead of all southern states. I think the only other state in the south that came anywhere near matching Florida in those days was North Carolina.

Joan Beifuss- Who owned the Tampa Times?

Ed Ray- David E. Smiley. S-m-i-l-e-y. He is now dead, and he was a Philadelphia lawyer and a newspaper man and he bought the Tampa Times in 1933 and went to Florida at the bottom of the depression to take over this newspaper and I went in their at the same time in 33 and in 35 I became the managing editor.

Joan Beifuss- What kind of circulation just out of curiosity.

Ed Ray- Oh about 60,000 at that time, it was a 6 day afternoon newspaper. We had competition of 7 day morning papers. It is still there but the morning paper finally bought it after I left there and went to Orlando to (muffled). So I got my first look at Memphis 30 years ago and at the invitation of Frank Aldren. At that time I felt that the Memphis newspapers were doing an even better perhaps than the one I was

connected in, in focusing on the needs of the negroes. I talked to Frank Aldren at length about it, he said yes we are fighting for these things, it is slow and we are radical but they got to come and (muffled). The Memphis Precimeter, Mr. Niemann was editor at the same time also was doing a job along those lines.

Carolyn Yellin- Do you think that this, the fact that negroes voted here in Memphis, this has been mentioned here several times, that the negroes voting here in Memphis and as well as the newspaper concentration on their problems that it was a little different from other cities in the south.

Ed Ray- Oh very much so. And when I was told by Scripts Howard that I was going to come to Memphis when they sold the paper, I was delighted because I knew something about Memphis and I knew the reputation of the two newspapers were progressive newspapers in the line of race relations and opportunity, opportunities for the 40% population in this town was outstanding and I am sure that the Scripts organization over the country didn't want it any other way because I am sure that many southern newspaper publishers have not liked positions and stands and all that these two progressive papers have taken over the years.

Joan Beifuss- How much freedom does a newspaper say in the Scripts Howard chain have, does Scripts Howard itself send out a national guideline on anything?

Ed Ray- Oh no, there is only one rule at Scripts Howard editorially. Every 4 years the editors of the Scripts Howard paper meet, well they meet more than that but every 4 years they meet just before the presidential election and they have a vote, the editors plus the owners. Each has a vote on which candidate is going to be supported and the majority vote rules and everyone has to go with that because it would be ridiculous for one Scripts Howard newspaper in Fort Worth Texas to be supporting one candidate and a Scripts Howard newspaper in Memphis Tennessee to be supporting another.

Carolyn Yellin- You would end up with some polarization.

Ed Ray- So that is the only rule. Sure there are some broad general outlines, a policy that Scripts Howard editors follow. Although we have some editorials written in Washington for all our papers and they come in on the wire, we can throw them in the wastebasket if we want to it is up to the individual editor and his managing editor the two of them what is going to be used and what is not. And it is a great policy because right here the distinction between the commercial appeal and the Precimeter and its policies is not one of taking one side and one taking the other to try and impress people that they are different newspapers, they are actually different newspaper. There is a long story that I won't get into now, but what I am trying to say is that when I came to Memphis 5 years ago I came here knowing that a lot of the spade work had been done by the newspapers and many civic leaders here to pave the way for the orderly integration of schools we had here. For more firemen and more policemen and for negroes to get into political life more, they have been voting for years but to get negroes to run for office and to get elected. I

remarked to Charles Snyder the editor of the Precimeter when I came here about....(tape Break) As I was saying I had told Charles Snyder who had been away from Memphis for years and had come back 2 years ahead of me that I thought Memphis and its overall pattern of community relationship among the races was far ahead of any city in the south, I had lived in Texas for 12 years and Florida for 20 years and Georgia for 21 years and I had been around the country a great deal. And thought that the approach here, governed a great deal by newspaper leadership I would say and some very open minded people in this town, it paved the way for finding (muffled) relationships.

Carolyn Yellin- Was Mr. Niemann he was still alive at that time?

Ed Ray- Yes,. When I first came here.

Joan Beifuss- When did you come 64 then?

Ed Ray- 64, 5 years ago this month.

Carolyn Yellin- That was about the time that we came here my husband came to Memphis state at that time.

Ed Ray- So I was pleased at the general relationship that was developing in Memphis and I have to insist that it was far ahead of any place I knew of.

Carolyn Yellin- How did it compare with Houston.

Ed Ray- Now Houston has a 3 way race situation. They have negroes a quarter of a million of them there and then they have a 100,000 Mexican Americans and then of course you have a, Houston is a new melting pot, it is a metropolitan city and...but even there progress was not as fast as it had been here.

Carolyn Yellin- And the percentage of negroes it wasn't as great, it wasn't 40%.

