

SS162.mp3

Carolyn Yellin- This is tape 2 interviewing Mr. Ed Ray managing editor of the Memphis Precimeter. April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1969 Joan Beifuss and Carolyn Yellin.

(Tape Break)

Carolyn Yellin- I just could have let that go.

Joan Beifuss- Ok had you heard about any threats on King's life before he came in?

Ed Ray- Through our sources, official and otherwise there were veil a number of veil general threats to get King's daughter. We couldn't testify in court that John Jones did it, but I am sure the FBI and the police department and the sheriff's office could spot light him if they ever had top. And we knew about it. All police have to tell our police reporter is we are uneasy about this King thing because of the phone calls and the threats we are getting, it is what is going to happen.

Carolyn Yellin- Would people call the police department, would they get anonymous calls or something?

Ed Ray- No people who had heard the threats would call the police department you see. And then some of these people were bold enough and this is the militant white who is doing that talk.

Carolyn Yellin- The other side of the coin.

Ed Ray- The other side of the coin, he was doing that kind of talk. We knew it yes.

Joan Beifuss- Did your letters to the editor pick up considerably the last part of the strike?

Ed Ray- Oh yes, and it was as I said that the day the violence broke out on Main St. was the day this town became black and white again, except for a few. I mean it really became black and white.

Joan Beifuss- Can you tell us at all about he day that King was killed?

Ed Ray- Well the day that King was killed we knew he was coming and we covered him, we had people there when he arrived at the airport, time he left Atlanta we knew.

Joan Beifuss- Yeah.

Ed Ray- I believe it was snowing wasn't it? Raining?

Carolyn Yellin- Yes that was the day that he tornado in fact.

Joan Beifuss- oh that night.

Carolyn Yellin- The nigh t he made that speech.

Ed Ray- Well I was living out in scenic hills at the time and my night man we keep a man on at night. Several of them when we have to but we have a regular night man. After the day reporters and all that followed through it was his assignment that Dr. King was going to the hotel and I think he was going out to dinner that night. And so the regular reporters got off of him because it was going to be social affair with negro....

Joan Beifuss- You were already home then right?

Ed Ray- I was home. I had a phone call from the united press here, that my reporter had told them that they both had heard it on the police radio and I was called immediately. And of course we dispatched all kinds of reporters immediately to downtown, we weren't publishing but we had to be ready to publish the next day.

Joan Beifuss- Did you come back into the office?

Ed Ray- Oh yes.

Carolyn Yellin- Did you make phones calls from home and got the reporters alerted?

Ed Ray- I called the city editor and we got one after the other and we started going after every detail that we could get. And of course the curfew was clamped on and violence was starting and we just had to have people available. I will have to go back to the records and see how many were put on overtime that night and the next day to watch every angle of it. And when I got the phone call that he had been assassinated I couldn't believe it. I just, you hear threats like that a lot but you just don't believe there is anybody....I didn't think that the situation was that bad that somebody in Memphis would do it. I thought it was getting bad but I didn't think it was that bad.,

Carolyn Yellin- Did you hear first that he was shot and then later that he was assassinated?

Ed Ray- Yes. Shot and taken to the hospital, you see they didn't pronounce him dead until they got him to the hospital and then the news came that he was actually dead, it was a little while before they announced that you know. So we got real busy all of us.

Carolyn Yellin- You didn't have too much time to...

Ed Ray- Well we did for the Precimeter the Commercial Appeal, we knew what we had to do just to get every scrap of evidence. My next door neighbor had a police radio and he heard that broadcast about the white mustang and all and he came right over and told me about it right then before I ever went back tot eh office and of coursed the thing was so shocking and the nagging thing that nagged us all along was certainly nobody in Memphis could pull this off. Despite the threats, and fortunately it turned out that nobody in Memphis had anything to do with it. Because it is one thing that they don't have iota of evidence about is that there was a

conspiracy involved in the killing of Dr. King. There is some thought and some conjecture, even the judge will admit that and they did. But they haven't the evidence and they haven't had any and the FBI told us that from the first beginning that this was a one man job. I had two or three authors to come in here who were investigating for writing purposes and one of them had been to the prison where Ray had served and he told me that he was a racist from way back, that was his reputation in the prison, he was a racist. And then the hearing that we had it came out. I am inclined to believe that this man may have had some encouragement somewhere but the idea of killing Martin Luther King was his own.

Joan Beifuss- Can you from the vantage point of a year later can you make any kind of assessment of what the killing of King did to this country in a sense to the civil rights movement in this country?

Ed Ray- I am afraid the killing of Martin Luther King set back race relations in this country, human relations in this country. I don't think it helped it at all.

