

SS354.mp3

This is side 2 of the second taping with Frank Holloman on August 14.

David Yellin: And I'm trying to influence Mr. Holloman that he's part of history. That may be making you too self-conscious, but that's. The last question that I asked, or if I didn't ask it on the other side, I mean to ask it now, and that is, how did you during this time, the whole period mainly, did you have a system by which you planned strategy? How did you work behind the scenes?

Frank Holloman: Oh, definitely. We had a system and we had strategy meetings. As a matter of fact, each day we had daily meetings, debriefings you might say as to what had occurred during that day, what information we had received that would have to do with the keeping of the peace mission that we had, and based on information that we had as to what was going to be scheduled for the next day, what would be our tactics or strategy in meeting the problems that would arise the next day.

David Yellin: Can you even be a little more specific, who attended those meetings? When did you have them? Did you have them in the morning or evening, or?

Frank Holloman: I would say that we had them definitely twice a day, in the morning and in the evening, later afternoon or evening, after the activities had ceased for that day. As necessary we would have them during the day. In other words, when we would have a march scheduled for in the morning we would have a strategy session before, then we would have a debriefing after the march had been completed; then we would prepare for the afternoon march. So, it was almost a continuous matter, and we were giving, I would say, we were giving 100 percent of our time, or 95 percent of our time to meeting the problems that were arising daily, and then sometimes hourly.

David Yellin: You mean as a result of this activity. Other police work was sort of put aside you might say.

Frank Holloman: Right, except for the fact that we had our regular forces and our regular commanders who had their responsibilities, but they were carrying forth on the routines of the police work for the city, whereas the chief and his assistant chiefs and I were involved to a great extent in this particular thing because this was the problem that we were faced with in this setting.

David Yellin: Now again, I'm trying to press you for who were in your strategy meetings, and who did you depend on because this person perhaps was an expert in one field as another. Did you have anybody of that kind, or?

Frank Holloman: Well, I don't think it's necessary to deal in personality or such, except for the fact that I would say that Chief James MacDonald of course was. He and I were in very close relationship in the problems that we were meeting. Captain Molnar, Captain John Molnar was the field commander you might say, who was in daily contact

and almost constant contact with the leaders of the striking individuals, or those who were planning the demonstrations and so forth. Jack Wallace, and Assistant Chief Jack Wallace was also involved. Assistant Chief Price, who is now Chief of Police was directly involved.

David Yellin: Do you recall that any one of these men, or someone you have not mentioned was particularly expert or had special training about organizing the police activity, or is that the chief's.

Frank Holloman: Oh, Assistant Chief Lux, Henry Lux was very definitely involved, and he had received training, and we leaned quite heavily on him. As a matter of fact on the march of the 28th, he was the head of the column, and was in direct control of the field forces at that time. So he was involved. Assistant Chief Crumby who was then an inspector, Chief Inspector Crumby was also involved in the high echelon of the command you might say.

David Yellin: Now, during the march where were you?

Frank Holloman: I was in my office.

David Yellin: In direct contact with Chief Lux.

Frank Holloman: Right, in direct radio communication with Chief Lux. And Chief Jim MacDonald was in my office at my side at the time.

David Yellin: Now was it the intention and the strategy if you would of your department to sort of keep the police out of the way?

Frank Holloman: Definitely. That was the policy from the very beginning was to not have a "show of force" or to have a large number of policemen in sight. We felt it would be better to depend upon them, and which they had assured us of their ability to marshal the marches themselves and we did rely on that. But at the same time we did not completely depend upon that. We had what is now commonly referred to as tactical units of police who were out of sight, but who were highly mobile, trained and could move with rapidity to meet any outbreak or violence that might occur.

David Yellin: And they were close enough.

Frank Holloman: They were close enough that we could depend upon them with the force that we had.

David Yellin: Now, I would like to get into one other area that I've not been able to feel out, and as I believe and recall, that after the March 28, at Memphis State they, Dr. Humphreys put forward the week vacation. It was supposed to be the following week as I recall it. The thing happened on a Friday, and whereas the vacation at Memphis State was supposed to be the following week, he determined that because of the trouble in the

city they would have it the week, I believe beginning April 1.

Frank Holloman: We were in a riot condition. The National Guard was on the streets of Memphis. We had -- after the violence of the march, we, the city experienced a riot in various parts of the city and there was considerable damage, millions of dollars worth of damage was inflicted on the city by rioting forces, and the National Guard was called in order to quell.

David Yellin: Now the National Guard was called in very quickly wasn't it?

Frank Holloman: Yes it was. It was called in within 30 minutes.

David Yellin: Yes. Did you suggest to the mayor, or?

Frank Holloman: I take complete and absolute responsibility. It was my decision to call the National Guard, and I recommended the National Guard to be called.

