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Carolyn Yellin- But anyway you were talking about the memorial service.

William A. Dimmick- As I thought the fact that the reverend James Lawson participating in the memorial service was a very gracious and noble act on his part. I was personally deeply grateful to him because this was a very difficult time for Mr. Lawson. The loss not only the leader of one of the leaders of our nation but in his case the loss of a personal friend and the loss in midst of great bitterness and violence and I can see how had Mr. Lawson not been really the fine man he is, he might have declined to participate into such a service. I thought his participation added dimension of grace to the memorial service that would have been absent without it.

Carolyn Yellin- Did you recall what (muffled).

William A. Dimmick- Well I think that one hymn that was used and I think there is a record of this, I mean a written record some place, oh god our help in ages past, was one of the hymns that was used. I think we used perhaps the hymn of mighty fortress is our god. I think that we used another hymn, Jesus shall reign, where the son of the succeeding journeys run. I think I am right about that but if you would like to have this record I will be glad to see if I am absolutely correct about it.

Carolyn Yellin- You were not operating the program of anything like that?

William A. Dimmick- See once again when this meeting was planned it was planned before Dr. King's assassination. There was no memorial service planned of course. This was something like I said constantly the scene even while you were involved and trying to do this changed constantly. The meeting we did have and of course we had no choir present but we had congregational singing and I never heard more beautiful or more meaningful hymn singing. It was for me a very deeply moving religious experience. I think that this was the feeling of all the people who were present.

Carolyn Yellin- When did you ask reverend Lawson to participate in that service?

William A. Dimmick- I had tried to reach him before but by t his time it was very difficult to reach anyone and I had sent word at the request the invitation that he participate and he arrived shortly before the service and I talked to him again about this. He was not sure emotionally he was up to this and then he decided he would try, and this is why I think it was a very noble and gracious act on his part.

Carolyn Yellin- Had you finally gotten in touch who knew reverend Lawson to give him the invitation?

William A. Dimmick- Yes, I had extended the invitation through the reverend Will Campbell who was in the city and I say Mr. Campbell and I have been friends for a

long time and he is, I think that he understands the situation in the south. The racial situation is human.

Carolyn Yellin- Who is reverend Will Campbell?

William A. Dimmick- The reverend Will D. Campbell is with the committee of southern churchmen and he is the chairman of this and I would call him editor although I am not certain that is his title of (muffled) the magazine be reconciled. Mr. Campbell has worked for many years in the south and I think had truly used god as an instrument of reconciliation.

Carolyn Yellin- Is he an Episcopalian bishop?

William A. Dimmick- Mr. Campbell is a Baptist minister who is also a confirmed Episcopalian.

Carolyn Yellin- What.

William A. Dimmick- Yes he was a member of the church I served in Nashville, Donelson's and Phillips church. I talked with him as I told you that night of first I was unable to get in and then I was able to get in and talk to him the night of Dr. King's assassination. I think some time if you would like to talk with Mr. Campbell I would suggest that he comes to Memphis from time to time and I would suggest that you talk with him, I think he would have some very profound insights into the situation in the south and more particularly Memphis.

Joan Beifuss- Well now, the committee he works with in Nashville is this a non-denominational.

Carolyn Yellin- What is the name of it?

William A. Dimmick- It is the committee of southern Churchmen.

Carolyn Yellin- And he is an Episcopalian Baptist minister.

William A. Dimmick- That is right.

Carolyn Yellin- Is he negro or is he white?

William A. Dimmick- He is white. He is a graduate of Yale divinity school, and of Wake Forest College. He was a chaplain at the Baptist chaplain university of Mississippi when James Meredith was entering the school.

Carolyn Yellin- So after the memorial service then.

