

SS174.mp3

David Yellin- This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> side of the Cherry Marathon.

Carolyn Yellin- I want to ask....

David Yellin- Well are we finished with that story about...

James Cherry- Yes I think so.

David Yellin- were there any aftermaths?

James Cherry- None and I think we correctly assessed this man as a crackpot who had nothing serious in mind except to run an inflammatory ad.

David Yellin- Why did he do it you think?

Carolyn Yellin- Was he representing any organized group do you think?

James Cherry- I don't know, I don't know. He had not been associated with any group to my knowledge since that time, He is a workman, he runs either a painting concern or I think it is a concrete, he pours concrete or something like this.

Carolyn Yellin- Just a contractor?

James Cherry- Yes, small individual contractor.

David Yellin- Mentioning his name or anything?

James Cherry- I don't know his name I have forgotten. We do business with a lot of crackpots at the newspaper at the advertising department we turn down a great many ads which we think are misleading or dishonest and so we are accustomed to dealing with these people. I wouldn't put too much significance in this. Except to say that if the ad would have run I would have felt partially responsible for what happened that day. And so I am...

Carolyn Yellin- You are relieved...

James Cherry- I am most relieved that we did not accept it.

David Yellin- Did you have any other experiences of this kind?

Carolyn Yellin- Well just want to make a point. It was similar to the ad that ran in the Dallas paper the morning of the Kennedy assassination.

James Cherry- Not as large that was a full page ad.

Carolyn Yellin- I will recall that because...

David Yellin- Your father sent it to us.

Carolyn Yellin- My father's friend had been in Dallas and he brought back several copies of it. I wanted to ask this about feelings of how the strike was going on and the escalation of tension. How did you personally feel, do you remember can you recall and put into words feelings that you had, did you feel there was anything you could do personally, did you want to do something personally?

David Yellin- Either of those.

Carolyn Yellin- This must have had some effect on you Marge having been so close to so many things and having, and being something of an activist in these matters.

Margarie Cherry- Well this sort of came at a time when I had sort of withdrawn from a lot of things having to do with personal reasons having to do with my children and with my own health and I had not been as closely in touch with people in interracial circles as I had been previously and I think one other thing that kept liberals, white liberals from being as closely involved with the strike as they might have was that the pay scale for the sanitation workers really was not bad compared with what a great many negro workers in Memphis are and were getting. It was pretty good pay for unskilled colored labor. And so you know it was, I didn't find myself particularly worked up about the situation. I felt that Henry Lobe was fool in the way he handled it and that the council and everybody connected with it was just going around and wasting a lot of time and acting kind of ridiculous. It was a little hard to get to the truth of the situation with the union seemed to be misplaying its hand also. The thing was so confuse it was a little hard to have feelings about it. I don't recall feeling terribly involved in the strike for these reasons.

Carolyn Yellin- Did you make your judgments from information you got from the newspapers and from the radio and television?

Margarie Cherry- I guess so, it was just that I hadn't had occasion to be with people, any people who were directly involved in it and had not had any direct word about the strike until after Dr. King came to town and then I got in touch with people who I knew had been in the first march to find out what had really happened and to their way of thinking and what the situation was like and then I began to feel involved.

Carolyn Yellin- Did you have a sense of foreboding?

Margarie Cherry- No.

James Cherry- I did.

Carolyn Yellin- Why Jim do you remember?

James Cherry- Well I was in pretty close touch with it and I was downtown everyday calling on advertisers and I personally call on the largest department stores because they are our biggest customers. And I saw the picket lines everyday and I saw the tension grow day by day.

David Yellin- Who do you deal with at the department stores?

James Cherry- I generally either talk to the president or to the advertising manager, the sales promotion manager, one of the top executives in the stores.

Carolyn Yellin- Did you ever discuss this with them other than...

James Cherry- Only from the view point of lost business, they were concerned and I know that they were, of course they were concerned and I know that a number of them were in the leadership trying to get the strike ended, for business as well as other reasons.

David Yellin- Do you remember what their comments were? This is awfully hard.

