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Carolyn Yellin- Tape 2 councilmen Billy Hyman, July 8th 1968 this is tape 2. We will just go right on with the question I warned you I was going to get to councilmen Hyman and that is, well I will go back a little farther in fact. Let's go to the events of and your recollection of the March 28th march the one when Martin Luther King led it and as we have had we talked about it in general but can you recall that day what happened, when you heard the news that this march, this of course followed the march that had been postponed and there had been mediation that broke off and....

Billy Hyman- I think you are right, you mean when the first march broke into a riot?

Billy Hyman- That's right and the one that Martin Luther King led and left.

Billy Hyman- I was in city hall, we had a committee meeting and I don't even remember which committee was involved. There were several councilmen, I think about 3. Mrs. Awsumb was there, I was there and I believe Bob James was but I know that we were talking about some of them had to leave but we were standing in the lobby of the city hall waiting for Dr. King to get there actually I had called my office and told them I was going to wait there, we were going to see where the parade, we had walked down to the lobby and we was going to ask the policemen that was there with the radios. They had set up a speaker stand just outside of city hall there for there convenience with the loud speakers and we had asked that a policemen there with a radio where they were and at that time they were still at Beale St. or Hernando and Beale. And we had decided to stay in the building and get a sandwich upstairs and stay in the building to hear Dr. King's speech. Then about that time we started seeing these cars going by at a high rate of speed South on Main and the police lieutenant that was on duty there with a radio told us that the riot had broken out. That they had started breaking windows and the people had started running and that they were having problems, and of course all of this was coming over the radio. We waited a few more minutes.

Carolyn Yellin- The cars that you saw, those were police cars?

Billy Hyman- Those were police cars...

Carolyn Yellin- Heading towards Main and Beale?

Billy Hyman- Headed towards the trouble spot, yes. And then in a few minutes we were advised by the policemen in charge there, and I don't remember who thee particular ones were that particular day. But we should decide where, what we were going to do, that they were going to close city hall and they were going to close the garage doors that either we needed to decide to stay there or if we were going to leave we needed to leave and go somewhere at that time. Of course not knowing what size riot we were going to be involved in and to what extent it would be, we decided to leave. I advised Mrs. Awsumb to at least not go any farther south to go north and go out east rather than to go home to go to a friend's house until we heard

what was developing. Because at that stage we didn't know how bad it could be and who would be involved.

Carolyn Yellin- Did you call Mrs. Hyman or did you call your home?

Billy Hyman- I called home, I believe I didn't call home until I got back to my office. I called home and I sent my girls home because my business is down on Florida St. I got back to the office and we turned the radios in and we heard they were having trouble on Hernando and down on Calhoun and South 3rd and so we didn't know to what extent it would be involved so we sent the girls at the office home.

Carolyn Yellin- This was a police radio that you had that received police.

Billy Hyman- At that time we were listening to the regular commercial radio broadcast at this time. Later on I got a police radio within the next few days and kept it in use then but we had just hearing the commercial broadcasts and it was exciting and it was a time when a lot of people had apprehension and we just didn't know, we were taking precautions but then I came on home and I called probably and then I came on home and I hadn't been home too long until of course I was disturbed, I hated to see this happen in our town, it was just such a shame. She had a guest when I got home and we talked a little bit to them and then the phone rang, and I was called back downtown to a meeting I think, at that time it was about 4:30 or quarter to 5 and I think we had our meeting downtown at 6:00.

Carolyn Yellin- Was this a council meeting?

Billy Hyman- This was a council meeting and so we went back downtown this particular night.

Carolyn Yellin- Did you take any special precautions at home or did Mrs. Hyman stay here?

Billy Hyman- No she stayed here.

Carolyn Yellin- And do you have children this is one of the things?

Billy Hyman- No we don't have children.

Carolyn Yellin- I know several people have mentioned they worried about the family and the reaction.

Billy Hyman- We didn't feel at this particular time there was any danger.

Carolyn Yellin- Had you received any threatening phone calls, this was another thing I didn't, or mail?

Billy Hyman- No.

Carolyn Yellin- Did you at any time during, because this is one of the things also that we are collecting and asking either for copies of.

Billy Hyman- We didn't. And we...

Carolyn Yellin- We are aware that there was a lot of this going on.

Billy Hyman- just this week I believe the 4th of July I probably received an obscene phone call from a negro man but I don't think this had any connection what so ever, I think this is something that happens to people sometime and it happened to us several years ago when we lived down on Cherrydale. I don't think there was any connection what so ever with it.