William A. Dimmick- We were, I invited them to go from the cathedral into the parish hall and that is where the resolution was adopted and we left there, left the parish hall and the cathedral and I took the cross and led the ministers and I believe there was 167 of them as I remember white and black and interdenominational. We walked from Poplar Ave. to the mayor's office. I walked in front leading the

procession and immediately behind me was Rabbi Wax the president of the Memphis minister's association and walking with him was the reverend Henry Starks, the president of the interdenominational ministerial association and Mr. Stark is a negro ministers.

Joan Beifuss- When you adjourned to the parish hall and voted on the resolution, had prior to that had anyone called the mayor's office and asked him to give you a hearing or had you notified him in anyway?

William A. Dimmick- I personally had called to see if we would be in violation of a restraining order which had been placed against marches. The people participating in the marches which Judge Brown I believe had placed. I was told that this march would not be in violation of Judge Brown's restraining order. I did not wish to be involved in some sort of open violation of the law because I thought that a permit if necessary could have been gotten for this march. While we were voting, the mayor's office was called and he was told that we were planning to come to our office and he said he would receive us. SO he knew we were on the way and as you know we marched two by two and where possible negro and white marched together.

Carolyn Yellin- Was this a silent march?

William A. Dimmick- Yes. They talked with each other but there was no hymn singing or anything like that no. I often thought that maybe we should have but again many of these things were things that were done you know under great strain and tension and urgency and it wasn't always possible to do all the things that looking back upon it we might wished they had done.

Carolyn Yellin- Were there many people around on the streets did you see?

William A. Dimmick- Not too many no. I know that when we started out of course people as they rode along in the streets in their automobiles wondered what was taking place. And then of course the people from the shops and offices along the street came to look and as we got downtown of course there were more people but not at any one time was there any large gathering of people because again no one knew this. It was though again the news media television and reporters were present and a man from the New York Times was present and was not in our march but walked along and talked with some people and placed an article in the New York Times about this. No there was no large gathering of people along the way, of bystanders and the march was of course very orderly. We stopped at all the street corners and obeyed all the laws and I know when I was at leading the march and walking along and we went along for some 3 or 4 blocks I guess with no police or no one around except for people that happened to be on the streets and the reporters who were there so I got down to the point and I think it was down near Lauderdale when we encountered the first police and as I remember about 3 or 4 squad cars drove up and the police had their helmets on and they had their night clubs and their guns drawn and they jumped out and we walked between them. I was walking

along and I thought well just what do I do at this point, I had been in the navy over seas but not exactly encountered anything like that. I didn't know what was proper to do so, I was carrying the cross and I turned to the man on my left and the man on my right and said good morning gentleman and walked off.

Joan Beifuss- Did they say anything?

William A. Dimmick- They did not say anything and we walked on.

Joan Beifuss- Were they on both sides of you?

William A. Dimmick- Yes.

Joan Beifuss- (Muffled).

William A. Dimmick- I suppose they were to protect us but they were pointing in on us. But I suppose they could have turned around rather quickly had we needed any protection. I took it to be friendly and a (muffled) action and they did then stop and they were at the other intersections on our way down. And did stop the traffic if necessary to let us through.

Carolyn Yellin- They had been sent by the mayor's office?

William A. Dimmick- I suppose so I would imagine that they notified them to escort us or to protect us or to guard us or to watch us I am not sure. But in any event I took that action to be friendly and of course by this time the police were very tense and nervous and I could understand this. But the mayor received us and we were treated very graciously.

Carolyn Yellin- Excuse me I am not getting the picture right here. If you are carrying the processional cross, did you go into the mayor's office with the cross.

William A. Dimmick- Yes.

Carolyn Yellin- And then did you hold it?

William A. Dimmick- Yes. While the resolution, Dr. Aldridge read the resolution which had been jointly adopted by the two associations.

Joan Beifuss- We might add that processional consummated a great impression on a great many of the participants in the procession to the mayor's office and those who observed it.

