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Jimmy Ogle, 2011

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Amanda Smith: It is July 1, 2001, and my name is Amanda Smith. We are here at Rhodes College with Jimmy Ogle. Jimmy, thank you so much on behalf of Crossroads to Freedom for sharing your story so that we can share it with others. We are honored to have you here and to hear your story.

J. McKinley-Smith: And I'm Josh Smith, and so I'm co-interviewer helping Amanda out.

Amanda Smith: Okay, so let's start out with some basic biographical information to kind of get your memory going. Can you introduce yourself, your name, where and when you were born, and your current occupation?

Jimmy Ogle: Well, my name is Jimmy Ogle, and I was born here in Memphis, Tennessee on November 14, 1952 at Methodist Hospital. In fact, I went to the newspaper, or the library not too long ago, and they said I was a boy and I was going to 1747 Peabody Avenue. I didn't have a name or anything, but I was a boy the next day. But grew up in midtown, and then, basically, our family moved out to east Memphis, what I called old east Memphis, which is the Laurelwood or White Station High School area, and –

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then eventually over to the Walnut Grove-Goodlett area in 1957, and that's basically where I spent my formative years before going to college, let's say, in the '50s and '60s, during this era we're talking about. My father was an obstetrician, Dr. Luther Curtis Ogle. My mother was a nurse. My aunt and uncle were both doctors here. My little brother is a doctor. So, I come from a long line of medical folks. But they had moved here in the '40s to come to medical school and stayed in Memphis from east Tennessee, so we have east Tennessee roots, but I'm all Shelby County, been here all my life. Lived in Memphis probably 21 different places all at a time all over – downtown, midtown, out east – but the era we're talking about was east Memphis. I went to Kiddy Kollege Kindergarten, which was KKK at the time. It says it on our picture there I still have. I have four kids I graduated from high school with in 1970 that went to that school. We did a reunion here just recently and –

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laughed about our picture at KKK. But that was at Mullins Methodist Church there at Walnut Grove and Mendenhall, and then first and second grade, public school in Memphis,

Grahamwood Elementary School. And then I guess about that time, it was getting into the early '60s and my parents wanted to have a different education than public schools, and sent me to private school, a Presbyterian Day School right there at Central [inaudible], just recently was founded by Second Presbyterian Church in the late '50s, of which I claim my only academic achievement of my life was winning the spelling bee in 1964, and then went to Memphis University School, very fortunately gone on to MUS, and graduated from there in 1970, and was a real good basketball player. I came to Rhodes College, which was at that time Southwestern at Memphis. My brother and sister had both attended here, and my coach in high school went to Southwestern, as well, Jerry Peters, and was at MUS and still is at MUS all these years.

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This will be the last year for him, 52 years of teaching there, so it was a great legacy there and a good connection with Rhodes, and I lasted two years here. Again, in my last decade [inaudible] in the '64 in the sixth grade, I wasn't a stellar student here, and then played out a couple of years and worked at First Baptist Church right over here, right across the way on Parkway in the recreational department. I went on to Memphis State University at the time. I got a degree in parks and recreation, municipal recreation was the emphasis at that time, and went to work for the Memphis Park Commission in 1979, which got me spread out all over the community, between the 6,000 acres of parklands and playgrounds and community centers, doing special events, and later moved up to deputy director of the entire bureau. Then, Mud Island, downtown, Memphis Queen Line Riverboats, Beale Street, Memphis Rock and Soul Museum, the Smithsonian Institution, where I started realizing in the early 2000s what I'd gone through in my junior high and senior high years –

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is what we're gonna talk about, so I can really see the impact of what really happened here, and in many ways how fortunate I was to be on the edge of all that, not in the middle of it but on the edge of it, and not really understanding what was really going on. When you're in junior high and senior high, you don't think about some of those issues, like you do as an adult, let's say. And so that's my lifelong Memphian background right there.

Amanda Smith: So, you talked a little bit about your parents. Can you tell us their names, when they were born and where they're from? And you said they came to Memphis, but can you kind of tell us that story?

Jimmy Ogle: Well, my father was Dr. Luther Curtis Ogle, and he was from Etowah, Tennessee, and that's way over there in east Tennessee about two-thirds of the way down from Knoxville to Chattanooga, in the mountains, right on the Hiwassee River. His father was a doctor, a country doctor out there, and my mother was from Bristol, Tennessee, Abington, Virginia/Bristol, Tennessee, right on the state line up there. State Street is the street that's –

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bisected by the state line, and so a lot of times we'd ride the overnight train, catch the overnight train and ride up in the '50s and '60s to see our grandparents in Etowah and Bristol and Abington. But they met at Knoxville. My father had gone to Maryville College, and they met in that Knoxville area, got married and then moved on down to Memphis for him to go to the medical school here in the 1940s. His brother came with him, and his brother was married to a doctor, [inaudible] the Ogle doctors there at Methodist Hospital. In fact, my Aunt Evelyn Ogle was the first female to be the president of the Memphis Medical Auxiliary Society here. That's another thing I found out in a book recently. Again, like I said, my older brother became a doctor, too. My father was a country doctor, and on my mother's side of the family, there was a doctor, I think it was James Hagey, my namesake. He delivered over 6,000 children in his lifetime and never in a hospital. He was a country doctor in Virginia. So, we do have kind of country roots as a family. My father liked –

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horses. He raised horses on a farm out in Oakland, Tennessee at the time. It was way out in the suburbs, before we had expressways and everything, and we had 300 acres out there, and a cabin and a lake, and I spent a lot of my time in the summertime out in the rural parts of west Tennessee, as much as riding my bike around the streets of Memphis, as well. But that was an interesting thing to get out in that part and still see tenant farmers, sharecroppers in the late '50s, early '60s on some of the land we had rented out, cotton [inaudible], for cotton development out there, cotton growth. I still think I have a country boy still, but I've been citified, basically, all my life, and that might lead to some of my habits I still have right now of being an adventuresome person

around the city, with my tours and things I do and explorations, and just curiosity to know more information about my city.

1st cut at [0:06:55]

Amanda Smith: You said you had two brothers, and they are older than you. Is that right?

Jimmy Ogle: No, I have an older brother and a younger brother, and I was a little Ogle. I was an older brother. Curt was two years older than I was, so I was a tagalong for him, probably a nuisance most of the time, but he's a good guy. He actually has a farm out in Rossville, Tennessee right now. He's retired from being a doctor, and he raises horses. He got that from my father, I didn't, and he stayed countrified and I stayed citified. But he went to Southwestern and graduated eventually, I think, from Memphis State and went to UT Med School and became a doctor. He was an emergency room physician here for 25 years out at the Methodist North emergency room, and has a lot of stories to tell about all the things he witnessed in there and the things that people do to people, or do to themselves sometimes in the emergency room. My younger brother is John, and we always said he was a brother from another mother. He was nine years younger than me, and just one decade removed from everybody. My sister was six years older than me, so Linda, Curt and I were kind of a little cluster, and then –

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all of a sudden here's John way down here, a little bitty kid. My father passed away when I was a senior in high school, and, of course, my sister was just graduating from college, my older brother was going through college, I was a senior in high school. December [inaudible] year, so it was a huge event in our family's existence, let's say, and now I was kind of a surrogate father/big brother to John, and that was really changed the dynamics of our whole family structure. It really transitioned it then in a time when our whole city was transitioning, or trying to transition. It was a splintered time. It wasn't a tragic time, or bad, ugly things happened in our family, I'm not saying anything like that, where we went crazy on each other, but things just started breaking up differently. We're very fortunate we all still live in this community and get together at least two or three times a month on birthdays and holidays, and all that. We go our separate ways, but we do get together, not in a forced but just kind of a planned sort of way. If there's a holiday coming up, "I think you're going –

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to Memaw's for dinner," or a birthday, We can celebrate it. So, we've stayed together closely as a family here in this Memphis area.