Carolyn Yellin- I was going to say, let me bring back one date to you, the day and I believe it was February 22<sup>nd</sup> after they had the picnic in city hall the strikers and then the next day they met at the auditorium and the city council did not hear them and left the building and it was at that point that they marched down Main St. and mace was used the first time by the police. I bring this up simply...

David Yellin- That is almost a year ago.

Carolyn Yellin- Many people it was February 23<sup>rd</sup>...

James Cherry- I do remember the day.

Carolyn Yellin- February 23<sup>rd</sup> and many people have placed this as a turning point, do you have any particular memories that day where you downtown?

James Cherry- I was not downtown and I got the message by phone as it was going on because the word was out that Goldsmith's had been damaged that windows had been broken and that the entire store was full of gas, mace I suppose. And or tear gas and so I called Goldsmith to get the word and the advertising department is on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor and I called the advertising manager whom I know of course better than anyone else there. And it was his feeling that yes, there had been damage to the windows that many, some of the employees and customers on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor were suffering from gas inhalation and eye irritation and this sort of thing and that the store had been locked and there were guards at the door to prevent any violence. I later found that he was a victim of misinformation himself that there hadn't been nearly this sort of difficulty but as I say he was on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor and was probably reporting rumor as much as anyone else. Later on I found out that there had really been no window breakage and if there had been any mace used it was not actually in the store. The only comments I heard immediately thereafter were how bad it is that we have got to get this over with and we have got to get it ended.

David Yellin- Well how to get it over with? What was the talk of the people, who could get it over with who would you go to, who were the people responsible?

James Cherry- I think the business community by and large, the ones that I dealt with felt that the strikers had to get in, that the strikers were wrong and the strikers had to see the light of day.

David Yellin- So to get it over with you have to force the strikers to...

James Cherry- Yes to accept something and to now...I am like these other people you talk to a year after the fact and you remember things and I think there was a distinct change in the attitude of the business community before and after the assassination. IU thin that after the assassination, excuse me...

Carolyn Yellin- I was going to ask was there also a change of urging arbitration, now this was something that came with the entrance of Martin Luther King. Do you think there was a heightening sense of impending disaster or impending trouble....

James Cherry- Yes...

Carolyn Yellin- And the business, was this apparent in the business community that suddenly the attitude that you describe of urging the workers to do something, did there then come before the assassination let's get it over with so Martin Luther King won't have any march to lead.

James Cherry- I don't recall anything about Martin Luther King from the business people I knew except resentment that he should come, that he should stay home that we didn't need him or any other outside people to come in here and help run our affairs. And I heard expressions of pleasure actually that he had been assassinated coming from the business community when it happened and it served him right.

Carolyn Yellin- Were these widespread?

David Yellin- These were people also in high positions?

James Cherry- Some of them, and some of them not, I herd them in my own newspaper, in high positions I heard a person in a very high position at my newspaper say that it was probably the will of god to see that the Martin Luther King was assassinated for the good of the country. The same man said the same thing about John Kennedy.

Carolyn Yellin- May I just ask this was this a person in a high editorial position?

James Cherry- No.

Carolyn Yellin- No.

David Yellin- Now can we get to the and this is where you have the discretion, but we are trying I think it is a legitimate pursuit, the position of the newspaper. Are you privy to the editorial position in anyway.

James Cherry- No sir I am not, only through personal friendships with some people but I am not taken into...

David Yellin- Now for instance we have heard that the name of James Lawson was asked to be kept out of the newspaper. Is this...

Carolyn Yellin- The Commercial Appeal.

David Yellin- During the strike.

James Cherry- I have heard that the name of Henry Lobe was supposed to be kept out of the newspaper until he became mayor after which it appeared as seldom as was journalistically feasible.

Carolyn Yellin- Both newspapers or just the commercial appeal?

James Cherry- Primarily the Commercial Appeal yes, and let me say this for the record the editorial policy of the two Memphis newspaper is completely independent one of the other with a single exception that Scripts Howard insists that they both endorse the same nominee for president of the united states. But in all other matters they are entirely independent, so the fact that one of them might have had a ban against publishing anything about Mr. Lobe (muffled).