Carolyn Yellin- And no mention of your being a councilmen?

Billy Hyman- No I don't believe this had any connection it was probably just a random call that sometimes other people receive like this sometime like this.

Carolyn Yellin- Well now I didn't mean to interrupt you were back at your council meeting that you had been called at?

Billy Hyman- Well I think this was really that was really about the end of that, we were up there probably an hour or two and came home and then we just tried to keep up with what was happening and then we talked to each other sometimes we would call somebody and see if anything had happened. We didn't, it was nothing significant at that time...

Carolyn Yellin- Did you have any consultation with the mayor at that time, in fact I should ask did you have any particular you yourself have any particular communication with the mayor.

Billy Hyman- Not any private communication we were kept informed from the mayor and as well as I remember that particular afternoon we were briefed by, when we got back up there that afternoon I believe we had Sheriff Bill Morris was there, the assistant chief of police, I don't remember which one was there that was in charge of the thing I believe Mr. Lux who would eventually is our present police chief, I believe he was the one that briefed us. We had briefing from the mayor. They just informed us of what our status was. Of course we had had that day as well as I remember standby from the governor with orders that if we needed them we would have available troops and as well as I remember about 4 hours from the time that the first call came in over the radio that there was trouble that we had people in town to assist us. The only thing that we did and this was a non official action we asked that the troops when they got here be deployed in the city and to take every necessary action and precaution to maintain law and order. We didn't want troops to be brought in here and camped out at the fairgrounds we want them to be put in the communities and put to use. This was carried out and I think would have been carried out without our asking. We just asked if this was going to be done, this was totally unofficial this was a meeting they wanted to inform us of what was taking place and where we stood at this particular time and this I think that the prompt action on the mayor being willing to ask for help and the governor being willing to give it and the cooperation we had from the federal and the state and the sheriff's

department and the police department was a great asset to us today. I think a 5 or 6 hour delay could have been tragic. Did you have any of your employees who had any difficulty with the curfew being stopped or was your work closed, they didn't have to come in at night.

Billy Hyman- We had a little difficulty, we had one or two employees that was out on trucks in the country and came in and one man particular got stopped a couple times. It was a little disturbing to them, but when you tried to explain to them how serious the matter was I think they probably understood, they were allowed to proceed on home when they gave an account for themselves and it would be verified. This was one of those things that we had people complain they were abused and mishandled but if you, the only way to control this sort of thing is with firmness and this is what was done and anytime you have a firm control there is a hazard and a danger that you may infringe on somebody's rights and this is regrettable but it is sometimes necessary.

Carolyn Yellin- Do you know were any special instructions given to the troops or to the police as to how to handle this or did it happen too quickly.

Billy Hyman- I don't think..

Carolyn Yellin- To avoid this danger.

Billy Hyman- There were any special problems, I think you know the last few years there had been a more inclination to train people a little better than they used to be trained and I think some of this prior training probably paid off and I think that the men who were brought in here, the troops had training in handling some of these situations and I think our own department is aware of a lot of the needs in handling people in this sort of situation. So I don't think there had to be a whole lot of special emphasis put on. We had complaints of people complaining the lights in there neighborhood, the street lights were shot out and this sort of thing. Well this is necessary, if you have had any military training at all and sniper warfare when you are out in a community and somebody is shooting at you the best thing to do is to make it dark if you can. The quickest way to do it was to shoot the lights out. So this was done...

Carolyn Yellin- Were there any incidents of sniping, I know we...

Billy Hyman- There was quite a bit. Not at that time not that night but the night after Dr. King's death there was considerable. This was certainly the most practical thing to do I felt like it was a lot better to shoot the lights out and get the thing the area in darkness than it is to start shooting up houses and getting people involved that maybe weren't involved at all. This was something that people were critical about that people had come into the neighborhood and shot out the street lights. This is a natural reaction which you can expect but it is one of those things you have to contend with. It was serious enough to do it and then you just have to.

Carolyn Yellin- We heard some reports that there was complaints in the negro community that the curfew wasn't administered the same in both the white and the negro community. Do you think there was any substance to this? Or was it considered at the time or...

