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Joan Beifuss- Tape 2 Downing Pryor. I will start this off with Mr. Pryor with one just proposing a theory for you to tear down or oppose. That someone it seems to me could make a case for the fact that what happened here as far as the events leading up to the assassination including the strike and all of these events it was a case of the events overtaking the people in almost every case, whether it was the union people, the city government people, the negro ministers, that it is almost like a truck out of control.

Downing Pryor- It is a runaway situation.

Joan Beifuss- Yes, and each person thinking that the other person may have more control over the situation than he does. Now I propose this simply for you to comment on and it is a theory.

Well let's say after two weeks, proposition was offered that if the union could collect the dues through the credit union, this was agreeable with the union. At approximately 2 weeks. Also that they would go back to work with 10 cents immediately and 5 cent on July 1st. Now this is a fact. This could have been done at that time and the only difference between that and the final settlement was 5 cents on September 1st instead of July 1st. But we didn't come up. Then the next thing it was a little bit more where it gave a little bit more momentum, the situation is that the union lost control of the situation to the ministers.

Joan Beifuss- This interested me when you....

Downing Pryor- They did and as they began to try and recover by bringing in Ruston and Roy Wilkins, to try and work it back around and give them control. I am not sure, but it had happened that on the other side that Memphis was called Kenya. I don't know whether they were competing or whether the ministers realized whether they wanted to retain control and perhaps Ruston and Wilkins might have tried to work the thing to give control back to the union. That they brought a team in, on nearside I don't think they were competing they were all moving to the same end that the snowball was getting bigger and finally it just ran away with everybody, everybody just lost control. You could think of nothing in essence really had the city council made different proposals or had they presented differently it is possible that it still wouldn't have made a difference. I am getting at a certain inevitability there seems that you might argue for in the situation.

Downing Pryor- I think back on March the 1st when the council began trying to, no it was March the 20th when the council got serious about writing an ordinance.

Tom Beckner- This was the one that the mayor said he would veto?

>At this time when we began talking about it and presenting it to him and he kept turning them down.

Joan Beifuss- Now the ordinance would have covered what? An ordinance saying what?

Downing Pryor- Oh ten cent immediate increase, 5 cents from July 1st, to allow the people. The mayor agreed to allow the people to do this through the credit union. But there is a hang up there that I am not going to talk about. Because there was a time when that was all that stood in the way as to how this was going to function with the mayor permit the credit union to do this for them or would he not or what manner would he allow it to happen and that could have ended the strike oh I say in the early part of March to the best of my recollections. That was the only point that happened.

Joan Beifuss- Did you ever have the feeling the only thing the union was interested in was the dues.

Downing Pryor- Yes very definitely very early in the situation when they wanted to get in and get the thing settled and get out and when I knew they wanted to leave after a few weeks here. Well two things, sure they wanted to do it but they had a bad situation on their hands and they wanted out the easiest way. Henry pulled a real smart one on Worth, I think Worth had only been in town just a couple of days and they had the big annual meeting of the brotherhood of christians and jews with I don't know how many hundreds and hundreds of people present and the mayor instead of sitting up on the big double deck stage for the banquet slipped in and got a room, a table at the back of the room with Jerry Worth as his guest and then sent word to the podium that he as there and then when he was introduced he got a standing ovation and that shook Mr. Worth pretty well because he was a little soft for a few days after that.

Joan Beifuss- He had just arrived in town that day.

Downing Pryor- I think it was yeah. Real strategy on his part.

Joan Beifuss- Would you tell about being one of the city representatives for King?

Downing Pryor- The mayor asked me, and I told him I already planned to go. I did not...

Joan Beifuss- Why was that?

Downing Pryor- I, in all sincerity I told my wife I planned to go to the funeral. I was going, and I suppose the fact that I was there I was thought to be official.

Joan Beifuss- But as a private?

Downing Pryor- But I was going and I was going to ride with some of the negros that were going or catch a ride or anybody else. Several of the white councilmen offered to go and would have gone and I think if I had said I think that it is important that a lot of us go, I think, I don't know how many might have gone of white councilmen.