Amanda Smith:

So, your mother continued to work after your father's death?

Jimmy Ogle:

No, she was an RN, and then had kids and was a stay-at-home mom, and my dad was a really active physician and active in the church, First Baptist Church. I know he was the chairman of the music committee for a long time, and chairman of the activities building committee, the building program over there. From the stories I hear from people to this day, I'll go to speak to groups, like I do all the time, and I'll have a 70-year-old lady come up – 80, well, 70, I'm 58 – 80 years old, "You're Dr. Ogle's son. He had the best bedside manner," and that's just a phrase I always hear about how wonderful he was, bedside manner, it's a great term and it's one that lights me up the most, and people tell me their stories of how sweet my father –

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was, and kind and just gentle as a doctor, and that's always great to hear. I only got him for 17 years. He would tell his patients, "You can't have a baby on Tuesday or Friday night because I've got my son's basketball game," you know? And when he passed away, it was a pretty big deal, I mean it was a night when I didn't have an exam the next day, right before Christmas, and we were playing White Station that weekend, our big rival, and we were undefeated, they were undefeated. We weren't supposed to be any good. We were the last undefeated team in the city that year, and being an all-state basketball player, believe that, and so we'd gone to watch White Station play. I was with my girlfriend, who was from White Station. My dad came to the game. He was so interested in scouting the team and giving me tips, and all that, and he wanted to sit by us. I kind of wanted, you know, "Dad, I want to have a date here. I don't need a chaperone." We got home that night, and I didn't have an exam the next day, so I got to stay up and watch the Tonight Show with Johnny Carson. You know, if you weren't in bed by 10:00 –

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I rarely saw the 10:00 news, and at 12:00 the TVs went off the air and you had the Indian chief head, the symbol. It wasn't 24-hour TV then, so it was a big deal to be able to stay up and watch

Johnny Carson. You usually could only do that on a Friday night, you know? He was always going to the hospital in the middle of the night to deliver babies, and my mother came up and said, "Can you warm the car up? Your dad is going to the hospital." I went, "Okay," and went out and warmed the car up, [inaudible]. I thought it was cool I was able to back it up and back it around the driveway. He came up and reached up for his pipe on the mantel, and he just looked at me – because he always smoked a pipe – and said, "Jimmy, catch me. I'm falling," and just fell on me, and by the time he hit the floor he was gone, basically. It took about five minutes, but he had a massive heart attack.

2nd cut at [0:11:49]

So, we buried him on Thursday, and I played the game on Saturday and we won by one point, and I scored a lot of points and it was a big, emotional deal and something that a lot of people remember about me –

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and my life in Memphis, was that senior year of basketball at MUS. And there was a lot of great folks around me, too, whether it was the headmaster or teachers or coaches, or other students, and we've all reconnected through our ten-year reunions, and we had a great reunion just recently, our 40-year reunion, where we had over 80 percent participation from the Class of '70 there, so that's a pretty good number. But we re-live all these stories and talk about the times, and you hear a song on the radio or something like that, and it reminds you of that back then in the early '60s, middle '60s, and everything we were going through. So, our family, like I said, John being nine years younger and Linda six years older, and two in college and one getting ready to go and one still in grade school, and all that, it was a weird time for our family in the '70s. Of course, the '70s were just weird anyway, [inaudible] weird. But my mom went on and sold real estate for a while.

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She's still alive, by the way. She'll be 89 this year, and she's remarried in 1980 and has been remarried now for 31 years, and he's Dr. James. My stepfather is a doctor, too, so this apple did fall far from the tree, so to speak, because I was in parks and recreation and tourism all my life. But I grew up in a great environment in Memphis, Tennessee, for a little white boy in east Memphis, who

could ride his bicycle around anywhere he wanted to go, leave the bike in the front yard, leave the basketball on the driveway, the back door is unlocked. You could walk in somebody else's house, they'd walk into yours. We had two basketball goals, kind of like almost a – about the length of half-court on our driveway, but we could almost have a full-court game, so all the kids would collect down in our area to play ball, so we were popular that way, too. But to be able to live out in east Memphis, and I was equally distanced between Laurelwood, Poplar Plaza and Summer –

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Shopping Center, so I was riding a bike the whole time when there was still a train track on the [inaudible], you know, and of course, High Point Terrace, which is a little cluster of stores there. I could ride to a grocery store or soda store and get my baseball cards and my Turkish Taffy and drink my Cherry Cokes, and ride on back and check the cards out and throw the ball against the wall and play. You know, it was a great time, almost like in the movie "A Christmas Story," you know, just from those moments frozen in time, and then, as I was growing up through high school and getting into college in the '60's and the '70s started, realizing the changes and the impact that was going on around us.

Amanda Smith: So, you've described a lot of your neighborhood growing up. Can you tell us how that neighborhood has changed since you lived there when you were young?

Jimmy Ogle: None.

Amanda Smith: None?

Jimmy Ogle: None. I mean it was built in the '50s, basically. I think that part of town got annexed in 1949 or 1950 from Goodlett east out to [inaudible] Expressway. I think the annexation to Goodlett –

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was in 1929, which encompassed the University of Memphis campus area of Highland Heights, Red Acres, Normal, Buntyn, those areas. So, our city was growing out to the east, and the expressways came in in the late '60s, which really changed the whole dynamics of our whole city, because we all started down here at the river and couldn't go west over into the flood plain, so they had to grow north, south and east, and of course the natural way was to grow between the [inaudible] and go straight out east out Poplar. That's how the city grew, and we were just a part of that growth. All the churches in the middle of the century were

leapfrogging. First Baptist Church went from Linden and Lauderdale, right down there by Beale Street to Poplar and Parkway. Second Presbyterian Church went from Hernando and Pontotoc, right next to the FedEx Forum, which is Claiborne Temple, all the way out to Goodlett and Poplar. So, churches were leapfrogging out to that area. Bellevue was formed there at Bellevue, and now it's leapfrogged way on out to Appling Road, or wherever it's at. So, as the community moved away from the old part –

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and vacated the inner city, the black population came in and filled in, and you'll see a lot of the old church structures from the turn of the last century, or the 1920s and 1930s, let's say, are in-filled by black congregations, and most of the neighborhoods are. Probably the classic example of that is Stax Museum of American Soul of Music at 925 East McLemore, was actually the south side neighborhood, it was a white neighborhood in the middle of the century, and that was the Capital Theater, which was just the neighborhood theater. We didn't have the big megaplexes. We had a few big movie theaters downtown, like what's now the Orpheum. That was the Malco or the [inaudible] or the Strand, or Warner or Palace, but it sat 2,000 people, but then the neighborhood theaters started coming to get out to the neighborhoods. Well, that was one that was just converted from a theater to a recording studio. One of the greatest mixtures of blacks and whites working together in a studio in the history of our country occurred at that spot, as –

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our city transitioned out to the east and the blacks in-filled behind from the migration from the Delta after the Depression. Now I'm getting to be historical about things, but at that time, my impression was once we got age 16, you always have a friend a year or two older who always got the car before you had a driver's license. You got to ride in the backseat, sometimes you got to ride shotgun, and all that stuff, and be able to fool with the radio – and this was before FM radio, too – and drive around, and we would drive into those areas just to explore and see what it was all about, driving down Beale Street and over to west Memphis, so we were exploring kind of kids once we got the cars. But, before we had cars, we were riding the bikes all over east Memphis, but never would go into the black neighborhoods. The closest black neighborhood to me was the Lester neighborhood, or the

Binghampton neighborhood we call it now. Lester was still a high school at the time, and that was –

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probably two to three miles away to the east, and that's a little bit too far to go on a bicycle when you don't want to go there. But when you're going to an endpoint, like a nice shopping center or the five-and-dime stores and the McDonald's, and all that stuff, those were where you wanted to go, but you didn't have to go across too many big streets or through dangerous areas, or railroad tracks or industrial areas to get to where I had to go. It was very residential, and the streets were wide and very much fun to ride a bike around during that time, almost an imaginary life is the way I look back at it now.