Billy Hyman- I am afraid there was some truth in it. I heard some things several days later that I wasn't aware of that I certainly don't approve of. Later on we had an ordinance to come before us, this enabling act for the mayor to be able to call the curfew. It had wording in there that the curfew could be administered in areas deemed necessary by the mayor. We struck this language out because I don't feel like you can have a curfew in one end of town and the other end of town running wild. I am afraid that we did have some instances of people that didn't take it as serious as they should have and some cases that violated maybe that shouldn't have and I think it probably would have been handled, well in those areas, as it was in those areas had the mass of the law enforcement not been employed in the areas where they knew they were needed. I believe that really they would have enforced it in the areas of town that the people maybe weren't enforcing it as well as they should have been had we had the personnel as heavily deployed in that area as we did the others. I don't believe there would have been preference made and I wouldn't favor and preference, but this is the same sort of thing that I think in this sort of situation you are going to have to treat everybody alike and I think firmness is the way to do it. To me you don't need unaccessive abuse but at the same time it is just like the rioting and the looting. If you see a man coming out of a store window instead of out the door with the glass is broke out with a color TV in his arms, and he don't halt then to me this is open looting and the only place for that man is in jail. This is the only way that we can control this to have control of law and order. I hope that we never get to the point to seeing people standing idly by and see this happen as we have seen in other cities and as we have witnessed in newscast after newscast and you have seen it to and you know what I am talking about. I don't think you can control it without this, I think that even just this week in Patterson New Jersey where they had 4 nights of just real problems. And then they put out the order that anybody who is caught throwing a Molotov cocktail would be shot. They had the 5th night was very calm. When a man is going down the street throwing a Molotov cocktail in a house or a business either one, there is no difference in this so far as endangering people' lives going down the street berserk shooting. When they do this they automatically get shot. I can see no reason there, I think you just have got to have firmness and maintain law and order, or our whole system will break down.

Carolyn Yellin- I realized the way our questions are going I am proving our first question was would you have known if you were going to get into all of this would you have run for city council because you have certainly had to consider some very big and fundamental questions in being a councilmen during this period. It must have been difficult sometimes.

Billy Hyman- Well I think that it is, it has been a practical standpoint it has been expensive. I had to designate one of my employees as a general manager. We have 3

locations now and the business just won't run it self. This naturally when you move one man you end up moving about 5 and this gets expensive to change these positions. Then I had been running a rather small organization with about 35 employees and looking after most of the credit approvals and the money management and this sort of thing myself with a lady at the counter. She retired at the first of the year and I found out by the first of February, that I had to hire somebody that was a professional to look after this end of the business. I had a young man that had worked for us some summers and he graduated down at Mississippi State and specialized in accounting in January so I hired him. This replaced a person that had I been there could have been a less expensive job. So it has been not only time consuming but an expensive too. As I said a while ago there are rewarding things and we feel like and the voters may not think so in august when they elect this charter commission group but we feel like the people have gotten their money's worth out of the council. We did a reasonably good job on the budget. We feel like there are projects that we have worked on that are beneficial and we hope we will have time to get into capital improvements and do some actual planning now. I think that all of these things that happened to us were tragedies, maybe had some hidden benefits. They tempered us and they made us a little more cautious. They took a little we may have been a little over anxious to jump into the thing a little fast and one of our problems might have been inexperience. This is maybe not the wisest way to get experience but it is kind of a southern education anyways. So I think maybe we have gotten over some hurdles that will be beneficial to us in times to come. We have made mistakes and we will make more but I think that maybe this is all these problems have tended to bring the majority of us closer together to where that we can have a better understanding and better working arrangement with each other that maybe you know people seem to get a little closer during times of trouble and hardships.

Carolyn Yellin- Have you had a feeling, many people have spoken of the fact that they seem to, you hear the word polarization, used so much that it is getting more all black and all white, and I guess I have to say I personally feel as you have said that there are opportunities for using this and you feel, I wonder if you have seen evidence? Let's say, in the white community this time, do you feel there is a will to use this to bring about a reconciliation of some kind. I think that it has served as vehicle to make people aware. I think people have become more aware at the same time I am afraid that it crystallized a lot of people's hard feelings to. I think that this...

Carolyn Yellin- On both sides.

Billy Hyman- On both sides, I think that we certainly, we can't say we are better off than we were, I would have to say that we are by far worse off than we were. I think it has made a great deal of people aware of some of the problems that maybe they weren't aware of before.

Carolyn Yellin- We know where we are.