Joan Beifuss- While he was still alive did you feel he was performing a valuable service?

Ed Ray- I did, I thought I was one of his admirers. I thought the man kept his cool as you say and stated eloquently the negro's case and yet kept into it the Christian philosophy of how this thing ought to be solved. He was a showman and exhibitionist and all that. But so are all people who get things done. And he dramatized, we had no editorial criticism except for the police when Selma march and all that. He said let them march, don't, we said here let them march but now after two outbreaks of violence we say no, not anymore.

Joan Beifuss- This is since the...

Ed Ray- Now we are the paper that came out the afternoon of the second violence.

Joan Beifuss- you meant he two weeks ago...

Ed Ray- Two weeks ago and said let's put it in church in a memorial service but don't ever take a chance of tearing up downtown again. Because they had two chances and they blew them and that is not fair to much of downtown to the other citizens who want to shop to tie up downtown with such a march with the threats of violence.

Carolyn Yellin- Now it has James Lawson the minister who was instrumental has said that he feels that this march or a march of this sort allows pent up emotions to come out and I think this was an argument that Martin Luther King used to make for demonstrations.

Ed Ray- It also lets out bad emotions and we have experienced them this time. Under this cover I got a chance to show them what we can do if we want to do.

Carolyn Yellin- Well the point that Lawson was making was that he compared it with Chicago where there was on the anniversary of Martin Luther King there was a real massive outbreak, he was saying and he was, and they didn't have a demonstration, and here they did have a demonstration planned. This was his argument in favor of demonstrations. I was going to, the reason I am bringing it up it seems to me that it is very much the same argument used to make too and he was coming under increasing criticism.

Ed Ray- Well Martin Luther King until Memphis his people didn't create the violence. In Birmingham and Selma the violence was created by the police. The police didn't create the violence in Memphis, this is a very important thing. If it hadn't have been for out police our downtown would have been torn up and burned up.

Carolyn Yellin- Do you think the invaders at that point had enough followers or were there followers that well organized?

Ed Ray- Oh yes, oh yes.

Carolyn Yellin- How many do you think there were?

Joan Beifuss- What are you talking about, are you talking about two weeks ago or last year.,

Carolyn Yellin- No he is talking about March....

Ed Ray- A year ago?

Carolyn Yellin- The one that Martin Luther King led, is that what you are talking about?

Ed Ray- Yes, the invaders were organized then.

Carolyn Yellin- They were in late March of 68? About, do you have any notion.

Ed Ray- (Muffled).

Carolyn Yellin- Do you have any notion how many there were, were they really that well organized to?

Ed Ray- As I understand it yes, from what I had heard.

Carolyn Yellin- And this is what the police in the area...

Ed Ray- We have been talking about the invaders in this office for nearly two years. They didn't just come out at the trial.

Carolyn Yellin- This is what I was trying to remember earlier what point did the word invader....

Ed Ray- Some of them used to come up here and see Kay Black, she knows them by their first names and lends them money which she never gets back and (muffled) we had to have police protection for Kay for two weeks.

Joan Beifuss- Yes I heard that was that from the invaders?

Ed Ray- Yeah. Oh yeah. And so did Judge, criminal court judge and also the ex-judge's wife, 3 of them. We had police, two police men with those three people around the clock for two weeks.

Joan Beifuss- What ex-judges wife?

Ed Ray- Judge Hooks, Judge Hooks. We didn't publicize it. We had two policemen and they did it themselves they did it because the information was that, you see they turned on Kay black because she printed the truth about them. We tried to warn Lawson, she tried to warn Lawson and some of the other last summer when they foolishly got them a special war on poverty project and let them have a headquarters for all of their organization with federal; money. The kind of people they were, Sweet Willy Wine the whole group of them. And these charges against them are not trumped up and so we had to print the truth about them and Kay Black knew it and printed it and in so doing that of course they turned on her. They still call her up though. And she knows, well there was one invader, ex-invader worked for the commercial appeal on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. He works for them as a reporter now.

Carolyn Yellin- I was going to ask, are there any negro reporters on the Precimeter right now?

Ed Ray- We had one last summer, we have a librarian who is a negro, we had a another negro boy we were making a reporter out of him and he decided he wanted to be a doctor so I got him a university Tennessee law school. They are hard to find. C.A. found a copy reader over in North Carolina, he is over there they have two of them I believe.

Carolyn Yellin- The conversation for trained people I guess is very great.