Ed Ray- Oh no I would say Houston's percentage is between 20% and 25% negro, whereas Memphis is 38%, 40%, 41% somewhere in there. I don't think anyone will know until the next census what it is. But as a whole I felt that as many negroes as there are here that Memphis was on the right course. Its athletics in high school and board of education here has a done a very fine job with very little trouble. Memphis State taking in negro students the way it did. So to me a newcomer never lived here before and to me Memphis was on the move and I made several talks out of town about Memphis and its attitudes.

Carolyn Yellin- Well it is interesting we have had this same point of view coming from a northern city. In fact, we used to tell our friends in New York that we thought it was important that our kids attend an integrated school. So we found we just had to move to Memphis rather than live in the New York suburbs.

Ed Ray- Well my children finished their education in Texas after starting in Florida but unfortunately for them we lived in a Latin American city which is Tampa you

know which is half Latin American and Cuban American, Italian American. And they, my kids fortunately got to know people of other races in a hurry and I went to San Antonio where half the town was Mexican and then to Houston after I was in San Antonio.

Joan Beifuss- Now in 64 this leadership that was making things fairly open and fairly progressive were there a lot of the business community involved in this or was it mostly people like newspaper editors?

Ed Ray- Well I am sure there were a number of fine men and women in this town that were working constantly around this question. A lot of them were centered around Ed Niemann, it is true e was a livewire in having meetings and getting people to talk over problems and there used to be a secret committee, they so called it a secret committee that I only attended one meeting because Mr. Niemann had that role and no one tried to take it away from him but I know they were going on and they were various southerners in the community that were meeting regularly with negro leaders and frankly talking about basic problems and I think that is how a lot of progress had been made in the past that, when they integrated the schools they had the chief of police fired and they just said we want this to happen and you help us. Well there wasn't a lot of fanfare about it and it was done.

Joan Beifuss- were you here when the schools were integrated?

Ed Ray- No it was before my day, you see the supreme court decision on integration came down in 53, or 4. 54 I was in San Antonio at the time and our paper there was the first paper in the south, south of southwest to demand that it was a (muffled) I believe that decision came down and in Fall all schools in San Antonio would be segregated. San Antonio didn't have quite the problem that Memphis would have because it only had about 15% negro so they just let them go to any school that they wanted to go to. So having that background and coming to Memphis and comparing it with other communities I knew both large and small I was very encouraged by what was going on here and knew what the programs were coming of say for athletics in the high schools and that program was carried out very wisely and discreetly and as a result I think that Memphis is far ahead amongst cities in this question. I never would have thought the day would come that you have white southerners sitting in a basketball game with 4 out of the 5 on the first team on Memphis state were negros, they were way ahead of me.

Carolyn Yellin- This past year yes.

Joan Beifuss- This past year yes.

Ed Ray- But coming up to this subject we want to talk about, lat year, the garbage strike which was in February of 1968. It brought to the surface as time showed some deep inner feelings that apparently nobody knew anything about. There is a natural feeling of people in newspapers or we feel and many other people do that a public employee has no right to strike. That they give up that right when they get on the public payroll and of course that is law in Tennessee, which ahs been stressed in

Tennessee. But I feel sure in my own mind that this was an excuse for people in city hall and elsewhere not to really do what they ought to do for some public employees, school teachers as well. I may be prejudiced about school teachers because my father was one for 50 years and my wife's father was dean of Western college in Macon Georgia, so my feelings maybe a little on the side of the teachers. Because both of our families are from teaching families.

Carolyn Yellin- Were you personally surprised at the feeling of, or these inner feelings that you spoke of as the situation developed?

Ed Ray- I was surprised that the angriness behind it. I really was. And maybe we weren't telling it like it was back then when we thought we were making so much progress. The inner resentment which I can understand of the negro of what has happened to them in the south, I can understand in.

Carolyn Yellin- In the nation?

Ed Ray- And in the nation I can understand it. I can't understand some of the methods by which they are using, they think they are getting results when I am afraid they are going to get what Memphis has gotten right now. And that is some thing I want to talk about. I guess today people such as I am who had a genuine interest in the human welfare of negroes, never abused one in my life, they have been my friends and always have been. I have always treated them even more courteously than they have treated me because I feel that way about it. And I saw this awful thing happened in Memphis and I guess it will be analyzed for years to come. The garbage strike itself didn't do it but when Martin Luther King and others of the negro leaders seized upon a strike of the garbage department in Memphis to make it a national issue, a polarization of this community set in. I never saw anything like it so fast. People who had been moderate and genuinely interested in doing the thing that can help the negro most to educate them to find a job to find them decent homes and all that sort of thing, just overnight almost when this violence broke out in the march, the first time King was here. It was a polarization that set, and it even set in on our staff that a lot of the sympathies that the negroes had just went right out the window when that violence broke out down there that day when you had the Kind memorial march that first one.

