

SS166.mp3

Joan Beifuss- Today is July 19th we are interviewing the reverend James A. Jordan, pastor of Beale St. Baptist Church.

Jack Curtin- Interviewers Joan Beifuss and Jack Curtin.

Joan Beifuss- Ok well first of all reverend Jordan let's start off with where exactly is Beale St. Baptist Church?

James A. Jordan- Beal St. Baptist Church is at 379 Beal St. Downtown.

Joan Beifuss- And so what is the make up of your congregation?

James A. Jordan- We have around 300 on roll. All of those are not active members though but they are on roll.

Joan Beifuss- Do they mostly live right in the area?

James A. Jordan- No, very few of our members live in the area most of them live out.

Joan Beifuss- Is it mostly people that used to live there and moved out and keep coming back to the church?

James A. Jordan- Quite a few of the members are, family ties in the church, their mothers and fathers were members, now we are taking on a few of the new members around in the area.

Joan Beifuss- Don't you have a day nursery operating there too?

James A. Jordan- That's right.

Joan Beifuss- Is that supported by the church, is that a church project?

James A. Jordan- It is a church project, right now Dr. Quarters church, First Baptist is giving us 100% support. They are paying the salaries and are buying the equipment and even (muffled).

Jack Curtin- How long has this been operating?

James A. Jordan- We have been operating now about 3 years.

Jack Curtin- This day nursery?

James A. Jordan- Day nursery.

Joan Beifuss- Di you get any like war on poverty funds for it or ?

James A. Jordan- No, we have a couple of youngsters from the Map South working in it.

Joan Beifuss- How many children do you take care of there?

James A. Jordan- About 30.

Jack Curtin- Are they usually from the surrounding area or do they represent people in your church?

James A. Jordan- No they are some from the surrounding area but most of them I have to pick them up.

Joan Beifuss- What else does your church do? For people in the area?

James A. Jordan- Well we give free meals on Sundays to the poor.

Joan Beifuss- Oh do you? Where actually in the church?

James A. Jordan- In the church.

Joan Beifuss- The ladies at the church prepare it?

James A. Jordan- That's right, mission board, mission sisters.

Joan Beifuss- Just for anyone that comes along?

James A. Jordan- Right, right.

Joan Beifuss- Do you have an assistant minister there?

James A. Jordan- Well we have 5 other ministers there, in the negro Baptist church you see whenever we have an assistant he has to be on salary now. All of those who are not on salary are not assistants but they participate in the worship service.

Joan Beifuss- Are you a native Memphian?

James A. Jordan- Right.

Joan Beifuss- Ok can you tell us a little bit about Memphis when you were in high school and school and...

James A. Jordan- Well I went to the grammar school here and I went on to the Navy after grammar school.

Joan Beifuss- After Grammar school?

James A. Jordan- After Grammar school I started working and I wanted to go into the Navy and so I (muffled) to tell you the truth. I went into the Navy and I stayed 4 years and 5 months in the Navy and so when I came out I enrolled in the American school correspondence and I didn't complete the American School Correspondence, but I finished it enough to pass the entrance exam to Lemoyne. But coming out of the navy I wanted to go into some type of vacation like air conditioning. So the government let me go to air conditioning school. So then I found out that I wanted to go to a religious school and I wanted to learn more about the bible so the only thing here at that time was the (muffled) school of religion, that was recognized by the

government and so I went to Right for 3 years and it was a part of (muffled) University. In fact, Right's faculty was mostly from Wilberforce. In fact, you know Right is a Methodist school and Wilberforce is Methodist...

Joan Beifuss- Right, is it here?

James A. Jordan- Well it was at this time it was at Clayborne's Temple.

Joan Beifuss- Oh really? When was this about what year?

James A. Jordan- This was in 52, when I came out and entered Lemoyne. So I got a bachelor of theology degree from Right. So I went o Lemoyne for a year and I had a 1 year and 2 months to go on my G.I. bill and so after going to Lemoyne for a year waiting for some assistance from the government they wrote me and told me they couldn't pay me for going to Lemoyne because of the fact that Lemoyne was on the same academic level as Right and I had let Right give me a degree. Now if Right hadn't given me a degree I could have gone on to Lemoyne. They wanted me to go to some school that would (muffled) my knowledge in theology. And so that's that.

Joan Beifuss- So did you...

Jack Curtin- Then did you begin preaching?

James A. Jordan- No I was preaching all the time.

Joan Beifuss- How old were you when you started preaching?

James A. Jordan- Well I started preaching in 49 and I was born September 4th in 29, how old was I.

Joan Beifuss- Alright. So then you got one year to Lemoyne?

James A. Jordan- Right and 3 years to Right but I went to Right first.

Joan Beifuss- And then did you go into a church then or how does it work?

Jack Curtin- You were already preaching at this time?

James A. Jordan- I was already preaching but not pasturing. After the year I put into Lemoyne then I started pastoring New Zion down in West Junction here in Memphis. And I pastured West Junction for 3 years, New Zion, for 3 years and then I was called to the Beal Street church and I have been there for 7 years.

Joan Beifuss- Was your family, are there any ministers back in your family?

James A. Jordan- My father was a Methodist preacher, long years ago.