William A. Dimmick- I take this to be myself and I did not do that lightly, although I had to do it again decide what to do rather hurriedly. This was not a decision I had made the day before or an hour before the march took place. It seemed to me that in as much as we had a procession inside the cathedral at the time of the memorial service, that it was proper and as much as the same people who had been involved in the procession in the cathedral and in the service in the cathedral that this was in many ways a continuation of religious services, this is a way to think about this.

Joan Beifuss- Were you also vested?

William A. Dimmick- No I did not, I was not vested. I had on my clerical collar the clothes I usually where. But it seemed to me that this to me was a symbolic act of the church being related to the world and the cross, a lot of times, and I read this somewhere it is not my own, that a lot of people think that Jesus was crucified on a gold cross between two gold candlesticks on a marble altar, with flowers. But actually this is not the case, Jesus was crucified on a hill outside Jerusalem a garbage heap between two thieves. I think that to me this was symbolic act of trying to say that the Christ who died on the cross is the Christ who is concerned about the lives of men and women here on earth and that it is his love that reconciles man kind. This is the way I interpret that act and I think those who have this understanding of it see it well in the lighting in which I see. And this is the light in which I see personally. The ministry of the church and the world and of course I might say of course I received a good bit of criticism by some people who thought that the cross had no business on the street.

Joan Beifuss- Oh really?

William A. Dimmick- Yes. And to me if the cross and if the reconciling love of Jesus Christ has no business on the street than I really don't know where it's main business is.

Carolyn Yellin- Well then when you got to the mayor's office you were one of the first ones into his office.

William A. Dimmick- Yes.

Carolyn Yellin- So you were close to the front at the presentation.

William A. Dimmick- Yes.

Carolyn Yellin- Well when you got in how did the mayor receive you and what happened?

William A. Dimmick- The mayor stepped forward and shook hands with me, I knew him and I spoke to him and I said something of a very, one word of greeting to him and we had come as ministers to talk to him and by that time of course everyone was coming into the mayor's office, the ministers were coming in. And after we were in and settled I think Dr. Aldridge read the resolution that had been formally adopted.

Carolyn Yellin- Did the mayor, he must have had such an awful night the night before did he appear haggard or?

William A. Dimmick- I thought the mayor seemed very tired. I also think it seemed to me that the mayor was moved by our visit. The mayor had certainly had a very difficult time during these long weeks but I though he seemed deeply moved by our visit and the fact that we had come as a group to express our concern.

Carolyn Yellin- Can we go back someplace else because I maybe reading things into this that don't appear. But it seems to me at that point in the memorial service march and Dr. King's assassination that many of the men involved have been almost stripped down emotionally, so they are saying things they would never say again probably and were not said before. And there was one incident that I heard about some where I can't remember but I think it was Father (muffled)

William A. Dimmick- Yes, that took place I believe the incident in which you are referring took place in the parish hall. Father Veron who is the Greek orthodox priest and also attended a good many of these meetings and expressed great concern about all of these issues. I think after we had adopted the resolution but before we left the parish hall to go to the mayor's office that Father Veron asked again a symbolic act of penitence, and of reconciliation didn't kneel before the reverend Henry Starks, not only for him self but for all the people that Father Veron represents as a white (muffled) and as a member of white churches.

Carolyn Yellin- Was this in front of the meeting?

William A. Dimmick- Yes this was in front of the people who were gathered in the parish hall.

Carolyn Yellin- What did Veron start to say.

William A. Dimmick- He assured him of his love for him and of his forgiveness.

Joan Beifuss- Was this almost an outgrowth of the atmosphere of the group as a whole. Do you think the group as a whole was sympathetic with what was happening.

William A. Dimmick- Yes the group as a whole, there was some people who did not march with us to the mayor's office, they did not proceed with us there, they either left or a few people drove downtown and met us at the mayor's office but they did not walk with us. I think again on Father Veron's part this was a spontaneous spiritual act and it came from the depth of his feeling. I think he expressed not only for himself but for many of us, our own personal deep feelings and our corporate feeling at that time.