David Yellin: Did you do that because of what was happening at the time, or what you felt might happen?

Frank Holloman: It was what was actually happening. It was not -- we never at any time called the Guard, nor do I think the Guard would have responded to what we might have feared was going to happen, it was what actually had happened. We had received direct information from the field commander who was at that time Assistant Chief Henry Lux, who was on the scene, that our forces were incapable of controlling the situation, and that the matter was completely out of control, and that rioting was taking place not only in the locale of Beale Street, but was beginning to break out in other places, and that we did not have sufficient forces to meet the situation, the riotous situation that was existing. And after careful consideration after receiving the report from Chief Lux and others in the city at that time, I decided that it would have been foolhardy and foolish not to have called the Guard in order to protect life and property.

David Yellin: Again, just to see if I -- get back to Memphis State. If you recall this, I really can't remember where I heard this, but somebody did inform us that at Memphis State they received several threats that the next objective of whomever was to burn down the university. Do you recall that, or was that just an idle rumor that I heard?

Frank Holloman: I don't specifically recall it. The reason I'm hesitating is that there, that sometimes during this period of time Memphis State was the object of threats, burnings and so forth. Now whether not -- the reason I'm hesitant is is to whether or not this occurred on this particular date or not I cannot recall, but I do know that on two or three different occasions during this general period of time Memphis State had been threatened with destruction.

David Yellin: So that when this evolved on the 28th, which seemed like a climax or at least approaching a climax, whether it was specifically that date or accumulated

information, that would be a good reason for Dr. Humphreys to say, well we'd better take off this week rather than next week.

Frank Holloman: Right, and I think that Dr. Humphreys decision, when a riot had occurred and was in progress -- a riot was in progress on that Friday because you'll have to recall that although this all happened around 11:00, 11:30 in the morning as I recall, the riot continued throughout the city throughout the night, and the National Guard, the first forces of the National Guard did not arrive until, oh as I recall around 5:00, 5:30 in the afternoon, and I also recall that the National Guard was used more or less to secure the Beale Street area, that general area in order to relieve our forces that were pinned down you might say in that area in order to meet the riotous conditions that were now spread, that had already spread to various other parts of the city.

David Yellin: When the National Guard comes in in a situation of this kind, what's your relationship with the commander? Does he ask you for advice, or are you in control, or is he in control?

Frank Holloman: I continued in control, except for his men. He stayed in control of his men, although I might say this, that there was a very, very close working relationship. There was a very close understanding between the two forces, the police and the National Guard. We worked as a team. They followed generally speaking our suggestions. In other words, they responded to our request as to what role they would play. As I recall on this particular day, our problem was we had too many men tied down in the Beale Street area, and we needed these mobile units to be in other sections of the city that were getting out of control, and so we requested that their men be assigned immediately to secure that area, which they did, and which relieved us for our men to operate in other sections of the city.

David Yellin: Do you remember who the general was?

Frank Holloman: General Mott.

David Yellin: M-O-T-T?

Frank Holloman: General Mott, who by the way is now chief of police in Nashville.

David Yellin: Oh, really?

Frank Holloman: General Hugh Mott.

David Yellin: He's now chief of police.

Frank Holloman: He's retired and is now chief of police in Nashville, Tennessee. But the relationship was very close. As a matter of fact, they had groups of men or squads of men who were operating with specific orders. We had at least one representative or more with each of their groups, and that was one of the reasons why Memphis I think was

more successful than a lot of other cities, is because of communication. In some other situations that had occurred the National Guard radio system was on another channel from the police. Here we were able with our walkie-talkie mobile units, we had a representative with our radio with each of these units of the National Guard, so that every unit of the National Guard was in direct radio communication with the general headquarters and with my office.

David Yellin: All right, while we're on that. By the same token, who determined that the National Guard was no longer necessary? Was that your determination, or was it General Mott's, or whom?

Frank Holloman: Well, let's say it was...

David Yellin: When it was over.

Frank Holloman: I would say that it was, of course we were in constant contact. We were having staff conferences and it was a mutual. I think it was from all evidence and all the facts that we had that we mutually agreed that the National Guard was no longer necessary. I would say that my opinion with the relationship with the governor at that time that my opinion played a prominent part in the decision as to when the National Guard would be called in, and when the National Guard would be relieved.

David Yellin: Okay, I'm going to take a little switch. Would you comment to the reaction to your statement, at least to the effect that you never knew a brutal policeman?