Joan Beifuss- Oh he was a Methodist preacher.

Jack Curtin- You need to speak up a little Joan.

Joan Beifuss- I know I mumble. But I am afraid we are going to miss the program at 8:30..

Jack Curtin- We are getting pretty close to it.

Joan Beifuss- Why don't we turn this off and come back to it if that's alright.

(Tape Break)

Joan Beifuss- Well they have never done anything like that here before.

Jack Curtin- Well let's see I am going to try changing position on this microphone just a little bit.

Joan Beifuss- Alright I will try to shout.

Jack Curtin- Yeah.

Joan Beifuss- I am the one that doesn't come off on the machine. Do you have any other tapes besides the....did you tape much of anything else?

Jack Curtin- We better get into the tape just what tape you are talking about here.

Joan Beifuss- Are we on now?

Jack Curtin- Yes we are on.

Joan Beifuss- I didn't know we were on.

James A. Jordan- We are talking about the tapes that I made of some of the dialogue with the mayor and the labor leaders, Mr. Champa and Mr. Worth. I will find those tapes and let you have them.

Jack Curtin- Well perhaps we can just copy.

Joan Beifuss- Dupe them yeah that would be marvelous we would appreciate that very much. And did you tape anything like any of the meetings at Mason temple, did you tape anything like that?

James A. Jordan- No. I didn't tape any of that.

Joan Beifuss- How long have you been a member of the ministerial association?

James A. Jordan- About two years I think, maybe three.

Joan Beifuss- Was that always an integrated group?

James A. Jordan- No.

Joan Beifuss- Were you one of the first negro ministers?

James A. Jordan- No Dr. Nichol of the 2nd congregation was the first negro member and he became the first negro member by mistake.

Joan Beifuss- By mistake?

James A. Jordan- They sent out an invitations and they were so sure that the congregation was a white church and so he showed up.

Joan Beifuss- Well now do you belong to a Baptist minister's association too.

James A. Jordan- Yes I belongs to the Baptist pastor's alliance headed by Dr. Roy Love and also the Baptist Pastor's Conference headed by Dr. L.E. Hamlin.

Joan Beifuss- Now are those integrated?

James A. Jordan- No they are not.

Joan Beifuss- They are not?

James A. Jordan- No.

Joan Beifuss- Do the group of white Baptist pastors and negro Baptist pastors ever meet together?

James A. Jordan- Yes, now they are meeting together.

Joan Beifuss- Since when?

James A. Jordan- Since the sanitation strike. I understand reverend Hopper and one of the presidents of the white Baptists pastors meeting together and they have met at Belleview and they have met at First Baptist, Dr. (muffled) church. And they have had breakfast together and quite a bit of dialogue has been going on since the sanitation strike.

Joan Beifuss- But here was no dialogue during the sanitation strike?

James A. Jordan- No. Just a little, they met at reverend Hamlin's church too on Hollywood. The strike wasn't over because it was right after the death of Dr. King.

Joan Beifuss- Why did you join the Memphis ministerial association?

James A. Jordan- Mostly, mostly because Dr. Roy Williams was the president and he sent me a letter.

Joan Beifuss- First Methodist Church?

James A. Jordan- Right.

Jack Curtin- (muffled) when that thing doesn't fire...

Joan Beifuss- He sent, did he invite al the negro ministers to join at that time?

James A. Jordan- Yes I think he had the secretary reverend Ray Cummins to send all of the ministers in the telephone book a letter.

Joan Beifuss- And how many negro ministers joined, as I understand previous to that it had been an all white group?

James A. Jordan- Well that is true.

Joan Beifuss- Did many negroes respond to this invitation?

James A. Jordan- Not too many, in fact you don't have too many there now. I think the membership of the Memphis minister's association only comes to about 103 or something like that and I don't know whether you have 20 negro members.

Joan Beifuss- Why did you join it?

James A. Jordan- Just because of reverend Williams said that the doors were open and in his letter he expressed that he would like some of the negro ministers to come and join.

Joan Beifuss- Have you seen many doors opened?

James A. Jordan- You mean...

Joan Beifuss- in the past 10 years say.

James A. Jordan- Yes, quite a few, in fact, but not in the church.

Jack Curtin- 11:00 Sunday morning is still the most segregated hour in the country.

James A. Jordan- That's right, that's the truth. You know I was the first minister to call attention to the other ministers concerning the sanitation strike.

Joan Beifuss- I was going to work up to the the....to the other black ministers or to the other white ministers?

James A. Jordan- Well to the black ministers first and to the white ministers next.

Joan Beifuss- Ok well let's move into that then, did, were you in contact with people in the sanitation department before the strike actually started?

James A. Jordan- No I had been reading about it, I had been watching it on television and it had gone too many days and I saw, I saw a lot of hostility in the black community because of the fact the mayor talks with his teeth closed you know. Which perhaps the men might have a good heart....when he would tell them to get on back to work that they are breaking the law, you know how he says it. I would listen to a quite of the few of negroes talk and I knew that most of the common people wanted these men to have this union because of the fact, what brought it on if you remember these two men got killed in this faulty truck and if they had correct

grievance procedure perhaps they never would have taken this truck out you see in this faulty condition.

