

SS309.mp3

This is the transferal from the cassette tape made in Washington with P.J. Ciampa on February 3, 1972 with David Yellin, and Carol Lynn Yellin at the Washington headquarters of the union with P.J. Ciampa.

David Yellin: You know, as much as information as we can because what we're doing is collecting all that we can, (muffled) it together in archives, because we don't even begin to suspect or understand completely, or should we, how this will be used, but something important happened to Memphis. You were in Memphis.

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah.

David Yellin: And you were involved in it, and so we want to, if we could, almost take you back in those days, and the only way we know how to do it is to sort of go back and just talk about them, and I'm sure some of the things skip by, but. So, we'll ask.

P.J. Ciampa: You probably have a better chronology of the events than I have.

David Yellin: Well, you threw in a few other things.

P.J. Ciampa: You're prompt and I'll try to collaborate as much as possible.

David Yellin: Fine, wonderful.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Well, we did -- we do have the chronology, but I think maybe one thing that I would like to ask you, now we were talking some about the early days of the union and how the union got started and the T.O. Jones involvement and so forth in Memphis. This was before the strike actually started, but one of the things we would like to ask is about your -- if you remember that first incident of the rainy day. Were you in Memphis that...?

P.J. Ciampa: No, I was not in Memphis when the young men...

David Yellin: Two men were ground up.

Carol Lynn Yellin: (muffled), yes.

David Yellin: On February 1.

P.J. Ciampa: The day after that was when they struck, and that evening I got into Memphis.

David Yellin: Also, you were in Memphis, again you may be able to recollect; you were in Memphis and there was an exchange of letters between you and Blackburn about some (muffled). Do you recall those?

P.J. Ciampa: Oh yes. I was in there a couple weeks before, early January I sensed difficulty. He claimed he's brand spanking new in the business, that he needs time to get the department -- the mayor needs time to know where the men's room is, and all those things. I warned him that he would be better off having (muffled) with the men in a formal manner and (muffled) I suspected very strongly that there would be some trouble in Memphis. I had admonished him of that a good two or three weeks before the incident happened. I don't think, however, that the strike would have occurred as early as it did if there had not been the loss of those two lives.

David Yellin: You mean you think that did start it?

P.J. Ciampa: That's right, that was the firecracker in my opinion.

Carol Lynn Yellin: That was more so than the fact of the rainy day and the pay, and (muffled). That's interesting to me, because it seems to me that that has to be -- that was so graphic. I mean no man could forget that, and especially it seems to me a man going out on a truck every day and thinking about this, it must have just been terrible.

P.J. Ciampa: Well that, plus the fact that the cold, callous attitude of the city, though, I think when the bodies were held somewhere for a while to decide who was going to pay for a casket, you know.

David Yellin: And there was no compensation for the men.

P.J. Ciampa: No workman's compensation, not a thing. I think eventually Loeb allowed \$800 for each funeral or some paltry sum. That only tended to flame the...

Carol Lynn Yellin: Wasn't it what brought you in? I mean, were you called in when that happened, were you called?

P.J. Ciampa: No, I think we have to go back a little further than that. I can't remember their names. Who was Loeb's competition in the first election, do you remember?

Carol Lynn Yellin: Ingram. William Ingram was the mayor.

David Yellin: You mean way, way back?

P.J. Ciampa: Before Loeb.

David Yellin: Farris? Didn't he run against Farris.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Well the sheriff, Bill Morris was running against him in the primary. Bill Morris and Hunter Lane.

P.J. Ciampa: At the time of the elections I was (muffled) headquarters, and (muffled).

The summer before, T.O. Jones -- I met T.O. Jones in Memphis. He met me at the airport. I should've known something about T.O. Jones at that time because when T.O. met me at the airport and we started moving along, more of his palace guards started showing up. He had about six guys (muffled).

David Yellin: Now is this in the summer of '67 then?

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah, yeah.

David Yellin: Yeah, right.

P.J. Ciampa: And the purpose of the meeting was to see the prospective mayor, and Morris I thought was the guy, Farris or Morris, one of them. Now the guy that Loeb won over. If we supported him, would he give us recognition, check off, and would he see to negotiations. He and T.O. lined up some motel and rooms and meals for his guy (muffled), but then Morris himself didn't come in. He sent his layman, or his aides. And (muffled) advised me -- I was over the firefighter incidentally. (muffled) told me, he says, my principal told me to advise you that you can have check off for \$25,000, but that's as far as he's prepared to go at this time. So, at that point he just bounced me out of the (muffled), thank you, very nice seeing you, and (muffled) the firefighters. Well, do you think that Mr. Morris will take a personal check of \$1000 from you (muffled). That was my first experience. That was after the election, after the municipal agent T.O. called me so we could meet with the new management to try something, and I had this conversation with Blackburn where I found the guy didn't know a sanitation truck from a wheelbarrow. Then the question of the tragic accident. The strike was out. T.O. says (muffled) coming out of the walls and so forth.

David Yellin: How did you find out about the strike?

P.J. Ciampa: T.O. called me.

David Yellin: He called you? When? Do you remember if it was that Sunday night or the next morning?

P.J. Ciampa: They called me on Monday morning when they were out. (muffled).

Carol Lynn Yellin: They were already out?

David Yellin: They were already out.

P.J. Ciampa: They were already out. They arrived and he was having the meeting at Bob Ross's Hall, or Central (muffled).

David Yellin: And he called you, and do you remember what he told you?

P.J. Ciampa: He said Ciampa (muffled), we have a solid strike and (muffled)

remembered the ineptness of (muffled) and I will get you some additional help. At that point I got into Memphis about 3-4 o'clock in the afternoon.

David Yellin: That same day?

P.J. Ciampa: I started a meeting with (muffled). Later that evening Jesse Epps came. The next morning Bill Lucy came and we started getting together.

David Yellin: What was your first reaction when you heard about the strike, can you remember? You can use any language you want.

P.J. Ciampa: My first reaction was, my God, what in the am I going to do with a strike in the South. I had heard so many horror stories about 'em. I had participated in one, and a couple of small ones, but nothing that big, and I knew Loeb's reputation.

David Yellin: You did.

Carol Lynn Yellin: You hadn't met Loeb, though, at that point. The only contact...

P.J. Ciampa: No, I knew him only by -- I only knew him as an arch conservative. And I thought, my God, where do I go from here. This is real. I had a feeling of impending doom before I ever saw it.

David Yellin: And you conveyed this when you talked to Jerry Wurf.

P.J. Ciampa: Oh yeah, I had. We both knew, because there is a long history, I guess Jerry told you, there's a long history of a couple years before when there should have been a strike and (muffled). That's why I didn't go back into that. The history there -- we were ready for organization a couple of times. We muffed the opportunity. This time, well (muffled). Who the hell needs a garbage strike in January/February.

David Yellin: Now when you went down there. You went down I guess, you (muffled). When you came into Memphis, who met you at the -- I'm doing this kind of on purpose. Maybe it will help you kind of remember incidents, which can really become so important sometimes.

P.J. Ciampa: T.O. met me at the airport.

David Yellin: With his aides again?

P.J. Ciampa: No.

David Yellin: His palace guards?

P.J. Ciampa: At this point T.O. had to have highly (muffled) type guards. And we went into a meeting then, and even then they were kind of holding a guard together during the

meeting, you know. So, no (muffled).

David Yellin: That's what I mean.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Were there representatives of the city, you mean?

David Yellin: No, no these were the union men.

P.J. Ciampa: No, union men, the workers.

David Yellin: Did he tell you what happened the night before?

