

J.P. – 1

The Memphis Riot

Editor's Note: Since I was (illegible) during the protest march that sparked the Memphis (illegible) with attempt to give the (illegible) in the march and witnessed the down town rioting at Clayborn Temple, the (illegible) for the (illegible) workers lead by civil rights (illegible) Dr. Martin Luther King, at 10 o' clock for the beginning of the march. At the time of Tom's arrival there was only about 2000 people assembled for the march. Carter noticed that there were a large number of Priests, nuns and ministers assembled out front of the (illegible). I also noticed that the liquor store in the neighborhood was during extremely good business. As time pasted [sic] the crowd grew larger and larger and by 10:30 Tom estimated the crowd to being anywhere from 10 to 15 thousand. Tom had by that time moved from the front of the line of march to the middle. As the crowd increased Tom noticed that the atmosphere was more in the nature of the carnival and that there was many young males either acting and smelling as if they had been drinking

109

J.P. – 2

By (illegible) the marchers had swelled to anywhere from 20 to 30 thousand and people by Tom's estimates (illegible) was needed for the march to begin (illegible) of Rev. King from Clayborn Temple. Around 11:15 King arrived and the march began with Tom being in around the middle of the marching line. Everything was peaceful at the start of the march, but (illegible) Tom's opinion, as soon as the middle of the line turned up Beale street some marchers closes to stores began breaking windows with the sticks that held their protest signs, at this point most of the march leaders were (illegible) at the front of the march and they hadn't realized what was happening. The march continued to move and windows was constantly being broken by the marchers that were in the middle of the march line. When the window breakers reached Pape's Clothing Store looting began. This looting rapidly spreaded [sic] to of the clothing stores and shops on Beale Street.

The line of march was continuing to move and Tom had reached Main Street and so had the looting and window breaking.

110

J.P. – 3

(illegible) march leaders realized what was happening and they immediately ordered the marchers to turn and go back to the march headquarters. When the marchers (illegible) moved back to Beale they was [sic] blocked by some of the marchers that was already on Beale looting looting looting stores. Confusion set in and when the marchers began to ignore the march leaders request to go back to the headquarters police moved in swinging sticks and spraying tear gas (illegible) some people returned with bricks, sticks and battles. Other continued to loot. Beale turned into open battle between young marchers and the police. Hate and anger was on both sides for the first time in Memphis black people

struck blow for blow with the police. The police showed extreme anger and ugliness [sic] exemplified by the many over beating of young people and the hitting of a few old people. One example was the continued beating of a already unconscious young man by a group of police shown on national television. By 12:30 Tom left the downtown scene of the riot.

111

J.P. – 4

at about 3 o'clock I personally witnessed brick throwing at cars driven by white people. This took place on Mississippi and Walker bricks was [sic] thrown at busses and one man's car windows was smashed and his face was blooded when he tried to protest the bricking of his car. In my neighborhood all of the white stores windows were smashed on Porter and looting occurred at the cleaners on Porter. I heard no gun shots during the riots and saw only three firebombs explode and they were in the housing projects garbage cans. This concludes my personal report on the Memphis riot.

112