Jack Curtin- What was wrong with the truck?

James A. Jordan- It had some kind of bad connection or something or faulty wires or something.

Jack Curtin- It started the machinery?

James A. Jordan- Right and just crushed the men to death.

Joan Beifuss- Yeah Bill Ross said once it started there was no way to stop it.

James A. Jordan- Right. And so this is, this is one of the main things I hear that brought them to strike. If the general [public had known the condition that the men were working under they would have been willing for them to have a union you see. I took one of the sanitation workers home after the all night meeting at St. Mary's cathedral and arrived. He told me that, in fact, you know during this time that coming prison story was out.

Joan Beifuss- The what?

James A. Jordan- The coming prison story, the Tucker (muffled),,

Joan Beifuss- Oh yes.

James A. Jordan- And so he said to me, he said reverend he said you have been reading about Tucker Farm and the coming prison over in Arkansas, I said yeah. Well he said, that condition exists here in Memphis we work under conditions worse than that. If you come to work and get sick and can't work you will get fired. You have to work sick, if it is raining you have to work in the rain. The truck drivers are usually the boss and they would hire a white man to be a driver and he would be somebody else under the wheel but he would be the boss you know and this is also one of the problems now that the mayor is wondering why they aren't doing as much work as they were.

Jack Curtin- (muffled)

James A. Jordan- Yeah that's right and the reason that they aren't doing as much work as they were because of the fact they worked as slaves before. Now they have a union.

Jack Curtin- It is going to take more people to do that.

James A. Jordan- That's right. And so this is one of the things that I knew that after the death of these men and that they didn't have no kind of insurance to leave their family. I just felt like the ministers should go to the aid of the sanitation workers and to help them to define their case to the city. Not so much as to work against the mayor, understand because I felt like this all the time that the mayor did not have the

true story. He didn't know what was going on although he used to have the job himself but, what goes on in the general office and what goes on out on the battlefield are two different things.

Joan Beifuss- you think that in that all night session at St. Mary's and then the subsequent meetings of the mayor and Mr. Champa, you think he did not get the true story then either?

James A. Jordan- No he didn't get the true story because the fact of this, the people who had the true story was the men.

Joan Beifuss- Joan Beifuss- Now that is what I was going to ask you, now Dean Demmick had said that there were sanitation workers in that session.

James A. Jordan- They were there that's right.

Joan Beifuss- Did they not speak, did they not talk?

James A. Jordan- No, I will tell you what, when a people of limited education and when they look upon (muffled) the mayor understand as superiors well it is pretty hard to try to express yourself in front of (muffled) especially when you don't have words at your fingertip too. And so I mean it is a different talking to each other they can express themselves because they have the same type of dialogue. But they told the best they could understand now, but unless you really got out there and watched the men understand work, you wouldn't know what was going on. So this is, this is the committee that reverend Love appointed to look into the sanitation strike and this is what started the ball to rolling.

Joan Beifuss- Now who is reverend Love?

James A. Jordan- Reverend Love is the president of the Baptist pastor's alliance.

Joan Beifuss- Now there is also the

James A. Jordan- Nelly Hamlin is the president of the Baptist pastor's conference.

Joan Beifuss- What is the difference?

James A. Jordan- Well it is just two..

Joan Beifuss- Is it different kinds of Baptists?

James A. Jordan- No just two negro Baptists.

Joan Beifuss- Then there is also the interdenominational ministerial alliance and that is reverend Starks group?

James A. Jordan- Right, right.

Jack Curtin- (Muffled)

Joan Beifuss- Ok so then reverend Love appointed, can you read the names of the committee that reverend Love appointed?

James A. Jordan- Sure, first name is always the chairmen in our group and so the first name was J.A. Jordan, (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- Can you give their churches do you have that?

James A. Jordan- Alright, J.A. Jordan of Beal Street Baptist, JW Williams of Lane avenue Baptist, W.E. Ragsdale, his church is out on Airs, reverend Brady Johnson his church is out on N. Bellevue and also out in Raleigh I think. Reverend A.C. Jackson, his church is out in Walker Homes area. Reverend Horace Robinson, his church is over on Moseby I think it is, reverend Williams, W.M. Brown, his church is on Georgia and we met at reverend J.W. Williams church. Now reverend J.W. Williams asked me since I was a member of the Memphis minister's association and he was not, he asked me wouldn't it be nice to call in some of the Memphis minister brethren to set out and discuss this thing and so I was the vice chairmen of the race relations.

Joan Beifuss- Oh with Father Veron?

James A. Jordan- Right and also we called upon Father Verona and his group, we called upon Dr. Ray Dobbins who was the chairmen of the social action committee, and we called, I had my secretary to call all of these names, Rabbi Wax, reverend Brooks Ramsey, reverend Jesse Nichols, Father Joseph E. Leppert of (muffled). And reverend Samuel B. Kyle, Dr. Paul T. Jones, and Father Joseph Ecklecamp, reverend H. Harold Davis, reverend Jim Lawson (muffled) and the reverend W.E. Demmick. And so Dr. Bruster was there also and many other names I don't have on here.

Jack Curtin- Dr. Bruster?

