

SS131.mp3

Judy Schultz- You have got one of the meetings that you want to ask about?

Joan Beifuss- Yeah I would like to go back, the or come forward after the march broke up into violence then there were meetings again with the white ministers, were you involved in any of those.

Henry Starks- Yeah.

Joan Beifuss- It was a meeting in which the statement came from Bishop Durrick and Bishop Finger and Bishop Vandross.

Henry Starks- At St, Mary's?

Joan Beifuss- No this was I think the day after the mini riot there was a meeting with the ministers and then the 3 bishops issued that statement that came out.

Henry Starks- Yes I (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- Ok then on Monday the ministerial association had their regular the Monday before Dr. King was killed the ministerial association had their regular meeting were you involved in that at all?

Henry Starks- Yeah at (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- No this would be Rabbi Wax's.

Henry Starks- No no I wasn't involved in it of course I know the meeting was going on.

Joan Beifuss- Now..

Henry Starks- I knew the meeting was going on at that particular time that is what you have reference to.

Joan Beifuss- yeah now we had understood there were attempts made to get ministerial alliance and the ministerial association together in a joint meeting.

Henry Starks- Yes.

Joan Beifuss- What was happening to that? That had not yet taken place?

Henry Starks- No no, It hadn't but prior to then we had some communication about Wax and I want we had discussed the possibility of the two bodies meeting together, a joint meeting the first meeting that was set up failed to materialize because of certain conditions. He pointed to a committee to meet with a committee I appointed to set the time and try to work the (muffled) such an affair where the atmosphere is charged with tension you wonder what (muffled). You took these steps but somehow his committee didn't materialize. So therefore the meeting itself

was called off. But then when he came to a regular session which I was at Monday they sat about making it possible to really meet and we had discussed it previously to this meeting and if it could be arranged then we would set a meeting up at Christian church, which I went on and secured the church and we set the meeting up for the following day which we did have this meeting, this joint meeting.

Joan Beifuss- now when was the joint meeting then?

Henry Starks- The following that Tuesday morning if I am not mistaken. It was a meeting following the white minster's alliance meeting.

Judy Schultz- like they met on Monday and then you had the joint meeting on Tuesday?

Henry Starks- I am trying to get my dates together, I am not quite sure but I know the next meeting that we had the bodies had, they were joint meetings. They might have been that Tuesday, might have been some other day but the next meeting, the joint meeting that we had (muffled) that particular meeting.

Judy Schultz- Would that have been on Wednesday....

Joan Beifuss- I am confused on Wednesday there was that meeting at St. Mary's, that was when Ralph Jackson was there.

Judy Schultz- And they were working on a statement which the two groups which the two groups were going to consider.

Joan Beifuss- March to the mayor and it was voted down eventually.

Henry Starks- Oh well that was the day after King, that was after King was assassinated.

Joan Beifuss- No it was the day before. And they in fact did march the day after King was assassinated but it had been discussed the day before in the meeting of the white ministers.

Henry Starks- Oh yes see this was, no I don't, I am somewhat hazy to the details of this particular moment. I remember there was a meeting.

Joan Beifuss- Well tell what you know.

Henry Starks- Well now I would like to get the facts straight because see it will refresh my memory.

Judy Schultz- Well on Wednesday afternoon the day before Dr. King was assassinated the ministerial association had a meeting and at that time they were talking about what they could do again to try to help resolve the strike and they talked about growing up a resolution which the two groups the ministerial association and the ministerial alliance could meet together and discuss and possibly co-sponsor and present to the mayor asking him to resolve the strike. And

so some people were appointed from the ministerial association to work on that. Bill Aldridge was one of them and wasn't Malcolm Blackburn or someone else. To help draw up this resolution.

Joan Beifuss- And I was under the impression that they were working with your group to draw up this resolution that was Wednesday afternoon the day before Dr. King was killed and then there was a meeting the following Thursday, the next morning....

Judy Schultz- At a Christian church on Mississippi.

Joan Beifuss- Father Greenspun was at it.

Henry Starks- No let me um....