Billy Hyman- That's right there is no kidding anymore that we have got problems and these problems are growing problems. I think that some of these things have developed have even had some affect on, well make the people be aware of things like the housing problems. You know we built about 8,000 houses in the county last year and only 317 units were for negro occupancy and yet the negro population is growing faster than the white population. This is one of the things that I think now that the same people involved in these other things get into housing and this is one of the things that the main topic right now of discussion and this will make more people aware of it. We just have to try I guess as life unfolds in front of us to use the experiences we go through to some advantage and maybe try to learn from there.

Wilson Beyer Jr.- Do you think the militants now say that it is only through this sort of action and perhaps Memphis has been a demonstration of this that anything that is ever done, only after violence do people become aware. So in that sense do you think?

Billy Hyman- I don't really think so, I think that sometimes that problems can be pinpointed, there are actually things being done all the time that people don't become aware of and maybe this puts a little more light on it. I was talking to a white minister in my office this afternoon, whop has a church down in south Memphis that is I had no knowledge what so ever that they had any sort of, he says they haven't had negro people apply for membership but they have been having quite a bit of attendance and it has been a real good Christian attitude in the neighborhood, it is a changing neighborhood, it is an area that is becoming a negro neighborhood.

Carolyn Yellin- Which church is that?

Billy Hyman- I would say, I would rather not because they have managed to do this without any publicity. I was going to say anything you, this interests us I guess, we aren't going to give immediate publicity to anything but for the record.

Billy Hyman- Well actually this is the Mallory Heights Baptist church and years ago this was a staunch strong solid white community that just wouldn't adhere to anything other than straight down the line.

Carolyn Yellin- When we hear something like this it is heartening or it is a hopeful thing and there is so much that has come out of this that I think can be discouraging and the idea that something can be worked out peacefully or accepted peacefully like this is a good thing to have on the record too.

Billy Hyman- I think a lot of times if people really are trying to help the situation and this has been one of the problems we have had. Not problems we have had but one of the things you have to observe of reverend Bell, Ezekiel Bell. That we have got a situation in south Memphis in the Candus St. urban renewal area that first the federal government said the guidelines on and this was declared an urban renewal area about 6 years ago. They at that time, started the studying and the planning and

what not and the government guidelines are that once you start it you don't do any major improvements you leave the community as is. Well then after the studies and this stage was approved as it was accepted as an area, the last administration sat on the thing for three years because the city's part of the initial movement was going to be about 240,000 dollars. They were so set on that tax rate that they didn't want to do anything. See there hadn't been a public low rent housing unit built in this city in 6 years. The project over there on S. 4th street at Danny Thomas Blvd. on Walker street was the last one that was built. You get awfully far behind when you do this. Memphis housing authority has over 1100 people on the waiting list. So we come up here with a situation that the past administration, they didn't move it but at the same time they quit enforcing the building codes. So then we come along now with we have moved the thing, it is in the process, we have extended the area from Trig down south to Parkway. It is in the process but the government said it had been so long since it was studied that it had to be re-studied. So then in the meantime these houses had gotten in terrible condition. Well you have to have legal means of doing things, we have started hearings, we have inspected the houses, we have instructed the code enforcement department to follow through on these things. We have to make the inspections have a hearing, tell them what they have to do. Then if they don't do it you have to go to the title company and find out who the owner is legally then give them notice. Then you have to have, it comes up before the commission of the council as it is now for 3 different hearings. I am sorry about that it comes up for two different hearings, before you can demolish somebody's house. A lot of these houses belong to estates, they belong to retired people, they belong to negro people that have moved to Detroit or Chicago or somewhere down there and they own 3 or 4 houses down there. They belong to retired people, and some of them belong to companies, very few of them belong to....they keep referring to all of this as belongs to slum lords. This is not the case, a lot of these houses belong to retired negro railroad man in the community, owns 4 or 5 duplexes. It is a matter of demolishing them or living in them like they are and a great number of them, the only code violation is they don't have hot water and they don't have a (muffled). A lot of them have tubs, bath tubs and they have sacks of coal stored in them and that sort of thing, but the biggest violation is that they don't have hot water because the code in 1954 that they were fixed up under, didn't require hot water. So now you got a situation down there that sure they are close together and some of them two story but they have roofs on them they have screened doors, they have running water, they have got piped gas and maybe they have beaded ceiling on the walls, instead of wallpaper but there are a lot of \$40,000 houses have this so, reverend Bell comes up tot us just like we have never seen him and I spend my entire day a block away from the area he is talking about. But he wants us to immediately to cut out all this red tape and forget about all these restrictions and rules and regulations and pick up the phone and call somebody with a bulldozer and go down there and level that community before sundown. Because he wants to take those people down there and take them up to court square and have resurrection city. He said that is the best place in the country to have one. But..