3rd cut at [0:18:37]

Amanda Smith: Yeah. So, we talked a little bit about your education. You went to PDS and then MUS, and so I can imagine that the integration movement in Memphis did not affect you as it did public school students.

Jimmy Ogle: Oh, I'm sure it did not because, as I recall, I don't think we had a black student in either one of those schools until the '70s or '80s.

Amanda Smith: So, do you remember hearing stories, perhaps from public school students from that time, or seeing things from that time?

Jimmy Ogle: Well, my church friends were great guys, and they went to Central and White Station and East, and it was happening slowly. I mean it didn't just happen right off the bat in 1960. I couldn't tell you the exact dates when city schools really started to merge and become one district, but I do recall hearing stories. I do recall seeing white and colored water fountains at the fairgrounds, or white and colored restrooms, and I never really rode a bus when I was a kid but I've seen signs of that down at the Greyhound station, and since, I've heard stories of why the public swimming pools were closed, because they were trying to desegregate the city, but the park commission plan and the school plan and the library plan just wasn't going fast enough and the Supreme Court had to intervene. So, there were some closed areas for a couple of summers, it seems like, and so we went to the country club or –

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to Maywood, or some other place like that to swim, or some folks, they'd have swimming pools in the backyard. We never did. We just had a big basketball court. But my publicly educated, Memphis city school educated – Central, East, White Station – had slow integration. It wasn't wholesale and it wasn't 50/50 or 70/30. What is it, 90/10 now, I think, black to white ratio? It was a slow process over a few years. I can recall, I think it was in the tenth grade – well, actually, it was in the ninth grade, when I was a junior high basketball player, I played against my first black kid –

Amanda Smith: So, how was that?

Jimmy Ogle: – as a basketball player. Well, he was pretty good. He played for [inaudible] and then went on to Germantown, twice that year, and there was another one at Millington that later went to CBU. We played against each other in college. My brother is still a friend with him today, David Terrell. But we were kind of like, "Wow," you know?

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And then, in the tenth grade, I got to play as a sophomore on the varsity, and we were down to the district tournament and that's when the athletics were starting to integrate more and more and more and across, and we were in the county league at the time, MUS was, which they had White Haven, Oak Haven, Westwood, Germantown, Millington, Bolten, Collierville, but it still was the white leagues, they still had the Negro leagues, is what they called it. But we'd start mixing in the district tournament, and I believe it was Geeter [inaudible], G-E-E-T-E-R, was a high school down in south Memphis that we played against. It was either Geeter or Woodstock, and boy that whole team came out there and we went, "Wow, all black kids," you know? But I think we won the game. I mean we held our own, and I think there was some intimidation factor, and it was a whole different style of basketball, for sure. I was a real student of basketball. I was a Boston Celtics and Philadelphia '76'ers –

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fan, and I got to meet Bill Russell in the 2000s in San Antonio. I was a clock keeper, and boy did I scare him [inaudible] stories. In fact, when I became my senior year in high school, I was greatly impacted by Melrose and watching Larry Finch and Ronnie Robinson – Larry Finch, who recently passed away – and one of the great healers of our community that will maybe never be healed, but he was one of those guys who helped get us close

together, for sure, in his efforts to stay in Memphis and be a part of the Memphis community, and not go elsewhere and leave town like some other players did. I mean he fought a few wars for a lot of folks, very hard-headed about it, and Ronnie Robinson, I got to work at the park commission with Ronnie, too, and that was Larry and Ronnie, you know, Little Tubby and the Big Cat when they went to Memphis State and got us to the Final Four and Final Two against UCLA. But I watched Melrose play in those two – he was a year older than me, and just their style of basketball.

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We were what we called slow, two-handed, white boy basketballs on defense, you know, [inaudible] the shot clock or anything, and they were running the gun, I mean they were pro basketball and they were really good, and we actually followed them to the state tournament, to Nashville, to watch them play in the state tournament, but they had the black tennis shoes, like the Celtics. And so in my senior year in high school, I got voted captain; I wasn't even gonna play that year. I was kind of burned out from being a kid all my life and said, "I'm just tired of basketball," but they voted me captain and so I said, "Well, I gotta play." But one of the things I got to do is select the shoe we got to wear, and so we selected black Converse to be like the Melrose Golden Wildcats or the Boston Celtics, and we had blue shorts and red shirts. We looked like the Harlem Globetrotters out on the court, but we had a little swagger to ourselves, and all of a sudden we won our first 23 games. It was a real surprise season, a real breakthrough season, I think, for the school. We actually went from being owls to being buzzards that year, and the administration let us kind of do that.

So a nickname, a separate nickname they carry on now and we reconstituted it at the school last year, with a new big buzzard banner, or a portrait in the gymnasium, and us 50-, 60-year-old guys are going back leading pep rallies for the students in the chapel program, but just a school spirit thing. So, playing in the athletics and playing in mixed leagues, because again, up until probably '65-'66, there weren't mixed leagues, not in church leagues, not in recreational leagues, really, or community center leagues, and it was not until the late '60s is when we started integrating athletics in the teams participating against each other.

4th cut at [0:24:44]

I remember Colonel Linn, who was our headmaster at Memphis University School, a longtime, great headmaster, that there was a

couple of times we'd have a – we'd always have a chapel program, or a general assembly [inaudible] different schools. We called it chapel because it was in the chapel, which is an auditorium –

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it's not a chapel, but anyway, he on several occasions would caution us how we were to act as a student body at the games when there's black players on the court, whether it was a single black player, like Melvin Henderson in Germantown, or a whole team. I mean there were hateful things going on, obviously, in the community at sporting events, believe it or not, people saying words and names and trying to get under other people's skin as part of the advantage. There were, obviously, hateful people, and still are and always will be, and that segment always comes out in sports because sports kind of brings the juice out in people that, as fans, makes them turn a little bit crazy. I don't understand it to this day, of why they get so rabid and hateful against an opponent and a team, but when you're in high school athletics in a very sensitive time – I think it's less sensitive now than it was back in the '60s because we were burning cities in the '60s, and stuff like –

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that, and breaking store windows and all that. We weren't, but it was happening, so it was a more incendiary time, I think, at that time trying to fight through it all and understand it; probably something that will never be understood forever. But there have been a lot of valiant attempts by courageous people and good hearted people, whether it's politicians or church leaders or civic leaders, over the last 30 to 40 years that continue to be around that try to pass the torch to make it work in our community in better ways. Some things are socially engineered, and that's difficult, and some things just happen, you know? And I think, in my experience on the athletic fields, and being an administrator in athletics, and then being a museum person and see it from the music point of view, that sometimes the best things just happen; you can't engineer it, and maybe I can tell some of those stories later on. But we're back in the '60s, during my high school days of going through things, and it was just –

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kind of a wild thing, and we read about it in the paper the next day and looked at the box stores. Everybody is the same color in the box score, you know? And just really enjoyed it and really respected what was going on from a competitive and an athletic

point of view, and never really regarded as a racial thing at all. It's surprising to me, looking back on it now, how our guys handled it collectively. Of course, my center was a 6'7" Mexican-American guy, so it wasn't like he was a snowflake like me, is what we used to call it. So, we had tolerance, and we had leaders and teachers and a headmaster that tried to tell you the proper thing to do growing up in the gentlemanly way, you know?