Joan Beifuss- March 28th.

Ed Ray- March 28th. We were sitting out in the newsroom there and we have been told, we have sources that give us inside information. (muffled) has more sources in the negro community than negroes themselves, because they trust them.

Joan Beifuss- You had a beautiful story on that march.

Ed Ray- She trusts, they trust her because she never prints anything except what is true and straight away. And we had been told through our sources that if they were going to have this march down here on this garbage strike that anything could happen. So we had a staff of 20 or 30 photographers and reporters down there. And

we had on the police radio and when the violence broken out we were ready for it because we had been told that it could happen and did happen.

Carolyn Yellin- Did you have reporters covering King from the, Martin Luther King had they gone out to the airport?

Ed Ray- Oh yeah we were with him all the way in, we had a reporter right by him. And they were all calling in to rewrite every thing that went on. I don't know whether you recall it but we had a day after the violence a full page of eye witness by our reporters and some of them didn't agree with each other.

Carolyn Yellin- Yes I do remember that.

Joan Beifuss- I remember that was when Kay Pittman Black Story.

Ed Ray- Kay Black and (muffled) all of them wrote what they saw.

Carolyn Yellin- I was going to say that was because in an event like this there are so many different vantage points...

Ed Ray- That's right and we had them from the beginning of the march line spaced reporters and photographers the whole way. As things progressed each one had his job of calling in. Therefore, when violence broke out on Beal St. and on we had people right in the middle of it. And if you recall those eye witness accounts, I have them here a full page that I designed. I will tell you what I did, this thing was such a shock within this office and we were moving so fast on our deadlines to tell the simple news of what was happening. The windows, that afternoon after our final edition I called in all the reporters and I had said to each one of them if you saw something and you feel you want to write it as a sort of a history of this thing, you do it, you do it, you do it. And I came up with this idea of grouping together our reporters who were there, and we got blasted out by many people for letting the reporters print what they saw.

Carolyn Yellin- From both sides.

Ed Ray- I think we did a public service because if there was some brutality and our reporters thought it was we let them print it because we said these were eye witness accounts.

Joan Beifuss- You mean people objected to your telling the truth?

Ed Ray- Oh yes, that is what came of this polarization I was talking about. You just don't know how many attitudes changed when the (muffled) peaceful approach to try to get a better living for the garbage workers turned to violence and threats of violence. That did it, that years of progress and dialogue between the negro and the white community were just blown right out the window.

Joan Beifuss- Well I want to go back again to your saying that the feelings in the negro community were evidently more deep seeded than you had assumed. Would

that be because the negro leaders that were being talked to by the white leaders were not really the negro leaders?

Ed Ray- Well you see, I specialize in trying to understand the negro all my life but I must say that I don't. Because he negroes that have talked to me over the years outside those in my immediate family concern. Have probably some of them say told me probably what I wanted to hear. They appreciated our interest or seemed to appreciate our interest but they were telling us what we wanted to hear according to some of them today. Maybe that is true I wouldn't argue with it, I am more inclined to believe it now than I would have before. Even though the negroes had the support of many ministers and many others in the garbage strike, the undercurrent of using this labor, labor dispute that is what it was, it wasn't a racial dispute. But it turned into one because most of them happened to be negroes in the garbage department.

Carolyn Yellin- I was going to say and do you think that if the same thing happened again now in the city, if a labor dispute came up in a department that was predominantly or was almost 90% negro, it would be I think the city, or I shouldn't say I think, but the city would be more aware of this do you feel?

Ed Ray- Oh yes I am sure of that more aware than ever before, now you had another strike of course with the hospital workers and they were all negro. Which whether you like it or say it is a labor dispute it turned into a race thing, unfortunately both times. And the moderate as I like to call them, the moderate who had been genuinely interested in all he could do he thought with the negro and for the negro and for his welfare, this thing in Memphis just grown to cover so fast I never saw anything like it. And attitudes started changing and things became black and white to make a long story short. It became largely black and white.

Joan Beifuss- Was it doing that before King led that march?

Ed Ray- I think the elements were there but I don't think it was pronounced in the beginning. I think the elements for it to develop it were there. I don't think that city hall handled it well, my editorials said so.

Joan Beifuss- Did the Precimeter support Lobe when he ran?

Ed Ray- Yes reluctantly.

Carolyn Yellin- But in the original in the primary you supported...

Ed Ray- No we supported another man we didn't support Lobe. Hunter Lane. Neither newspaper supported Lobe in the primary.

Carolyn Yellin- That's right.