Carolyn Yellin- Was this recently?

Billy Hyman- This was in the last 3 weeks see. Well when they started the one up in Washington he thought well I had one here in court square. This is one of the things that you just have to try to use patience and reason and explaining to the people what you can do and what you can't do and laws apply to everybody and we have had as much reaction from the people in the community down there on the other side that they don't want to be bothered and they don't want to be moved and I had this past ten days one of the people in the community came by my office and said he had a full unit building right behind his store that one of the family's has been there one 14 years and one 12 years and the city came by and condemned the property a day, and they are all upset. They are paying 22 dollars a month on one side and 28 dollars on the other side, They can't afford anymore, they are happy and the only thing they don't have is a hot water tank, and eye appeal. The house looked horrible you put a picture in the paper and everyone just moaned and groaned but inside of them they are neat they are clean, they are cozy and old people live in there. They have heated water on their stove for years to take a both in. There is not any housing available in the public housing units for them right now. What are you going to do in a case like this, it is hard decision to make.

Carolyn Yellin- SO you think really the solution probably would be to build the public housing and make the new housing available first.

It is just going to take time, it's going to take time. You just got to if you if you follow you can see what the thinking is in some circles is. If we could tear down 800 houses right now and we probably have this many in the Manassas St. and out in North Memphis and south Memphis that probably are substandard that you could actually put on a crash program and within a 120 days you could get orders to condemn and demolish 700 or 800 houses. Then you would really have a tremendous problem on your hand because then where would you put these families. The thing is it looks like to try to use a little bit of logic and be aware that what they were trying to do, Gerald Fanion, and the man from the community relations man...

Carolyn Yellin- Tennessee council or something.

Billy Hyman- Civil liberties or something the other day, wanted to build a hope city or something uptown and his excuse was to make the officials aware of the housing need. I think the officials are well aware of the housing needs we had a meeting the other morning on nothing but housing. We have approved every program that has come before us except this past week we didn't like the wording in one of the federal blanket contracts that takes all our powers away as a governing body. But there is a complete awareness of the housing problem and you just can't do these things over night. This thing down there in the Kansas Street Project is going to take probably 18 months before they start demolishing property and building more. Now that Manassas St. there is a 1000 unit high rise building for elderly people that will probably be under construction for 12 months but it still takes a lot of time. We don't think there will be any completed units other than the ones on Alcee Rd. that the group is building now that you can see from the expressway, it is supposed to be about 250 units. There are some that WDIS is sponsoring out in Hollywood. There is

I believe 32 units that the home group the one that represented Kirkendial has worked on, it is under construction. But other than this a pure city sponsored public housing is just going to take more time.

Carolyn Yellin- I wanted to ask one more thing we hadn't gotten around to and this reminds me you are speaking of and Wilson is speaking of the more militant leaders. And your earlier reference to the fact that some of the older established leaders weren't active in this crisis and perhaps weren't able to be as active as they had been previously. As the role of a negro councilmen, do you feel that has been helpful in giving on the council as a whole, have they a chance to emerge as leaders any of the city councilmen?

Billy Hyman- I am afraid that the ones that probably have the most heart in the community have probably been handicapped by trying to represent the community. This is a problem. Fred Davis for instance is I think tried to do a good job for Memphis and for district 4. And in doing so he has had to treat everybody alike, or try to do this.

Carolyn Yellin- He has both white and negro people in his district.

Billy Hyman- That is right. When you try to look at something from an overall citizen's viewpoint, then in the eyes of some of his community then he's not popular anymore. This is tragic because he has tried so hard and so desperately and he has just met....he just attends meetings and committees, he works hard all the time and looks into the projects that are under his jurisdiction in the council committee. And he has tried to do the job like it should be done and therefore he has gotten highly criticized for it. On the other hand you have a councilmen who doesn't attend executive sessions, doesn't attend the committee meetings, doesn't get in on the hearings and the things that you get involved that you have to do. But gets there at 2:30 and especially when a controversial issue is up and the TV lights are on...

Carolyn Yellin- This is Mr. Patterson.