Amanda Smith: So, you talked a little bit about your church. Can you tell us what church you went to and how involved you were?

Jimmy Ogle: Well, I went to First Baptist –

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Church, which is at Poplar and Parkway, and Dr. R. Paul Caudill was a long-time pastor there, and he was just like on the mountain all the time. He wore the white suite, and he was just a vision [inaudible] kids, and we were very fortunate to have a congregation of I guess about 4,000 people, but –

Amanda Smith: Wow.

Jimmy Ogle: – about 2,500 active over there. If you look at the campus now, it's a big building, and back during the '60s, there was a large movement in the – it was a Southern Baptist church – a Southern Baptist convention for church recreation, the family that plays together, prays together, stays together type of things, so church recreation became a huge deal, and we, in 1964, opened an activities building over there on the campus, and it had a gymnasium, bowling lanes, racquet ball court, TV room, game room, arts and crafts room. So, we had a facility that lent itself to programming, just like a community center did, but it had a professional –

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staff onboard that also programmed activities for all ages, from day camps for kids to youth camps to choir mission tours, to residential camps like at Chickasaw State Park twice a year – which was another two weeks out of my life every summer, was in Chickasaw State Park – to senior citizens [inaudible] at the LLL Club, athletic programs. We grew up in just a great family environment, because it was families coming in on Friday night for potluck suppers, and there'd be 400 people there, crammed all over the place and bringing the potlucks, and the skating in the gym, and it was just a place to go. We went to the church community center, or the church-oriented community center that the church monitored and

had, and wanted to steer people in the Christian recreation and wholesome activities. You know, the family that plays together, prays together, stays together, and we were so lucky.

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The great leaders – Bob Dixon and Bob Cessons and Leon Mitchell, and of course, Dr. Caudill, founded that. Dr. Earl Davis was the subsequent pastor in '75. After I fumbled through Southwestern for a couple of years, my first real employed job was being a janitor in a church gymnasium at First Baptist Church, getting to sweep the floor, and since we had four bowling lanes, I got to be a bowling machine mechanic. How I still have all my fingers, I don't know. But then, became a coach and a day camp counselor, and then a day camp director and then a camp director, and then the activities building, where I had the keys to the building, the alarm codes, and I opened and closed. I ran the building and scheduled teams and scheduled referees and all that with other churches, so that's how I got into all the recreation aspects of my life. Rather than being an athletic person, I was a recreation person. And we went on canoe trips and camping trips, and just a wide – I mean, how much fun is that, you know? And then, finally, discovered that's what I want to do as a –

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career, and that's why I got into parks and recreation, which eventually morphed into tourism in Memphis for 35 years, but you couldn't have asked – I'm one of the luckiest guys in the world, I can tell you that right now, because it was a doctor's family, who was a Christian man, well respected in the community, wealthy enough.

5th cut at [0:31:20]

Wasn't crazy wealthy, or anything like that, but our father spent time with his children. Even with all of his heavy schedule, he'd be out in the backyard encouraging us to throw a baseball, be in there with us, be the catcher, showing us how to pitch. He was a coach of the team. In fact, my mother, we'd always have a little area where we'd play in the backyard with the hard ball, and of course the house was the backstop. Of course, the window was right behind us, so we'd break a window about once every month. My mother would be so mad because it was a foul ball, but my dad would just laugh at her and say, "Fix the window. Get it fixed. Don't worry about it." He wanted us in the yard playing together, you know, he didn't care, and was very supportive.

Our group in that church, I still see some of the parents that are still alive and thank them for what they did, and always mention some of the times we had with their children, and we were just lucky, just really lucky on that, and then to go to Memphis University School, of all the little stumbles and trips I've had in my life, I look back and I say, "How could I do that?" with all the breaks I was given to start out with, you know, how could I have messed up in some of the places I messed up, and made some of the decisions I made. But then, being able to stay on my two feet and have good jobs, and do a lot of important things with the city makes me appreciate all that, my background during that time, and my upbringing. I was a lucky guy.

Amanda Smith:

So, before we move in to talking about the Civil Rights era, can you tell us a little bit about your family now? I understand you have a son, is that right?

Jimmy Ogle:

I do. He's 32 years old. He's Jimmy Mack. I'm James –

[0:33:00]

McAllister Ogle, so he's Jimmy Mack, and he lived in Knoxville, Tennessee. We were married for nine years and divorced, and in fact, I married the minister of music's daughter from the church, had a great voice, and she got remarried real quick and moved to Knoxville when he was five years old, so I've done a lot of commuting to Knoxville back and forth. She's since re-divorced, but we remain friends, if you can say that in divorce, but our goal was not to make the transition, when I go pick him up to bring him to Memphis, or vice versa, nothing transpired in front of him. If we had differences, we'd talk about it on the phone or in private, so we always had good swaps, let's say. And then our families, her father sang at my father's funeral, and my father helped get him employed at that church; he was on the music search committee. So, our families, through their children's difficult times, remain great friends, and there's times now when sometimes I'll fly to Knoxville –

[0:34:00]

and she'll pick me up at the airport, so that's lucky. So, if you can have a patched up relationship, that's good. Well, my son has lived in Knoxville, 400 miles from me, all my life, basically, and I have a granddaughter now, too, who'll be three years old. But he's carried on some of the personality of me and his mother; he had a good voice and had a music scholarship to East Tennessee, but he morphed on into IT, and now he's a mobile DJ. I guess it's Ogle

Entertainment, and Ogle is a big name up in east Tennessee. There's a whole lot of Ogle up there in those cabins up in the Smokey Mountains, my great-great-great-great-great-grandparents, and all that. But he has three or four guys working for him, and they do the weddings and the receptions on Friday nights and Saturday nights, and all these parties and fireworks shows and lighting shows, so he's got a good little business going on up there. I'm real proud of him, and I'm real happy for him to live in Knoxville, Tennessee, and his wife's family is all up there and living in the neighborhood near them, and so the granddaughter has a lot of good love and support up there –

Amanda Smith: That's great.

[0:35:00]

Jimmy Ogle: – and every time I go visit, I do make the rounds most of the time to see the grandparents, and we all get together, even though [inaudible] divorced side of the family, [inaudible], you gotta bury some of that stuff later on, and still man up and be friends, and they are loving people. And, like I say, you make decisions and make – [inaudible] fork in the road in your life, you sometimes go one way, but those folks never leave you. If they really love you, they really love you and support you. So, again, I'm really proud of my son, Jimmy Mack.