Ed Ray- Lemoyne, Memphis State, University of Missouri it has got 840 journalism students I was over there in February and they had one negro, two negros. One was from the Caribbean and the other one was from St. Louis who was there on a scholarship from St. Louis (muffled). I tried to hire him and I couldn't hire him because he stayed in St. Louis. And ours is a very touchy technical business. And you have got, you have got to have a college education today and you have to have a lot of understanding in information to be a reporter. And I am trying, I am trying all I can.

Joan Beifuss- Let me ask you something else, who do you consider to be the leaders of the black community now?

Ed Ray- I don't know anymore. They don't know. We ask them who are the leaders? And they will just split up 40 different ways.

Carolyn Yellin- Do you think they will ever come together again?

Ed Ray- I really don't know.

Carolyn Yellin- I mean because it has been said I think they were pretty united during the strike.

Ed Ray- A few were. Pretty united yeah I guess they were.

Carolyn Yellin- I mean as compared with today.

Ed Ray- They had to give lip service.

Carolyn Yellin- They were making room within their own rivalries...

Ed Ray- You know it is a strange thing that two men that did more to get the negro some of the things he deserved to have the negroes turned on him. Russell Sugarmon, turned on him and they turned on the guy who ran for mayor.

Joan Beifuss- Willis?

Ed Ray- Who?

Joan Beifuss- Willis?

Ed Ray- Willis. Willis was trying to do things in the community to really help the negro economically. They turned on him because somebody said they were white man's negroes.

Carolyn Yellin- Do you see any way out of this in the near future?

Ed Ray- I really don't.

Carolyn Yellin- Not just for Memphis but for, because I don't think this is unique to Memphis I think this polarization...

Ed Ray- As a matter of fact I think that as I said the assassination of Martin Luther King did more to retard race relations than anything else because of the demonstrations that followed in Washington and elsewhere. And with a white person violence is not the answer, and it is not the answer. And that violence has set back and made the white man more skeptical than ever before of just where we are going in this question of race relations. And what is true in Memphis which the polarization we have here right now, hasn't changed one iota since the assassination I don't think.

Carolyn Yellin- Do you think that there is more violence to come in Memphis? That is another hard question.

Ed Ray- I wouldn't want to try to answer that, I hope not. But I am a great believer that we keep our police alert all the time. Because there is no justification for this

kind of violence,. There is none in my mind. And you know there was a while here during that strike that people were buying up arms, white people in this town. We printed about it since then. Even I took my two old pistols that I had, relics in my house that had been given to me over the years and I had never used them and I went and traded them ion on a new 22 to put in my house. My wife was scared, she got scared. I think most women in Memphis got scared. And we sold our house in scenic hills and moved out east because we had to go through negro communities to go to and from work. She just got scared and I couldn't do anything about it.

Carolyn Yellin- Scenic Hills now that is out on North.

Ed Ray- Between Raleigh and, it is beautiful out there, we hated to do it, beautiful out there.

Carolyn Yellin- And but you had to come in through that North.

Ed Ray- Chelsea area one of the worst areas.

Joan Beifuss- What was your feeling about the Ray hearing.

Ed Ray- My feeling was that one of the ablest defense attorneys in the country, (muffled)...

Joan Beifuss- That's right in Texas of course.

Ed Ray- Plus he couldn't find a case for Ray and let him plead guilty you know he is pretty guilty.

Joan Beifuss- Did you feel it would have been better had there been a long trial as the Sirhan trial?

Ed Ray- I doubt it. What have you learned out of the Sirhan trial?

Joan Beifuss- Not a thing.

Ed Ray- Really what have you learned out of it? By the way they gave him the gas chamber.

Joan Beifuss- Oh did they?

Ed Ray- Yeah. In the final edition it is coming out now.

Joan Beifuss- What time do you go to press on that final edition.

Ed Ray- Preferably 3:15, markets final edition.

Carolyn Yellin- That is incidentally I just have to say that kind of incidental information that ends up on these tapes we feel that given the great immediacy of someone listening to this many years from now.

Joan Beifuss- The press rolling at 3:50.

Carolyn Yellin- (muffle) to hear you say it is on the press now I think this will really give the person of really being how it was in Memphis at this point.

Ed Ray- When Ray's guilty plea came we were in the middle of a strike ourselves. We had it published, that was on of the toughest days of my life, but I had two men in from Chicago and I didn't have an outside reporter. The 18 of us that got out the Precimeter for 10 days were old veterans, old grizzled veterans that knew the score but we weren't on the outside. We didn't have a photographer or an outside reporter working. But (muffled) Adams and Andy Anderson and a few of us got out the paper. I better not talk about that here. But the Ray trial that came we had (muffled) from Washington covered it beautifully for us. And I talked to them afterwards and they were satisfied. Only the super liberal press in the east said anything about it.