P.J. Ciampa: Well he says that he had a meeting with Blackburn and the meeting blew up and he put his jail clothes on. Not graphic, he just gave me the short resume that started the (muffled). But the thing that impressed me was that I moved in there out of the suspicion that I saw in these men's eyes.

David Yellin: In the workers?

P.J. Ciampa: In the workers.

David Yellin: Now what do you mean by suspicion?

P.J. Ciampa: Well, as I was talking to them they looked at me with just intentness, such -- who is he, where are you from, what do you represent? (muffled) I was very uneasy all that night. I met with the board later, and, you know, reviewed many things. Over the next day we had a meeting, and at the end of about two or three days is when I started communicating and getting an air of mutual confidence.

David Yellin: With the men?

P.J. Ciampa: With the mean, yeah, because they never did trust poor T.O.

David Yellin: In other words, they didn't know you.

P.J. Ciampa: No, they didn't know me, and the amazing thing is, you know, their suspicions at first and their absolute total, complete loyalty down the road further.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Trust you mean?

P.J. Ciampa: Complete trust and love, you know. So, and when we were there, I just -- it was almost weird.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Well do you think perhaps this was because in the very process of maybe making Loeb and a few of the establishment types in Memphis mad, that you were establishing trust with the workers themselves. You were saying things that they never

would have dared to say themselves.

P.J. Ciampa: I think inadvertently I won their loyalty and the crackers' contempt, no question about it.

Carol Lynn Yellin: You didn't know what you were doing, but...

P.J. Ciampa: I didn't know that it would sink roots that deep.

David Yellin: Now did you find these men, and you say you had been in the South, or let's say blacks anywhere. What was different about them, if indeed there was anything different.

P.J. Ciampa: No, really nothing different except maybe more sophisticated (muffled). For example, in Pascagoula, no problem. A couple of other smaller places there were no problems. But here, the numbers are (muffled). We're looked at 1200 (muffled) staying in dense silence while you're trying to transmit to them I am here, I am for real. I want to bleed and bleed and do what I have to do with you.

David Yellin: And nothing though, just kind of a vacuum.

P.J. Ciampa: This was the first day. Oh, there was that little patter. You can tell what they're feeling.

David Yellin: You should have talked to me. You know what I would have told you? That's a southern trait.

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah.

David Yellin: Not black, it really isn't. Carol Lynn has heard me say it. Every class I face. I used to call it the cotton curtain.

P.J. Ciampa: (muffled) true.

David Yellin: You know, I mean, and of course you put your interpretation and you may be right, but there was more to it than that.

P.J. Ciampa: This was their life. This was their livelihood.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Well when did you first meet with Loeb? Do you remember? What was your first -- was as it Mr. Wurf just said? His first confrontation was right in front of the television cameras.

P.J. Ciampa: Absolutely, yes ma'am. The first confrontation with Mr. Loeb was in his office with two or three channels right in the way. He stood up at his desk. He looked like he was about 15 feet tall. He said, Mr. Ciampa, I've heard a lot about you. I'm

glad to see you, welcome to Memphis.

David Yellin: And what did you say?

P.J. Ciampa: Thank you, sir and we'll talk.

David Yellin: I have a question, that -- again, you understand, and this is somewhat impossible but we try. We're neutral. You know...

P.J. Ciampa: I promise you to be as biased as you are now.

David Yellin: That's exactly what we were. Now, we did hear somebody say that you and he had a talk in this small room behind his office.

P.J. Ciampa: Oh, this is much later. We had a large committee. We suggested the committee was too big, that we ought to (muffled) his office (muffled). So I thinned down the committee. By this time Bill Lucy and Joe Pasley.

Carol Lynn Yellin: From Nashville.

P.J. Ciampa: Joe Pasley (muffled) professional people. (muffled) we were sort of deadlocked where Loeb and I had argued the merits and demerits until we were frozen in position on recognition and agreement and procedure and everything else. So, then we agreed that we would (muffled) some off-the-record discussions. In the off-the-record discussions we agreed that Henry and I would remove ourselves from this, and let the attorney, Blackburn, Lucy, Pasley, see if they can knock something up for a couple of hours. So, pretty soon Loeb bounces in from the off-the-record session. I bounce in from the off-the-record session. We had the same kind of a shootout privately. (muffled) basis. Lucy thought we had something going. I (muffled). So we go back out there.

David Yellin: You and he?

P.J. Ciampa: He and I, and everybody, but he and I were (muffled). We got there and we were going back to bat (muffled). And out of the blue he says Ciampa, that isn't what you told me in the back room.

Carol Lynn Yellin: That's right, he announced publicly that you had said something else to him.

P.J. Ciampa: And now he comes out into the formal session, and he comes out and we were trying to make our position. I'd get a little position on him, and he'd say that isn't what you told me in the back room, Ciampa. So I said now you want to hear all of (muffled). And from that point we got to be pretty infantile (muffled). So I thought that from a man who is not an unlearned man -- to pull a (muffled) trick like that is just about as corrupt as you can pull on anybody. And it wasn't significant. It was a minor

(muffled) recognition and (muffled) and so forth, and (muffled) just some give and take. I never did devise what I did or did not say in the back room, but what I did or did not say in the backroom had nothing to do with what we were saying out here in the (muffled).

David Yellin: And he should not have used that.

P.J. Ciampa: He (muffled). It was the cheapest, lowest trick that a man can play because when you go off-the-record, you're off-the-record. If somebody, that's what you go off the record for, and that's what the (muffled) session was for, not to have it thrown out that (muffled) and things got so bad Mr. Mayor that you and I disqualified ourselves from it, and when the men try to deliberate, and then you got your dirty nose in it, and then I had to get my dirty nose in it, and, you know, the whole thing. Well this time, (muffled) men, he got real aggravated, but he had the ability of recovering a little faster than I did.

Carol Lynn Yellin: He had all of his troops present didn't he.

David Yellin: He was also on home grounds.

P.J. Ciampa: That's right.

Carol Lynn Yellin: It's his ballpark.

David Yellin: Did you ever run across a guy like him? I mean is he distinctive?

P.J. Ciampa: He is -- in a different sense (muffled) Atlanta the same egos prevail, the same confusion of what their responsibility is, and what a mayor should really be. He missed the same philosophy in (muffled) the South.

Carol Lynn Yellin: This was after, long after.

P.J. Ciampa: About three years later.

David Yellin: Now, did you feel that early on -- when did you realize that this would prolonged, if indeed you did?

P.J. Ciampa: After two or three weeks. Yeah, we realized after the first week or ten days. I was hoping that somebody would come to break it up. First it was (muffled) confrontations, then the gyrations then the ministers and outside committee. I was hoping -- many of our labor disputes, one committee or another will find a key solution to it. But the more upstanding citizens we were able to get together with, the more confused the pie became. Then I realized that we were getting representatives of committees to get together to form a (muffled) committee. That's how broad this thing had gotten. When it got to that, I realized we were in for a struggle and I didn't know where it was going to end.

David Yellin: Can you tell us about the macing, your experience?

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah, it's -- Jerry probably told you how we had left the auditorium, and just sought safe passage to this church. The chief eventually agreed and everything was fine. We kind of spaced ourselves.

David Yellin: Where were you in the line?

P.J. Ciampa: About one-third of the way from the front, not too far (muffled).

David Yellin: Do you remember who you were walking with?

P.J. Ciampa: No because I kept moving, solving little problems.

David Yellin: Such as?