Amanda Smith: That's great. So, I would love to hear about what you saw and heard during the periods from 1950s to 1970s, concerning racial issues in Memphis. I understand that you were very young at the time, but are there any stories in particular that you would like to share from that time period?

Jimmy Ogle: Well, I think about the '50s, first off, and my biggest memories when I look back now was all those black ladies getting off the bus in their white outfits, because –

[0:36:00]

it seems like a lot of the homes in our area had maids, and they were all black ladies that lived in the inner city and rode the bus out to east Memphis, and our maid was Irene, and she was as much a part of the family as anything. This throws you back 100 years ago into the plantation days, and *Gone With The Wind*, and all that stuff. It wasn't like that, and there's still, I'm sure, homes in Memphis, white homes that do have black maids, or yard men, you know? We always had George and we always had Irene, and that was just part of our family, and we would go down and visit Irene

in south Memphis at Christmastime, and she took as much care of us as our mother did. My mother wasn't out socializing or playing golf or running around all the time, but just the needs of running the household at the time, and I guess that was just a way of society in our country, or in the south in the '50s and '60s, just that's the way it was –

[0:37:00]

[inaudible] a lot of the more well-to-do folks out in east Memphis did have, and it wasn't every day. It was a couple days a week, maybe Tuesday and Friday, or something like that, but Irene knew how to make my peanut butter and jelly sandwich just right, and stuff like that. She knew as much about me – she probably whipped me more than my mother did, too, you know, [inaudible] the trouble I'd get into out there catching bees and bringing them into the house or something, you know, like I'd get in trouble all the time. But it was a very important part of our life, and, of course at the church, at the time, Dr. King is the one that said the most segregated hour of America is 11:00 on Sunday morning.

Amanda Smith:

Right.

6th cut at [0:37:39]

Jimmy Ogle:

I think that's one of his great phrases, and I can recall that we did have some black folks working in the church, but they weren't janitors, they were porters, and there's different names for it, and stuff like that, helpers. But in our neighborhood, you would kind of almost see the bus stop was there, like at Walnut Grove and –

[0:38:00]

Goodlett, and there'd be a lot of, you know, whatever, the 8:00 in the morning bus coming in, and there'd be four or five folks getting off and they'd spread out and fan out to the neighborhood, and walk somewhere. It was a ritual every day, and you knew the neighbors' maids name, as well, too, because they're the one that let you in the house to watch their TV when you weren't allowed to watch [inaudible]. You're grounded over here, but they didn't know over there [inaudible] to go watch TV in the afternoon, or something. But that was probably the first impression of – it wasn't a surrogate mom, or anything like that. It was just a part of our family, but if you look back at it now, it was a part of our segregated society, and household and neighborhood growing up, and of course the yard man. The yard man never could come into the house, though. The maid could go anywhere she wanted to go,

because she was cleaning and doing all that. She folded clothes and put them in drawers, and cleaned bathrooms, [inaudible] bedrooms, and all that stuff, but the yard man stayed out in the yard, and –

[0:39:00]

sometimes drank from the hose. Sometimes I drank from the hose, because it was good, you know, that wasn't a big deal there, but I guess it was just the rules, I guess. He would come to the back steps to get his glass of ice water and sit on the steps, and maybe because he was sweaty and dirty and all that, and didn't want to come in the house and track things up, too. But that always seemed a little bit odd to me that George always stayed in the backyard and never came inside and played with us, you know, because we'd take anybody to play with us. And then, I can remember in the church, and I think this was later on in the '70s, when we had the first black family come to join First Baptist Church, and I won't say the name. I don't think it's an insult to anybody because they're a dear, sweet family. It's the Futrail family, and their sons were basically my little brother's age. I was on staff, so this was in the '70s, but Stella Futrail was the mother's name, and she sang in the choir, and that was kind of a big deal. Here's all the white folks sitting there, and, of course, I had the luxury in the church of seeing it from a different point of view. Our church was very heavy into the Chinese –

[0:40:00]

population in Memphis at that time. I think there was like 1,200 Chinese living in Memphis at the time. We had a Chinese pastor, Reverend Chee Wu –

Amanda Smith:

Wow.

Jimmy Ogle:

– and we had a service on Sunday afternoons, like at 2:00, and my wife was like the minister of music. It was a Cantonese and a Mandarin service, but they still had to sing American songs. But we had a thing where we had a school bus, and we'd go around and pick up some of the kids on Sunday morning and bring them to the Sunday morning service to kind of Americanize them. And we'd go into the black neighborhoods with the bus, because a lot of the Chinese stores are in the black neighborhoods, and bring them into our church as a mission, so to speak, and try to integrate Chinese into Memphis and into our religion, and I could look into those homes and see the grandparents of the Chinese basically are 100 percent Chinese. They just spoke –

[0:41:00]

Chinese and kind of waved at you, because they didn't understand a word you were saying hardly, but the parents were about 50/50. They could speak fluent Chinese, they could speak broken English, and then the kids my age and younger were about 90 percent American and 10 percent Chinese. [inaudible] seemed like they were very comfortable with the language, and I see quite a few of those guys still around, but about 10 percent. So, you can see in that three-span generation there, and the Chinese coming into America in Memphis, in the south here, what it was like mentally and image-wise. Well, you can kind of look at that, our grandparents, my grandparents and great-grandparents, grew up in a time where it was just hard, you know, segregation, and our parents started melting that down in the '50s and '60s. So, I can see the progress and the change that made over three generations just by seeing, "Well, here's Chinese-speaking 100 percent, zero, 50/50, and then 90/10." It changed like that, and I –

[0:42:00]

kind of parallel that to the black community. So, it was usually the ones that were older that grew up institutionally, it was their way of life that society stayed separated, whether it's in church or in the country club or in the shopping center, anywhere – golf courses, restaurants, anywhere – and it started breaking down and we started getting together [inaudible] my parent's age. Now, my age, now our kids' age, think nothing of it hardly, I don't think, but what they hear, and then there are still hate mongers on both sides –

Amanda Smith:

Of course.

Jimmy Ogle:

– trying to stir things up for their own advantage nowadays. If we could kind of [inaudible] some of those people, I think we could smooth things out a little bit more in our community.

7th cut at [0:42:45]

The Chinese thing, I was a coach of a Chinese softball, an adult softball team, and I fielded a whole team of Chin's, Chow's and Chu's, and Chu was spelled three different ways. But what a great group of folks it was that was totally different from me, but they were Chinese or they were Asian, let's say, and not black, and black was different than being Chinese, but to go through some of that and trying to understand it from that point of view, and to learn some of the language and culture and traditions, and that church has grown as a big Chinese church, the First Baptist

Church. I think it's out in the Cordova area now. They've grown on and left that church, but it just showed it from a different parallel deal, rather than just growing up black and white. It was black, white and Chinese for me, because I was intricately involved with them. We had the Chinese fellowship night at the church on Tuesday nights, and the volleyball leagues and bowling, and all this stuff, and it was just kind of a different way to see it. So, when the Futrail's were brought to membership for the church, there was actually people that said no. Normally, when you to church and somebody is just [inaudible] the Baptist Church, "All in favor, say I," and half the time they don't even say, "All opposed?" They just welcome them on into the – but I can remember that day, it was kind of a tense day at the church, and there was actually some opposition, but it passed anyway.