James A. Jordan- Dr. William Herbert Bruster at East Trig. And so this was the first, this was the statement of purpose I said to them. I said brethren in a meeting of the Baptist pastor's conference and at the St. John Baptist Church, Dr. Roy Love president although I said the Baptist pastor's conference, I meant the Baptist pastor's alliance and so Dr. Roy Love p[resident. At 11:309 am Tuesday the 13th 1968 Dr. Love appointed a committee of 7 to look into the garbage strike. Reverend J. Jordan was named chairman, Reverend Jordan called upon his brethren of the Memphis minister's association headed by Rabbi Wax, members of the Baptist pastor's conference headed by Dr. L.A. Hamlin and members of the catholic diocese and of the Presbyterian church and the Methodist church and the Christian church and others to come together and discuss this problem for the welfare of all concerned. I call Dr. Ray Dobbins the chairman of the social action committee of the Memphis minister's association and his committee for his view and to be the main investigating committee of this meeting to find a solution to this problem. And then I said all present please feel free to speak, I only hope we are not too late to save life and property and the only link of race relation that we have in this city is between the white and colored brethren. I said we have worked together in the past to defeat

the devil, I was talking about in this liquor by the drink. Let us solve this one too. With this statement I would like for Dr. Ray Dobbins and his committee to come forward.

Joan Beifuss- Now what is the date on this meeting?

James A. Jordan- This was, on the 15th I think.

Joan Beifuss- So that the strike had only been going a couple of days at the time that your group started acting?

James A. Jordan- No, this had been...

Joan Beifuss- The strike started the 12th of February.

James A. Jordan- Oh this was, this is way past February let me see. (Tape Break)

James A. Jordan- So now this is the report I read back tot eh Baptist pastors alliance and this is what happened in this meeting. The committee to investigate the garbage strike headed by reverend James A. Jordan and reverend J.W. Williams, Brady Johnson, W. Ragsdale, W. Jackson, H. Horace Robinson and W.M. Brown met at the lane avenue Baptist church 974 Lane avenue. Reverend J.W. Williams pastor. Reverend John called the conference and Dr. L.E. Hamlin president and the Memphis minister's association Rabbi Wax president, the catholic brethren, the Methodist brethren, the Presbyterian brethren, the congregationists and brothers of all Christian faith to share in this discussion. This meeting was called to order by reverend James. A. Jordan at 10:35 am, prayer by father monsignor Leppert of (muffled) catholic church. Reverend Jordan read a statement to the brethren on why this meeting was called. That's it. Afterwards reverend Jordan asked the reverend Ray Dobbins the chairmen of the social action committee of the Memphis minister's association to be the chairmen of the meeting. A number of white and negro leaders were present. Dr. Dobbins reluctantly accepted the chairmanship. Dean Demmick was the first speaker and he said he saw the wisdom in Dr. Dobbins serving as chair.

Joan Beifuss- Dr. Dobbins. Who is he?

James A. Jordan- He, you know Dr. Dobbins, he is a Presbyterian, I think he headed, he kept the book store.

Jack Curtin- Oh yes I guess I have.

James A. Jordan- Ray Dobbins?

Jack Curtin- Yes.

James A. Jordan- And reverend Williams also endorsed this and father Leppert. Out of this meeting several committees, two committees at least were appointed. One Dr. Dobbins went to the telephone after we had selected a committee to meet with Dr. Wax. This was on a Friday and this was his holy day and so a committee of 7 and

on this tape when I give it to you I had each one to give their name before we started talking with Mr. Champa.

Joan Beifuss- I would love to have that tape.

James A. Jordan- And so....and so we talked from 10 pm to 1 am. And then we were supposed to meet with the mayor.

Joan Beifuss- Now you talked with Mr. Champa from 10 pm to 1am?

James A. Jordan- Right now we left, now this is Saturday morning.

Jack Curtin- The whole group talked to him?

James A. Jordan- The committee, let me name them. The committee was Dean Demmick, Rabbi Wax, Dean Demmick, Rabbi Wax and I believe Roy Williams was there, Father J. Leppert came, Father (muffled) Veron, and a couple of more.

Joan Beifuss- Ok now hold just a minute, when this was first discussed with the white and black ministers together for the first time to discuss this what was the reaction of the white ministers?

James A. Jordan- They were enthused or (muffled).

Jack Curtin- What about Paul Tudor Jones?

James A. Jordan- Paul Tudor Jones is (muffled) also but wait a minute I don't think he was there at this particular meeting on Lane. Let me key in on that. Mr. Cummin, reverend Cummin who was the secretary the year before last of the Memphis minister's association, he said that he had met with the mayor, he was at Lane Ave. at this first meeting and that he had just left the mayor this morning and he didn't think that the minister's should interfere. So reverend Frank McRae who is also one of the mayor's school chums, he endorsed what Mr. Cummin had said. Now those were the only two who actually didn't want the ministers to have anything to do with the strike. SO Dr. Dobbin, Dean Demmick, Dr. Roy Williams, Dr. Roy Williams also spoke of seeing that these fellows get some food and money to pay rent while they were out on strike.,

Joan Beifuss- Now may I ask something else did you feel from that meeting that the main concern of the ministers was that they were not particularly concerned whether there was a union or not but they wanted the men to be fed and have decent wages and stuff.