P.J. Ciampa: (muffled) the cops, telling our guys to listen to the cops. We only want to get to the church and so forth. I was right, about one vehicle away from when the girl screamed and the guys started rocking the car.

David Yellin: Did you see that?

P.J. Ciampa: Oh yeah.

David Yellin: Could you describe it?

P.J. Ciampa: I didn't see -- you know, I only saw it after the girl screamed.

David Yellin: You heard a girl scream?

P.J. Ciampa: I heard the girl scream, yeah. Then the guys mumbled voices, but you knew what they were doing because you saw the car bounce, and by this time...

Carol Lynn Yellin: The police car.

David Yellin: Was the police car all the way across their line, or was it?

P.J. Ciampa: Oh the police car was over. It had crowded, over at least 24-36 inches into the, you know, being over the white line that we were supposed to be.

Carol Lynn Yellin: And this had happened before. Some of the tape said that the police car had crossed over before this.

P.J. Ciampa: The police car had crossed and just kept edging the crowd, moving a little faster into the crowd, bumping some -- and then this child, this girl, I don't know if it was a child, but the girl screamed. By this time all hell broke loose there, and I figured well,

let me move here and talk to some (muffled). While I was talking to some of them, these three cops barged in (muffled).

David Yellin: You don't remember the word?

P.J. Ciampa: No, I don't.

David Yellin: There's that...something.

P.J. Ciampa: That...something. I looked at him and says just a minute mister, yeah we'll take care of you, and the guy.

David Yellin: Right in front.

P.J. Ciampa: Right here the mace hits me in the face, and I tried heading for the crowd, but I stumbled (muffled). I feel this stuff all over me. You can't breathe and you can't see.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Did they continue to spray it on you.

P.J. Ciampa: There's a photo somewhere.

David Yellin: We have it.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Yes, we have that. In fact we saw that in the union news.

P.J. Ciampa: I really didn't know. After the first hits you, you don't know what (muffled). All (muffled) I was completely disoriented, didn't know how to go, or where. I was just grabbing for something to hold onto, and the officer (muffled) and some hands started grabbing me, and I thought, my God, this is it, this must be the cop, and it was...

David Yellin: And what did you think, you thought they were going to...?

P.J. Ciampa: I thought it was the cops. You know, I was totally helpless.

David Yellin: Did you think they were going to...?

P.J. Ciampa: I thought, I figured well I've had it, you know.

David Yellin: They were going to tear you apart?

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah, I thought they were going to tear me apart, and lo and behold it was just a few courageous souls that just dove in amongst the mace of the officers and drug me out.

David Yellin: Then what happened to you?

Carol Lynn Yellin: They were some of the sanitation workers?

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah, some of the sanitation workers and the community.

Carol Lynn Yellin: From the community?

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah, the guys on my side. From there...

Carol Lynn Yellin: Did they take you off the street, or how did they get you off?

P.J. Ciampa: They picked me up. By this time I'm just being carried away from, carried into somewhere I don't know.

Carol Lynn Yellin: A store or somewhere.

P.J. Ciampa: I couldn't see well. After a bit, you know, the eyes started seeing, and we went into a store, and the clerk says no water. Then we went into the bank.

David Yellin: They had no water (muffled)?

P.J. Ciampa: That's what they told me. Then we went over to the bank and the bank took me into the restroom and there they washed out my eyes and washed as much of the stuff off of me as possible. And from there we walked over to...

Carol Lynn Yellin: Excuse me, but someone from the bank actually did, or they allowed the workers who had carried you in to...?

P.J. Ciampa: A little of both. Some lady from the bank came into the men's room with a towel or something.

David Yellin: Some lady?

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah, came in there with a towel or something and administered cleansing. From there on I got back out in the air, it felt so good (muffled). We walked to the temple.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Mason Temple?

P.J. Ciampa: No, not to Mason. (muffled)

Carol Lynn Yellin: Clayborn Temple.

P.J. Ciampa: Clayborn Temple, Jackson's (muffled). We went up there and that was my first meeting with Jack.

David Yellin: That was the first time you met him?

P.J. Ciampa: That was the first time.

David Yellin: He had been maced, yeah.

P.J. Ciampa: He had been maced as well. He went in to change (muffled), but we had to go to the Mason Temple then. So, I was impressed by Jack. (muffled) speeches he was so curious he could hardly talk. I was so kind of whooped that I didn't feel like talking. And I get into this car and (muffled) cigar (muffled) that kind of thing. I remember thinking (muffled). And we were at that point heading for Mason Temple, and here were the remnants of our ride. I asked him to please stop. These are the workers that I'd marched with. I am going the rest of the way with them. I got out and marched five or six blocks with them.

David Yellin: Now, when, okay, then you knew you were in something then, right? The next thing that say we might be concerned about is right about that time is when the ministers got together and formed the COME Alliance and so on. How did -- can you recall anything about that? I mean...

P.J. Ciampa: The Alliance?

David Yellin: Yeah.

P.J. Ciampa: Yes, we assigned Jesse Epps as the coordinator of the ministers (muffled). The job that he did best of all was to mediate between the egos of a conglomeration of ministers that big. Then, the (muffled) part of it is, the meetings (muffled) COME was the most erratic time in the wildest places. You know you'd have a 6:00 breakfast or a midnight snack to have a meeting, and after trying negotiations (muffled) all day. To make those meetings I think I went to sleep in a couple of them. When a couple of the ministers started...

David Yellin: They sometimes didn't start on time did they?

P.J. Ciampa: Well, I don't remember when they did. And, you know, bringing together that many ministers with that many problems, getting them together at all was a Herculean task, so the tardiness didn't disturb me. I could understand that more than I could of any other profession.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Now, what I was going to ask is, the famous confrontation as far as the citizens of Memphis was when you told the mayor to shut his big mouth. Had that taken place...?

P.J. Ciampa: Well, that was after about 4, 5, 6 days.

Carol Lynn Yellin: That was before this?

P.J. Ciampa: Oh yes, oh yes, much before this. This...

Carol Lynn Yellin: This was the (muffled).

David Yellin: Yeah that happened somewhere the first week.

P.J. Ciampa: Oh yeah.

(muffled)

Carol Lynn Yellin: What I'm trying to get back to was in fact, Jerry Wurf was just saying that you had begun to receive such really dreadful hate mail in Memphis and phone calls and this sort of thing.

David Yellin: Do you have any of those?

P.J. Ciampa: They're around some place, but I just...

David Yellin: Where? Could we see them?

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah, you're welcome to them. Connie or publications, because I just -- when I got back I just kept, every week the guys would get them (muffled) and get them out of my box.

David Yellin: You mean they're here in your publications department?

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah, our publication departments ought to have them.

David Yellin: Oh boy.

Carol Lynn Yellin: We would love to have those.

David Yellin: That surely will give a picture.

P.J. Ciampa: Let me get the "shut your big mouth" to the mayor comes to how the media can represent a, misrepresent a situation. Every time I would factually back the mayor into a corner, he would give me this, "But Champy you're violating the law." That was, you have that in a matter of a marathon sessions over 15 or 20 of our marathon sessions some 200 times. I had him (muffled) and he'd kick me out by "Champy, but you're violating the law." So I says, "Look, either stop your, cut out your sanctimonious hypocrisy. If I'm violating the law, put me in jail. If I'm not violating the law, shut your big fat mouth and stop arguing."

David Yellin: Hmm, that's completely different.

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah.

Carol Lynn Yellin: That puts it in context.

P.J. Ciampa: (muffled) context. Jerry said, now why would you do that Ciampa? I have never been able to convince Jerry. Until last year, or a year or so ago in Atlanta, he and Sam (muffled). I said, you've had your turn. But that was it.