Billy Hyman- Yes. This is really a shame. And I am not saying that Mr. Patterson doesn't have the community spirit at heart but just from practical observation and I am not the only one who has voiced it you can see it and everybody else can see it that he has emerged as a strong negro leader in his community and he is going to be the next state senator because he is running unopposed. And it really is not for many, any outstanding work he has done. We hear complaints from the negro community that they can't communicate with him, or they can't find them or he is not in their bracket, he is completely out of the financial realm of people that say they try to get him to do things, so I don't know. But this is a thing that I am afraid that the thing has polarized to a point that when a man tries to really work for the betterment of the whole community and take a practical stand on things, he gets criticized because he doesn't take a militant stand.

Carolyn Yellin- Do you think that has happened to any of the white councilmen that they have been prevented from doing as much as they wanted to do because there was resistance in the white community. I don't believe so, not much, I think that there are times that we all do things and say things and vote for programs that a lot of times people don't like but I believe they have been fairly understanding of them. I think really that most of the white councilmen have pretty well taken an attitude that we are going to do the best we can and we hope that everyone understands it and we will just not worry about what happens 4 years from now we may not want to run for office anyway and we do, if they want us to do the job we will try and if we don't they give the problem to somebody else. This is the attitude I have tried to keep, I have tried to be as nice to people and explain things to them and hope they understand me and if they don't well it is just one of those problems I am going to make the decisions as I see best of everybody concerned and hope they understand.

Carolyn Yellin- Before we finish I guess I do want to get around to the actual, the day that Martin Luther King was assassinated here because I think it changed everything and it was the central event that brought Memphis onto the front pages and into history. This is where if you could just remember that day and where you were and what you were doing and just tell it your own way. W

Billy Hyman- Well we had met, the council had a meeting, and of course all the things that were developing at that time, most of the things had as we said the communities had pretty well polarized and there was problems with everybody. Mr. Frank Miles had been asked to mediate the strike and they were seemingly making some progress. It was hard back even from the beginning of the strike to negotiate with the union because they were so unreliable. There was three different times that the thing was seemingly settled. We had one of those meetings that the paper criticized us for, one afternoon, one Sunday afternoon during this strike and had agreed a majority of us had agreed on some routes to be taken and some settlements. They had the union at least the people that was supposed to be speaking for the union had agreed to them and we called the mayor over and went over it with him and he agreed with us, and I think as well as I remember they were 11 of the councilmen there and I think 9 of them could go along with the proposition and we thought it was settled and the next day it was an entirely different situation. The union was so unreliable to deal with because they changed their mind.

Carolyn Yellin- Was that the meeting over at Fred Davis's.

Billy Hyman- No I didn't attend that meeting, I got my dates mixed up on that one.

Carolyn Yellin- This was a later one?

Billy Hyman- A meeting that we had, at Jared Blanchard's house. So we had tried to work from so many different ways to get some reason out of these people and so this particular day, when the council dismissed and I don't remember whether we were in regular session and just one of our meetings that we had to get in for them and I don't remember who asked me I think down in Prias, I had time to go across

the street to work on this thing a little while and I told him I did. And several of the councilmen went over in the Claridge hotel and met with Mr. Frank Miles and to try to see if we could get a little further on the mediation and I don't remember who all was present I believe that reverend Neders and Downing Pryor and Louis Donelson, and myself. And maybe Mr. Mac Adams, IU am not sure, don't believe it was though. I am thinking that this was maybe the full councilmen but I don't know why this particular group was asked anything except we were just trying everything we could just to work out something with the people.

Carolyn Yellin- And this was the afternoon?

Billy Hyman- This was the afternoon, we went over there and went up in room the hotel provided us with and we had probably been in there, I had called home from there, I had called my office, it was a little suite of rooms, and I was in the room using the phone and we had finally decided we had gone as far as we could go. It seemed like there was two or three things we were going to talk to somebody else about and maybe present and come back and discuss some more but we had agreed on one or two things we could do and one or two that we couldn't do. As you usually do when you get into this sort of thing.

Carolyn Yellin- And discussing each one with Mr. Miles?