(muffled)

Henry Starks- Well I don't know I am trying to get this in my mind you see we had a joint meeting that was a meeting of concern with some members of the minister's alliance at Lawson's church Jim Lawson. Which was the same day that king came in because King spoke to this meeting, he came out to say a few words.

Joan Beifuss- now is this the black minister's or was this whiter and black?

Henry Starks- And some white black and white.

Joan Beifuss- Oh that is the morning.

Henry Starks- See black and white. No, we had enough of the gut to get out there and instruct a way to get out there and voice a unified position on the sanitation crisis. This meeting between the two groups took place at Christian church, Mississippi boulevard Christian church.

Joan Beifuss- That was the next morning right?

Henry Starks- That was...I am hazy on the date but I presided tot his particular meeting.

Judy Schultz- It was a morning meeting was it not?

Henry Starks- It was a morning meeting.

Joan Beifuss- The morning, the day of Dr. King being killed?

Henry Starks- Well see not he (muffled) Dr. King spoke was also the morning.

Joan Beifuss- Yeah that was Wednesday he flew right in and came to the meeting at Centenary.

Henry Starks- That's right Centenary.

Joan Beifuss- Ok now could you tell me what that meeting at Centenary was like what was Dr. King talking about at that meeting.

Henry Starks- Well he didn't get a chance to do much talking at this particular meeting you see. Because there were some factors that were mitigating, or mitigating circumstances at this moment. I just can't (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- Well the injunction they are waiting for the injunction to be served.

Henry Starks- That's it. In fact the that was part of this. Therefore they had to be careful as to what was said and so forth. I don't think he, in fact I don't think he spoke really at this particular meeting. Maybe said a word or two but not too much because of the injunction. He hadn't seen an injunction.

Joan Beifuss- Well then why was this meeting held?

Henry Starks- This meeting was really held I think to try to give him an opportunity to speak to us and for him to be come oriented to the particular problems of the community.

Joan Beifuss- Now again not to label this black white thing but was this a meeting of negro ministers with a few white ministers there?

Henry Starks- Yes white and negro there, press and all, but you didn't have too many white people there it really was together to begin with it was really together the negro (muffled) were together that is what it really was.

Joan Beifuss- Ok.

Henry Starks- But the time interval was a factor. Because you send your telegrams or you send your letters, all of them didn't get them in time to get here because there was something that was, because of urgency. It was something that happened on the spur of the moment so to say get these men together you see.

Joan Beifuss- did SCLC staff members speak at that meeting?

Henry Starks- Well we didn't have too many people there, we had a group of people but there were not representative of the numerical strength of the clergy and you didn't have too many speaking, you have too much expression, you had many expressions from many people you see. Because you had also (muffled) injunction and didn't know what it contained (muffled). We had a number of factors in the picture to keep it from becoming a full blown affair.

Joan Beifuss- Ok then that afternoon then the ministerial association met and you were not at that meeting?

Henry Starks- No.

Joan Beifuss- And then the following morning there was the meeting at the Mississippi boulevard Christian church.

Henry Starks- Right.

Joan Beifuss- Ok now what was that meeting?

Henry Starks- Well this was the meeting when we (muffled) really got together to see if we could come to some common understanding. We were really trying to create community among the black and white clergy and to have community you must have a common understanding, I mean an understanding, a common understanding and a common commitment and a common fate. You see that was what we were trying to create.

Joan Beifuss- Now was that meeting in fact this long awaited joint meeting between the...

Henry Starks- Yes, the long awaited meeting.

Joan Beifuss- So how did it go?

Henry Starks- Well I really don't think we accomplished too much other than the fact that we each got the chance to really understand, I mean each got a chance to see the others position. We had those who didn't see much value in the meeting and we had those who were hoping that something would come out of the meeting.

Joan Beifuss- How many people, was this a large meeting?

Henry Starks- Oh pretty large, it was pretty fairly, it was attended fairly well.

Joan Beifuss- Did you have good representation black and white?

Henry Starks- We had a pretty good representation but consider that (muffled) of the religious community we didn't have much but you had influential, I think we had quite a few people there. Of course now one of the things that was really noticeable in this whole crisis was the absence of the Baptist denomination with the exception of one or two clergymen, two. Southern Baptist denomination.