Carolyn Yellin- You mean that questions left unanswered and so forth. Do you think that is a justified thing that say there will be questions to ask for the years to come.

Ed Ray- Oh yes there will be questions there will always be, my wife, pardon me for mentioning her but I think she is just a good newspaper reader she has been around maybe more so than the average woman but she talks to a lot of women and all the women think that somebody hired this man to do it and they read detective mysteries and all and I kept tell her from the very first day the attorney general of united states and the FBI tell us a lot of things that we don't print insisted that this was no conspiracy, there was no real evidence of anything of a conspiracy but people don't want to believe it.

Joan Beifuss- Do you think if there had been a long trial that people would more prone to believe that there was no conspiracy if a whole lot of...

Ed Ray- The same evidence only would have been coming out of the trial. See to convict somebody for murder in Memphis Tennessee you got to, who saw it and what was the evidence and they had the evidence that he did it, they had no evidence that nobody paid him, they had no evidence of that. This man he got money he robbed banks, he got money almost anyway. He was a smart thief.

Carolyn Yellin- I will put you out on the limb again do you think he will get a new trial being at this point in time...

Ed Ray- The attorney general's office says that there is no reason for it that he waived all his rights and he assaulted that in court with his own attorney the great Percy (muffled). So legally unless there is new evidence that would justify and I doubt they got any. Of course if there was some new evidence to be found I am sure Percy Foreman would have found it.

Carolyn Yellin- With these new attorneys that seem to be ku klux klan attorneys whether that is a fair branding, I mean people because a man defends a murder doesn't mean he is a murderer but the stoner in particular has been identified as everything you read about him that is the first thing they say.

Ed Ray- Of course you know in this country there are some awfully rich negro haters. There are plenty of them and this thing gave tem something to chew on. That's why I say King's assassination, I don't know who planned it or did it only thing I know right now there is a guy with my name and I want to change my name.

Carolyn Yellin- That's right Mr. Ray from Memphis.

Ed Ray- Yeah. That he did it and the greatest disservice to orderly development of human relations that ever came in all time in this country.

Carolyn Yellin- It unleashed a lot of passions.

Ed Ray- Oh sure and that is the grave tragedy of it all from the standpoint of the general public.

Carolyn Yellin- Do you feel and this maybe we shouldn't keep you longer than you have given us two hours now.

Ed Ray- What time is it?

Carolyn Yellin- Almost 4:00, but do you feel that Memphis, compare it with other cities.

Ed Ray- Well the...

Carolyn Yellin- And I guess that what I was going to say is will the course of a events go differently here because the assassination took place here. If let's say if Martin Luther King had been assassinated in Little Rock instead of in Memphis do you think the course of events would be...

Ed Ray- Much smoother.

Carolyn Yellin- Smoother, it has made it more difficult?

Ed Ray- Much more difficult.

Carolyn Yellin- Right that was what I was getting at.

Ed Ray- Much more difficult.

Carolyn Yellin- And you aren't as hopefully for the future now say as you were when you came here several years ago.

Ed Ray- I am afraid there had been a setback, I am always hopeful for the future because back 30 years ago when I really became interested in the subject of race relations from the newspaper, and from my contact with people. I used to make a little talk that the whole basis of human relations of the future was education. And on that theme I worked to get the teachers equal pay to get the children equal training. There was education and jobs we were going to solve this problem. Because you are never going to completely solve the problem of racism and by that I

mean you are not going to prevent negroes from being negroes and you are not going to prevent other ethnic groups from being what they are. Most ethnic groups outside the negro in this country have come up the ladder in this country of opportunity for education and jobs. And that is the way ultimately to the negro is education and jobs. And there are more jobs opening up for them and there are more education opportunities for them.

Carolyn Yellin- Do you think it can come fast enough to satisfy the young negroes?

Ed Ray- The negroes? Well like most young people they are going to have to learn to have a little patience. Well I was a freshmen at Mercy University, Baptist old Baptist school in Macon Georgia. It is about 150 years old, way back then I...Macon took a great deal of pride in the fact that it had separate but equal schools. It was an educational oasis in a desert, Macon was. And we talked about jobs and education but we didn't let them have jobs. And I will never forget there was a negro girl that my wife's brother was dean at the University of Georgia and this negro girl graduated, she helped teach their children French. The only job she could get was being maid in the house. That was all the job she could get. But she could teach the child French she could do that, black as the ace of spades ugly and gawky but just smart as she could. She had no opportunity to talk and she married a negro man that turned out to be no good and she got to drinking and full on they were having to bail her out of jail for drinking.