[0:44:00]

Just to actually have that happen in a place where arms are supposed to be all wide open, and it wasn't that the folks that said no, for whatever reason – I'm not in their heads why they said no, but a hundred years ago they didn't know any difference. That was the way of the world. That's just the way it was, and we didn't know the difference or didn't try to know the difference, and it took a century to melt some of that down. It's still melting. But that was a memory there, so from the athletics and playing against black basketball players, and having great competition, and then having their respect, as well, and then still seeing people to this day that remember that, and seeing some of the coaches. Verdy Sales was the coach at Melrose my senior year. It was his first year at Melrose, and he's the only person I know of that has two gymnasiums named –

[0:45:00]

for him in Memphis, Tennessee, at Melrose and at Southwest Community College, and still one of the great coaches and legends of our time, and was on the park commission board in the '80s, and I got to connect with him, and still see him from time to time. My last game of my life was in 1970. My last high school game was against B.T.W. on March 2, 1970, and Bill Little was the coach of B.T.W. Well, I keep the clock at the Tiger basketball games now, and he sits right behind me, covering it for the *Tri-State Defender*, and every time I turn around and talk to him and tell somebody new how mean he was, "They kept the ball away from us. They beat us 58-43, and those black kids just dribbled the ball and ran real fast, wouldn't let us have it and play, they weren't fair, they just cheated us," you know, and he just laughs and loves the

attention. He's a longtime coach, too, but we still connect back to those days as being good memories, the people we see nowadays, and laugh and joke, and having the luxury of going through the park commission in the '70s and '80s –

[0:46:00]

and working with a lot of folks in the community centers, the park commission, the summer gyms at the high schools were used for recreation centers in the summer because they're not used by the school. So, you had a facility, so let's pay the coaches to be the gym directors, open the gyms, that's a summer gym program, so I got to know a lot of those coaches. Well, back in the '80s, I was stringing for the commercial field part-time at night covering basketball games. So, since I knew all the black coaches, the staff of the commercial field would send me to North Side at Carver, or Hamilton at Melrose, and they'd go out to ECS [inaudible], you know? That's okay, but like Mr. [inaudible] would say, I'll be the only snowflake in the joint. But they knew me, not a problem, treated very well; I actually covered a murder one time at a basketball game –

Amanda Smith:

Wow.

Jimmy Ogle:

– [inaudible] and the commercial field couldn't find a black reporter to find Hamilton, so I had to go down there and give the interview. It was kind of weird, but that's not about this now. But you –

[0:47:00]

get into the community, you get known by your deeds and not by your color, it works both ways, and people respect each other both ways, and, again, I was fortunate to be one of those little, I won't say naïve, but just trusting type of guy, because I've been held up twice in my life, at a gas station and at a convenience store here in Memphis, and in the streets and stuff, and had crime in my life, living downtown and other places, so it's not like I'm too naïve or too insulated that I was Forrest Gump and nothing happened to me, you know? But those things happened, and we still, I mean I don't blame the whole race for it or anything –

Amanda Smith:

Of course.

Jimmy Ogle:

– and they don't blame me for what I do. And when I got to college here at Southwestern in 1970, we'd go on road trips, and my road roommate was Ralph Allen, who was a black kid from

Tech who played track, and I think he played football here, too, but he played basketball during that time. So, I had a black –

[0:48:00]

roommate when we did the road trips here, not that that was really weird or different, but I was the only guy with a black roommate the whole time, and maybe it was because I was a freshman and the other guys didn't want to. I don't know, but it didn't seem to be an issue. But I just recall I was just one of those guys that had that on the road, and we became good friends. In fact, I think his sister worked for my sister for a long time in the [inaudible]. Ralph passed away a couple of years ago, but what a great guy he was, you know? So, as Dr. King says, it's not the color of the skin, it's the content of the character, and that works both ways, and there were hard times. I did hear racial slurs, and I'm not gonna be that naïve. Not directed at me, obviously, but I've heard other people, you know, witnessed it and hated seeing it.

8th cut at [0:48:47]

I guess we need the next question.

Amanda Smith:

So, did you perceive when you were younger that there was extra stress in your family because of the political racial issues that were going on at the time, or was your family a little more removed from that?

Jimmy Ogle:

Well, no, I think they were adjusted to it. Not removed and there's no real stress. I do not recall having, like if there were dinners, my parents would plan bridge parties, and stuff like that when I was in junior high, or elementary/junior high, in that stage, it was all white families coming into our house. I can't recall mixed couples, or not mixed, but a black and white couple coming in, or I didn't have friends at the church or at my school at the time that were black that I would have a sleepover, or anything like that, whereas probably my son did, you know? So, that didn't happen in our household, but there was no pressure against or animosity. People were treated as people. My parents were cool. My parents were good people, living at the end of a –

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society that was changing, and they were tolerant people and appreciative people, and let us do our thing, didn't tell us, "No, you can't do this because that's a black person," or, "No, you can't go there because there's gonna be black people there," or whatever, or colored, whatever the right term was, because there were several

terms being used at the time, and now I think we're all African-American for the most part. When I give tours nowadays, I go right off the bat and tell folks, "I'm not gonna say Native American, I'm gonna say Indian. I'm not gonna say African-American, I'm gonna say black," because when you're talking a lot, you just don't need all those syllables, and if Rufus Thomas can say Sam Phillips was looking for a white man who could sing black music when he found Elvis Presley, that's good enough for me. If Rufus can do it that way, I can do it that way, and Rufus was one of my first contacts with a black person, really. It was in the middle '60s, and we had a gentleman running for student council president at our school –

[0:51:00]

and somehow they were always putting on skits trying to outdo each other, who could be cooler, well that makes them a better student council president if they had a better skit, I guess, or promotional campaign, or whatever. And I recall I think he came in on a helicopter. They brought Rufus Thomas in on a helicopter to perform, like "Walking the Dog" on the chapel stage there. Well, how wow was that? And it turns out the kid running was named Bill Ferguson, and of course Rick Ferguson was his older brother, who was a previous student council [inaudible], but [inaudible] that it was Burt Ferguson, who, in 1948 in Memphis, he and John Pepper created the first all-black formatted radio station in the world here, WDIA, right down there at 112 Union Avenue. So, they did have access to people like that. [inaudible] King was a DJ there; Rufus was. It was a goodwill station, did a lot of community work, and the concerts and stuff, so they had access to stars like that. To this day, nobody realized how big a star Rufus Thomas was. He's the world's oldest teenager, but he knew W.C. Handy, he had his first hit at –

[0:52:00]

Sun, first hit at Stax, and nobody can say that, and then has an amphitheater named for him in Italy and a festival over there. A lot of these Stax artists were more famous in Europe and on the California coast than they were in this area. Again, they weren't generally real popular in the Memphis area, but they were just Beatle mania type famous in Europe, and Rufus, wearing the hot pants and singing the quirky songs, I mean "Walking the Dog" was a jump rope tune. You know, it wasn't some serious song, but it was just a cool beat, a funky beat, and that's what that was all about. And to have Rufus come in and do his Rufus Thomas thing, and the way he looked, it was just really cool. I can't realize the

impact of that until 35 years later, when I recall that happening, when I met Rufus again in 2000. I mean I met him a couple times in the '90s and stuff, but just on a stage briefly, but when I started running the Memphis Rock and Soul Museum, he was in there about once a week, because he was proud, and he was in a museum and he was on the video, and –