James A. Jordan- No from what I gathered from that meeting all of the white ministers thought understand, since Dr. Bruster explained what was happening they felt that the men needed a union.

Jack Curtin- Was that so.

Joan Beifuss- Was there any hesitancy on the part of some of the black ministers in this meeting to get involved in this?

James A. Jordan- No. I tell you what this is what many of the black ministers felt. They felt like after the white ministers had come together understand before this had gotten out of hand and had come and had called the mayor understand into their mass meeting and just said Mr. Mayor, these men have been working under all kinds of bad conditions and we feel that they need this union and we would like for you to let them have it, I believe that would have been all to it.

Jack Curtin- Really you think so?

James A. Jordan- I believe so, before anybody had bothered with it you understand.

Jack Curtin- Before he had gotten himself out on the floor.

Joan Beifuss- Well actually before Champa had first come in I suppose.

James A. Jordan- Right, right.

Joan Beifuss- Well then...

Jack Curtin- Before everybody got over committed.

James A. Jordan- Right.

Jack Curtin- Well now wait a minute didn't Henry Lobe know what was going on wasn't he well aware of the conditions these men were working under he had been involved in this.

Joan Beifuss- He had been out though for 4 years.

Jack Curtin- But yeah those conditions hadn't changed?

James A. Jordan- No well you see, you know I really believe that he thought that it was just going to be a couple of weeks and the fellows were going to get hungry and go back to work. But now here is what happened the law intervened in this thing. If they had not sprayed mace on the black ministers they never would have gone to their aid as much as they did.

Joan Beifuss- Ok wait now you are getting ahead of us, when you met with Mr. Champa that night was Mr. Champa happy to have the ministers in the thing.

James A. Jordan- Yes he was.

Jack Curtin- Was that a good meeting, did you come away from there feeling that the ministers had been pulling together?

James A. Jordan- Right, you see, as you know Rabbi Wax and the mayor don't hit it off.

Joan Beifuss- I am sure they don't now.

James A. Jordan- But they didn't then. Rabbi Wax is a liberal understand and the mayor is a segregationist.

Joan Beifuss- Besides that the mayor had just converted.

Jack Curtin- Yeah that is right, Rabbi Wax is still a Jew.

James A. Jordan- Yeah you see.

Joan Beifuss- Well let me ask you something else, what was your impression of Mr. Champa? Did you like Mr. Champa when you first met him.

James A. Jordan- Yes I will tell you on television when Mr. Champa (muffled) at the mayor and called him a liar or something I knew that was a sour note because of the fact that this made a whole lot of people angry at him and when they got angry at him they got angry at the union.

Jack Curtin- It gave Lobe a target to shoot at.

James A. Jordan- Right. And so anyhow, but all in all when you , if you would meet Mr. Champa, I call him Mr. Champa he said it was alright. When you meet him you wouldn't meet a nicer guy.

Joan Beifuss- Then were you with the group that went to see the mayor?

James A. Jordan- The next morning I called Rabbi Wax, but before we left there confidentially I asked Rabbi Wax, I said sir, you want this to be a fruitful meeting don't you? Since Mr. Champa said he would be willing to understand to talk with the mayor again, they had broken of you see and this is what we are trying to get them to resume talks. I didn't want my presence to hamper the meeting understand and so I knew that the mayor understand right now was angry at black people. So I asked the Rabbi Wax did he think that my presence might hamper, in all seriousness he said, it may and I asked him would he excuse me and just let the other committee members. So this is what happened. The mayor had been out somewhere and they went to his office and I think it was 10:00, no 8:00 that morning. 8:00 that morning and he was under shaven and everything and hadn't had any sleep and so they said that he invited them back at 2:00 or something like that. So they met and agreed to come to St. Mary's at 7:00 to resume these talks. The ministers, this committee was just a listening agent understand and....

Jack Curtin- Just trying to bring parties together.

James A. Jordan- Right, in other words the first beginning of the talks, Mr. Champa would talk to the ministers and the mayor would talk to the ministers.

Joan Beifuss- They didn't talk to each other.

Jack Curtin- (muffled)

James A. Jordan- So at 12:00 Mr. Worth came in and so at 12:00 out of the 9 points that they were striving for and Mr. Worth came in, they quickly agreed on 4 of them and I can't recall what they were but they were not the main 2.

Joan Beifuss- Well the mayor would talk directly to Mr. Worth?

James A. Jordan- Right.

Jack Curtin- But not to Champa?

Joan Beifuss- Champa, there had been that exchange of insults.

James A. Jordan- That's right. Now this is the meeting understand, you don't have me (muffled) that is alright. Dr. Jones came to the mayor's rescue on some point that Mr. Worth was making.

Jack Curtin- Paul Tudor Jones?

James A. Jordan- Right, and so he said to Mr., Worth that he couldn't see who he could come to this town and insult our mayor like t his and it was an explosion.

Jack Curtin- Was this Worth or Champa?

James A. Jordan- Mr. Worth, you know he, Mr. Worth has a broad vocabulary.

Joan Beifuss- I don't suppose you have that one tape do you?