David Yellin- Yeah well neither of them supported Mr. Lobe in the primary.

James Cherry- No neither did.

Carolyn Yellin- I don't think you know this David but I heard another rumor, supposedly coming from a member of the commercial appeal editorial staff, that once again the ban on mentioning James Lawson is in effect of mentioning him in the Commercial Appeal and it was stated this way that his name is to mentioned only in his own obituary. Does this sound like a wild..

James Cherry- I had not heard this and it is something that I could find out. But it is not something to answer Dave's question, it is not some thing to which I would be privy on the front end I would have to find out and I would have to question and by asking the right people I could get this information.

Carolyn Yellin- Well this does bring up a question that to us seems important, and that is the question of news management.

David Yellin- Even the very fact that Lobe's name is kept out is indicative of the kind of...

Carolyn Yellin- Does this indicate and would it be fair to say and would, you may not choose not to answer but is there....could an accusation of news management if it is an accusation or do all newspapers manage the news and let me go on to say that this has sometimes been said with considerable approval by people of liberal feelings about nothing was printed about where the school was to be integrated kept the troublemakers away, that peaceful integration was possible because there wasn't news management.

James Cherry- First of all that I will say in my honest opinion the accusation of news management on the part of the Memphis newspapers is exaggerated, it is greatly exaggerated.

Carolyn Yellin- Have you heard it made before Jim?

James Cherry- Yes, I have heard the accusation made, I hear it made every day.

Margarie Cherry- This accusation is made about every newspaper.

David Yellin- Yeah of course there has to be a certain amount of news management it is called discretion and selection.

James Cherry- There has to be news selection there and there is always a certain amount of built in prejudice and view point on the part of any writer, he can't avoid that.

David Yellin- News management is when James attacks James Lawson, I mean councilmen James attacks him and Donelson says he has outlived his usefulness and so on, they never go to Lawson and say what do you say.

James Cherry- That is your definition of news management.

Carolyn Yellin- My definition of news management would be if there was a written edict saying do not mention James Lawson in this newspaper, or do not mention Henry Lobe, this to me would definitely be news management.

James Cherry- I would imagine that there was no written edict in existence on either...

David Yellin- On either one no they wouldn't have written this.

James Cherry- But if there was a policy it could easily be implemented let me put it that way. I also know this, I think I am safe in saying that the Memphis newspapers in the period in which integration or desegregation was progressing, a 5 year period or so before the assassination of Martin Luther King and the garbage strike did follow a policy of playing down any racial problems, violence, disagreements, unpleasantness, in what they considered I am sure the best interest of promoting harmony in the community and of assisting this desegregation to take place.

Carolyn Yellin- But they also played down what liberals would consider racial progress, and this again with community approval. For instance a teacher in the county schools told us that faculty of the county schools was integrated, there was a negro teacher in her school and there were two in the county schools that she knew of and the papers had agreed not to mention it so that there wouldn't be any trouble.

Margarie Cherry- I remember on the day that busses were due to be desegregated the papers did not carry a story about it in advance because they were afraid...

David Yellin- This was a sense of responsibility? Now can I come in from outfield.

Carolyn Yellin- I would like to hear Jim's well, a sense of responsibility?

James Cherry- But that is as Carol indicated this is applying that sense of responsibility in news management if you want to use that phrase, only in a direction that some people would approve of.

David Yellin- This is always the situation.

Carolyn Yellin- I want to follow this through only to this extent that this is Germaine in this is what concerned the black community to the point that they boycotted the papers, the fact that they were so felt that they could not get their story across to the public in the newspapers because no one did come to say now what do you think of this. And this has been stated..

David Yellin- In this regard and I think this is very significant and you can or cannot help on this. I think I heard, that the most powerful man in this city was Frank Algren.

James Cherry- I have heard that too.

Carolyn Yellin- Do you believe this.

David Yellin- I have seen an indication of it in one area, in relation to the university. The president, deans at the university trembled less they incur the wrath of Mr. Algren.

Carolyn Yellin- Do you wish to be on record saying that?