The negroes certainly were going. But the mayor asked me if I would go and represent the city and I told him I already planned to go and that since he said that I would be the official representative of the city, along with the other councilmen, I went down with Ned Cook with his prop jet company plane, go down and back that day. Reverend Neders and Fred Davis and I went and we were joined down there by some other negroes we know...

Joan Beifuss- From Memphis?

Downing Pryor- From Memphis. And we had a great deal of difficulty...

Anne Trotter- Stop for a second, start with the airport and then do it in sequence.

Downing Pryor- Well we gathered at the airport in the morning and I have been flying for many many years and the weather looked bad and I was a little apprehensive of it, but I was intrigued with the plane because I wanted to fly it, at least on the way back. I had never flown anything with a prop jet or any jet engine really.

Joan Beifuss- You are a flyer?

Downing Pryor- Yes Odell Harton went with us and he is a great man and he is the director of the hospitals. Odell went to Moorehead college, with Martin Luther King. Knew him well.

Joan Beifuss- Now that is something.

Downing Pryor- So Ned Cook had provided transportation for us and when we landed in Atlanta I have been to Indianapolis on race day, which is the biggest ingathering of sports fans in the world. But I have never seen anything like, and I told Fred Davis when we got off the plane at Atlanta, I said, Fred every time you see one without props on it, little planes you start at a million dollars and they were lined up like trailers on an airbase. I have never seen so many private aircraft with such great value at one place at one time. They did a marvelous job at handling the traffic in and out of Atlanta, fortunately the weather was clear there or it would have been a real problem because they start stacking them up and working them in by radar. But we might as well have been the only plane in the air we were handled so conveniently and worked in so quickly.

Joan Beifuss- And almost all of these were people flying in for the King funeral obviously.

Downing Pryor- Yes and there were planes with foreign insignia on them, besides the national guard of Pennsylvania or air force national guard Illinois, things like this, old big military type aircraft belong to the states the governors were coming and senators were coming. Down to the hot new million, million and a half Lear jets and things like that. It was all handled very beautifully as far as again the military doing a respectful good operation as I used to handle the formation take offs and

landings, get them in and out, they handled it as well, they had been a bunch of trained people to work together. We had a car waiting for us and a driver who took us to Moorehead.

Joan Beifuss- Had this been arranged for from here.

Downing Pryor- Yes Ned Cook handled this and all at his expense, Cook and Company. Once we got to the campus Odell Harton knew his way around there. We got out there a couple of hours, let me see two hours ahead of the schedule time and already the support was beginning to get massive. It depended entirely upon the Moorehead students to monitor and marshal the crowd and it didn't take long before this broke down. We had no credentials and this was the thing we were aware of, I don't have a card identifying myself away from Memphis that I am an official of the city, none of us there. And we were aware of this and we finally got to the seated section of a 125, 150,000 people there in this great common in between the buildings at Moorehead. They had some chairs there were probably 2,000 and we had Dave Patterson with us Cameraman or really a newsman from channel 5. The local NBC station. Dave worked his way in with a press pass and then got somebody to let us get up. I think it took us 45 minutes or so to work our way about 45 feet through the crowd, we were telling the man please let us through we had seats and it took a long time, we finally got into the seated section. Of course the funeral cortège was perhaps an hour late. The crush of people, there was just no control what so ever. I didn't see, I didn't see one security person who breeched out to people there, there was no way to have done it. They closed all the aisles, they tried to get aisles opened outside of the seated section. And the tension was, it was the most tense situation I have ever been in the world, in my life. Well we all have a distance that we don't like people to get inside of and elevators or subways or whatever we get uncomfortable when people are inside of this, when you get that many thousands of people standing body to body these people were not standing apart they had no area around them whatsoever. You could feel the tension and they were standing on limbs of trees, if you have even been in the forest and heard the limb snap off of a tree it goes off like a rifle shot, and I had the distinct feeling and talked with others there, that the tension was so great that one thing like this could have set off a stampede. I was very touched and moved by the service and all that went with it but we went through the whole thing with this feeling of tension.