James A. Jordan- No I don't have that no I don't. But I have another interesting thing.

Jack Curtin- So anyway Worth exploded in Paul Tudor Jones' face?

James A. Jordan- Yes he did. And I don't know whether they showed this, the TV cameras were going.

Jack Curtin- Yeah but they edit that.

Joan Beifuss- Well you must have been awfully tired at 5:00 in the morning after listening to that al night.

James A. Jordan- That is the truth.

Joan Beifuss- Well now then did you yourself feel that was a fruitful meeting that all night session?

James A. Jordan- Yes a rather, they agreed upon 4 of the 9 points and then they were to come back that evening I believe.

Joan Beifuss- Yeah I think it was that afternoon at First Methodist Church perhaps?

James A. Jordan- Right, Dr, Roy Williams church it sure was.

Joan Beifuss- See I really am an expert on this.

James A. Jordan- Yeah.

Joan Beifuss- I sat down with Dean Demmick couple days ago.

James A. Jordan- Is that right? Yes.

Joan Beifuss- Now were you present at all of the session that the ministers were hosting for Mr. Champa and the mayor.

James A. Jordan- Yes.

Joan Beifuss- Did it get better or worse as it went along.

James A. Jordan- Well I tell you , let me tell you about the last meeting. The last meeting we were at St. Peter's at 3rd and Adam and the union men and the sanitation workers were all in the auditorium there at the new city hall building.

Joan Beifuss- Oh while you were at St. Peters?

James A. Jordan- That's right and the mayor was there and Mr. Worth was not there. And so Dean Demmick, no Mr. Worth sent two men over to St. Peters to tell the mayor that he was tied up in the council chambers.

Joan Beifuss- Wait was this the council meeting at which Fred Davis was acting as chairman?

James A. Jordan- Right.

Joan Beifuss- Ok fine.

James A. Jordan- So, when these two men left now the mayor was not there then at St. Peters. So when these two men left then the mayor came in and Dean Demmick said to him, he said Mr. Mayor, Mr. Worth said that he was expecting you over to the council chambers that he wouldn't be over here, is that right? The mayor said no, I haven't heard anything about it we are going to be right here. And so then I asked the (muffled) do you want me to see if I can get Mr. Champa over. And he said yes please. So I went to the chamber and I said to Mr. Worth I said that the mayor is over at St. Peters waiting on you. He said would you tell him to come on over here because I am tied up with the council he said. He said, it seems like we are going to get something done over her. And so I went to the telephone and I talked to Father Gary and he got Dean Demmick on the phone and so...and anyhow I was hungry and Father Gary had some sandwiches or something and I said pick a sandwich up and I started back to St. Peters and I met the mayor crossing Main, I understand that he and the city attorney, Mr. Frank Giannatti and that was the last meeting.

Joan Beifuss- Did you say anything to the mayor when you met him?

James A. Jordan- Yeah we spoke.

Joan Beifuss- So he had not gone to the council, was he going to the council meeting?

James A. Jordan- He was going to the council chamber s then.

Joan Beifuss- Now was this in the morning?

James A. Jordan- No this was in the evening. This was in the evening.

Jack Curtin- Which meeting was this?

James A. Jordan- This was the very last one, now I tell you what if you remember the one that, it was the day before the mace.

Joan Beifuss- Yeah it was when Fred Davis was...

James A. Jordan- Right.

Joan Beifuss- Now did you go to the council chamber that day at all.

James A. Jordan- I went to the council chamber and talked to Mr. Worth that day.

Joan Beifuss- But did you stay at all?

James A. Jordan- No. They wanted me to stay but I didn't stay.

Joan Beifuss- Could you tell us at all what the atmosphere of that meeting at the time, the short time you were there.

James A. Jordan- I tell you what they expected trouble because they had police there all over and all outside understand and squad cars back to back. They were expecting some trouble and I think this was the day they were eating the bologna sandwich and everything.

Jack Curtin- Yes.

Joan Beifuss- So when you went over there the sanitation workers themselves were already there in council chambers.

James A. Jordan- Right they were there.

Joan Beifuss- Well now were those meetings that clergymen were hosting, were those ever officially broken off or did they just kind of die off after that day?

James A. Jordan- I think that after that day, after that day they just stopped. Because you see right after, the next day when they left the auditorium they were maced and they called this meeting the next day and organized.

Joan Beifuss- Ok now were you at that meeting, were you maced? Were you on that march.

James A. Jordan- I started the march and I said my car is too far for me to walk back and so I better drive my car.

Joan Beifuss- but you were in that meeting in the auditorium?

James A. Jordan- Yes I was in that meeting in fact, I came in it and I didn't hear the council or they were moving the mics or something when I walked in the door. Somebody, somebody was up understand I believe it was Vasco Smith if I am not mistaken that said something about that I told you this was a racist town or something. When they started this, I felt like that this march perhaps was going to get provoked into something and that is another reason that I didn't march because I just didn't want to get into something that I didn't know what it was going to be about. But now I saw, I saw Mr. Worth talking to one of the high ranking police officers and he was giving them the line on how to start the march.

Joan Beifuss- Do you know which police officer it was?