David Yellin- Yeah, I was there, this I can ascertain to, that they said well we will not do it because we are not sure what Frank Algren will say to a situation. Now can you or would you care to discuss Frank Algren and his influence?

James Cherry- I think there is no doubt that Frank Algren was during his period of editorship a powerful personality in Memphis, whether he was the most powerful person in town I don't know. I don't know.

Carolyn Yellin- Was there a comparison between him and Niemann?

James Cherry- I think that if there had been a comparison made that everyone would have said that Frank Algren's influence greatly dominated Ed Nieman's. His newspaper is larger and it sought more influential, older, more identified with old Memphis and the establishment than the Precimeter was a Scripts Howard newspaper which bought the Commercial Appeal and absorbed it. So it is the Commercial Appeal the old reliable 125 or 130 years old now which is more powerful. Now speaking of the editorial influence. I don't know that anybody lived in fear and trembling of Mr. Algren. I don't know that he abused whatever power he might have had and the reason that I am saying this is that I don't want to say something that I am not sure of and have it...

.Carolyn Yellin- Would this be inherent in his position as editor of the largest paper....

David Yellin- I think it is more of his personality than anything, he had a powerful position but this is my own interpretation that anybody in his position would be powerful persay, but that is not in a sense what we are talking about. It is the matter of...

James Cherry- I think the man enjoyed his position of influence and I think he enjoyed the company of powerful people in government and their being able to associate with them and perhaps influence them.

David Yellin- Would you say that the staff of the papers for instance in relation to the strike and the fact that they voted as the member of the guild voted not to be in favor but the staff in general were kind of opposed to what was happening or opposed to the union?

James Cherry- Strange thing happened, the newspaper guild took a vote and they didn't take a vote the executive committee took a position supporting the boycott and the strike even though the boycott was hurting the newspapers and the membership followed this action by virtually censoring the guild, the chapter president and the other members of the board.

David Yellin- By only a few people voted, comparatively it would seem it was something like 26 to 18 or something.

James Cherry- Yes.

David Yellin- But well you say at the paper you hear this and that, were most of the working newspaper men say in sympathy with the strikers or against them?

James Cherry- I would say most of them were against the strikers.

Carolyn Yellin- I am interested in this because this to me has seemed a different thing about Memphis. In almost all cases I the newspaper men I have known have tended to be far more liberal than their community. Especially those on the editorial staff and yet I have heard this said and I was waiting for your answer that indeed this is an extremely conservative community with extremely conservative newspapermen on the editorial staff that....

James Cherry- Certainly not all but there are a number of..

Carolyn Yellin- And the majority, the...

James Cherry- Well I couldn't say Carolyn whether it is prevailing or whether it is even a majority.

Carolyn Yellin- I have heard it said this, that the prevailing opinion is certainly...

James Cherry- The, I took a straw vote among the members of the advertising staff and the day before the November election and out of some 40 people present Mr.

Wallis got 27 votes and Mr. Nixon got 9 votes and Mr. Humphrey got about 2 votes. And this was a secret written ballot no show of hands.

David Yellin- Humphreys got yours and who else?

James Cherry- I don't know. Somewhere there is a friend.

David Yellin- Yeah.

James Cherry- But I don't know I don't think the vote would have been quite that disproportionate in the editorial departments. I think it would have been in the trade, in the craft departments. The printers and the other people. Well we are wandering and you wanted to talk about newspapers. I don't know that you would get some direct editorial analysis or commentary from somebody. Do you know (Muffled) at the commercial appeal.

David Yellin- No but I have met him.

James Cherry- Editorial writer and a liberal person and a very fine person and would probably off the record or for historical purposes give you some...

David Yellin- I think we would like very much to talk with him.

Carolyn Yellin- I know guy Northrop in that we share a relationship somewhat like yours and Marge's, we have a common great grandfather.

James Cherry- Is that right? your great grandfather certainly had a lot of different seeds.

David Yellin- Yes he did. That is a fun way to put it.

Carolyn Yellin- I might say that I think as I study the situation (muffled) On my mothers side of the family.