Joan Beifuss- Can you recall, can you name me some of the ministers who were at that first (muffled) meeting.

Henry Starks- Well if you name them I can tell you.

Joan Beifuss- Ok, Brooks Ramsey?

Henry Starks- I think Brooks Ramsey was there if he wasn't, I think he was there I am not sure.

Joan Beifuss- Reverend Lawson at that meeting?

Henry Starks- Yes.

Joan Beifuss- Reverend Jackson?

Henry Starks- Yes.

Judy Schultz- Middlebrooke?

Henry Starks- Yes, Middlebrooke was there if he was not, I think he was there maybe he might have come in late, I don't know for sure but very likely he would have been.

Judy Schultz- What was the first Methodist....

Joan Beifuss- Roy Williams, Dr. Williams.

Henry Starks- He was there.

Joan Beifuss- ok then it was pretty much the people who had been...

Henry Starks- Involved the while.

Joan Beifuss- Now as there an attempt made at that meeting to draw up some kind of a statement about the strike?

Henry Starks- Yes, (muffled) have a meeting of the minds as to what could be, what actions could be taken . Which never because of a thing never crystallized.

Joan Beifuss- Well you knew though that they had voted on Wednesday afternoon to march or to go to see the mayor on Friday.

Henry Starks- You mean in....

Joan Beifuss- The minister's association was going. Now if we got it straight from Dean Demmick it wasn't necessarily that they had decided on Friday but that what they had done at the Wednesday afternoon meeting and Dean Demmick was reporting this, he was saying that they had , Wednesday afternoon had talked about having presenting some kind of resolution or asking the mayor presenting something as a coordinating, or co-sponsored attempts to say to the mayor that we the ministers, all the ministers black and white want you to solve the strike and there was a committee appointed at that Wednesday afternoon meeting from the white ministers to work on some resolution in the impression was that everyone who has told us about that thought that there was a corresponding committee appointed by the ministerial alliance to work with the ministerial association on wording the resolution and that supposedly there was supposed to be some action taken maybe just in discussion on Thursday morning maybe just over the resolution but nobody could come to grips with the resolution so they were going to come back and work on it again Thursday night and then Friday morning another meeting had already been set up for the group to meet at St. Mary's cathedral but it was supposed to be concerning the resolutions some kind of statement to the mayor and at the last minute of course changed the whole picture and the reason for the meeting but they had the memorial service anyways that Friday morning at St. Mary's and then immediately talked about...

Henry Starks- Yes you know you can bring back some of the details that had really slipped my mind. All of this we did take some action but the thing that reading the big statement was the fact was it never crystallized in light of the assassination.

Judy Schultz- Everything was just...

Henry Starks- Because the things that stands out I my mind is the assembly at St. Mary's after the assassination.

Joan Beifuss- Did you go to the Lorraine motel at all on Thursday when Dr. King was there?

Henry Starks- Yes I mean I went there immediately after the assassination, you see we were discussing certain things earlier.

Joan Beifuss- I mean you had been there earlier in the day?

Henry Starks- No not the Lorraine see because, you see I recognized that sanitation men out on the streets. Without any guidance would become susceptible to maybe police brutality, to further dangers. And there were some of us who were always concerned with being with them during these demonstrations and we had to keep them going. So I was one who spoke out for the union and then they came back to the area where the marshals and these men and to clear them on the daily rounds.

Joan Beifuss- Oh yes.

Henry Starks- And dramatizing this. And when I came in see we were getting ready and planning for a mass meeting that night and so I came in and I walked in and they told me that my friend, my daughter told me that Dr. King had been assassinated and I couldn't believe it.

Joan Beifuss- Did you r daughter know he was dead then or....

Henry Starks- _No she told me he had been shot that is what she told me and I didn't believe it. She said Dr. King has been shot and I didn't believe it. So she told me, yes he has really been shot. And I decided then that I would go to the motel, see I had been there before. (muffled)

Joan Beifuss- Did you get into the motel or had they already cordoned off the area.