Ed Ray- And we both reluctantly supported him mildly in the run off against Mr. Ingram.

Carolyn Yellin- Could you say why it was reluctant or do you care to?

Ed Ray- Because of his behavior in the past. I meant to get back to that. In the negro community Henry Lobe was a segregationist. He had run before and he had talked about it. He made no effort during the campaign to do anything but win the white vote so he would go in on the white vote. Now I have made been a starting point for all this final lining up of men black and white. We never said so but in my own heart I thought it was.

Carolyn Yellin- I don't think he thinks of himself as a segregationist?

Ed Ray- Not now anymore but he used to say he was.

Joan Beifuss- Oh did he, he said it?

Ed Ray- Oh we quoted him in the paper we have quite a file on it, we knew about it you see. And Henry I think learned a lot of lessons. But during this strike you know you are dealing with people that are mostly uneducated, the previous mayor knew how to handle negroes pretty well.

Joan Beifuss- Ingram?

Ed Ray- Yes he knew how. Now that doesn't make him a perfect man by any means but he could do that, and they trusted him. And he was their man. That was a beginning really where all this deep unrest was. Henry Lobe could hardly get nay negro votes at all, hardly any.

Carolyn Yellin- Ingram was not discouraging that feeling among the negroes.

Ed Ray- Oh no he played it to the hilt, he played it to the hilt. And because he did, I always believe a man, we believe a man in public office has got to think about all the men in the community and not just a few. And Henry Lobe, I mean Ingram, was basing his whole hope on getting a few super white liberals and all the negro votes in order to put him in. And his approach to the negroes was fine, he went to their meetings and he did a lot of other things while he was mayor and he never slighted them and I think that is correct and proper he should have done that. I think Henry has done a little bit more about it now, but Henry was elected by the white people. So there was the background to this and contributed to the whole picture.

Carolyn Yellin- And the city council how did you see their role in this as the thing developed? For instance one of the things when Jared Blanchard fairly early in the strike made what was regarded as a turnabout that sort of thing?

Ed Ray- Well I think that we, this newspaper exercises a great deal of influence on the council. We didn't expect to influence Lobe about it but we did the council. That this, there ought to be some basis, we kept plugging away for some basis for the city to move in order to get this thing settled. I believe you all might have the editorial in your fields and it might be well for you to see one of them that we did have.

Carolyn Yellin- I know...

Ed Ray- It was a very well done editorial and no question that the garbage people, the garbage department men should have more money. I don't think the community begrudged that at all. I think in the beginning when you get an organizing campaign in any field there is problems. If you have never been through a strike I just went through one and you don't realize it is quite, your going through and how people lose their perspective and lose their tact and...

Joan Beifuss- Lose their cool.

Ed Ray- Right, right word you should have been right out here in front of this building on March the 7th of this year. At 5:30 in the morning I came through the picket lines at 6 and I was on the federal negotiating team and we broke off at 6 and came over here and if you had seen and knew what ordinarily decent, level headed reporters were doing on the picket line you would just be appalled.

Joan Beifuss- Well let me ask you something the editorials that are written are they okayed by a group of people?

Ed Ray- No, the editorial final passages is up to Charles Snyder on the editorial page.

Joan Beifuss- Now would there be for instance...

Ed Ray- He has conferences with all of us, the executives. You see the managing editor is the man who produces the newspaper and all the news content and the staff. The editor is overall he is at Scripts something like the publisher. And of course he supervises and determines editorial page final policy. Well Charlie Snyder is a native Mississippian and went to Cleveland New York, San Francisco before he came back here. He is a progressive man and we sat around here 4 or 5 of us trying to find ways and means of getting the city off of a dead position. I don't think the negro community appreciated what we were trying to do because we weren't saying give them everything they ask you see.

Carolyn Yellin- I wanted to ask about the boycott that was set up by the strike leaders and what, when you were aware of that or did that ever become...

Ed Ray- Oh yes we were very cognoscente of it and they did all they could to hurt us and they did, booth papers.

Joan Beifuss- How badly did they hurt you?

Ed Ray- Oh not much. Unfortunately the negro doesn't read newspapers enough, I will tell you an interesting story about that in a little while. You see they had the negro leaders knew what the Precimeter said don't do that to the Precimeter, do that to the Commercial Appeal. And one guy says no it is the same Memphis publishing company we will have to do both and the real negro leadership in there just (muffled) that they did anything like that to the Precimeter.

Carolyn Yellin- Because they were cognoscente of the past years and ...

Ed Ray- That's right and even during the strike.

Joan Beifuss- Could I but I don't know if you want to say these names, who when you say the real negro leadership, about whom do you speak here, are you talking about Jesse Turner?