Billy Hyman- Discussing with Mr. Miles and this was a very unofficial and informal gathering, we weren't officially representing the council, he wasn't, he was just trying to get the feeling of what maybe we thought the council would accept and wouldn't accept and you have to have these things when you have something like this involved. We decided we would finish up and one of the men and I believe it was Downing Pryor went into the other room there to use the phone to tell somebody he was on the way home or he was coming or something. I believe there was actually a question arose and we were going to call one other member, but anyway while we was waiting for this to be done he called it was either he or one of the other members one, but it could have been reverend Neders. But somebody was using the phone and they had called home and they told them that they had the television on and Dr. King had just been shot. Well we just, first reaction we thought that it was surely a mistake. Then he kept getting information and hollering out at us as he was hearing over the phone. Then he hung up the phone and called I don't remember whether it was the police department or the hospital, it seems like it was the hospital and got it verified and of course we didn't know to what extent then was. The report we had then we didn't know if he was seriously injured or how seriously or anything like this. So we immediately adjourned and went our separate ways.

Carolyn Yellin- Were you talking amongst yourselves, can you remember any of the...

Billy Hyman- Well it was just, well I would say more or less bitter, it was so unnecessary why it had to happen when we thought we had the thing, virtually

completely settled, just a matter of one or two more points and the thing could have been all over and it was such a tragedy that all of our efforts and our working had just been to no avail, now it was just thrown out the window. This was probably the main reaction a tragedy that was so unnecessary. And so foolish that it was just a real shame that anything had to take this turn of event.

Carolyn Yellin- Before you go on do you remember how this suite of rooms was made available to you? Had there been any previous meetings...

Billy Hyman- This may have been, this may have been, I think some of the mediation hearings they were having were in that hotel.

Carolyn Yellin- Yes I do recall the news story.

Billy Hyman- There was, I would think too there was a couple of times that there were some meetings over there and I think probably that maybe the management of the hotel just made this particular thing available because they were concerned like the rest of the community was. The whole community was so concerned and involved in this thing that everybody was wanting to do anything to help out. I think this was could have very easily been the case.

Carolyn Yellin- Well then after the meeting adjourned then do you recall what you did and what your feelings were?

Billy Hyman- And of course in a time like that you just feel kind of sick with a tug at your stomach. I came on home.

Carolyn Yellin- you drove?

Billy Hyman- I drove on home and we had.

Carolyn Yellin- Had your car been parked right on the street?

Billy Hyman- No I was parked in the basement of city hall we all were. Of course this was after hours so we had to go around to the back to get our car out of the garage. I don't recall a whole lot then we listened to the radio on the way home and came on home. I will take that back, I believe my radio was broke and I didn't get any more word until I got here and Polly was listening to the radio and had the television on and we got the later news and I don't believe I got the message of his death until after I got home, I think this was the case.

Carolyn Yellin- There was that period of an hour or so in there.

Billy Hyman- Then of course we had friends came by here insisting that we not stay here, they had some feeling at that time and you asked a while ago if I had received any threats and I hadn't. There were other officials that had and there were some friends that came by here and insisted very strongly that we go stay with them. But my feeling was that your first reaction was but then you just can't pack up and leave home. We have a problem and we are going to have to face it and we told them we

would call them in an hour or so and tell them for sure and we called them and told them we were going to stay here. I had left it up to Polly, she had felt worried, we were certainly concerned but she felt like we would both feel better if we stayed at home and we stayed at home. We, I think everybody was somewhat apprehensive that night and the night that followed but we felt like the best thing to do was to stay here and do what we are supposed to do or what we could and I felt like if I got any calls, if we needed to have any emergency meetings or anything that we need to be here and nobody would know where to reach me if I wasn't here.

Carolyn Yellin- Did you watch the television coverage of that night, did you keep your television set on that night?

Billy Hyman- Yes we had our television set on and then we had a short wave radio here then that we could listen to the police broadcast. We listened until I guess somewhere between 2 and 3:00 in the morning. In fact I heard several reports of some good friends of ours businesses and fires and this sort of thing. I heard everybody's but my own. I don't know, I was either doing something else or doing something when mine was broadcast. But then I had a call from after they left there one of their fire captains that knew me...

Carolyn Yellin- Was that the Hollywood store?

Billy Hyman- That was the Hollywood store and one of the fire captains when he got back to the station called me and I called to see if they felt like I could go over there, they had left, you know when you a fire in a case like that they cut the chains off the gates and all, and normally they would secure the place back but this night they had more calls than they could answer, they were in just a turmoil, so they couldn't do this. I called to see if I could go over there and the security people felt like they would rather me stay in the house.

Carolyn Yellin- Was this the city security?

Billy Hyman- This was city.

Carolyn Yellin- You would have needed someone to go with you?