Carolyn Yellin- IS that what is the matter of us do you think that only in crisis do men actually talk to each other not all this covering.

William A. Dimmick- I think that in crisis we talk perhaps more honestly with each other than we do at other times and when we talk honestly with each other we sometimes speak with raw emotional feeling. I think this is what some people don't understand. When we got tot eh mayor's office for instance, the resolution was read and Dr. Aldridge read it. I thought it to be a very reasonable resolution. This was never presented, that is it was never on the television and it was not reported in the paper until some days later, but when Rabbi Wax spoke tot eh mayor with great emotion, great feeling this was recorded. Also when Dr. Jackson spoke to the mayor

this was recorded and was shown on television channels throughout the united states and maybe through out the world. The quiet calm reading of the resolution was not recorded. There were many people that criticized Rabbi Wax for the intensity of his presentation. I think we have to understand that the church must sometimes speak in the role of the prophet. And when it speaks in the role of the prophet it does not speak in the quiet measured tones, or hushed tones that it may speak when it speaks in the sanctuary. And Rabbi Wax was speaking out of the pain and anguish which he had been involved in and which he had shared and which our whole city was involved in and he was not speaking of any disaffection for the mayor which some people may have interpreted this to be, but he was speaking out of the pain and anguish of all of us and as we say this pain came after weeks, long weeks of meetings and deliberations and they all seemed to profess, and then on top of this the violence and at last the assassination of Dr. King. But I think it was in this way that Rabbi Wax was speaking the intensity of his feeling. Thinking and being at that time as later did Dr. Jackson speak. But it seems to me tragic, that this happened in the first place. Dr. King's death and that the sanitation dispute ended in violence. I think these were unnecessary but again we are all human beings and they took place during our sin and our frustration, and our feelings. But I believe that surely out of all the midst of our pain that we have been able to more clearly some of the promises of god, and some of the promises of making this city a good home, but it will require a great deal of re-evaluation and change and reorientation on the part of many people.

Carolyn Yellin- Do you think that the Memphis Cares program was kind of a first step towards that?

William A. Dimmick- Yes as I see it there were many steps taken and they were faltering and feeble steps and we are still in the process of taking very feeble steps one at a time. The Memphis Cares program and this was the program that was so much the work of John T. Fisher one of the very fine laymen that belongs to the cathedral but one of the very fine businessmen and leaders of our city, and many people of course work with Mr. Fisher on this. It was gotten together again perhaps as you know under great pressure of time just to be able to get it together at all. I thought it was tremendous tribute to the people who took part in it that emotions, well the emotions expressed at the meeting were very intense indeed ones. And certainly the feelings in the city at the time were very high and I felt that it was a good thing that just took place and that at least it expressed that Memphis does care, there were many people in our city who care. Now I think if we stop there and this is what so many people are frightened about that we may stop. We might think well now we have done this we don't have to do anymore, but of course I think the thoughtful leaders in church and government and business and education and all walks of life realize that we have yet ready to get reasons for the alienation of white and black and we have yet in the church, we have yet to do this. The church will always be involved in doing this, the church has always been involved in it and it always will sometimes certainly our efforts have been too little and too late. But I think that we see the desperate need to be directly the body of Christ in reconciling

body in our society, and this is the tremendous challenge that is still before us. And this is what requires so very much effort and there are so many people who are not oriented in their thinking to move forward. And there are people like this in government, in church, all sorts of profession, business and every other walk of life.

Joan Beifuss- Pretty well covers the sequence of events.

Carolyn Yellin- Is there anything you would like to add?

William A. Dimmick- Well I..

Carolyn Yellin- Some scholar is listening years from now.

William A. Dimmick- I am sorry that I have omitted the names of some men and women who contributed a great deal of time and effort into trying to be creative and the time of the sanitation dispute and who are still giving themselves in this and there are several movements under way in the churches today as well as in the business world and the world of politics.