Joan Beifuss- Lena Horn.

Downing Pryor- Lena Horn sat about 3 rows in front of us and she came in with 2 negro entertainers, I recognized their faces, I don't recall who they are television personalities. We were sitting perhaps 50 feet from a sort of a side area the television cameras were set up and it was a little bit if you could get out to the television cameras you could get out through their cables. She came and sat down and different points waiting for the service women would go into hysterics, somebody would get emotionally upset and start screaming.

Joan Beifuss- There was this sort of a feeling you get in the negro church, was there any music going on or anything of that sort. Just crowd.

Downing Pryor- This was going on before the service....just crowd. Hot as it could be the sun beating down, everyone in dark clothes. Somebody had hysterics probably 2 or 300 feet away and we couldn't see where but every time something like this would happen everybody would try and raise up and look and see what was happening. And Lena Horn stayed 3 or 4 minutes and left frankly it was just a very tense situation. Now once the cortège arrived and the casket was brought in things sort of began to take over and there was some relief to it. I understand and this is not a rumor as this would be my directed down there. There was 6 people to speak in order at one point down there. Who were simply introduced and did not speak but it was said that Dr. King's father sent word to Abernathy who was conducting the service to get the thing over as quickly as possible, he didn't like the situation. He wanted it over and he wanted it out of there, he realized the minute he got there what a really dangerous situation it was. Then when...

Joan Beifuss- How long had the march gone on? The march had gone on for some...I mean people were still marching or was this..

Downing Pryor- From the church to the (muffled)

Joan Beifuss- That we saw on television as we were watching.

Downing Pryor- Well they were nearly an hour late getting there.

Joan Beifuss- And the march it looked like the march just kept going on and on and on.

Downing Pryor- It did.

Joan Beifuss- You had arrived while the march was going on?

Downing Pryor- We had arrived, yes, we passed the church to go to Moorehead they had not started the march we saw the crowd outside waiting to march with the, so not very far away but I drive a good way to circle us around and bring us in from the backside. So I dodged the march but it probably got started by the time we got to Moorehead.

Joan Beifuss- Will you tell them about your visit with the couple where you had to wait for the guy...

Downing Pryor- After, (muffled) she sang a beautiful negro spiritual and it is a very mournful song, and it gives a chance to really express himself with all he has and she in enough time that she got a number of people in the (muffled) at one time and the situation got awfully tense again. At this point we were down to the end where Abernathy began to talk and the service was almost over and it got, I heard it was going to be brief so I eased over to the crowd and walked over to where our car was

parked. Well our driver had gone and take Dave Patterson some film and they were shooting film that day and I suppose as newsman he realized he had a chance to catch a delta flight out and get back to Memphis and have it on the air that night. Which he did. So he had not gotten back to pick us up and I went back into this negro home where we asked if he could park in his side yard, very nice negro woman said yes we could do that. I asked if I could sit on their porch and they said well they are watching the end of the service to come on in and sit there were about 7 or 8 negroes in the room and I apologized for intruding and they made me feel very comfortable.

Tom Beckner- Did they know who you were?

Downing Pryor- No, they...

Joan Beifuss- Were any other people with you or were you alone?

Downing Pryor- No I had headed on out alone and I told Will we knew the way it was simple right down the street, but the service at that point lasted longer than I thought it was going to. And when Abernathy finished I think I got to about the end of that and I thought that would be about it and then they sang Moorehead Alma Mater and all the people in the room stood up. Well most of them had gone to Moorehead. I stood up with them of course. Then they got into singing and holding hands we shall overcome. Singing we shall overcome...Then one very soon black and whites will be like. It probably was it was very handsome very large negro man and when it was over I said I really feel like I have intruded you people have been so nice and I am a stranger. And he said, no we think it is nice you were here, where are you from. I said Tennessee. So he said where in Tennessee? I said, I am from Memphis Tennessee. And he said, well I am proud that you would come today. He was a minister and was Abernathy and he knew Abernathy and King and Abernathy had something to do with persuading him to enter the ministry and he made me feel very comfortable and very good about the fact that, at that point I wish that more people could have known that Memphis sent representatives there.