Henry Starks- They had cordoned off the area but of course I got in because I knew Lux and some other from marching. I had no trouble being identified.

Joan Beifuss- Where did you go to in the Lorraine?

Henry Starks- I went there to see exactly what had happened and to talk to some of his staff members. Williams....

Joan Beifuss- And they still not know he was dead at this point?

Henry Starks- No they didn't know he was dead at this particular point, the news came later that he died.

Joan Beifuss- where were you then where you in the lobby...

Henry Starks- At the motel.....well we were sitting there at the table at the dining hall while he was doing some calling, one of his staff members we were talking about it. I was in the lobby right by myself for awhile, you see I was really trying to get myself together. I went back in....

Joan Beifuss- Well did the hospital call the hotel and notify his staff that he was dead or did you hear it over the television or how did you?

Henry Starks- Well it appears that they were in contact with the hospital almost constantly it appears that way.

Joan Beifuss- And so they got the word that way.

Henry Starks- Yeah it appears. YOU see some of the staff members were with King at the time when he passed, they called.

Joan Beifuss- I know it was very difficult were you sitting at a table then in the dining room when someone came in and said he had died?

Henry Starks- I can't, at this moment I just...I don't know, I really don't know whether I was sitting at the table or whether I was talking to someone or whether I was out here in the vestibule or the lobby sitting to myself I just don't know.

Joan Beifuss- Can you, as I said I know it is difficult can you describe at all the reaction that went through the motel? I assume it was transmitted one person told another person who told another person.

Henry Starks- Oh (muffled) everyone knew it was electrifying news and it was an atmosphere of shock and disbelief and really a spirit of dejection. It appears that if tragedy (muffled) on a man. Of course there was a deep sense of feeling of togetherness with him and his group among those that were with him.

Joan Beifuss- What did you do then?

Judy Schultz- When you found out he was dead? Did you stay there at the motel or did you go home?

Henry Starks- Well I went home and (muffled) happened. Knowing from past experiences there would be people caught and they were coming to a mass meeting that particular night. So I went over to share the responsibility seeing that these people got in without being arrested and (muffled) the crowd began to get ugly the mood when they found out when he was really dead the mood got rather ugly.

Joan Beifuss- Is this in Mason Temple?

Henry Starks- Yeah Mason Temple, see I went over to Mason Temple of course as they gathered.

Joan Beifuss- Were there people coming to the temple that did not know that he had been shot.

Henry Starks- Well I don't know if they were coming because they didn't know he had been shot , I think they did but they were thinking we were going to still have the meeting but they didn't know about the curfew. So they were coming and of course we felt that this would happen and the mood was getting sort of ugly and all these people who were (muffled) I put a couple of them in my car and carried them on back to the hotel and carried my family on back to the hotel.

Joan Beifuss- Who was that, do you know who the white people were who went there?

Henry Starks- Brother Paisley, he was one of the brothers, Champa, I got them off, got them out, they were there and I carried them back to the hotel and I carried my wife and child home. And then I made it my business to get these young people who were coming in, I carried some of them home that night later on (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- Was anyone on the stage at Mason Temple in charge of this group of people who were coming in?

Henry Starks- Well I had been presiding (muffled) you see what I would do is I would usually get someone else to preside, I would (muffled) I would get somebody else to reside.

Joan Beifuss- Had Dr. King been scheduled to speak that night?

Henry Starks- Yes. He was scheduled to speak that night.

Joan Beifuss- And mood of he people was it anger?

Henry Starks- Well I guess you would say frustration or anger, you see it gave an opportunity to those who had no confidence and faith in law and order to begin with who have no faith in the justice of the white man from a (muffled). Well being his intent they said well do I (muffled) a peaceful protest where nonviolence will get you no where and with the killing of King the apostle of peace the apostle of this nonviolence was dead and it gave those people an opportunity to say see here this is where they get you and this is not the way you see. And of course in a moment of frustration people who would not other wise give themselves to such activities would find themselves silent with this type of thinking and it was this thing that we were trying to prevent.