Carolyn Yellin- Let me go back again. The human relations group that Edmin Orgill headed for some period of time had you worked with him on that.

William A. Dimmick- Yes.

Carolyn Yellin- Where was that group during the strike?

William A. Dimmick- Well that group was always an unorganized group, you know I was a member of that group from the beginning and we met a year and half ago at the Jewish community center, the old Jewish community center. This was sponsored first of all by the catholic human relations council and an effort to bring together people of different churches and different races and all to face up to the situation in Memphis and this was a year prior to all the things that took place and we first had an idea of having some sort of mass meeting and seminars and time went on and we were not able to secure the services of certain people we had sought and so it was all delayed. But it was out of the outgrowth of those meetings that were held some months maybe a year prior to all of this that Mr. Orgill and I think he deserves a great deal of credit for this just as Mr. Fisher does for Memphis Cares for the program that took place at southwestern.

Carolyn Yellin- Now let me ask a kind of wild question. Again back 8 years here or 9 years, (Muffled) We were not here then but it was my understanding that there was a group of top leadership in the city that kind of made this possible as peacefully as it was. But they don't seem to be really functioning this spring in the city when then again....

William A. Dimmick- The human relations council.

Carolyn Yellin- The human relations council or top business leaders or anyone who is able stop what was happening compared to the church.

William A. Dimmick- Well it think that so often..

Carolyn Yellin- Changed in those, what changed.

William A. Dimmick- Yes these organizations were in committees and were underway for awhile and they did some fine work and then they seem short of shall we say to go into the background. And therefore they were not able to come with any force as an organization to bear upon the sanitation dispute or the events of recent months. Yes I am not able to explain that, I think many times organizations get under way they serve a particular purpose or function and then they seem to fade away. But the good that they do is never lost, that is if they bring new understanding and insights to people this is the same sort of insight and understanding that comes to the surface to support maybe when new leaders arise.

Carolyn Yellin- Do you see any new leadership coming up in Memphis, people like Mr. Fisher?

William A. Dimmick- Yes I do. I think that our situation in the church and our situation in our city, is precarious,. I think that there are many people because the crisis of the sanitation dispute and the crisis that Dr. King's assassination brought about, this time has passed shall we say, but it really hasn't past and there are many people who shall we say have gone on to a summer schedule. I am afraid that this may fall into some lost sense of believing that the issues have been dealt with. Actually the basic issues have not yet been dealt with in any sort of long lasting way. Many fine people of our city of black and white protestant and Jew, catholic, have really tried to do something and they are doing something during the summer, but I think we would be living in an unrealistic world if we thought that our present efforts were enough. There are many hopes in the present situation, but I think that we have in the church that we must some how and we are working now, some months ago I helped organize the downtown church association and we are now working on the basis of a metro interfaith agency. You see we had no place, the church and many other people there was no one place to turn in the midst of all this crisis there were many people of goodwill trying to do good things. But there was no center, there was no place where we could go and really offer ourselves and gain information from others and take any sort of what of concentrated action of the very best, based on the very best information you could get. I think there is a great need in our city for some sort of metropolitan agency and we are now have a group of about 30 people I guess who are working and trying to establish MIFA, some sort of metropolitan faith agency. I hope and pray that we will be able to do this but I think we are dealing with some very serious problems. We are dealing with people who are not oriented many times with the 20<sup>th</sup> century and unfortunately the 20<sup>th</sup> century is now more than 2/3's gone and we must prepare to live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century not just 20<sup>th</sup> century and many people have not even moved into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and yet here it is more than 2/3's gone and we have got to pray for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and changes that take place today take place so rapidly in comparison to what they did a few years ago. We are dealing with many times a mindset and with institutions and with individuals and leaders who are not [philosophically and spiritually

oriented to live in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. They are tied to the past. I think we are grateful and can only be grateful to our past if we have some idea of god working in and through human history as we believe he does. But if he works in and through human history he does this not only in the past but he moves forward in the present and in the future. So somehow we are dealing with a mindset many times and a heart and spirit set not willing to face up to the time in which we live. I see this in one of them, so many times when we elect our officials we elect people, officials who reflect the mood of the people instead of being willing to be courageous and men and women of vision who will not only reflect but who will help to mold and to challenge and to lead forward and this happens not only in politics but it happens in the church.