Joan Beifuss- What was the reaction in Memphis when it was discovered that you had gone.

Downing Pryor- Well oddly enough during all this sanitation strike I did not get one crank call from a negro, I got some crank calls from some white labor people, usually at 3:00 in the morning. Usually abusive, not one from a negro and I got about as many crank calls from whites as about going to the funeral as I got about the sanitation strike itself.

Joan Beifuss- This must have been quite a....

Downing Pryor- This again is a disappointment to me about citizens here.

Joan Beifuss- it must have been just for you personally what an emotional see saw or rollercoaster to go through this and then come back to that...

Downing Pryor- During that period I was eating like it was going out of style and drinking more than my share of rich things that would cause a person to take on calories that was losing weight.

Joan Beifuss- Were you able to sleep during this?

Downing Pryor- Yes. I was drinking a lot of iced tea.

Joan Beifuss- Well that is just enthralling I have to say that story and this is so unique. No one else could have had this experience other than the city council president. Did you identify yourself as a member of the city council when you were there.

Downing Pryor- Well I sat in the people in the row ahead of us was the vice mayor of Philadelphia is a negro. Very tall handsome negro, federal judge from Philadelphia and all city officials from Philadelphia and we identified ourselves.

Joan Beifuss- Pennsylvania is the...

Downing Pryor- Pennsylvania yes...and in fact the judge who was a very handsome man and he was taking pictures. And I noticed as he stood up in front of me that this beautiful clock tower at Moorehead was right over his shoulder so I said well that would make a very fine picture if you would set your camera and let me pose you I am going to catch you and the bell tower behind it, it is a beautiful one. White tower with a big clock on it.

Joan Beifuss- Sure black and white together.

Downing Pryor- And I took his picture this is an old thing for me to take someone else's picture trailing along, I have done this in Europe, some honey mooners or something. One takes the other picture and the other walks up and they both take pictures. At the airport our pilot said they did not identify themselves as being from Memphis around all the other pilots.

Joan Beifuss- Well whatever happened with the judge, did he ask where you were from?

Downing Pryor- Yes we talked quieter a bit. Because we had a long wait for the service to start.

Tom Beckner- But you never when you were in this home the ministers home identified yourself...

Downing Pryor- This was not his home, he was a friend who was, he had been up to the campus and his vantage point wasn't too good so he went back down there.

Joan Beifuss- But when you said you were from Tennessee and then from Memphis did you identify yourself as a city official?

Downing Pryor- Yes I said I am, well I am not sure that I did. At this point, I would say yes I am here officially.

Joan Beifuss- What was your personal reaction to Mrs. King and her conduct I mean answer if you wish to.

Downing Pryor- My wife said something about this and I know that she has been compared to Mrs. Kennedy. I am sure we were all tremendously impressed with this woman, this great woman of grief. I thought about another woman that lost two sons and had been in seclusion in grief for months without letting anybody see her. Now this woman, Mrs. Kennedy, marched in the funeral with the rest of them. My wife said, it's the good blood that is in those veins, and I think (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- I asked this because you described this tension and this really hadn't come through to me so much from the television this feeling that something could snap and I wasn't aware of this thing of hysteria that was just right on the surface there.

Downing Pryor- Yes hysterics broke out frequently through it and people fainted in great numbers,.

Joan Beifuss- This is where I come back to the conduct of Mrs. King and being on public display as she was and this amazing composure. You think that she was aware of this tension.

Downing Pryor- This is what Dr. King's father said, that the family were going to leave, get the service over quickly.

Joan Beifuss- They were so aware of the potential of this.