David Yellin- Well, I don't think we want to find out anymore or anything about the papers because the papers are there, we have the papers and we are studying them.

Carolyn Yellin- I want to ask one other thing. Are there separate Mississippi's editions, is there a special edition that goes to Mississippi.

James Cherry- Of the commercial Appeal yes.

Carolyn Yellin- Daily?

James Cherry- Every day.

Carolyn Yellin- Is the editorial approach is a different editorial approach used in that paper, is it tailored for Mississippi?

James Cherry- In differentiating news and editorial yes, the same editorial page runs through all editions there is no change in it but the front page is entirely different and the inside pages many stories are made over and the coverage is different. Now whether it is safe to say that the editorial philosophy is different I don't know. I do know that some of the people who are in responsible editorial positions handling the Mississippi edition are extremely conservative and Mississippi oriented and all south oriented and frankly anti-negro in their views.

Carolyn Yellin- Well this point was made by Frank former congressman Frank Smith in his book I believe and this was, I think he mentioned it and we have intended to really get a copy of the Mississippi's edition and in fact we might even ask you?

James Cherry- I can get them for you. For a particular date or?

David Yellin- Way back would be the best.

Carolyn Yellin- Would there be any way you could get some Mississippi editions for the period of the strike, that far back?

James Cherry- It would be not easy but it would not be impossible.

David Yellin- Would they be on microfilm by now?

Carolyn Yellin- Let's say something that week between the march and the assassination.

James Cherry- Alright yes I can get that, we keep them a year and then we put them on microfilm and I think we film the final edition rather than the early editions, there are 5 editions of the commercial appeal. One for Mississippi, one for Arkansas, one for Tennessee and two for the city.

Carolyn Yellin- Two for the city?

James Cherry- Final and then the final makeover as they call it.

David Yellin- Gee that might be an exceedingly interesting study for a journalism student.

James Cherry- Yes it would be.

David Yellin- Because that if anything indicates a newspaper and the direction it takes. I mean here is the same paper going to different areas.

James Cherry- Well this is the strength of the commercial appeal, the commercial appeal has far more circulation in the city the size of Memphis would warrant and the reason that it does is that it is the (muffled) newspaper in Northern Mississippi and eastern Arkansas and western Tennessee and up in the bootheel of Missouri and this is because it tailors its news coverage to each of these localities and...

David Yellin- Are there separate managing editors or (Muffled).

James Cherry- Well there is a man called a tri-state editor meaning Mississippi, Arkansas and Tennessee, whose job it is to determine which news will go in each of the editions and then we of course have correspondents in, full time correspondent in Jackson Mississippi.

David Yellin- Well we obviously can't get into another area that I think would be exceedingly important and you would be so good. But I have a suggestion when we get off the tape that we may want another session of equal time.

Carolyn Yellin- But on this particular thing.

David Yellin- Particular are that we can do for about 3 minutes.

Carolyn Yellin- Well no I just wanted to say, I mean to ask how you feel about Memphis now, let's say a year later, how do you feel personally, do you want to continue living here, have your feelings changed in the past year?

Margarie Cherry- After the strike they did, I really was heart sick over what had happened and I felt yeah that I would like to leave, it just seemed, the whole place seemed so ugly all of a sudden and the expressions I heard from many white people whom I had just assumed to be people of goodwill before were so shocking to me and disillusioning, the whole city seemed to just change complexion over night almost. And as a matter of fact shortly after the strike I paid a visit to my daughter for a few days just to get out of the tension for a little bit before getting back into it and I did re-involve myself in the whole problem of race and social action after this happened as I think many people did. I called my negro friends to say that I was sorry and to see what I could do and I joined groups that were beginning to take interest who, groups which had formed to see what they could do to make things better.

David Yellin- Now do you feel that way now?

Margarie Cherry- I feel better now.

David Yellin- Yeah after last week you would see where can you go.

Margarie Cherry- Yeah.

Carolyn Yellin- Last week being when the 4 of us were exposed to some northern....

Margarie Cherry- Northern prejudice.

Carolyn Yellin- Northern prejudice which.

David Yellin- Well we are going to come back. (Tape End)