Frank Holloman: Yes, I welcome that opportunity because that statement was taken out of context. I was done, what I consider a very vicious disfavor. The word brutal to me is an animal or an animal instinct, and I think that Webster's Dictionary will probably substantiate my interpretation of the word "brutal" or "brutality." It is an animal instinct in which an individual is acting with this animal instinct to inflict grave injury on someone with pleasure. Now that is my interpretation of the word "brutal." I think that it has to go to that extent of feeling that it's not someone -- it does not describe a person who is acting in the moment of passion, but it is someone who is delighting in inflicting harm, injury, or even death on someone else. Now in that context, in that context I made the statement that I had never personally known. Now the word "personally" as I recall was not included in the quotation. I said that I had not personally known a brutal policeman. I have to say at this time I cannot yet name a person that I personally knew to be a brutal policeman in the context of what I am saying. Now, I did not state, I did not infer in the statement that I made that there was no such thing as police brutality as the phraseology is used in our present day context. In other words, police brutality today admittedly and there is no argument about it includes language, attitude, the use of degrading names or references to a person. The charges of police brutality include all of those things, including excess force that is necessary in order to make an arrest. Now, in that context, yes I have known policemen personally who have been indiscrete in using epithets and references to a minority or to a group that was insulting, yes. I have known police officers who have had the wrong attitude, a display of attitude toward a minority

group. I have known policemen who on Monday morning quarterbacking used excessive force in making an arrest. At the time, at 3:00 on Saturday morning, I might not have said this was excessive force, but here's a -- let's take an example of police brutality. A policeman is called out to a situation in which there's a disturbance, a fight or something is happening in a joint or something. He goes out to make an arrest, and he has his partner with him and there's only two of them. He's faced with 50-60 irate, maybe drunken, highly emotional situation in which his life is in danger, or he feels like his life is in danger, and in making the arrest resistance is made to the arrest. Now, he has three choices in my opinion. He has three choices as far as the force is concerned in order to successfully make the arrest, which he is charged with making a successful arrest. One is that he will use his natural weapons, which is his fists. The next thing that he can use is what is called a nightstick. The third thing he can use is his gun. I prefer #1, using his fists if necessary. I then prefer the nightstick over the gun, and a lot of times a nightstick has been used, in which injury has been inflicted, but which if there had not been a nightstick available, then the policeman would have had to have used his gun, and rather than injuries there would have been a death to have occurred because I think we have to look at these men from as prudent individuals, or what would a prudent individual do under the circumstances. What would a reasonable prudent man do, who is trying to make an arrest, 3:00 in the morning, faced with 50, 10 or 15 irate very belligerent individuals, and he feels that his life is in danger, then what force. And another thing I think we need to keep this in balance is this. Who is to judge the muscle in a man's arm who brings into play a nightstick, as to whether or not the force in which he uses it, and I have always advocated that the nightstick should not be used in the head area of an individual at any time. And our men have been trained to use a nightstick in other ways, not in the head. And of course we know that this training has not always held up, but I think that in the passion of the moment, they are attempting to defend their lives and I just wanted to bring this in because I think that it's very important that we can Monday morning quarterback saying that the man should not have brought his arm down at 15 miles an hour with his stick, or 20 miles an hour, or 1 mile an hour when he brings into play this use of an instrument of self-defense, and that's what a nightstick is supposed to be all about. It's an instrument of self-defense. And as I say I think that there has been cases that on Monday morning we look at it and say, well you should not have used this much force, but I think that a lot of times we are in a gray area; that we have to take into consideration what was happening at the time, when it was happening, who was involved, and what was the feelings of this man who does have a right to protect himself and make an arrest as a public servant. So we get back to this question of the statement that was made. I remember where it was made, I remember that it was a luncheon, and I still say that it was taken out of context. I was not given the opportunity at that time or later to expound on it. No one came to me and said, 'what do you mean by saying that you never knew a brutal policeman,' no one came for this clarification. I was never given the opportunity for that clarification that I am now making today. And so it appeared in Washington newspapers, New York newspapers, west coast newspapers that Frank Holloman says there's no such thing as police brutality is actually what was left, the impression that was left in the minds of people who were reading the story, they're saying that this guy is stupid enough to say there's no such thing and never has been such a thing as police brutality, which I did not state, and there was no way for that

to have been twisted into that except for the fact that I was not given an opportunity to explain exactly what we were talking about as far as police brutality, and that we were talking about police brutality at the time.

David Yellin: Yeah, fine. I think you've now given an explanation, and if you want to say more. What I'm concerned about, too, is why you were not given a chance to explain it. Can you explain that?

Frank Holloman: Nope. I can no more explain that than I can a lot of other things in which we have completely irresponsible, unprofessional journalists. We had them then. I guess, I know we've got them now, and I guess we'll have them in the future, just like we will have unprofessional lawyers, or doctors, or even policemen. I think that we've got some representatives of journalism and I am one of the great admirers of professional, responsible journalism, but we've got some very irresponsible and I might say that from my experience we have some viciously irresponsible journalists who desire to make a headline and although I think they're in the vast minority, because I think that generally speaking our press is very responsible. We have very responsible, professional journalists, but at the same time I think we have others who are not so, and I think those are the ones who will take something like this without trying to get both sides, or try to get an explanation before the headline; and then after the headline, as we all know, that is something that can never be retrieved, regardless of what denials we may make and so forth. After the original story has been made, we may as well forget it because there's no way to correct in the minds of the public who has read the first statement to really get the correct interpretation of what was meant.