Carol Lynn Yellin: And you were also dealing with how it was reported by the Memphis papers rather than what actually happened.

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah, and the amazing part in the immediate aftermath (muffled). I think that was on a Thursday, and on a Saturday morning somebody comes in with a tore up sign (muffled). They got "Ciampa Go Home" signs.

David Yellin: Yes, I remember those.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Bumper stickers.

P.J. Ciampa: All over the city. There was quite a few of them.

David Yellin: There was, how did you feel about them?

Carol Lynn Yellin: In fact, we have one of those in our archives.

P.J. Ciampa: You know, it's like the little kid who wets his pants, there's (muffled). You want to laugh about it, but down deep you're embarrassed and you're hurt to tears. And on that one (muffled) the black community (muffled). They had realized what was happening to me, and before that afternoon was up they had me on a radio talk show, and another radio show where the people called in, and they (muffled), "Mr. Ciampa, thank God for you coming here to tell this mayor. You're the best thing that ever happened to us." The whole time midnight Saturday night rolls around, and hell, I didn't have to walk, I just sailed (muffled). It solidified the positions more, but it didn't do anything to solve anything, except salvage my own self respect or ego if you want to put it that way.

David Yellin: Why do you think -- what gave these men...there they were for years taking it; what made them do what they did? What enabled them first of all to go on strike? Maybe they didn't know what they were doing?

P.J. Ciampa: I don't know, you know, and this is only surmised and really opinion, (muffled). It kind of reminded me when I was a kid and my father was in the mines, and he said the hell with it, what have we got to lose. They had gotten to the point of, "what have we got to lose?"

David Yellin: It's just gone as far as it can go.

P.J. Ciampa: That's right. We've lost an election, we have an enemy (muffled). It only gets worse unless we do something, and they went for broke. And when they found that there were resources behind them, the kind of resources a union gives, they were indestructible. There were times after that macing incident (muffled). You know every day we met. The next morning (muffled), will there be 10 men there? Will there be 100 men there? What men are going to have the courage to come after the beating they took yesterday. We went down to the Rubber Workers' hall and they were hanging from the rafters. What's the matter with you? You soft or something? We're ready to go, let's go.

David Yellin: Were they militant?

P.J. Ciampa: They were determined, not militant. You know if you talking about the definition of militant, that militant means that they stood up and they walked in the face of whatever adversity there was, then they were militant. They weren't militant to the type to walk (muffled).

Carol Lynn Yellin: But they mostly weren't young either. They were middle aged.

David Yellin: (muffled)

P.J. Ciampa: (muffled) One of the things early in the strike we decided that the community ought to know what's happening. So we put out a nice, pretty little brochure, because when you see (muffled) everywhere these men took, rang the doorbell and made sure the citizen got it, all kinds of (muffled). I was just (muffled). They did a beautiful job of circulating this. (muffled). But this is the kind of (muffled). But they said no, you said today's the day, today's the day we put em out, and you could see them coming back.

David Yellin: Did you ever meet Mayor Ingram?

Carol Lynn Yellin: Former mayor.

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah, down in the strike (muffled), but he never operated anything other than lip service.

David Yellin: You had never met him before?

P.J. Ciampa: No.

David Yellin: And then during the strike he did come in sometime?

P.J. Ciampa: He mouthed (muffled). He gave some lip service, but insignificant.

David Yellin: Because there had been rumors around, you know, that it was reported that Mayor Ingram wanted to -- was in league with the union and so on.

P.J. Ciampa: Morris, I met him at some motel one night.

David Yellin: He was sheriff.

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah, but he had ran.

David Yellin: Yeah.

P.J. Ciampa: And he (muffled). He called us into this clandestine meeting in a cheap motel, and ran into a reporter while (muffled). And we sat there and he offered nothing except, you know, you shouldn't have done this and you shouldn't have done this. You guys should have worked for me harder. But, an hour or an hour-and-a-half of that. Well thank you kindly (muffled).

Carol Lynn Yellin: And he was the one you hadn't met, you'd met only his lieutenant earlier. You said he'd said \$25,000, I will give you your police chief.

P.J. Ciampa: That's why (muffled) big money in Memphis.

David Yellin: Yeah, I was going to ask you about Memphis, the whole business. Did you find Memphis politics any different than politics elsewhere, and was the city full of intrigue?

P.J. Ciampa: It's more pronounced maybe than most southern cities, but it's the same gut politics that you'll find. I mean, (muffled) characterize a southern city, in any city.

Carol Lynn Yellin: I guess what, really what I think what you're getting at, you've kind of followed through is now the fact that E.H. Crump and his machine, and sort of one man (muffled) in Memphis for so many years, and a lot of people felt that (muffled) moving there from other cities, that this is far less -- they do things differently in Memphis, that they aren't as used to.

P.J. Ciampa: The freedom of movement is an opinion.

Carol Lynn Yellin: And if somebody says this is the way it is, why there isn't as much tendency to question it. So people who are in control maybe feel more (muffled).

P.J. Ciampa: You know, Loeb (muffled) just because he's a lover boy.

(muffled)

David Yellin: He may be right, but I don't know (muffled). But, would you say that part of the problem as a matter of fact was that Loeb was unassailable? In a sense nobody could get to Loeb. Did you feel that? You know, usually somebody in power...

P.J. Ciampa: His friends, and it used to infuriate me so, his friends used to come to me and say, "You know, Loeb is a decent man. He's a good man. He just has a stubborn streak in him that you have to understand." How do you understand a stubborn streak when people are dying? That you don't understand. "You don't understand, you don't know Henry. Henry will do the right thing his way. You've got to trust him."

David Yellin: Of course that's the speech he made to the men when he went there.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Did he ever say to you, "You know I'm a garbage man myself."? Because this is what he used to say -- you know he was once commissioner of public works, before, way back, one of his first offices. And he used to make a great thing that he was a garbage man, and I wondered.

David Yellin: He said it last week.

P.J. Ciampa: The only confrontation we had with Loeb -- Loeb was saying you don't represent the men, I want to talk to those men.

David Yellin: (muffled).

P.J. Ciampa: Okay, Mr. Mayor, let's break this up for lunch. We went out to the Rubber Workers (muffled). "Fellows the name of the game is this, we first march into Loeb (muffled)." Okay now, Mr. Loeb, the men want to see you. Well, very good, very good...All 600 of them, sir?

Carol Lynn Yellin: Was that when the first march took place?

P.J. Ciampa: We welcomed the Rubber Workers (muffled), and before the police were wise. (muffled) one police car, two police cars, 10 police cars, 20 police cars. By the time we got downtown we were bumper to bumper with police cars.

David Yellin: No kidding. And then that's when you took them into the council?

Carol Lynn Yellin: Did the mayor have policemen in his office then? Because later on...

P.J. Ciampa: Oh he always did.

Carol Lynn Yellin: He always did. Even before?

P.J. Ciampa: Oh, there was a plain clothes or something (muffled). When I very first met him there was always a cop with his arms (muffled).

David Yellin: Tell us about that speech, though, I mean that first...

P.J. Ciampa: We went to (muffled); Bill Lucy, myself, I don't remember who else. We said, Mr. Loeb, I didn't represent the men, the men are here, are you ready? (muffled). He said well let's go some place, what about the auditorium. Okay. So they opened up the auditorium. The guys slowly went in the auditorium (muffled). And he says to (muffled), you go first for two minutes, and I'll go second for two minutes. (muffled) I get a little hot on him, as the men were naturally biased. I could say nothing and they'd come screaming with me. And he could be speaking profound statements and they'd boo him. This went back and forth and I saw this.