Carolyn Yellin- That is kind of a sad thing.

Ed Ray- But today, today that situation there was no place for her to go but to teach school probably at half the pay the white teacher was making at that time. There is a place to go now. They come in here and try to get qualified we are looking for them and business is looking for them.

Carolyn Yellin- Do you think that the great effort that the business community is making here in Memphis now to find jobs....

Ed Ray- It is the most important thing we can do.

Carolyn Yellin- Would that have happened if Martin Luther King hadn't been assassinated?

Ed Ray- I think that was steadily growing.

Joan Beifuss- That was what?

Ed Ray- That was steadily growing. Oh yes because you could go to the university where they had qualified negro graduates coming out and they were going into businesses everywhere and that, it may have been accelerated a little bit more but it was already going.

Joan Beifuss- Let me ask you a couple of quick questions here. The group of 65 or 66, Mr., Niemann and Mr. Orgill that group that kind of almost set policy or set human relations policy, there is nothing like that now?

Ed Ray- Well I have been to 3 meetings with different groups since then but not ever the same group of negroes.

Joan Beifuss- What about this new thing of the chamber of commerce, oh what do they call it.

Carolyn Yellin- Excuse me, were they the same white people?

Ed Ray- No different white people too.

Joan Beifuss- Then the white leadership split also?

Ed Ray- No, no they just didn't get together.

Carolyn Yellin- And there was no follow through?

Ed Ray- No follow through.

Joan Beifuss- So that...

Ed Ray- On e thing about those things, you get with a negro a so called leader sand you talk and talk and you talk and you listen and you listen and you listen. When you get through you have nothing positive to move on. You see, it is like a college classroom sometime, it is a lot of talk, maybe to bear fruit sometime later when the student is out but this was talk. The most important thing I know of is this thing of jobs and education and I think that the work has got to be done on a positive level on a sensible basis. Leading to jobs and leading to education.

Carolyn Yellin- Well now what happens on a city like this well for education to get better there has got to be more money put into it evidently but the city is trying to hold the line at a budget which is not going to up it as far as it should be upped, the educational funds. Is it more important to hold the line on the budget as mayor Lobe and Mr. Donelson are trying to do or would it be better to go into deficit spending and do some of the...

Ed Ray- Well see this is a democracy, this is democracy, ands where as I agree with Holloman about the police, fire department. I agree with my good friend Dr. Callason over a the university of Tennessee about nurses and whereas I agree with others that pay should be upgraded in a hurry for teachers, I am all for it. But this is a democracy. Whether you like it or we don't like it there is a tax payers revolt just about the (muffled). And it is being sensed in Washington and it is sensed every where else. You may not agree with it but it is a fact of life, people just don't want to pay no taxes and where I think Memphis is a little more conservative than a lot of these cities and can afford it. The majority thinking I am afraid has gone along those liens and you have to take those period of democracy of when they switch. If you

arbitrarily do these things against the wish of the people, they won't keep you in office either, you see democracy it works.

Joan Beifuss- Is there any way to determine the will of the people on something like taxing without putting out a direct referendum where they can vote? Can you assume that letters that come in a newspaper actually do represent...

Carolyn Yellin- Or can you ever raise taxes without...

Joan Beifuss- Of course I don't know if we ever had a referendum if we would ever raise taxes.

Ed Ray- That's right.

Carolyn Yellin- Or can you ever do it without a presentation to the people that you have a choice.

Ed Ray- Now when I was in Texas, and Florida, you couldn't do as they do here and just issue bonds. You wanted to issue bonds you had to go and get the voters to vote on it you see. You had to spell it out very carefully and we spent a great deal of time in Texas and in San Antonio and Houston and Tampa Florida and Orlando Florida and giving the facts and urging the people to vote for putting the debt on their back and why it had to be done. Well, a lot were turned down and a lot were approved. I think that the voter, in most cases had pretty good judgment. All this thing that we call democracy (muffled). I think you can get yourself tied up in referendums on such routine stuff that democracy will break down its own machinery. But when you come to voting on a, well somebody should get a 5 or 10 dollar raise or 50 or 100 in relatively what it is then you getting into a dangerous territory because those were vested interests should get out and vote. Just like the people that opposed the liquor by the drink. Everyone of them got out and voted. People didn't care or wish they hadn't or didn't think much about it because they got liquor at home, they didn't get out and vote.

Joan Beifuss- I would be fascinated today by the response to the bringing into the beer plant.

Ed Ray- Oh yeah.

Joan Beifuss- Listening to the WHER open mic program a number of woman called in and said they think it is just great the beer plant is coming in because this means now we won't fluoridate the water because the beer plant has to have pure water. And I thought oh jiminy.