David Yellin: Along that same line, do you feel that during the strike and reporting after, and I am now including both print, and television, and radio media, that the police were given a fair shake?

Frank Holloman: As far as the local television is concerned, I think that we have in Memphis had at that time so far as I know at the present time, we have one of the most responsible news media that I've ever had contact with in Memphis. I think that our local television media is really, I'm very proud of their responsibility. As far as the national television is concerned, that is an entirely different story. I think that during the entire riots throughout the country, not only in Memphis, but for the past half a decade, I think that the national television has been completely irresponsible. I think that they have not done America a service, and I know what the answer to this would be, 'well, in what way aren't we?' I know about their time schedules and so forth, but just the expression on a commentators face will change entirely the statement that he makes, or the tone of voice that he makes.

David Yellin: The raised eyebrows.

Frank Holloman: The raised eyebrows, the smile on his face. Whereas in radio, you don't see the smile, you don't see the smirk, you don't see these facial expressions, and I think that our national commentators are guilty of this. I think that they are

nonobjective, and I'm not talking about all of them, but I'm talking about a large number of them. And from my personal experience with them, in which they have come to me and talked to me, from the questions that they ask, I know that they are not objectively seeking the facts, that they are seeking to confirm what they had already in their minds decided that they wanted that story to be.

David Yellin: In other words they have a preconceived notion.

Frank Holloman: Definitely, and I think that their personal feelings influence them to an extent. Now, I'm not indicting the national media, and I'm not indicting the national radio, television or newspapers, I'm saying there are certain elements, and I think there are still those elements who are now operating today even.

David Yellin: Now are you, without mincing words, indicating that the possibility that the charges that have been made of an eastern establishment is true essentially?

Frank Holloman: We would have to discuss and to define and delineate a little bit what the eastern establishment is. I don't think it's so much the eastern establishment as it is individuals.

David Yellin: Ah, in other words it is not a group of people who sit down at some café and determine what they do.

Frank Holloman: Right, I do not think that is true. I think that it is more or less individuals or personalities that I'm referring to, and I don't think it's generally the policy of a station let's say or a newspaper.

David Yellin: Or a network.

Frank Holloman: Or a network, and let's stay on the television right now. I don't think it's the policy of the television to take a picture of a riot situation showing a policeman clubbing an individual, but didn't show the individual's clubbing the policeman, and that I think was prevalent during the time, and I think that even some of the television networks have admitted that maybe they did not show all of the pictures that were taken, and I think a lot goes into the editing of it. And I think a lot goes into the effort on the part of the people who are administratively responsible for policy, feeling that they cannot direct their news gathering people, and their commentators, but they must give them certain leeway in order not to control the news, if you follow what I'm saying. I think that sometimes our leaders maybe lean over backwards in that respect, which results in personalities and personal feelings entering into stories that should not have been, but should have been objective. And I think that even today I think that we've seen a change that has occurred in America today in which our commentators, our national television commentators today express opinions without any question. In other words, in your newspapers your opinions are expressed on the editorial page. The news stories are supposed to reflect facts. Now, on national television and on national radio there are those who express opinions without any question. In other words there is no

gray area, it is black and white that they are expressing opinions.

David Yellin: You're not, I assume against somebody expressing opinion. Your objection is to somebody expressing opinion where there ought to be facts.

Frank Holloman: It should be labeled. It should be labeled an editorial comment, or it shouldn't be carried on the regular news half-hour. In other words if you have a -- the point I'm making is that in the newspapers they have a page that's entitled the editorial page, and they also have there the columnist who express opinions. All right, that is labeled. But when you have a 30-minute national television news time, then I think that when a person is going to express his opinion, which I think he has a right to do, they should put on like Norman Brewer's Channel 5 WMCTV in Memphis commentary by Norman Brewer, in which he's expressing an editorial opinion, and I think the same thing should carry over into national news coverage.

David Yellin: I think it's real nice of you to mention Norman Brewer at this particular point in time, as we say...

Frank Holloman: I think that Norman Brewer, and I hope that history will record this fact, that he is one of the most responsible, professional journalists, that I have ever known.

David Yellin: And apropos of the time, in a few days he's going to be leaving.

Frank Holloman: I hope he doesn't leave the news media. I hope that he stays in the news media, because I think this community or this nation needs people of his responsibility.

David Yellin: I think he will, and I hope he will, too. Fine, I need about 15 minutes more, and I have another tape, and we're doing real fine, and I think our time is just great.

END OF RECORDING