Downing Pryor- The, there was a group of southern Christian leadership people on the roster deck in levis and levy jacket jumpers and black turtle neck sweaters. I couldn't quite figure them, you can see them in the pictures of Life magazine of the cortège. These seem to be young vigorous leaders of the thing. One situation became very bad you perhaps saw on televisions where they stopped the service and tried to get people to loosen up the are to the right of the speakers so where they brought the casket through some dignitaries were coming through there. Then came up and awful serious question there. This man (muffled) he quit trying to persuade them he told them to get back and he kept telling them directly. It was a very forthright manner and it was a situation where they just set them in too tight. There have been situations like this where a great number of people have been trampled to death right out in the open. Just over a (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- How would you compare the Atlanta or did you see enough of Atlanta, the reaction of the normal Atlantians as to the normal Memphians?

Downing Pryor- No we got off the plane and went t Moore head and got back in the car and walked straight out of car to the plane crawled aboard and flew home. So

there really was no chance to evaluate the situation in Atlanta. Of course mayor Allen very much the prominence throughout the thing. I think this is a great credit to him and to Atlanta.

Joan Beifuss- Now what about and again this is a question of something that was recorded in the New York Times. That I never saw in the papers here and that when Mrs. King was flying to Memphis to I suppose this was after when she as coming to when after Dr. King was assassinated. And that there was a group of negro women who went to the mayor's office to ask for someone to meet...

Downing Pryor- This was the white glove congregation or assembly of women. And I never heard much about that.

Joan Beifuss- It was recorded, the reason I ask that is because it was recorded in the New York Times that they were refused. And this was being read in New York but I never ht ought to my knowledge I never saw anything here. But I have since this information gathering thing someone has mentioned this to us that this was a cause of concern in the negro community that there was not official representative at the airport except the national guard when Mrs. King arrived.

Downing Pryor- This is true and this is purely the criticism I have heard is that at the time they came to pick up the body and put it on the plane there was no city officials there..

Joan Beifuss- And the theory was that the national guard, this is the way it has been explained to us very frankly is that the national guard was there to keep them from , keep negros who had gone to pay respects to their leader from getting close to their leader. Now this may be the worst misinterpretation but this, that there was no city representatives.

Downing Pryor- I think this was an absolute slip up on the part of the council or the mayor's office, it didn't occur, I'm as guilty in this situation as anybody. It never occurred to me, and I am sorry that it didn't, nor did I hear from anybody who it did, that somebody should be there to say something for the city and if had occurred to me and I am sick that I didn't think about it or somebody didn't say something. Perhaps under the circumstances security people would not let the mayor do this. I certainly would have. I think in the same light that the mayor certainly would of because it certainly occurred to him pretty quickly in the field that the city should be represented in that funeral.

Joan Beifuss- But this sort of stunned reaction on the part of, it struck me..

Downing Pryor- You know the transportation of a body from one point to another is a thing that we just don't like to think about and have a bunch of...you know it is not like this. The development or seeing the body go aboard it is a thing you..

Joan Beifuss- Well in the course of this covering what was said in the New York Times which has been one of the comparisons we made of this sort of thing that they reported that Mr. Allen went to the airport with Mrs. King, took her to the airport.

Downing Pryor- We should have been there to greet her and it is really regrettable.

Joan Beifuss- This comes back to my original thing at the beginning of this tape and that is events over-taking people. It seems to me that this has, could be another example almost of that.

Downing Pryor- I think the great shock that the city was in at this point perhaps prevented their half a dozen people who might have thought of this who just didn't. It never got to the council that someone should be there because I know in this case our negro councilmen really would be sick to think that they didn't do it. I think we were in a really in a state of shock.

Joan Beifuss- And they never mentioned this at all there was no question of even a request being made.

Downing Pryor- We should have had a delegation out there or and would have.

Joan Beifuss- Other than this delegation that did go to the mayor to request this.
(muffled)

Downing Pryor- This had more to do with getting the strike over is what they wanted.

Anne Trotter- Who met Mrs. King when she came to the march? Dave Caywood and Micah?

Downing Pryor- Well yes, now I say yes I saw on television was Caywood at the front of the line. I was very proud of Caywood for getting the citizen's award.

Anne Trotter- Yes that was noble.

Downing Pryor- I know you have been awfully busy because Caywood and him were working hand and glove through all of this clandestine to dealing with the situation.