Carol Lynn Yellin: He wasn't used to this.

P.J. Ciampa: No, he wasn't used to this. And I saw that, you know, here are two whites really debating the fate of this sea of blacks. At that point while he was talking I said Lucy, I'm going to yield. Will you take him. Then he was really put at ease when the great Henry Loeb is put down by a black. I thought it was a real -- at the moment I thought it was a real smart move, but then I thought, all I did was made this mad dog completely red.

Carol Lynn Yellin: As far as Loeb was concerned that was (muffled).

P.J. Ciampa: That was the insult of insults, and Lucy and his glib, his little zingers were just driving the men up the wall and Loeb into the ground. That particular meeting broke up with (muffled). But you know, there was about a 15-second television shot on that. The cameras were running the whole meeting, but about 15 seconds were used of that confrontation (muffled) and it didn't go good for Loeb.

Carol Lynn Yellin: It was interesting to see how it was reported in the paper, too. Do you recall? We've got (muffled).

David Yellin: And we may have a lot of film.

P.J. Ciampa: That was -- the men orderly filed out and got in their cars and went off into different (muffled). Many of us went back to the Rubber Workers. Some of them had cars that they'd pull up in, and the meeting broke up very orderly that time.

David Yellin: Now, do you recall how long you stayed in Memphis?

P.J. Ciampa: I stayed in there (muffled).

David Yellin: Oh you did? You were in and out, or you were there mostly?

Carol Lynn Yellin: Were there other things going on in the union?

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah, there were all kinds of things going on in the union.

Carol Lynn Yellin: But you had to kind of put everything aside.

P.J. Ciampa: Our union took a beating on everything else. I got out of it in the whole period (muffled) about 3 times for a breather on the weekend.

David Yellin: Where would you stay?

P.J. Ciampa: The duck hotel, what is it?

Carol Lynn Yellin: Sheraton.

David Yellin: The Sheraton-Peabody.

Carol Lynn Yellin: With the ducks in the water.

David Yellin: Now did you have any, and we're not, I mean you understand I think what we're trying to do. First we're trying to find some information maybe that nobody else gave us. Did you have any meetings with other people or leaders that you thought or told might be helpful?

P.J. Ciampa: Oh I met with all kind of would-be, (muffled) would-be labor leaders. Most of them were of this philosophy that Henry is a great man, he's just a stubborn man, you have to understand his stubbornness. Then there were a couple of hustlers, I don't remember names too well, that were ready to negotiate on our behalf and bring the settlement to the men.

David Yellin: And these were labor guys?

P.J. Ciampa: Oh yes.

David Yellin: Was labor generally behind you, you feel?

P.J. Ciampa: Well, it's an amazing thing. Ross.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Bill Ross.

P.J. Ciampa: Yes, gave us sort of lip service and submitted only when he just wanted (muffled). Tommy, the rubber worker.

David Yellin: Powell.

P.J. Ciampa: Powell, (muffled). Tommy was a reluctant dragon, but once he got into the swing of things he became, you know, he became an ardent advocate of ours. The guy from BYBEW.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Taylor.

David Yellin: Taylor Blair.

P.J. Ciampa: Taylor Blair. Taylor Blair became very interested and everybody knows the reasons. Taylor Blair saw the utility men would get in his back pocket if we were successful. So it was to his greatest advantage to find help. And he became a good part of (muffled). He was responsible for a couple of sizable contributions. He was responsible for wielding some real money out of his international union (muffled).

Carol Lynn Yellin: This was while the strike was in process.

P.J. Ciampa: Oh yes, this is mixing it up during the process.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Did any other international, I mean did any other union money come in in addition to that? One of the things that -- what kind of funds did you have in your union? This is one of the things we didn't get to with Mr. Wurf. You had organizational funds.

P.J. Ciampa: We had some organizational funds. Our union did not have a strike fund.

Carol Lynn Yellin: That's what I was wondering.

P.J. Ciampa: It got to be the first week or so, \$10,000, \$15,000, \$20,000. The next week it was \$25,000. (muffled) running between \$35,000 and \$50,000 a week just sustaining. A lot of inexperience. Early in the strike, (muffled) says here's \$5000, and yearly payroll for \$1000 a week (muffled). And if you need more (muffled).

Carol Lynn Yellin: Did you do anything like go to your other locals?

P.J. Ciampa: Oh we went to all of our 2000 locals. Jerry Wurf (muffled). Considerable funds came in from that. We wrote to all other international unions after clearing with (muffled). Some responded, some didn't. We wrote to -- wherever we could hustle money up. The funny part of it is (muffled) money used to come in and what's his name at Tri-City, the bank?

David Yellin: Jesse Turner.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Jesse Turner.

P.J. Ciampa: Jesse Turner, you know, an officer of that bank -- he just kept writing checks like it was going out of style. Sometimes the money was in, sometimes it wasn't there, but he kept writing the check on the faith that we would come through. Sometimes we had extra money, sometimes we didn't have enough, but Jesse said, don't worry about that. That, for a conservative business man, was a mark of true greatness in him. I am sorry that he got crapped up by some of our people since then (muffled). That was greatness. We never knew from one week to the next whether we'd be able to sustain the men. A mistake we made is instead of getting a stipend, we started saying we

will take care of your needs, and that almost drove us completely nuts. Basic needs -- (muffled) we will see that nobody in your family is hungry, see that you have a roof over your head, see that nobody suffers for lack of prescriptions medicines, and so forth. And then it started (muffled). You know your financial institutions (muffled).

Carol Lynn Yellin: Do you think this was because you made the mistake and publicly said that?

P.J. Ciampa: I don't know. They played us. We would tell them that the business was (muffled) becoming weaker by the day. We started out by contacting all of them, financial institutions, the utilities, the bank, and everybody else. We said we have a strike (muffled), but we'll try to struggle. Go on with you, I believe in (muffled). Two weeks later you know they sent out 25 eviction notices or shut off the electricity or pick up (muffled). You knew the sentiments in the business community by the way they put the squeeze to us, so we (muffled) and used the ministry very practically as social workers (muffled).

David Yellin: Did you work with the ministers with Reverend Jackson, or who did you particularly work with?

P.J. Ciampa: Jackson, the little guy...

David Yellin: Bell.

P.J. Ciampa: Bell.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Lawson.

P.J. Ciampa: Lawson. The big one, not too bright, but such a devoted...

David Yellin: Starks.

P.J. Ciampa: Starks, yeah. And I can't think of anyone else. But there were the good dozen I call them. I guess.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Billy Kyles.

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah, Billy.

David Yellin: And then there was a Reverend Smith, I can't think of his first name.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Julian Smith.

David Yellin: No, Julian Smith was the bishop. This was the other guys (muffled).

P.J. Ciampa: You listen to Lawson orate around the country and say, gee, I was

shoulder by shoulder with a great one.

David Yellin: He is a great one.

P.J. Ciampa: He's a (muffled).

David Yellin: Well, I will come to that in a little while. What about March 28? Were you in that one? Where Martin Luther King came and the march was broken up?