Ed Ray- I think Jesse Turner would have been inclined to oppose the boycott of the Precimeter. The Commercial Appeal, there were several and I would rather not name them. They told us about it, that they fought it and there wasn't anything they could do about it. Because whatever committee this was they had, was doing it because it was a Memphis publishing company. Yes at places they had goon squads firing at our negro carrier boys and negro district managers, tearing up papers and all of that sort of thing was going on.

Joan Beifuss- Was there many subscriptions cancelled.

Ed Ray- Oh yes, several thousand on either paper were cancelled.

Carolyn Yellin- Have those come back now?

Ed Ray- They are all back now. They are all back now and more.

Joan Beifuss- What is your subscription rate on the Precimeter, home delivery.

Ed Ray- \$1.95 a month.

Joan Beifuss- No I mean how many people do you have any ideas how many families take the Precimeter?

Ed Ray- Oh we have 150,000 in circulation.

Joan Beifuss- Is that both newsstand and...

Ed Ray- Yeah that is total, total circulation, about a 150,000, Appeal 225 but they go out further than we do.

Joan Beifuss- So actually if you lose a couple thousand it is not hurting you?

Ed Ray- No it didn't hurt us at all..

Carolyn Yellin- Did you notice it on newsstand sales?

Ed Ray- No some of them were dropping it at home and buying it on the street but not enough of them and that is the story I want to tell you about. After the strike was over and they had this negro committee, a lot of people I didn't even know came in her to see us about negro coverage. They hadn't even sent he paper during the strike, they didn't even know what was in it. They didn't know what we were doing with the mayor. We had just put it out in front of them that we stand on our record

(muffled). And you see they just got mixed up. They tried to alienate the best friends they have had., Fortunately we didn't lose our cool about it and we are not going to because those human beings are 40% of our population and we want them to read our newspaper s and patronize our advertising. I mean it is silly to talk about hat we are not going to include them in community planning and community thinking. This is the newspaper has always said let's do. SO they had some bad leadership and some bad thinking was an emotional period and the strike was just a vehicle for a lot of pent up old feelings to come to the front.

Carolyn Yellin- You think that for instance that the violence in that march with Dr. Martin Luther King the March whatever it was, March 28th. So much has been made since about he fact that these were younger people that had, that they were not the marchers themselves. Do you think that there was this split? Do you think there was pressure being put on the old time negro leaders, he recognized negro leaders from this upcoming...

Ed Ray- Oh yes definitely so. And it is a still a cleavage among those. Let me say this though.

Carolyn Yellin- How do you think you can handle, how can that be handled I wondered?

Ed Ray- I don't know of anything you can do but education and time. Let me give you what I happened to observe. In all the years of my newspaper career I have been with newspapers that fought the ku klux klan and I have lived in communities where the community leadership in that verbally oppose the klan.

Carolyn Yellin- And the Memphis papers do.

Ed Ray- But they never did a thing, never did a thing to expose the real leaders of the klan because de3ewp down in their hearts they didn't totally disapprove of what klansmen were doing. That is still true in Mississippi and probably is still true in a lot of parts around here. Now just reverse that in this situation. You have got the young mark or the equivalent of the klan in the groups like the invaders, and you didn't hear but one so called negro leader speak out against them during that whole time, one man. The same attitude that the whites had about the klan they have had about these young bucks that have been around intimidating store keepers and everything else. Same thing, same principle, same gang tactics that they learned from the ku klux klan.

Carolyn Yellin- An interesting illustration.

Ed Ray- We talked about that around here that and you didn't find the negro leader going around during all this period of violence, they just said oh they are young fellows.

Carolyn Yellin- Do you think there was any element of fear in it, I mean for instance...

Ed Ray- OH yes sirree....

Carolyn Yellin- Who didn't speak out against the klan for perhaps fearful.

Ed Ray- They were scared too (muffled) there was approval and fear both. Approval and fear, that certainly was true in this situation.

Carolyn Yellin- Where do you think that Martin Luther King then fit in to this, did he know the situation in your view or could he have known the situation in this community?

Ed Ray- I can imagine that he did.

Carolyn Yellin- Was he being filled in by...

Ed Ray- Martin Luther king wanted to dramatize his cause where ever he could and it so happened that all the garbage workers here were black and so he came and they invited him to dramatize it themselves and they invited him so that he could do that job. It would have been pretty effective if there had been a peaceful march, it could have been pretty effective. But let me point out to you that even that march the estimates of the crowd were anywhere from 15 to 20 thousand, somebody gave wider figures but I don't believe anymore. Do you realize you are 40% of your population is negros?

Carolyn Yellin- Yes.