Joan Beifuss- I want to ask you one other thing just in general because it seems to me that there is considerable validity to the idea that Memphis has had so little racial unrest. This is really a matter of fact not just assumption that the city is justified in saying that we have had an awfully good record in racial matters.

Downing Pryor- It is true where the white people, the attitude here is reflected by comments at the time of the riots and the assassination, don't sound good still these very same people accepted to him a pretty rapid program of integration.

Joan Beifuss- This is what interests me the very most is that you do have this, exactly what you mentioned that how is it and it seems to me that this concerns some of the soul searching that is going on right now, I have heard innumerable people say I

never would have thought so and so would have reacted this way. A feeling of almost blatant feelings coming out and some of them surprised that people would be so integrationists, other surprised of people who they thought would be segregationists in these matters and yet the actual matter of fact is that Memphis has gone through this whole period from 1954 onward, with no major of people what so ever.

Downing Pryor- Nothing beyond some demonstrations, you know some sit-ins and things like this, and in the white community they respond to a, they just when things like that happen they happen and they didn't seem to care. This I sort of what seems inconsistent. If you are going to express yourselves you can hear some real surprising things about the racial situation but when they demonstrated they don't resist these things or object to them.

Joan Beifuss- Is it because the unions are involved?

Downing Pryor- No. Actually the unions the union there is as much bigotry among them as there is anybody.

Joan Beifuss- No I meant was there objection in this because unions were involved.

Downing Pryor- No I mean no. Aside from that particular point I told the negro ministers very early in the deal one day I said, I did not understand you are down here fighting a union's fight for them. You turn right around and here is Tommy Powell head of AF of LCO and make him name his lowly white union employees. I said, the town is loaded with them. And you will accept the fact that he tells you they are changing all of this but we are a 6 week old government tell you we are going to change things but you won't wait for us, you won't give us a chance. You are backing a wildcat strike.

Joan Beifuss- What did they say?

Downing Pryor- Ask Lawson this one.

Joan Beifuss- It is a, everywhere you go in this you seem to find new questions, that each answer raises more questions and this certainly is a fascinating one. We have one of the things that we have come across and we do have that will be handed to the archives is union almost apology to union members and this is the firestone union for there evidently considerable pressure that the sanitation workers should not be in their hall.

Downing Pryor- I never heard that one.

Joan Beifuss- Well they were under pressure from their own members.

Downing Pryor- Sure well said there was as much bigotry among the unions as there is anywhere in the community and consider the fact that all the demonstrations even the biggest march they attempted to have and Roy made great

effort to get the white union people to show up and they never showed up. They did not, the white union members of the city did not actively support this anymore.

Tom Beckner- (Muffled)

Downing Pryor- I think it goes back to where did it come from, they are mostly rural people who were brought up with their attitudes (muffled) I like to think that if we can get this generation behind us it is going to changed with these people still raising your children they come to the same thing as they feel.

Tom Beckner- I am sure (muffled). We can believe in next generation.

Downing Pryor- Yeah one generation is not going to remove it. Military service helps, most of these fellows put in a tour, hits you the military to find out they are accepting negros as their equals or being under command of negros is not he worst thing.

Joan Beifuss- This was interesting that during all this period that you would see the Shelby Countians that were in Vietnam or who had been killed and you just had to have gotten the picture of the number of negros in..

Downing Pryor- Disproportionate. As it has to be, I haven't seen a total on it but it seems to be quite a string of negro boys versus white boys.

Joan Beifuss- Now what have we not covered?

Anne Trotter- We have got everything pretty much.

Downing Pryor- I really haven't I guess there was two points I was going to add to the other things that need to be said and that is the fact that King was trying to not march and he, then the funeral let me take a glance.

Joan Beifuss- I want to go back to this point of his not marching, the point that I was referring to this, the photographs that showed these young black militants.

Anne Trotter- I am not sure how many of them were militants?

Joan Beifuss- Well whatever.