Ed Ray- I tell you all you have to do to understand the education level of Memphis Tennessee. (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- Listen to WHER.

Ed Ray- Listen to WHER.

Joan Beifuss- It is unbelievable I turn it on every day I can't believe it sometimes. The other thing I wanted to ask you quickly about generally human relations in this city. The enormous amount of hate material that circulated and we of course in our files a great deal of it has been turned over to us the hate sheets that were circulated on Lawson and Bayard Ruston and on King himself and then there have been a number of them since then.

Ed Ray- Have you sent the hate sheets that the negroes turned out on the Precimeter and the Commercial Appeal.

Joan Beifuss- Yeah.

Ed Ray- Well these are just small groups that do these things.

Carolyn Yellin- And they are all anonymous.

Joan Beifuss- But, if someone did a story for instance and expose where they were all coming from wouldn't that in itself be of help?

Ed Ray- Well we tried to find out the source of the hate sheet on (muffled) that the negroes were putting out. And they were pretty clever about that. I even suspected one of our reporters in my day. I have some super liberals on my staff. The ring leaders of the strike were on my staff, I inherited them when I got here.

Joan Beifuss- you mean the newspaper strike?

Ed Ray- That was the stupidest strike in (muffled). That strike as just, hell pretty were making great advances and got greedy that's all.

Carolyn Yellin- One thing I did want to ask oh I know, when these sanitation strike was going on wasn't there a vote by the newspaper guild here that they did not support the strikers. I mean I am mixed up about it.

Ed Ray- There was a guild vote and all I know about it because I am not a member of a guild can't be and don't try to attend to their affairs.

Carolyn Yellin- You know we haven't talked with anyone about this.

Ed Ray- The all out support resolution that they wanted passed did not pass. Now it wasn't the editorial people who didn't pass it, it was the white women on another floor.

Joan Beifuss- The want ads?

Ed Ray- The non-editorial people who in their educational level would tend to be opposed to the sort of things that the negroes were seeking. Of course they are on a level that is just a little higher than they are.

Joan Beifuss- There is a little actual feeling of they are being pushed form below, so that and this was just simply a vote on a resolution on whether they expressed support for the strike. It wasn't really giving money or anything to a strike?

Ed Ray- No it was not, that was my understanding of it and I never knew, I know it brought some repercussion within the guild it self.

Carolyn Yellin- Well I think the final question, did you take a vacation at any point, did you feel the need to really get away from Memphis and really after this...this must have been a tremendous strain...

Ed Ray- You mean last summer, after the strike?

Carolyn Yellin- Yes.

Ed Ray- Oh yeah I got away and went down tot Houston and San Antonio and went toe h (muffled) fair and went to Astroworld I was there after they built the domed stadium, helped build it. Our paper helped win the fight to help sell the bonds.

Carolyn Yellin- Just as you were talking about.

Ed Ray- To get the astrodome and if our paper had opposed it there they would have lost. So I go to Houston a great deal and I am sort of a VIP in the Astrodome when I go back. I did have to get away I was exhausted. Last year I tell you it was the busiest year of my life. Most interesting I guess. It was pretty hard on all of us physically and this hasn't been an easy one.

Carolyn Yellin- I guess not.

Ed Ray- Say if you have never been through a strike you see people turn from normal decent human beings to just vicious individuals.

Joan Beifuss- You had the guild I Houston then?

Ed Ray- Yes.

Joan Beifuss- There never was a strike.

Ed Ray- No, this paper never had one before.

Joan Beifuss- This paper didn't?

Ed Ray- No.

Joan Beifuss- Oh didn't they?

Ed Ray- Never had one before.

Joan Beifuss- Oh I didn't know that.

Ed Ray- This was a case here of a small group, militant group here taking over where the machinery and leading the others who didn't have enough fight in them or

(\*muffled) in them to stop it. And that's the truth. That small group has to work for me.

Joan Beifuss- One other thing I want to ask you because I want it refuted on the tape. We have heard from various sources in the course of these 10,000 interviews we have done. The name of Lawson that there was an unwritten policy here during the strike that Lawson's name was not to be used in the Precimeter.

Ed Ray- Oh because these clippings may prove the lie of that.

Joan Beifuss- Save it for the paper.

Ed Ray- Huh?

Joan Beifuss- Say it for the tape.

Carolyn Yellin- He did.