Ed Ray- And you take 20,000 negros and put them downtown, what percentage of the negro population that was there and I believe the second march they had the memorial march I don't believe they had but 7,000. What percentage of the Memphis negro population went? You see these things got to extremes. There wasn't a negro in our building that participated, not because we told them not too, because they had good jobs and good homes and doing alright. And those with homes and good jobs and doing alright they didn't want any part of all the wild talking about, so they went on about their jobs and went home, and that was the great majority of them. And they still, in those areas of goodwill where those employee relations are established those haven't changed. Those are people who have earned themselves a place in business and a life and they went right on just like white people did regretting the violence and young people didn't say anything about it, just went on and did their job.

Joan Beifuss- Let me ask you something, were you surprised when things happened for instance when the large group of negros sat in at city hall that day and had the bologna sandwiches and then the macing the next day on Main St.

Ed Ray- After this violence broke out on the first march I wasn't surprised on anything,. As a matter of fact we made our plans on coverage on the basis well anything could happen.

Carolyn Yellin- This was before the Martin Luther King, this was what weren't you asking about way back in February.

Joan Beifuss- Yeah...

Ed Ray- Oh that sit in?

Carolyn Yellin- Where they sat in and then the next day they went to, they started and it was the first time that...

Joan Beifuss- The mace was used on Main St. Where they were...

Ed Ray- Yeah that's right. Well Fred Davis tried to be a level headed city councilmen and he couldn't control them that day. Now this was mainly the garbage workers who were getting, some of them were getting hungry because they hadn't been on payroll remember. And they were the ones that and if you know many garbage workers you know that they have the lowest level of intelligence, not intelligence but the lowest level of training, of training I should say. Then most any group outside the unemployed, they had jobs. Of course among them were some garbage man who had been on the payroll for years and years. But the tension was on and with the ministers stirring it up on Sunday and all it was a emotional thing.

Joan Beifuss- Had you ever seen a situation before where the ministers came into it like this?

Ed Ray- No, not in the south. No I never have before. I think the interest was genuine if they believe in what they preach then the interest was genuine. I have no criticism of the ministers participating in these things and stating his opinion. That is his right.

Carolyn Yellin- One of the things that has been mentioned by some of the people that we have talked to I guess both black and white was the fact that there was so few white ministers involved, do you think, why do you think this was? When they say ministers it was always the black ministers they were talking about because he white ministers until towards the end weren't too involved.

Ed Ray- That is correct and if you are a white minister and you had a white congregation you are inclined to go along and not get involved some other way. I think that is just as natural as could be. Especially when they had boards that were all white and a lot of them are getting mad if you do get involved because you see that in several instances right here in Memphis.

Carolyn Yellin- Now how would that have compared with another city do you think? Do you think this was unique to Memphis?

Ed Ray- No the same thing would have happened in other cities.

Carolyn Yellin- But perhaps the black ministers were unusual here and the white, you say that the black this hadn't happened before and I don't remember it happening.

Ed Ray- There were some white ministers who got involved very deeply.

Joan Beifuss- A few like Dick Moon.

Ed Ray- Yeah they got involved very deeply and the Rabbi's got involved. And catholic priests some of them got involved so it wasn't all black as far as the ministers were concerned.

Carolyn Yellin- Many of those came really somewhat after the ...

Joan Beifuss- After the assassination yeah.

Ed Ray- Oh yes.

Carolyn Yellin- But at the time it was mostly as far as the strike, really working with the strikers...

Ed Ray- The black ministers helped dramatize it into a black situation rather than a labor one.

Carolyn Yellin- Do you think they wanted to do that?

Ed Ray- Well you know not having been born a negro and having live around and with them all my life, thinking I knew some thing about them I about decided that I didn't know much about them and I just have to guess that the negro ministers had a chance to take the spotlight and they took it, they took it that's all. They had a chance to take it. Probably unselfishly thinking that this was a role that a minister ought to do. As a negro minister has been more of a watch dog of his flock than the white ministers is.

Carolyn Yellin- You know I would like to go, a little, well we haven't gotten to the assassination yet or that day. We have done a lot on the march and I think that's....but that period that week then in between the march and the assassination, what was the atmosphere say working on a daily paper in a city that was clearly in crisis?

Ed Ray- Oh yes definitely. And we were sitting on pins and needles within the newspaper office wondering what was going to happen next and trying to alert our staff of photographers, well our photographers got beat up in that march so with talk of King coming back and the strike not being settled we were prepared for anything really, we took precautions.

Carolyn Yellin- What kind of?

Ed Ray- By where our reporters were going, that is what I am talking about..

Joan Beifuss- Did you have any hesitations sending your reporters into the black community at this time?

Ed Ray- No, no, we hadn't had any problems along those lines except on the day of the march. We had an office boy that was beaten up bringing back pictures.