James A. Jordan- No I don't but they seemed to have been on real friendly terms because I remember the officer said something and laughed you see.

Joan Beifuss- Did the men in the auditorium seem angry when you were there, the workers?

James A. Jordan- Yes they were angry.

Joan Beifuss- What were they doing, standing up, sitting down?

James A. Jordan- They were all sitting, in fact there were so many of them that(muffled) and you know 1300 filled that thing up.

Jack Curtin- Were they all there?

James A. Jordan- Just about. That's right.

Joan Beifuss- Well then when did you find out that he mace had been used?

James A. Jordan- When I got to, when I got back tot eh church you see they came on down to Danny Thomas and marched towards Linden but it was such a small crowd then understand, that kept up the march.

Jack Curtin- You mean some actually finished it? I hadn't realized that I thought it just broke up.

James A. Jordan- Some finished it.

Joan Beifuss- And did someone tell you then that mace had been used or how did you find out that the mace had been used?

James A. Jordan- I heard them talking in a little printing shop down there but I really got the big story that evening on the news.

Jack Curtin- What effect did this have on you personally?

James A. Jordan- To tell you the truth I just felt like that this thing had gotten all out of hand and there, with the sanitation workers had gone too far then to back out understand that they had to win this at all costs. This is one reason that I was glad when Jim Lawson and the other committee and organizations got together and called this meeting to organize.

Joan Beifuss- When was that meeting?

James A. Jordan- This was the next day I think at Mason Temple. They have a, they have a conference room there and 100 and some ministers got together in that conference room.

Jack Curtin- Mostly negro?

James A. Jordan- Well yes there was some white ministers there though.

Jack Curtin- Do you know Richard Moon.

James A. Jordan- I know him, I don't know whether he was there at the first meeting.

Joan Beifuss- Malcolm Blackburn I suppose.,

James A. Jordan- I think he was there.

Jack Curtin- How about Richard Wells?

James A. Jordan- (Muffled)

Jack Curtin- Tall light hair.

Joan Beifuss- but there were several white ministers?

James A. Jordan- Oh yes, sure.

Joan Beifuss- Well now who was the chairman of that meeting was that reverend Lawson?

James A. Jordan- Jim Lawson was the chairmen of that meeting and let me think who else. I believe Gilbert Patterson.

Jack Curtin- Is this really the formation point of COME?

James A. Jordan- Right.

Joan Beifuss- Now what...

James A. Jordan- Now this was organized understand, really this organization had been in being I guess about 2 weeks before the name changed to COME you see.

Jack Curtin- Did it have a name before that?

James A. Jordan- It had a name I just can't recall it now just what it was. But I remember the night after, at Jim Lawson's church that Billy Kyles came in with this new name and plan for all of the organizations.

Jack Curtin- What was the name of the man?

Joan Beifuss- Kyles.

James A. Jordan- Kyles.

Joan Beifuss- Billy Kyles.

James A. Jordan- (Muffled) Baptist church.

Joan Beifuss- Now this was before the macing incident?

Jack Curtin- No the day after.

Joan Beifuss- Joan Beifuss- Oh this is the day after right. Now that meeting you were at then was that all ministers or was that people like Maxine Smith and Jesse Turner or was this just a minister's meeting?

James A. Jordan- This was just a minister's meeting but there were some laymen there.

Joan Beifuss- What was said at that meeting?

James A. Jordan- The, this meeting got the organization set up and started the strategy committee and planned the 1st main attack and I can't think of what it was. Oh yeah to stop you, yeah, stop your paper and don't buy downtown or in the shopping centers.

Joan Beifuss- Now was there any discussion at this meeting were there black ministers at this meeting that were hesitant to go along at that point.

Jack Curtin- Once that mace sprayed out that galvanized the negro community.

James A. Jordan- Right.

Joan Beifuss- Now would you say at the point of say early in March that the entire black community was united.

James A. Jordan- That is a sure thing.

Joan Beifuss- Ok, was that the first time that had happened in Memphis.

James A. Jordan- Oh yeah I am sure it is. In fact you see we have had incidents understand concerning perhaps groups and individuals, but this was the first time that the total of the negro community was involved in anything.

Joan Beifuss- In other words then in the early 60's here when they were desegregating the fairgrounds and the libraries and this kind of thing there was not this kind of community support?

James A. Jordan- No.

Joan Beifuss- Why?

James A. Jordan- Well I just feel that the reason they were not concerned is because they didn't know what was taking place.

Jack Curtin- How did they know this time?

James A. Jordan- Well you see this time it was preached from the pulpit and it was taught in the city clubs.

Jack Curtin- Is the fact that Henry Lobe was mayor important? The fact that a man that was generally believed and understood to be a racist was the mayor?

James A. Jordan- I tell you the truth now this was a big factor in what happened, yes.

Jack Curtin- In other words if it had been another man who was more personally popular with the negro community who had done virtually the same thing would it have had the same effect?

James A. Jordan- No, in fact I don't believe the black community would have gotten together against a man like mayor Ingram you see.

Jack Curtin- It would have been much more split.

James A. Jordan- Oh yeah very definitely so. In fact, to tell you the truth if mayor Ingram had said go back to work and I will work something out for you I believe the majority of the negro leaders would have gotten with the fellows and said now listen, go back to work you know.