Carolyn Yellin- So you are saying that if you are also to (muffled) at the time of the strike and still exists there seems to be trouble brewing in the white leadership. And especially those who are striving (muffled).

William A. Dimmick- Well I think you are right and too often the leadership reflects and does not help to mold and to challenge and it requires a great courage on the part of people whether it is in government or in church to come forward with some idea that does not merely reflect the mood at the time.

Carolyn Yellin- Yes I think especially here, I think for some one like, I don't know John Fisher but I am sure Mr. Fisher came under many of (muffled) throughout the city for the Memphis Cares thing. It would seem to take more courage in Memphis and stand up and say something perhaps than in other cities. I don't understand why this would be true.

William A. Dimmick- I think it is a very tragic thing when we turn to our peers and act upon them instead of acting on faith. And I think we often see this and we see this reflected in many ways in our public and corporate life in government and the people we send to congress and various and sundry ways and also even in the people we choose to be leaders in our church. It is a safe and secure thing, to just to ride along with the move of the time. And I think for instance you mentioned Mr. Fisher and Mr. Fisher and many men and women like him and a man who is like Mr. Orgill who is a good bit older than Mr. Fisher but who has not just been willing to reflect the mood of the times. And I think of a man like well, Mr. George Rider who was once our congressman. People like this who had it seems to me a vision and a courage and we need more people like that. And it is not a very safe and secure world to move out into to and this happens in the like of a church too, it would be much easier for me as a minister to do exactly as I know I want my people want me to do, instead of hopefully and prayerfully doing what I believe god would have us to do in the time in which we live.

Carolyn Yellin- Was it sticky at all because Henry Lobe was Episcopalian and you weren't Episcopalian?

William A. Dimmick- No this was not for me.

Carolyn Yellin- You think it was for Henry.

William A. Dimmick- It may have been for Mr. Lobe. I personally like Mr. Lobe and have respect for him. I believe him to be a man of integrity and of really basic human goodness. So this was not, I never felt this, of course Mr. Lobe has been an Episcopalian for a fairly short time I think as I understand it he does not belong to this congregation. We would like to have all that sort of power in our congregation but we don't have that. He belongs to another congregation, he was confirmed I think at the end of last year. My differences with Mr. Lobe would not be of any personal kind at all but of a philosophical orientation to the time which we live.

Carolyn Yellin- Ok was there anything else you want.

Joan Beifuss- No I think that sums it up pretty well.

William A. Dimmick- I would like to say that I think Memphis is a very exciting and wonderful city in which to live. I think these are very difficult days for Memphis. I think they were very difficult days whether it be any man Mr. Lobe or anyone else who would serve as our mayor. These are difficult days for president Johnson or for anyone. These are difficult days for the church, the church is going through a great deal of change because of the world in which we live, but in addition to the difficulty in which we are involved I think we also live in very exciting days and really the resources that we have in our hands if we would be willing but to use these I think that many of the causes shall we say of poverty, the causes of alienation from race to race, the causes of ignorance and disease. That many of these could be removed because of the physical resources that are in our hands and I also think that the spiritual resources we have, particularly I feel that resources that we have and the teachings of Jesus Christ and teaching to us the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man if we really work on willing to give ourselves to this that we could help to create under God's will and with his help and strength the kind of society that we could envision that to me would be a place of good abode for all of us and give to our people here in Memphis and to the people of the world. I believe that kind of life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness.....(Tape End)