P.J. Ciampa: Yes, sir. (audio issues) The King thing broke up, and (muffled) it all broke up and here I'm wandering around. And, I have a bad knee. I can't run. By this time canisters of tear gas were dropping all around us. I've got to seek cover, so a couple of guys are hanging onto me and getting me there. Then there was a little truck with a sound system. He says, "Man, you can't run, you get up on the truck." So I sit up in the back of the truck. Ah, this feels good. I look around, and my God, I'm the perfect sitting duck. So then I can't afford to lay down in the (muffled), I thought that would be treading on my manhood or something, total cowardice. I've got to do something. But by this time somebody sensed the same thing in the cab, and says come on in. Announced over the speaker, you know, return to the church, turn around and go back to Clayborn Temple. I did that. And, fortunately I was inside the truck. There was a little midget in there. I don't know why they had him -- for some special publicity reason. He starts crying. I'm quieting him down, and getting -- all of a sudden this policeman comes with his nightstick and is just beating on the window. He just, he was going to get to me. The thing that I had was the sound system (muffled). I said someone get this crazy bastard away from here because he's going to do harm. So (muffled) came and got the policeman away from us. So this poor man's truck window is all shattered.

David Yellin: I'll be darn.

P.J. Ciampa: The man had gone furious. I don't know what he'd have done if he had ever got it completely broken.

Carol Lynn Yellin: And he recognized you?

P.J. Ciampa: Oh yeah.

Carol Lynn Yellin: I mean having had the experience of the macing, you feel that that policeman came directly at you?

P.J. Ciampa: I know he came after me.

Carol Lynn Yellin: He knew it was P.J. Ciampa.

P.J. Ciampa: He knew that son-of-a-bitch was there. You know, there were no questions about it. The (muffled) got him away, and then we went back to the, we

eventually we were just driving a truck through a sea of people. There were (muffled) for a driver, but we eventually got there.

David Yellin: The sound truck, that's right. You see somebody did, you know, this is -- somebody said way back, find out a story about the sound truck.

P.J. Ciampa: They had a sound truck in the middle of a march (muffled).

Carol Lynn Yellin: This is one that had been -- it had been hired as part of the march arrangements?

P.J. Ciampa: Uh huh, for communications in the march.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Yeah, and to give directions as the march moved on, and then when the march went...

P.J. Ciampa: Haywire, we used the sound...

Carol Lynn Yellin: Used it to get them to turn around.

P.J. Ciampa: At that point, because I couldn't run, only because I couldn't run, I wind up in the truck.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Where was this? Was this on Beale, or was it around the corner on Main, do you remember?

P.J. Ciampa: We had made it to Main.

Carol Lynn Yellin: And the sound truck had turned around the corner and was going down Main headed towards City Hall?

P.J. Ciampa: And then trying to ease our way back there, and keep, you know, get the crowd. You know, we're going peacefully. Don't bother with policemen. Go back to the (muffled).

David Yellin: What was your reaction to Martin Luther King getting into this?

P.J. Ciampa: I just, I didn't think it him getting into it, but I thought it made the man whole as far as I am concerned. I feel -- I comment sometimes I feel a little richer for having shared something with him.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Because he, do you feel he shared your concern? Because Poor People's March (muffled) he still came to Memphis?

P.J. Ciampa: He was able to relate to our problem and translate it back to the community and participate, yes. He was a charismatic (muffled) that was so essential to

have at that moment.

David Yellin: Let me go back a little bit. We've heard a lot of people say of him -- you ought to get your say in too, to go back to the origin of the of the strike. You have never been asked, it was called.

P.J. Ciampa: The strike was a spontaneous thing. I never even suspected -- I'd tell you if I'm wrong, because the first I heard of it wasn't T.O. Jones, it was a reporter from one of the Memphis papers that called me and wanted to know if we had authorized and what the issues were. And I told them (muffled), let me call you back, I don't know anything about it. At that point I got a hold of T.O. Jones, but T.O. Jones was my first contact with our people.

David Yellin: You called that morning?

P.J. Ciampa: Somewhere, noonish, 11, between 10 and 12 in the morning.

David Yellin: And you never would have called that strike would you?

P.J. Ciampa: Not in February, sir. I just don't agree you sell snow to Eskimos.

David Yellin: I'm one of those Eskimos.

Carol Lynn Yellin: I want to go back to Dr. King. Once he became publicly involved after that first time he came in and spoke to the big rally at Mason Temple and then went on down to Mississippi, and then was going to come back and then the snowstorm delayed it. But in that period, and having Dr. King involved, did that bring you more support and more attention national (muffled)?

P.J. Ciampa: Oh I think sure, oh sure. It awakened. I think King at that point was a little bit controversial in the black community. When King was identified with our strike and struggle, it renewed some of the lost faith that the black community, and I'm talking about North, South, East, and West, nationally (muffled) community, I think it really awakened our faith in him, our faith in King and focused on at this point the Memphis strike was taking on portions of the Birmingham march.

David Yellin: Now did you ever feel that the strike was taken out of your hands by the ministers, and the involvement of the total black community?

P.J. Ciampa: No. I think there were attempts to by some hustlers, but there were just too many honest, decent people to let that happen. And, oh Reverend Jackson a couple times thought that he ought to make labor policy, and quite tactfully he was told, Reverend you save souls and we'll save jobs, and he'd say that's right (muffled).

David Yellin: And he (muffled).

P.J. Ciampa: He was only trying to do it because maybe he thought we were inept and he is a better thinker, you know. His enthusiasm, his eagerness, his impatience, but then the welfare, the food thing.

David Yellin: The food stamps.

P.J. Ciampa: Not food stamps, the canned foods, the collections and so forth. The warehouse kept shifting, you know, and we had to keep chasing this bandit down, (muffled) devoted a whole morning of preacher talk on how do we get him out of the food. He was trading on it, 2 cans to the workers and 10 cans to the store.

David Yellin: You did find some of that?

P.J. Ciampa: Oh yes. You can't make a public scandal of it, you just wipe him out and move on.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Was this the man who was running the welfare...?

David Yellin: (muffled)

P.J. Ciampa: I'm trying to think of it. The lady in the Chrysler, the Lincoln Continental.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Crenshaw?

P.J. Ciampa: Crenshaw and her buddy. Who was he?

Carol Lynn Yellin: (muffled)

P.J. Ciampa: Pickett?

Carol Lynn Yellin: Yes, O.W. Pickett.

P.J. Ciampa: O.W. Pickett, that creep bastard. Here's a guy that you know really didn't need it (muffled).

David Yellin: He's the one that made the speech.

Carol Lynn Yellin: You're telling me something that I didn't know.

P.J. Ciampa: I'm not (muffled) into that, but she was such a iron follower of his, and you know.

Carol Lynn Yellin: And you see, I think one of the questions that has always (muffled) because they are Ingram people. They were the closest -- they considered the former Mayor Ingram's Negro lieutenants. And, it always clouded things up because they

always appeared, for instance.

P.J. Ciampa: At the inopportune time.

Carol Lynn Yellin: At the, exactly. And they would always make some big statement that they never seemed to be the people who really were around, then when the press was.

P.J. Ciampa: I said when the chips were down, the work was -- they were showing. But I know Pickett, he kept shifting the warehouse for the donations and everything. People were collecting.

David Yellin: Why that's right. He did set up that food thing.

P.J. Ciampa: You're damn right he did. I remember (muffled). Because I was looking for food because I had some hungry people.

David Yellin: Yeah, right. Now, can you tell us a little bit about April 4th, when Dr. King was killed? Where were you, and go from there?

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah, Jesse Epps and I were about 3 blocks from the scene when it came over the radio that King had been shot.

David Yellin: Were you in a car?

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah.

David Yellin: Just riding, or?

P.J. Ciampa: We were going back to the hotel for some meeting.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Back to the Sheraton-Peabody?

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah, yeah. We just turned around and headed for the...