Downing Pryor- Oh the invaders, they are and another group. It is interesting how they used them in the big march as marshals and I saw 3 of them outside of city hall while the speeches were being made and they were standing out there waiting on the march to resume. I said, you fellows are doing a fine job and they grinned just as funny as you know. I come down to city hall and Jerry had been on another occasion but that day they were really proud to be complimented on the helping the situation.

Joan Beifuss- Were they aware who you were?

Anne Trotter- Oh yes they knew.

Downing Pryor- Oh yeah. This is talking about security, this is an interesting situation. You finally get your mind made up that what difference does it make about security? It could stop a drunk from getting meds and going and looking for the mayor or something like that. But there is a real plot to get him at one point I just decided if I was in trouble with him I would just take my chances I don't have to worry about the leadership or what they would say about me. Knock myself out on everybody and if I had would probably try to get the strike settled personally. I (muffled). There were times in there when people said be careful where you are going what you doing who you seeing and things like that. I got garbage dumped in front of my house one night early in the morning.

Joan Beifuss- Were you mentioned the hate calls. And the, or the calls in the middle of the night. To the frequency of these I would just like to inquire, when did it start...

Downing Pryor- The never got to the point to where I left my phone off the hook, we did one night and it was because we had one drunk who kept calling, the woman who we spoke with was a well educated woman and not with a southern accent, a white woman I am sure. But finally just got tired of listening to her and took the phone off the hook.

Joan Beifuss- This was my next question were more of these calls women than men.

Downing Pryor- About even. I didn't have many really looking back on it there weren't that many as the negro would say himself it wasn't dat many. I wonder if we ever get away from (muffled) appreciation we have for things typical. We got balled out regular in city hall when somebody says nigro. Somebody will get right up and say the word is negro and it irritates me for you to say that. Well that is alright for me I have been flying long enough to know that people in my airplane and on the ground can understand my southern accent so I can shift gears just so when I preside I do it differently. But some of our people can't Billy Hammond is from Mississippi and just cannot pronounce the word, (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- Somewhere I saw a reference to Hazel Brandon Smith you know the woman newspaper editor then in Mississippi and his office had been bombed and what not but she made a switch in Boston and she pronounced the word nigra and someone said isn't that amazing that someone like Mrs. Smith should do this and there was an editorial somewhere saying that she probably knew a great deal more about the situation and had much more stronger and sincere feelings than someone who would pronounce the word negro.

Anne Trotter- Thelma this is off the record. Don't take this down at all. This funny story I heard concerns a friend of mine, who had a neighbor child and this is a child that was absolutely horrible. Would say bad things and they hated niggers jews, catholics, yankees and foreigners. And he would read along in his book and he got to the word and it was spelled n-i-g-g-e-r. He didn't know what the word was and he uses it all the time. He said what is this word, she said that word is nigger. He said, I always thought that was spelled n-e-g-r-o. Ok back on Thelma.

Tom Beckner- I can see all this getting typed out.

Downing Pryor- We didn't talk about Frank Miles being brought in did we.

Anne Trotter- No.

Joan Beifuss- And in fact.

Downing Pryor- Are you all going to talk to him. This is fine because he is in a very sensitive situation but I will say this and if Frank doesn't want it in we can take it out. I have known Frank about 20 years and I think he is an outstanding person and a very fine citizen of course his record is an interesting one he starts out as a bus driver and rises up to an important man in the industry as well before that federal mediation. I have been involved in good works in the city with Frank for about 20 years and got to know him quite well. Haven't seen much of him in recent years but it was, I don't know how long and get this from him but two or three weeks before he was appointed conciliator he called me one night and said that things were not moving and they should be moving and he wanted to get into the action and what did I think about it. I said I think by all means if anybody in the world can bail us out you are the guy who knows how to do it. He has been, this has been his career.

Joan Beifuss- He really called volunteering as a concerned proud citizen.

Downing Pryor- Yes, we are going to cite him one of these days, just a fine citizenship. But Frank said that he was unable to get in touch with the man who was going to present him to Worth and his people and presented his credentials but he was very anxious to talk to Worth that night. So I arranged it and he did and from that night on he touched base with me occasionally, I said Frank it is not necessary that you tell me what you are doing. Once in a while he would call me and tell me what was happening. But he laid a lot of groundwork.