Jack Curtin- He is really that popular with the negroes?

James A. Jordan- Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's right. That's right.

Jack Curtin- But T.O. Jones told us pretty much exactly the same thing.

Joan Beifuss- Well then when at this point when COME was first, when it was first getting organized did you still see it as short, did you still think the strike could be settled within two weeks, three weeks was it still a short term thing.

James A. Jordan- Yes because of the fact, I will tell you what now, most of my group, and when I say my group I mean the minister's alliance, we were really banking on a huge delegation of the white ministers that were there to just talk to the mayor.

Joan Beifuss- Now the ministerial alliance you are talking about reverend Starks?

James A. Jordan- No reverend Love's group.

Jack Curtin- You were banking of massive support of the white religious leaders?

James A. Jordan- Right.

Jack Curtin- Did this support develop?

James A. Jordan- No, we went to the mayor, in fact, we talked about marching to city hall and this was at Dean Demmick's church St. Mary's cathedral.

Joan Beifuss- Now....this...who talked about it?

James A. Jordan- The Memphis minister's association. They talked about marching to city hall and several of the ministers didn't believe in it because of the fact that the negro community had been involved in this riot in marching and the white community was upset so on it that they didn't want to have no part in any kind of march you understand. Several of them stated it was alright to go to the mayor understand, (muffled) and so on but they didn't want no part in no march. But you know we did finally march up there.

Joan Beifuss- Yes, well now did white minister in fact go see the mayor do you know?

James A. Jordan- In this march?

Joan Beifuss- No before.

James A. Jordan- Individually?

Joan Beifuss- Yeah,.

James A. Jordan- No.

Joan Beifuss- Did black ministers try to go see the mayor?

James A. Jordan- Oh yeah.

Joan Beifuss- Did you go se the mayor?

James A. Jordan- Not to, you see when I got on this listening committee I had to just sit and listen I couldn't...

Joan Beifuss- no I mean after that broke up though?

James A. Jordan- No.

Jack Curtin- There is not much point going as an individual?

James A. Jordan- No in fact there wasn't much point of black ministers going to the mayor because he wasn't going to give over to...

Joan Beifuss- Now did you go to individual white ministers to ask them to help or was it just done through the minister's association?

James A. Jordan- This was done through the ministerial association.

Jack Curtin- Did you use letters or did anybody use personal contacts? Did anybody go and actually confront white ministers and say we need you?

James A. Jordan- Yes this was done in many of our meetings, I understand the fact that some of the brethren got so riled up I understand that they thought the lack of cooperation on the part of the white ministers I think in some of our meetings that they condemned, they put all the good and the bad in the same bag and I felt back for this because of the fact they had not been in a lot of the meetings and had seen and heard men like Rabbi Wax understand actually going out on a limb.

Jack Curtin- Dick Moon nearly lost his job.

James A. Jordan- Right and life too. That's right and Brooks Ramsey you know and I understand about 30 families left Dr. Troutman's church.

Jack Curtin- Is that right? Now it is a better church.

Joan Beifuss- Well, were you on the CEOM strategy committee?

James A. Jordan- No but I participated in the strategy committee meetings quite a bit. On advising you know.

Joan Beifuss- Did you think that it was going along pretty well from the point of COME, were things developing?

James A. Jordan- No it seems like for 7 weeks that we were not getting anywhere.

Jack Curtin- NO movement.

James A. Jordan- That's right in fact, it seemed like even the seriousness of the matter was not getting out of the city you understand because it was such a tense situation that they just don't know how close a race riot had come to this town.

Joan Beifuss- How close had it come?

James A. Jordan- Oh, well one of the white ministers and don't let me call his name, but he had tears in his eyes when he told me that several of his parishioners were harming themselves and they were meeting in the basement of white churches and buying this ammunition with the cross for innocent kill.

Jack Curtin- Dum-dum bullets.

James A. Jordan- Yeah, and that this was going on quite a bit out east.

Joan Beifuss- Was it going on in the negro community?

James A. Jordan- No, they were really waiting and listening to the strategy committee and these nightly rallies understand really had the attention of them but now, there were some activities going on among the black youth that were not a part of COME and I think that they wanted to contribute something and they felt like the ministers, were too slow and were not getting the job done and this was getting to be a dangerous situation you see.

Jack Curtin- Wanting to move ahead.

James A. Jordan- And this is why, in fact I met in a prayer meeting with some of the brethren on a Saturday right after Dr. King got killed and they were kind of slight, they hadn't been coming to these meetings and they were in a neighborhood where many of these young black power boys lived and they were seeing them not begin concerned and you see this was about to bring about an attitude you understand on their part that these ministers are not concerned we are going to have to do something. They are they are in their praying you know.

Jack Curtin- Well let me ask you this when, you said there was weeks there when you felt there was no movement that the sides were not bringing up anything new, what did the entrance of Martin Luther King do for you? Did this give you an uplifting?

James A. Jordan- Well you see when the idea to bring Martin Luther King to the city was brought up, I said that this would, I mean I didn't say this to the committee but what I thought this would be one way to put the true story out to the national...(Tape End)