David Yellin: Lorraine.

P.J. Ciampa: Lorraine. We had gotten there before the police had started setting up, you know, the protection. We got up there and they were loading, we thought then the patient, but really the body into the ambulance.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Was the Fire Department and Police?

P.J. Ciampa: I don't remember. I think it was, but I don't remember. (muffled) that kind of confusion.

David Yellin: And you got that (muffled)?

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah, that's but you know -- really I served no -- neither one of us served any useful purpose, except to say, "I saw them loading the body," you know.

David Yellin: And then what did you do? What did you think your first?

P.J. Ciampa: We talked to some of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference people who were in an absolute state of shock, infuriation. Jesse Jackson wanted to, you know, wanted to get his torch and start burning the city, you know. I just had to keep -- we played the role of saying, "no, he may not be dead. He (muffled). Time will tell. This isn't the time to (muffled)." Shortly after that then that evening there was supposed to be a big rally, a meeting at the Mason Temple. We decided we'd better get out to the Mason Temple and tell the people that (muffled) and they'd better get home (muffled). We got out there and the people we were telling that to were telling us to go to hell because it was their night for revenge (muffled) just constant. I was very confused to (muffled).

David Yellin: Now those people who told you that, were those the workers, or just general?

P.J. Ciampa: General. By this time you didn't know a worker from a friend. They were all -- the community was so solidified and we were all one. It didn't make any difference whether you were laid off, fired, or whatever it is.

David Yellin: Did you feel that after Dr. King -- were you in any of the negotiations after Dr....?

P.J. Ciampa: Yes.

David Yellin: With Donelson?

P.J. Ciampa: In fact, I attended all the negotiations, except when Jerry came in he handled them. Then, after the King thing, I remember this time the governor, and Jerry told you that whole story. There was this question of (muffled) subcommittee, and the hotel across the street from the city hall.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Claridge?

David Yellin: The one that's no longer in existence I guess.

P.J. Ciampa: (muffled). By this time the palace guard around Loeb was, you know, two cops at every door, and two cops in the hallway, and two cops sitting in the room with him, you know, they really, really -- he really had (muffled). But, the night -- I remember very distinctly the morning before the big memorial march.

David Yellin: Monday.

P.J. Ciampa: Because I remember very distinctly (muffled) got back to the hotel, took a shower, got some breakfast, and then went out to the march line. By the time all these (muffled) I'm sitting on that darn stage going to sleep, you know, in a highly emotional and charged thing, I was just exhausted. Sitting next to me sort of propping me up was Bill Kircher from the AFL-CIO. (muffled) just completely, just totally exhausted.

Carol Lynn Yellin: And that was a very tense situation. All those windows around. I know that you were very aware.

P.J. Ciampa: I'd wake up and I'd feel like I wanted to scream or be part of it you know, and Walter Reuther came with his \$50,000 check. I wanted to make sure that Walter didn't pull out here's a check folks. So, I staged T.O. who was the president, and some other guys, and the minute he said the check (muffled). Of course Walter says, "For God's sake I want to make a speech here." (muffled) but T.O. had the check (muffled). Money motivates you.

David Yellin: You'd have a bouncy check on (muffled).

Carol Lynn Yellin: Get that into Jesse Turner's bank.

P.J. Ciampa: (muffled), but as soon as that (muffled) like a drug addict.

Carol Lynn Yellin: When you look back on all that period, I mean what do you think it meant at that time, or what do you think of...? I mean to your life?

P.J. Ciampa: Really Memphis is no different. Memphis -- I would live in Memphis tomorrow. If I would live in any southern city, Memphis would be no different than Atlanta or Jacksonville, or Birmingham or any other place. I think that Memphis is going (muffled) the same as all of our cities. The whole change (muffled) system, and service, and responsibility to the community. You know, you go to Detroit. I would 10 times sooner want to live in downtown Memphis than I would want to live in downtown Detroit. (muffled), so really Memphis did leave scars on me for a while. I -- a lot of emotion and a lot of me in there. But, it could have been any place with a conservative dog, any place else. The Loeb types are not strangers in the public society.

Carol Lynn Yellin: How did you place the city council? (muffled) I mean did you find any of them that were easy to work with, or that you felt could have saved (muffled).

P.J. Ciampa: There were a couple of them. I can't remember the one guy's name. The guy that marched.

David Yellin: Heavysset fellow?

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Jerred Blanchard.

P.J. Ciampa: Blanchard, who is not an ally of ours, but who is fundamentally an honest man, tried to pick out his conscience instead of being biased. A couple of them. The same thing happened to me in Atlanta where we were sort of struggling at a city council meeting, and (muffled) march back and (muffled) brought his, you know 400 policemen, 400 or 500 policemen, (muffled). We went back in and had some more sessions and they said, well we can march back to police it. One of the opposition councilmen, (muffled) says and I'm going to walk to see that nothing happens. He walked from city hall back to (muffled) about a 20 block march.

David Yellin: He probably remembered Memphis.

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah.

David Yellin: You know the same way that Memphis was a little wary because they remembered Little Rock. When you know other things I guess.

P.J. Ciampa: Each of them make a little bit of the (muffled).

David Yellin: Well, what do you think the climate of the country is towards the movement for better understanding?

P.J. Ciampa: Better understanding of the workers' problem?

David Yellin: Yeah.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Well, I think what you're saying is what (muffled). Did Memphis have an impact on the growth of this union specifically? Do you think that the dramatic events in Memphis made it easier for you to go on into the next place, particularly in the South?

P.J. Ciampa: Well, you know the funny part of it, we thought that. I put together a task force. And the first place we wound up was in Montgomery. And Montgomery, the old man there was quietly and effectively shut us out. He cut a deal with the ILA and a couple of other union (muffled). After 3 months we quietly folded our tent and moved out of Memphis.

David Yellin: Out of Birmingham.

P.J. Ciampa: Out of Mobile.

David Yellin: Mobile.

P.J. Ciampa: But then later that year we organized Miami Beach (muffled) three week strike. There was another talk of a (muffled) mayor. Mayor that was a lawyer in New

York, retired, made mayor down there and...

David Yellin: He beat Roosevelt didn't he? I think he defeated Roosevelt.

P.J. Ciampa: (muffled). And then he did. He (muffled) by the pressures of the hotels and the business community, who couldn't stand the heat. And there I was able to pick up another (muffled), the elderly people, the senior citizens. You know, some of these old orders, ex-labor (muffled) that had been around and didn't retire for 5 or 6 years. We got them to help. We committed to address the city council and the mayor. How could a mayor tell an 82-year-old man shut up and sit down. And he's act like Lawson would, you know.

David Yellin: Plus the guy probably couldn't hear him.

P.J. Ciampa: (muffled), but I think, you know, since then Washington, D.C. -- you know Washington, D.C. is every bit as corrupt as Memphis. The cracker (muffled) superintendent. The black mayor (muffled) figuratively speaking. Racism prevails just as rampant in this city as it does down there. Up here we have a little more culture masquerading it.

David Yellin: So in a sense, what you're saying is that in some ways you are, and I use the word carefully, kind of inexperienced about this, and Memphis was kind of your first...

P.J. Ciampa: It matured a lot of us. It matured a lot -- and Jerry Wurf had strikes in New York and (muffled) you still walk away from it. I have had a few strikes in the private sector and the public sector, but that one taxed all of our wits and all of our friends' wits, and we didn't get a settlement until King paid the sacrifice, and the president and everybody else at that point got interested.

David Yellin: But since then you've learned that this seems to be a pattern that, through the south certainly.