Billy Hyman- At this time we were having a good bit of sniping going on in the city. They had people all over the areas over there and I made arrangements for one of my employees to get permission and go over there and lock the place up, the troops and the police both were on the scene and in the neighborhood so this worked out fine. We had I think tremendous coordination as I said before with all the agencies of law enforcement and with the fire and the police and the people that we had to depend on that night and the nights to follow to keep things under control.

Carolyn Yellin- What did you think of the television coverage as it was going out, the national coverage that went on that night and in the days that followed. Did you feel it was unfair or fair or adequate, I don't want to put words in your mouth.

Billy Hyman- I don't really have a whole lot of criticism of it, I thought it was pretty adequate coverage of it.

Carolyn Yellin- Had you expected there to be that much coverage when you first heard the news, had you expected it to bring that much attention?

Billy Hyman- Well I think probably maybe that you would. I am thinking through the years and the news coverage has gotten to the point that probably a lot of our problems maybe stem from negative thinking rather than thinking on the things that are good. You would pick up any newspaper and see so many things that would attract attention that are bad but it is hard to find those little articles over there were somebody did something good. This I think that we just learned to live with and you really when you see coverage and it is not telling the truth or not telling the whole story I guess you just kind of become immune to it. This is kind of the same problem we have back to this housing question and I keep thinking about this because it is so important. This turnkey project that the government has had, Memphis has had seven different turn key projects that we could have had under construction turned down because they weren't in gray areas. There is one over an ideal spot, over at Rozelle and , I believe it is Rozelle and Person.

Carolyn Yellin- Is this for the integrate?

Billy Hyman- For the low income housing.

Carolyn Yellin- I mean when you say gray areas?

Billy Hyman- Well what it has to be in area that is white that is turning black. Right now we are not sure that we can get the Candidate Street project approved again because now it is all a black community and the first time they got approved it was still mixed. But there have been areas that we have had ideal projects of this one at Person and Rozelle would have been ideal. But the nearest white family, single family living was over a ¼ of a mile, so the government turned this down. Now the areas like the south Memphis Shadowlawn park the area down there at one time was solid white and then it turned gray and now it is a solid black community. That eliminates it from the possibility of getting public housing and this is tragic. This is bemuddled thinking, but this is what has happened to some of our federal programs. And now we have gotten two projects approved that the government approved the city doesn't have anything to do with approving these projects really but one (muffled) and one up in Frayser for the turnkey projects and this is a project that would have produced housing faster than our regular public built projects. This are projects where the developer has the land, presents the program, the plans and he builds it and then turns the whole project over to the housing authority and they re rent it out. We have had 7 projects turned down in Memphis in the last year because they weren't in areas mixed white and negro. And see you don't only have to meet the guidelines of the regular hosing needs you have got to meet I think it is section 6 of the civil rights code. This is one of the things that you just, it is ashamed it is that way and it is the same with some of this coverage. Sometimes the coverage leans so

much to one side like the coverage we had that this was a sick backwater river town or something like this.

Carolyn Yellin- Yes we have had lots of comments on that.

Billy Hyman- This is tragic that people think like this and people in other parts of the world don't realize that it is not that bad of a town, but I think you just learn to live with this sort of thing and expect it when you get national coverage. Some of the coverage I thought was real good and it was factual and maybe you wished it wasn't but it was facts you can't argue with the facts.

Carolyn Yellin- Do you think we are nearing the end of the tape and maybe I will just ask one last question, do you think that Memphis, with the trial coming up now, do you think Memphis will survive that publicity too since we are on the subject?

Billy Hyman- I hope that all parties concerned, that the people that are leading the minorities and the people that get involved in the various factions and all these names that we have mentioned tonight can see the wisdom and having peace and progress rather than having strife and turmoil and I hope that they won't try to use this as a means of stirring up additional trouble and strife and that they will let it be a fair and just trial and let law and order take it's legal course and I hope that we can accomplish this.

Carolyn Yellin- Well do you have any other things you would like to add, we have another tape if we need it.

Billy Hyman- I don't think so I think the things that we have covered are pretty well done. I think one of our real problems is poverty and I don't believe that we can ever eliminate it, I don't know the answers to eliminate it, it's just like taxes are unpopular now and they weren't popular in Christ's time and they had poverty from the beginning of time and it is our biggest problem, but whether we are ever going to be able to overcome poverty or not I think that this is something that history is going to have to answer for us. The needs of the world are great and I think that...(Tape End)