Ed Ray- Just these clippings. When he was running for the school board we felt as we do with all people that run for office, we felt it incumbent as a newspaper to print his record and we printed it without matters. And where did we get it from? We got it from him, he told us about going to jail and we printed it but it was incidental in the whole story when he was running for the school board. As far as Mr. Lawson is concerned I know he has among white people some admirers. I know a lot of people say he saved the situation from being worse, but I had my first impression of Mr. Lawson at one of these committee meetings, secret committee meetings. Long before there was a strike threat from the garbage workers or anybody else.

Carolyn Yellin- One that goes back to the Niemann..

Ed Ray- This was after Mr. Niemann was dead well I went to a meeting and he was there. And they were having various, well they had wats by then they had wats and some other racial confrontations in other parts of the country. And he was using this tact the whole time. That if you don't do this, this could happen in Memphis. He would bring it up all the time. And one time somebody said something I think it was Claude Armor said something about what do you want me to do. I have done everything asked of me and my men have over the years. Lawson flared up and said I want to tell you now when the rioting starts in this town I am going to be sitting at home watching it on television. The first statement I ever heard the man make at a meeting of that sort. Now this to me was to reveal the man as he really was. You don't take my word for it that this is the way it has got to be then you are going to pay the consequences and I am going to sit on the sidelines and watch you. I didn't like it. Nor do I like the deliberate distortions and half truths that he has been a part of spreading.

Carolyn Yellin- Such as..

Ed Ray- About this newspaper because he doesn't know anything about it.

Carolyn Yellin- You think for instance are you referring to the hate sheet that was put out on the newspaper?

Ed Ray- I don't know that he had anything to do with it, I would hope that he didn't. (muffled) we spelled his name right and we had his picture in his paper didn't we? Do you remember?

Carolyn Yellin- Yes.

Ed Ray- And we always have. You see he can't tell us what to do as the negro leader of this town and I think in his crawl that is what bothers him. Now he may have had more influences with Mr. Niemann than he has had with Charlie Snyder or with me. But that is not deliberate on our part.

Carolyn Yellin- I was going to ask about in the coverage of this last march which I gather that he was mostly instrumental in organizing.

Ed Ray- He had a great deal to do with it.

Carolyn Yellin- And how did you cover that? Was there any...

Ed Ray- Well whatever he had anything to do it was in the paper.

Carolyn Yellin- And how about the day of the march itself?

Ed Ray- Well now you must understand the circumstances under which we were operating on that march. We would get up for this last one the same way we were for the other one with 28 reporters and 30 photographers.

Carolyn Yellin- Was someone covering Lawson that day?

Ed Ray- Well we had them all along the route.

Carolyn Yellin- But I mean was anyone in contact with Lawson?

Ed Ray- OH yeah the beginning and end and in all. Now as you may not recall it but I do vividly. We had on the police radio again. 12:00 came which 12:10 is our normal deadline and the thing was just beginning.

Joan Beifuss- I was going to say that was at a bad time for you.

Ed Ray- Just beginning and we were putting out the story paragraph by paragraph as it happened.

Carolyn Yellin- Running it down to the presses.

Ed Ray- Running, you know the running stories and we had delivered to hold up the press for 30 minutes on the home edition that day and instead of going to press, I mean press roll at 1:30 instead of 2:00 just in case. Well our last page on 2:00 press roll has to go in at 20 minutes ahead of time, 1:40. I was closing them and we were

getting ready to finish page 1 when the phone rang and all hell had broke loose again. I held..

Carolyn Yellin- Who was that one of the reporters?

Ed Ray- Oh yeah.

Carolyn Yellin- Do you remember which one.

Ed Ray- It was coming in on the police reporter. It came to me from Vanpritchard, no Charlie Snyder, the editor was out there because I was in the (muffled) room and he was here too because he knew the period we had before and he hadn't gone out to lunch he was here. So it was Charlie Snyder called me on the phone hold up hell is breaking loose again.

Joan Beifuss- Another edition.

Ed Ray- So I held the edition and we had headlines that violence marked the parade which it did you breaking out windows. We had the pictures in the final edition the next day. It was like that same afternoon and we said much time money and effort and space that we as an institution on this march in particular.

Carolyn Yellin- Now I have heard the comment and again to get your comment, but he comment that another newsworthy story was the fact that so much of the march and the people in the plaza did not break into violence and that Lawson's name was used on the front page of the New York Times and it was not that angle of the story wasn't played up here that he quieted a panic in the city hall plaza.

Ed Ray- We carried the story in that afternoon final edition that Lawson had pleaded with them, (muffled) we had it in the paper. We didn't make any hero out of Mr. Lawson, because it was Mr. Lawson's planning that created the situation to give these skunks a chance to violent again. You see he created the situation, we didn't, the community didn't.