Joan Beifuss- Beaten up by?

Ed Ray- BY a negro.,

Joan Beifuss- Ok did you have photographers accidentally hit by police too didn't you down at the, isn't that it seems to me there was one photographer?

Ed Ray- Not ours, not ours. I think they got pushed around.

Carolyn Yellin- IU think anyone who was there.

Joan Beifuss- Yeah anyone who stood in the way got pushed around yeah.

Carolyn Yellin- So actually you had two concerns, you were concerned doing the job with the newspaper was supposed to do and concerned for the safety of the employees.

Ed Ray- Oh yes and we had to double which on this memorial march we had to do the same thing.

Carolyn Yellin- How did that figure, when the assignments are made is there a city editor?

Ed Ray- Oh yes, he reporters work under the city editor.

Joan Beifuss- How many city side reporters are there?

Ed Ray- _Oh about 30.

Carolyn Yellin- How would that thing work, the decision to send a reporter or not to send a reporter and taking into consideration all these things how did that work during that period.

Ed Ray- Our plan worked out beautifully because when the violence broke out in the march we had people there, we had pictures there, we had them there.

Joan Beifuss- How about prior to that did you ever have reporters covering those nightly mass meetings in the black community?

Ed Ray- Yes we had a night man Pat Gabyo who went down to the temple. Now for a whole there they were throwing white reporters out. It just so happens that Pat is a, his name he is of Italian descent I think. Anyhow he is a dark boy, he went to Memphis state and I guess a lot of them couldn't recognize that Pat wasn't a colored you see. So he got in a lot of times when a lot of others didn't. Now we didn't send

Kay Black at night which she could have gotten in anytime. Kay could have gotten in any time. She had been a liaison I have heard her as a liaison to the negro community for 4 years now. She understands them, she knew every one of their leaders of the invaders. She had to print the truth about them, they (muffled). So they resented that. If it hadn't been for this newspaper and the FBI and a few other (muffled) burn this town up.

Joan Beifuss- How about was there any attempt made to talk to the leaders of the community on the move for equality organization. Did you try to get people into their strategy meetings or anything like that?

Ed Ray- They wouldn't let us come in.

Joan Beifuss- Did you have any contact with them?

Ed Ray- Oh yes.

Joan Beifuss- They would talk, they would..

Ed Ray- Oh yeah, Kay Black talked to them every day and they still didn't, strike leaders would talk to Kay Black they didn't talk to anyone else.

Carolyn Yellin- Why was this because they were objecting that you weren't covering your activities and then they wouldn't let you in that made it sort of, sort of.

Ed Ray- We knew what was going in because there was one negro in there would call us and tell us.

Carolyn Yellin- From the meetings?

Ed Ray- Oh yeah. And we knew what the invaders were planning and the police department knew what they were planning because we had people within the invaders that were there to do that job.

Carolyn Yellin- When did the invaders really come into, I am trying to remember myself, they were known by, invaders were known as the militants before that march...

Ed Ray- That was at Memphis state, the first group of them was at Memphis state. There was a small group of them at Memphis state. I remember the first time we had anything in our paper about them. It was some confrontation out at Memphis state between white and black students.

Joan Beifuss- During the strike period?

Ed Ray- No it was before that and of course we had watched the invaders very much because we had inside reports on what the national ideas and leadership was coming from.

Carolyn Yellin- I want to go back and this is kind of a..

Joan Beifuss- Wait a minute I can't let that pass, you mean the black panthers?

Ed Ray- Yes it is definitely established that he guidelines all came from the black panther. Chicago and Los Angeles.

Carolyn Yellin- I wasn't listening to you, when I say I wasn't listening I was...

Ed Ray- The whole (muffled) of the invaders came out of the black panthers in Chicago and the other group in Los Angeles.

Carolyn Yellin- You think there is, you know there is..

Ed Ray- No question. That the resurrection city as they called it the invaders went there with them. We had our Washington reporters find them there, Sweet Willy Wine all of them. We had them in resurrection city, our Washington staff found them. So there was a tie.

Carolyn Yellin- You feel this was true in the Martin Luther King, when he was the head of the southern Christian leadership do you feel there was a tie there too?

Ed Ray- I have no evidence that it was.

Carolyn Yellin- I mean the fact that they were there would that mean that they were just trying to get in, or that they were invited in?

Ed Ray- Well you see the invaders, they had a record of trouble before this march at the school. And we knew what they were going on because we were told, some of the invaders would tell them themselves what they were going to do. They didn't tell me, they told Kay Black.