Joan Beifuss- Was he behind the scenes before this was ever...

Downing Pryor- He works for a big company who can be criticized for this and then he persuaded his people.

Joan Beifuss- E.L. Bruce?

Downing Pryor- Yeah, E.L. Bruce (muffled) he at some point in there he agreed to letting them somehow out in the open do this and the minute he said he would the council named him on March the 21st to be the official mediator. I would guess that Frank worked for 10 days and 2 weeks at the least before that. So that when he came in he wasn't coming into a strange situation at all.

Tom Beckner- What about Reynolds. How did he get here?

Downing Pryor- Reynolds was sent down because of the assassination, he was sent by the Whitehouse to get down here and get this thing going.

Tom Beckner- I just wanted to ask, I think of it. Do you know personally either on or off the record whether the governor or the president of the united states called or tried to put pressure on the mayor in terms of settling the strike became important and had to go on.

Downing Pryor- I never heard of any. Never heard of any or know what conversations went on with the governor. The night of the assassination the mayor called the governor, I was in his office. They had quite a discussion as to whether or not to call the national guard back out before they decided they would.

Joan Beifuss- On what basis?

Downing Pryor- Well they had recently been in you see, they had been in,

Joan Beifuss- And they hesitated?

Downing Pryor- Who was hesitating?

Joan Beifuss- Right, did they hesitate or was it immediate or was their discussion that perhaps they should not call the national guard?

Downing Pryor- Well I heard one end of the conversation, it took the mayor, I wouldn't criticize the governor but I don't know if the governor was aware of the seriousness of the situation here at the time where it was not a case of just (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- The mayor had to do a bit of posing of..

Downing Pryor- The situation I guess.

Joan Beifuss- It probably is urgent that we get them here.

Downing Pryor- Well the governor did (muffled). While he discussed it I think he probably discussed it I think they were probably discussing (muffled). Oddly enough I heard a number of fellows admitting to they heard this came on in.

Joan Beifuss- Assuming that they would be called.

Downing Pryor- Particularly the fellows who were headquartered here, they mostly showed up right quick.

Joan Beifuss- Well now getting back to Reynolds and Miles was there ever any conflict between them.

Downing Pryor- These guys have black 6 and 7 eight, immediately shook hands looked at each other miced each other. It just was one of those very fortunate things, of frankly this is typical Frank Miles, bring the big guy in the room and in 3 minutes you will all be crazy about him. Of course this is what reconciliation needs to be but he is a genuine guy. He just....

Downing Pryor- That is fascinating that...having really volunteered for this job so when it came time to choose a mediator he had almost chosen himself because he was so eager to do this.

Downing Pryor- What I think about the fact that he came in on the 21st or had been in probably some days before that time that if he could have been pulled in real early in this thing plus the injunction is one of the kickers in this thing.

Joan Beifuss- The injunction against the union leaders.

Downing Pryor- On the 24th the injunction came in, nothing took place between February 24th and March the 21st.

Joan Beifuss- Now who advised the mayor to get that injunction? Gianatti..

Downing Pryor- No Gianatti advised him not to.

Joan Beifuss- Under what advice was the mayor acting.

Downing Pryor- I do not know.

Joan Beifuss- This is something we would have to check out our self with the mayor.

Downing Pryor- You got to get a visit with him on this thing.

Joan Beifuss- I hope so, I hope so because I don't think we can possibly...I hope we can. Since we seem to be doing this and if we could we would hope to arrange such because I think his whole story...

Downing Pryor- Well it is the most important thing of all.

Joan Beifuss- Our study is fairly meaningless unless we have it.

Downing Pryor- The wise in the workforce we are all in his mind. I could go down the line and look at so many things that he only he could answer.

Joan Beifuss- The thing that in a case like this here is a crucial point. (muffled) Off the record but do you think we would difficulty arranging our credibility...

Downing Pryor- No but you are going to have to come in strong with your credentials, what you are doing. (Tape End).