Carolyn Yellin- Now do you think this is comparable to Martin Luther King because the same thing was said often about Martin Luther King and his marches. I guess what I am trying to say is I wonder if Lawson himself thinks of himself of being like martin Luther King.

Ed Ray- \_Well I don't know the gentlemen that well, I really couldn't comment. I told you my one contact with him and one quote I remember as long as I live. He said then if violence broke out he would be at home watching it on television said that in front of the whole group. Maybe he has changed his mind since then.

Carolyn Yellin- Well, did he mean by that instead of quieting his followers if he does have a following. This is what other negro leaders for instance I think I could quote Billy Kyles was on that he said he felt that he did have, I have heard him say that he did have a following that he felt, that he was urging up to be violent or not be violent, not to be violent but not to be violent.

Ed Ray- Well I feel sure..

Joan Beifuss- I didn't get that?

Carolyn Yellin- I know I am not...

Ed Ray- Mr. Lawson is against violence, I feel sure he is. But I am also feel pretty sure that he will use the threat of violence in his negotiation with the white community.

Carolyn Yellin- It is a weapon he uses or a tactic he uses.

Ed Ray- I heard it, heard it. And in view of what he has said about the Precimeter and said publicly and speedy (muffled) we didn't quote him on it but we could have. My judgment of the man is that he is irrational, he is on the background shows the kind of thinking he has done and I wouldn't have full confidence in him.

Joan Beifuss- Well ok all I wanted cleared up was the charge about the strike.

Ed Ray- So that is all and as far as I am concerned and today..

Carolyn Yellin- You say the clippings that you have, t his shows definitely that he is mentioned in the paper, that his name was not omitted from the paper?

Ed Ray- Why if anything, we had him in the paper too much. Because we got all the negro (muffled). We got a certain amount of space and a certain amount of world news that comes into my desk everyday. Sure we have to exercise judgment on it. Some of he statements..

Carolyn Yellin- What we were talking about earlier.

Ed Ray- We may have interpreted it as inflammatory and for his own protection didn't print them.

Joan Beifuss- One more thing I want o ask you.

Carolyn Yellin- This goes right back to the thing we were discussing of taking responsibility for..

Ed Ray- We did that on the speech when he was honored by the catholic's, we toned the whole story down. But he gave Memphis the worst black eye in what he had to say. Go back and read it. We toned it down.

Joan Beifuss- Again back during the strike and the assassination, did you have reporters from outside papers all over the country coming in here? Trying to get information? Did they work out of your office?

Ed Ray- Some did.

Joan Beifuss- The New York Times man came in he would work out of...

Ed Ray- If they wanted to, if they wanted to use our files, (muffled). Extend them that courtesy yes.

Joan Beifuss- You throw open...

Carolyn Yellin- Must have been a madhouse time.

Joan Beifuss- Yeah.

Carolyn Yellin- With trying to get out your own paper.

Ed Ray- Oh yes it is quite (muffled).

Carolyn Yellin- This descending of all the national press.

Joan Beifuss- Did you Henry Lobe has said so often that the national press did such a rotten job with Memphis did you make any evaluation?

Ed Ray- We as a Memphian we have given some of the reporters and other newspapers the devil, the Memphis papers have. I had a confrontation on the day of the memorial march with the united press which Scripts Howard owns.

Joan Beifuss- The memorial march last year or this year?

Ed Ray- This year. I got a big file on it, I was raising sand about the type of story they put out on the memorial march,. It started out a thousands of people jammed the narrow downtown streets of this river town. Of this river town. This is a great metropolitan center and the nation services are calling narrow streeted river town. It was just made me furious and they changed it within an hour after I got on the telephone. And it caused me to go to the brass all over the country about this attitude about Memphis you see. You think that (muffled) invest 60 million dollars into a plan in Memphis one of the most dynamic growth areas in the country. This isn't a Mississippi river town.

Joan Beifuss- I thought it was because of the pure water.

Ed Ray- Well we probably will get that.

Carolyn Yellin- Well I think we have used all the tape possible.

Joan Beifuss- Unless you would like to make a final speech.

Ed Ray- Fro what I have contributed yeah some personal opinions and some facts.

Joan Beifuss- Oh It is fine, we have talked to so many people that really give a kind of beautiful cross section.

Carolyn Yellin- And we don't, we seldom go into this kind of questioning except where we do feel there is something that needs to be on record where we, this explains the question that Joan asked you that we wanted to get on record.

Ed Ray- Well I give in this paper we are leaning over backwards, leaning over backwards, trying to help the negro. Where the things that help most and that is jobs and education and opportunities. (Tape End)