[0:53:00]

he wanted to bring people in, and I said, "C'mon, I'll listen to your stories all the time," and I picked up a lot of stories from him. But to be able to touch with him 40 years later, after my childhood of seeing him being one of the – he was the guy that stood up in the L.A. Coliseum at White Stacks, you know, it was in '72, and said, "You know, 100,000 folks here and nobody's been shot yet?" you know, and just said bold things like that, but it's a telling thing, though, you know? And just to have him, who did the Midnight Rambles, and he emceed the amateur hour that helped discover B.B. King down there, and helped him grow his career, just to see a pioneer like that. In fact, I bought his last birthday cake of his life. [inaudible] Ellis' son had come and was just wanting somebody to help with the – I think it was his 80th birthday, or something like that. It was at Black Diamond, and I said, "Yeah, I can [inaudible] sponsor the cake. We'll sponsor something," to help with the party, and they got –

[0:54:00]

one of those cakes – at that time, this was cutting edge technology, to put somebody's face on the cake, you know, you can screen it on there. It's probably easy to do now, but we did that, and he liked it so much [inaudible] I said, "Rufus, I'm gonna buy cake for you for the rest of your life," birthday cake, but he died before the next birthday. But we had that type of relationship by then, and, again, to me, that's kind of Forrest Gump-y, you know, of how lucky can I be to have seen this guy being a legend in the '60s as a black man and a performer all over the world, to buying a birthday cake for him 40 years later, and realizing that these kids I was growing up with, their parents were some of the people that were the pioneers, like Burt Ferguson was with WDIA.

9th cut at [0:54:39]

Amanda Smith:

So, tell us a little bit about entertainment, maybe for people your parent's age during this time. Where did they go for entertainment? Was it Beale Street or Overton Square?

Jimmy Ogle:

Well, Overton Square wasn't around. Well, Overton Square didn't start until the '70s, and so that would have been my maybe brother or sister, but in the '50s and '60s –

[0:55:00]

I think a lot of them went to the country clubs, and we were not a drinking family or a nightclub family at all. We were a be-at-home family, do-everything-together family, or go-out-to-the-farm-together family, or go to horse shows in other cities. I mean we stayed together pretty much as a family unit, and it seemed like our primary source of entertainment was the church and the recreation program, and all the leagues and camps and parties there. I know they went to some of these dinners and balls and fundraising balls, and things like that at the Peabody Hotel, but my parents were always at home, always with the kids, and never out socializing that much, except once or twice a month, it seemed like, or had bridge clubs and they went to other people's houses. But they weren't going out – of course, now families – so, they were in their 40's and we were in our formative years, –

[0:56:00]

you know, but what would a couple that was 25 years old and have no kids do, or 30 years old? I really couldn't tell you, and I know there were clubs out there and there were dinner clubs and facilities out, places like maybe where Elvis would go, in that area, I guess, but I never ventured to those places, even in the '70s, when I came of drinking age and all that, I didn't go. I don't think I had my first beer until I was 34 years old, so –

Amanda Smith:

[inaudible] –

Jimmy Ogle:

– well, not that it's a big deal, but it's just I was in a different environment. I wasn't circulating in that world. Again, I was activities and recreation and sports and all that, and all of a sudden, you're tired and it's time to go home. There's no time to go out, and I was doing that a lot at nights and on weekends, so I just [inaudible] didn't need it. I didn't have to have it, or that wasn't primary to me, and really, when I became the general manager of Mud Island in '85 in charge of that amphitheater, I'd been to two concerts in my life, and now I'm in charge of an amphitheater –

[0:57:00]

that's having 35 shows a year, and I saw the Fifth Dimension in 1969 at the Coliseum, and Chicago in 1977, and that's the only time I've been to a concert. So, it wasn't like I lived a sheltered life

or anything, it just wasn't an interest to me, and then, all of a sudden, it's a business to you. You gotta be knowing and learning, so a little fast learning curve there, but I mean I listen to music and listen to the radio. I used to ride my bike over to Poplar Tunes, or it was called Pop Tunes at the time, on Summer, next to the peanut shop there, and buy the 45's and had the George Klein [inaudible], and I was sitting there worshipping George Klein and his Top 40 list from WHBQ in the '60s. And all those new songs would come in, whether it be James Brown or Otis Redding come in, the Beatles and the Elvis' and all that, and the British invasion, or Sam the Sham and "Wooly Bully" in '64. I bought his record, and 40 years later I'm in that same building, which is now a Baskin Robbins, and Sam walks in, we're friends from the Rock and Soul, and he buys –

[0:58:00]

me an ice cream cone. I spent .27 cents buying a record of his in 1964 that became number two in the country, "Wooly Bully," that year. But George Klein, when I got involved with the Rock and Soul Museum here 40 years later, one of my best friends and one of the great storytellers, and I got to host him on book signings and appearances. I got to be his Ed McMahon, and like you're doing me, asking questions, let him talk to the audience and shape some of the questions coming in, and help with his book signings and hear all his stories, and then look back, that guy, what he's [inaudible] like, being Elvis' right-hand guy all those years, and what Elvis went through pioneering wise, it's just amazing I get to meet these people and hear those stories now, and say, "Well, I heard about all that back then and didn't realize what I was going through," and now I get to meet all these people, and it's Al Green or it's Isaac Hayes at the book signing, you know, the folks that really did it back then that I was sitting way away from in my house and home listening to it on the radio, or watching it on TV, and worshipping, so –

[0:59:00]

to speak, and memorizing all their songs and stuff because music was a big aspect of all that in the '60s. And now, 40 years later, I get to be somebody who gets to interpret all that and be in charge of it. It's really cool.

10th cut at [0:59:12]

Amanda Smith:

So, what was your perception of the sanitation strike and Martin Luther King's assassination? You were in high school at that time,

so kind of of your community and your family, what was the perception of those things?

Jimmy Ogle:

Well, those trucks would come down and pick up our trash. Of course, we didn't have the green monsters like [inaudible]. The barrels would be back in the back of the driveway. They'd haul them out and put them in the garbage trucks, and I remember vaguely hearing about that. I was in the tenth grade, that was '68, and that spring, we had several things you could do in our school, they had trips you could go on, when seventh and eighth grade, or ninth grade went to the Sugar Bowl, rode the train down to the Sugar Bowl, two nights and three days in New Orleans, see museums and stuff and hanging out. Tenth grade, they offered a trip to New York City. I think senior year, they could –

[1:00:00]

take a trip to England. I mean you had to pay for it and all this stuff, but there was a teacher coordinating it. And that spring, it was right at spring break, I know Dr. King had come to town [inaudible] February [inaudible] March, and we were hearing a little bit about it, that there was gonna be a strike, and the garbage wasn't gonna get picked up, and we went, "Oh, wow," and then we had our exam week that week and it was right before spring break, and it snowed 14 inches or something like that the day before we were supposed to fly to New York. I remember getting to New York, and there was green grass in Central Park. It was like – the snow had just come through the south, one of those weird storms. And so we got back, and they had had a march, or were having a march that was broken up. I know a lot more about that march now than I did then, but I remember the march being broken up, and I remember the curfew, they were gonna have a curfew. And then all of a sudden, I remember tanks on Beale Street, and that was just weird, the National Guard being called out, and then of course, later on, in the summer of '68, when you had the fires in –