Carolyn Yellin- Well I was going, the question I was phrasing when I missed that last answer I was thinking of, I was going to say that whether this is a policy of news coverage or what not. But in the process when you are on a paper covering this sort of thing, the question of actual, what it might be better not to print. Joan was mentions the Sun Times after the Cicero thing in Chicago that there was a period when they really played down any kind of racial conflict in the city because they felt it would actually be inflammatory. And I am wondering, I have heard it said that one of the reasons that Memphis was able to integrate I think someone that a teacher had mentioned this, that if they would go ahead and do it....

Joan Beifuss- (muffled)

Carolyn Yellin- Where the which school was going to be integrated..

Ed Ray- Well we had a , it was before, when they first started I wasn't here. But I do know that between the rectifying police commissioner then, Armor, Claude Armor, and the school board officials, the newspapers television and radio and all got together. That we weren't going to dramatize this thing, we were going to be there and if some thing happened we were going to report it but we weren't going to

print stories in advance that this school was going to start tomorrow and there is going to be racial confrontation. We did that without any agreement not to break the news we did that as a gesture to try to make an orderly transition and it worked beautifully and this has been done in other cities too.

Carolyn Yellin- Well this was what I was getting t because after New Orleans where everybody would show up and shout at the little children, or Clinton Tennessee there had been this thing where it was clearly in the public interest sometimes too...

Ed Ray- Well we do a lot of things in the public interest sometimes that judgment we have maybe wrong but our primary motive from the policy standpoint editor is to print the news but to print it with the public welfare in mind. We do a lot of thinking about things and people don't realize what we do.

Carolyn Yellin- I was going to relate that then to this particular period in the city's history. Would it be fair to ask if there were policy discussions or, I mean is there anything..

Ed Ray- Oh definitely, we had policy discussions all the time every day.

Carolyn Yellin- On whether to print this...

Ed Ray- How are we going to do it and how are we going to approach it. Oh yeah very careful consideration given to it always in the back of our mind we had to print the news. Now how you print the news sometimes is another thing.

Joan Beifuss- Yes of course.

Carolyn Yellin- For instance a this sort of thing that if you felt that he negro ministers were thriving on this and this kind of publicity was helping would this have been a, where it would be more in the public interest not to provide the publicity that was building up this stink hill.

Ed Ray- Well wherever the negro ministers or anybody else had during the strike period, had some thing pertinent to say we printed it. Now if it was just racial propaganda sometimes a certain person would say things that they shouldn't be saying, we did it to let them know, we did it to let the public know he was saying these things, It is a great deal of editorial judgment that has to go into the news column and as well as into the editorial pager. And every day every edition I was confronted with it because I am the man who has to decide those things right on the spot. You don't go and have a conference on what you are going to do when you have 45 minutes before the deadline you decide...

Carolyn Yellin- You don't have an hour and half to sit there and contemplate all the results.

Ed Ray- Especially on an afternoon newspaper because we got to the press 3 times a day and you got to go to press. If you don't get the paper to the reader nobody will buy it. So we had, I guess I have been on 7 newspapers in my life and I guess as

much thought was given to that as during this crucial period as to anything, how are we going to handle this.

Carolyn Yellin- Now what about the reporters judgment too, I mean again were there any specific instructions given to reporters. Was there any, is there any safeguards you can take against a reporters personal bias?

Ed Ray- Yes you can see his copy and question him and question him and question him about it and if you are in doubt about it you leave it out. You see his copy didn't just come in and automatically go into print. It has got to go to the city editor, the assistant city editor and after that it has to go to the copy desk where copy readers look it over and I get every proof before it goes in the paper. So people don't realize how many double checks we have on stories before they get into the newspaper.

Joan Beifuss- Suppose, theoretically suppose you had a reporter during this period who was wildly in sympathy or suppose you had a negro reporter, who was wildly in sympathy..

Ed Ray- We didn't need a negro reporter but about 3/4 's of our staff was in sympathy with the negro strikers and advised with them I am sure they were fellow unionists then. Have to deal with the union and all just had a strike. And we won it. So..

Joan Beifuss- Well then now the week between the first march that broke up into violence and the time that King was killed did you see tension rising?

Ed Ray- Oh yes, that violence broke out that day started the (muffled) of everyone coming out, black and white. I just take my own wife bless her heart. I don't know any woman who has a more genuine interest of doing the things that mean something than she had. But she cannot stand violence and when violence broke out on that picket line, the atmosphere they had built at that point she said I am rejoining the white race, just like that and I almost did too, I will be honest with you I almost did too.

Carolyn Yellin- So who did you feel was responsible for that violence in the ultimate, where would ultimate responsibility for that violence that broke out there.

Ed Ray- Well of course that is a hard question.

Joan Beifuss- That is a hard question and we are running out of tape too. (Tape End)