Carol Lynn Yellin: (muffled) this idea of an alliance with the civil rights bosses -- has this worked anywhere else?

P.J. Ciampa: Sometimes, depending upon who (muffled) -- O.W. Picketts, there's too many of them around, and they have infiltrated these civil rights movements so badly. You know, you take (muffled) in Atlanta. Masquerade civil rights organizations, but he's a hired gun and that's really all he is, and you're a little sick of them (muffled).

Carol Lynn Yellin: Plus the fact when you (muffled) the fact that the black separatists then came in right about that same time and the idea that the black people would have to work by themselves in trying to get together with (muffled).

P.J. Ciampa: That's a very (muffled). I have seen some place where I thought that the

black separatism is a (muffled), that they in some place they tried it and were successful, and some places they tried it and the same thing happened to it as what happened in most of the movements, the leadership devoured it, or (muffled). I suspect that that's going to fall by the same way. You know we're going to have either an integrated situation or we're in for difficulty. Really, nobody (muffled) whether it's individual or group. The quicker they learn, the better off they're going to be. I don't think the hot shots (muffled).

David Yellin: Well, you know, in some ways I get a feeling that also what you seem to be saying is if tomorrow say that Memphis hadn't happened, but if tomorrow what happened in Memphis you would still run into troubles. It may not be the same kind.

P.J. Ciampa: Yes, we'd run into big troubles. I think tomorrow in Memphis, in the Memphis it is now, we would sift it out. We know where the genuine gold is, and where the tin plate is, and we can deal with it accordingly.

David Yellin: All is not gold that glitters, however.

P.J. Ciampa: Remember all that we had to start with was a cheap little hustler, philanderer, and everything else -- everything that was immoral was T.O. Jones.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Well, why was he able to do what he did you think?

P.J. Ciampa: Because Ingram gave a license to him.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Is that right.

P.J. Ciampa: Ingram let him live on (muffled). Ingram let him hustle those workers for a few bucks so that he could go down to Ingram's office or somebody's office once every two months and say, Mr. Ingram I've got to make a showing because I've got to collect some dues.

Carol Lynn Yellin: Do you think that the fact that it was a new city administration and T.O. Jones didn't have his thing worked out with the new city administration made him nervous about?

P.J. Ciampa: Oh, he was definitely nervous about the whole thing but I think...

Carol Lynn Yellin: He wanted to get it straight with the new city administration.

P.J. Ciampa: Yep, that's why he went in aiming for meetings and how he learned (muffled).

Carol Lynn Yellin: That's why he tried to get together with Morris, too.

P.J. Ciampa: I am the T.O. Jones, and I will work with you if you work with me. But

in addition to that, when these two men were killed, the thing got away from him, that he just had to run to stay out in front. Then we had to keep goosing him to keep him out in front.

David Yellin: But all through this are the men. Are they involved with this duplicity?

P.J. Ciampa: Some.

David Yellin: Some.

P.J. Ciampa: Some. There are some phonies in the ranks. I remember one guy. He had a wife, second wife and one child or two children. And it got to be at the end, don't touch me, just tell me how much. He'd never come for anything big, either \$5 for medicine, \$12 for..., \$6 for shoes, but you know 4 or 5 times a week he'd come. But he was an absolute hustler. But you know what the crazy part of it is, as he was a hustler (muffled). The face remains so vivid, but the name slips. We'd send him on a mission and forget it. It would be accomplished. You can just never give him too difficult a mission, but if you send him on a mission he could accomplish it. He had absolute candor that way.

David Yellin: Now then, you're not overly romantic about the men.

P.J. Ciampa: If I've left that impression because I've said there's a few hustlers, but the main stream of the men, one rotten apple will make the whole barrel smell, and that's just about the equivalent, but to the whole mainstream of the men yes I am quite romantic about it, because I will never forget after about a week. (muffled) I said Jerry, you cannot understand until you sit there and look into these men's eyes. I saw these men's eyes a week ago with suspicion, a few days ago was a maybe, but right now these men's eyes just show me complete devotion. That was before any of the big rumbles. That was reading them right. Through the rumbles they've proved that I was reading what I was looking.

David Yellin: So in other words you could say...

P.J. Ciampa: Well, what I want to say is that Loeb (muffled) mainstream of the man is something that I saw there, but something I haven't seen since a strike when I was a kid.

Carol Lynn Yellin: That's interesting.

David Yellin: These men were fighting, were -- fighting maybe not even the word -- hankering for, yearning for the dignity. They had come to the end of the road as far as anything else is concerned.

Carol Lynn Yellin: It's interesting what you say, because I think it's been recorded not just with us, but I think it's even recorded in some of the books about Martin Luther King, that when he came in and after he had been to that first meeting at Mason Temple

with the (muffled) driving him to the airport, he couldn't get over it. He says it's like the early days of the movement.

P.J. Ciampa: It is, not only the needs. Guys say, Ciampa, can you find \$10 because they have taken my washing machine, or (muffled). That's, you know that's not like the general hustler who says how much do I get, what do I get, where's my money? I'd give the guy somehow a duplicate check. He'd come back and say Champ, this is the second check this week, (muffled) two checks this week. He says I know there's somebody that might need it worse than I do. I've got enough to each. Some guys would say, Champ I don't need it, my wife is working. Where the hell do you find that kind of moral these days? Basic decency, those are the things that just...

David Yellin: I mean there are enough of those that this was not...

P.J. Ciampa: Not only enough, but that's the overwhelming majority.

Carol Lynn Yellin: (muffled).

P.J. Ciampa: The O.W. Picketts (muffled) that's a handful out of 1000.

Carol Lynn Yellin: You said something about (muffled) we didn't get at the beginning. You said labor when you were a kid. Tell us about -- did you come from a labor family, or?

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah, my father was out of the coal mines.

David Yellin: Where?

P.J. Ciampa: Pennsylvania.

David Yellin: Where in Pennsylvania?

P.J. Ciampa: Saxton, Huntington County, up near Bedford.

David Yellin: That's the hard coals.

P.J. Ciampa: Soft coal.

David Yellin: Oh, I get the state. The West?

P.J. Ciampa: South, South Central.

David Yellin: Oh the south part.

P.J. Ciampa: East of Altoona.

David Yellin: Yes, yes.

P.J. Ciampa: (muffled)

Carol Lynn Yellin: Was he in the United Mine Workers?

P.J. Ciampa: Yeah (muffled).

David Yellin: (muffled)

(audio issues -- audio very soft)

P.J. Ciampa: You know the other thing I remember a few days later a committee of three men came with some baskets. They cried, my mother cried. I said what the hell (muffled)? That's my first strike.

David Yellin: Where did you, how did you start working?

P.J. Ciampa: Well, from there I went up to Pittsburgh and got involved (muffled) shop store of the United Steel Workers (muffled). I played around in construction after that for a while, and that wasn't really my cup of tea. I went (muffled) UAW was organized and (muffled). I don't know the educational processes (muffled).

Carol Lynn Yellin: How did you get to the AFSCME?

P.J. Ciampa: Because (muffled) had a little difference of opinion and Walter had the marbles.

Carol Lynn Yellin: But you got some of the marbles back in Memphis.

David Yellin: (muffled)

P.J. Ciampa: Maybe part of that. (muffled) I remember in the early days when he was shot I wanted to get the guy that shot him and kill him, or shoot him. A few years later (muffled), and we sort of became separated. When (muffled) were killed (muffled).

(AUDIO ISSUES--VERY SOFT, FAST SPEAKING 4 minutes left of tape)

END OF RECORDING