Joan Beifuss- Could you tell how you yourself felt personally?

Henry Starks- Oh I really felt awful. I felt the world had lost one of its greatest citizens. And that the united states had lost one of its greatest apostles of peace and

one who had the vision to see that this nation could not exist as two communities, one black and one white hostile you see. That he was a man who could see down the cards of time and see the road we were taking that would lead us too almost a city (muffled) stance you see. And he was trying to do something about that. And I really felt bad and I felt awful that here was a life given to peaceful means and pursuit of activities to bring about this togetherness, this historic and by the very thing he denounced violence.

Joan Beifuss- Were you yourself angry at that point?

Henry Starks- No I never gave myself to anger, I gave myself to I guess you could say I really felt so terrible that I wished that thing had never occurred. That goes to the sanitation strike had never occurred where such a valuable life would be snapped out. I was really I guess you could say I was overwhelmed with grief to get at matters.

Joan Beifuss- Well then the meeting that was held the next morning at St. Mary's did someone call and tell you to come to that?

Henry Starks- That is what I am trying to get now how we got there. There is a group of us there, how did we get there?

Joan Beifuss- They had then a memorial service in church....did you participate in that?

Henry Starks- Yes I had participated to some extent and of course I was part of the ministerial alliance. I was asked for observations I mean to say something in this moment but really a constructive course and we are (muffled) earlier you see was and coming from me was at this moment I think beyond the apprehension of those who were involved to a large extent and involved maybe to the (muffled). So therefore I thought it isn't the time for me to talk, this is the time for the white citizens to speak out against this type of thing not for me you know my position, I have already spoke. Last time you were to speak up and I think you could do it and some of them did at this particular moment.

Joan Beifuss- Let me ask you this, did you even want to spend the next morning with white ministers?

Henry Starks- Well see it is this thing that I know and I can feel it deeper than I can even give expression too. That if it ever gets to the place where I cannot spend any time with a white ministers or he can't spend anytime with me or we can never communicate that we are getting on grounds that are so dangerous that it will destroy both of us. It will destroy this country, it will destroy that which we hold sacred and dear. And it will destroy me as an effectible apostle of my Lord because I must under any circumstances preach love and whatever I dare not to forgive I must forgive and I also must do one thing. The painful thing about life is that when your trust is betrayed you must keep on trusting. You see you cannot become bitter and turn your back and fail the trust. Because when you do really life ends for you there.

As this thing, see I never got to a place and I hope I never get to the place where I can never communicate with anybody and mourn to be in their company. I felt awful bad about it but I didn't feel maybe like some of my brothers and I have never felt that way.

Joan Beifuss- Reverend Starks were you the minister that thought that Veron went down on his knees went down in front of and said my black brother forgive me or something.

Henry Starks- Yes I was. Yes. We had talked earlier about a lot of things so he and I were on a number of committees. I imagine he was a part of the collective guilt that all of us feel.

Joan Beifuss- Ok what did you say to him then do you have any idea?

Henry Starks- Oh I don't.

Joan Beifuss- Ok so then you all marched to the mayor I think we probably have that.

Henry Starks- There were some things see earlier we had discussed certain things and Father Veron, no father Veron, I am thinking about, no Father Veron I am thinking about (muffle). Father Veron (muffled).

Judy Schultz- You mean Father Greenspun?

Henry Starks- no I am not talking about him. No Father Veron and I hadn't discussed anything but I was there when he did that, no I was thinking about another minister and catholic priest.

Joan Beifuss- Yeah but Father Veron did...

Henry Starks- I know I met him...

Joan Beifuss- That was you who he...

Henry Starks- I don't know what he chanted to me I just said, where I had to be standing symbolized...

Joan Beifuss- yeah right. No I didn't, I understand that. (muffled).

Henry Starks- Well I was elated in one way and appalled in another way later to see those who had the courage like Dean Demmick and others, my white brothers to march down to the mayor's office, Rabbi Wax and those. And then I was appalled at a number of clergymen who didn't have the courage to do it. Who had for reasons as known to me business elsewhere (muffled) but yet who would come to...(Tape End)