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Detroit and L.A. at Watts, and the Kennedy assassination, the country kind of burned during that summer, and that was my tenth grade year, a very impressionable year. It was right after Sergeant Pepper's had come out, you know, and all the hippie movement, and all that stuff, which we heard the music, but I never was involved in any of the other things, like going to festivals or stuff like that. We just loved listening to the music, and then, of course,

the King assassination, and of course I heard that on TV. I think it was like a break in, like between 6:00 and 7:00 that night, or maybe later on. I just remember them coming in and we being at home, and the family kind of getting into the den, and they were interviewing some people on TV on the streets. It's not like you had the technology now, when you see the trucks out and you see people interviewing all the time. But, obviously, it was a very stressful and unusual time in our city, and we went to the hard curfew again, and people would get on TV and you'd just see crazy interviews with citizens saying anything, –

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"Well, all these black folks are gonna come down to Walnut Grove and start burning down houses," you know, from the Lester community, you know, "Don't go out. Stay in your house." It's like we were frozen for several days there. Nobody knew what was gonna happen, and I think Miss King came back and led the march, before he was buried, to city hall to complete the march that was broken up, because King had done that. I think it was March 28 when the last march of his life was that got broken up, and he came back. There was a court order that said he couldn't march, and he was waiting that out when he gave the last speech of his life here in Memphis, Tennessee, "I've been to the mountaintop." You would see news reels that week, and it was almost like the Kennedy assassination week [inaudible] John Kennedy, JFK. It was only three TV stations and maybe the PBS station, there wasn't a whole lot of options on TV, and everybody was covering that, and we were the folks that were pretty much glued to the TV, too. So, the whole King assassination was pretty much covered, and they had footage of, "I've been to the mountaintop," and I remember those images of those speeches, and, again, –

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it kind of affected me. It didn't impact me at all. It probably affected me like being outside in cold weather and you didn't have a coat on, and it's cold, and you have that feeling, and then it wears off, and of course it did wear off to us kids. It didn't wear off to our community for a long time, if it hadn't worn off yet, because Memphis was greatly scarred by that event in '68. Here's Dr. King, who wasn't from Memphis, from Atlanta in Memphis, James Earl Ray who wasn't from Memphis, stalked him, could have shot him anywhere, almost – Birmingham, Atlanta, somewhere else – but it happened in Memphis. So, these two outside factors came in and bloodied Memphis, and just as naïve as I was back then, my little

brother, nine years younger than me, one of his best friends I used to carpool is Hampton Sides, who recently wrote the book, *Hellhound on the Chase*, about James Earl Ray.

[1:04:00]

That's how small a world it is, but I was carpooling this ten-year-old kid around who's actually one of the leading authors in the country now about this. So, you don't know how it impacts people. Hampton has a lot of dramatic stories about that, too, when he tells about it in his book and some of his interviews, but it wore off of us. I mean we went on about our way in the summer of '68, you know, as kids, playing basketball in the gyms and riding the bikes around, and then getting automobiles to drive, and then our schools were getting more and more integrated. But then, we had the busing that came in in '73 or '74 that really splintered or fractured the school system, I think, when all the churches opened up the church schools, whether it was Briar Crest or ECS or Towering Oaks. There was a whole lot of – it seemed like it was almost Baptist-driven

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– church schools that opened in '73 and '74, the middle of the '70s, because they just didn't want their kids bused ten miles away. They wanted the kids to walk to their neighborhood schools. I never have understood the experiment of busing, because neighborhood schools seems like that's the best idea for everybody, and I know people that lived in the Kingsbury area but they got bused to Hollywood, or on around, and all the experiences they had there. It wasn't a good situation for anybody. It was a bad experiment and a costly experiment that probably made matters worse than tried – it probably was a step back. I don't have the solution to this day of what would have been the best thing to do, as our community changed and there was the great exodus of white out of the community into South Haven or Fayette County or Tipton County, like you see now, into the suburbs. The biggest issue right now in our community is the consolidation of schools –

Amanda Smith:

Right.

Jimmy Ogle:

– to this day, 50 years later, –

[1:06:00]

which it shows you how bad it's been handled and how poorly we've done in our schools. And probably one of the biggest scars on our city is our educational process, the lack of home training

and education training, and a cycle of poverty and continuance of these things over the years to where there's crime and we have a dirty city now, and things aren't improving, or we're not getting there like we should. And you can harking this back to some of those decisions made in the '60s of how we adjusted to integrating the races, you know?

11th cut at [1:06:43]

Amanda Smith: So, looking back on race relations then and comparing then now, we've talked a little bit about it, but what would you say has changed and what has not?

Jimmy Ogle: Well, I was a child then –

Amanda Smith: Right.

Jimmy Ogle: – so I really probably didn't understand what was going on, and I'm an adult now and I still really don't understand what's going on because a lot of things are so racially charged to this day. You look at everything on a vote in the city council or county commission, it's a 7-6 vote all the time, straight along racial lines it seems like all the time, and the districts are gerrymandered that way for the type of representation in our community. We've got some weird districts around, not only locally but state and nationally, you know? And politics are politics. Politics are just ugly. I don't know too many people – there's good people in politics or in government, let's say, but the ones that really gotta get out there and run for those positions that are the mayors and the presidents and the senators and all that stuff, they have to make so many deals and it's so money-related, contributions to campaigns, so it seems like you're almost buying influence in all that in a sort of way, and rather than it just being pure, like it should be. The government should be of the people, by the people, for the people, and it –

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shouldn't be a career for anybody, and it should be a changeover and let other people get involved, and let it be to where everybody is handling it rather than – there's an old phrase, sometimes a patriot must stand to defend his country against his government, and it shouldn't be that way at all. Our government should be working for us, and doing good and keeping up – "Everybody agrees on these common goals, let's do it," rather than it's always sides, on each side of the issue, and then money gets involved, and then taxes get involved, and then people don't want to pay taxes

and want to leave. And politicians and government build these big facilities and programs that, again, our citizens can't really support, either through taxes or through participation [inaudible]. So, it stresses a community out in a way, and the poverty here, to this day, to me – I didn't see it so much back then because I didn't circulate around the city like I have the last 30 years in the –

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parks and recreation, and tourism and tours and all that, but there's very much a class difference here as much as there is a race difference –

Amanda Smith: Definitely.

Jimmy Ogle: – because there's a lot of – the few white people that are here, the 30 percent, seem to be very well off, but the 70 percent, the black population, probably two-thirds of it is poverty level or below, and that's a much a class difference as it is a racial difference there. It's just that's the way it's laid out over the years, and it's been – is the word systemic, or something – for decades, even preceding – I mean you can go back to the Civil War and the immigration and the freedom after the Civil War, well then you go to the Depression and the immigration from the Delta, people coming in and getting off the plantations finally, and the tractor coming in down there, and people coming seeking employment opportunity here in Memphis, or St. Louis or Detroit or Chicago, and all of a sudden now you have large clusters of people in urban areas that are poor, and unskilled and uneducated.

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That just doesn't happen overnight. You can't change a whole group of people. You can change a few, and a few catch it, and some of the most marvelous Memphians have come out of the projects and the ghettos, and all that, just as some of the most marvelous Memphians have come out of the country clubs in east Memphis, too, but those are rare rather than the rule. What I've come to see, and it doesn't matter where you come from sometimes, but many folks don't have a chance at all, and you hate to see some of the things in our community to this day, where you have teenage mothers and 30-year-old grandmothers. Those folks don't have a chance; those kids don't have a chance – fatherless homes. Some things I've observed, and I'm not trying to be a social engineer person at all, I'm just trying to deal with recreation and people's enjoyment, and being out and knowing the community, but that's the most hurtful thing I see right there, and

then it seems like most things nowadays are still split down, black and white, you –

[End of Audio]