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Rev. Frank McRae, St. John's United Methodist Church, 1968

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Joan Beifuss- Ok this is, I can't remember the day, August the 5th, August 6th or somewhere around in there we are interviewing reverend Frank McRae in the offices of the Memphis search for meaning committee. 3677 Southern. The interviewer right now is Joan Beifuss we will be joined later by Caroline Yellin. Ok reverend McRae, first of all can you explain how the Methodist church here is divided into districts.

Frank McRae- Yes until, well in June of 1967, bishop H.E. (muffled) restructured Shelby county in such a way to allow two districts. One outlying district that would include all of Shelby county plus some of the area within the city of Memphis. This was to be known as the Memphis Shelby district. Then he created a small inner city district to be known as the Memphis district which was comprised at that time of 15 churches that were within the parkways or at least adjacent to the parkways. So the thinking here was to provide some structure whereas the Methodist church could look at some of the needs at the heart of the city. Now since that time we have added 4 Methodist churches, or 5 Methodist churches to the Memphis Shelby district and 3 to the Memphis district meaning that now in the Memphis district we have 18 united Methodist churches. We changed our name in the spring.

Joan Beifuss- CME churches, is that united...

Frank McRae- No CME is Christian Methodist Episcopal which is almost exclusively a negro denomination. They have headquarters here and we work together but we are not directly affiliated with them in any way. Same thing is true for the AME, African Methodist Episcopal church and the AME Zion, also has some representation here but there is no union between these two but a certain degree of cooperation and some degree of history related to..

Joan Beifuss- Is there any move on the national level to bring those two bodies into the united Methodist church?

Frank McRae- We have merged this past year, the Methodist church merged with the evangelical united brethren to form the united Methodist church. At that time we did away with the old central jurisdiction of the Methodist church and at that time some did a great deal of discussion took place in terms of merging with those groups that were almost predominantly black meaning, CME, AME, and AME Zion. So as time goes on possibly there will be more and more communication of the union in time.

Joan Beifuss- I remember I was at the (muffled) convention in St. Paul Minneapolis I think in 56? And they were discussing central jurisdiction at that time I remember.

Frank McRae- Yeah well there is no central jurisdiction.

Joan Beifuss- Do you have any idea about what percentage of the Memphis population is Methodist?

Frank McRae- Yes we have about, in Shelby county we have between 40 and 50 thousand Methodist so this would be something less than 1 in 10, maybe 1 in 8 or 9 would be Methodist, would be united Methodist, CME's and AME's have a pretty strong contingency here in the black community of course.

Joan Beifuss- Are any of the United Methodist churches integrated?

Frank McRae- One that I know of.

Joan Beifuss- Which one is that?

Frank McRae- First Methodist Church.

Joan Beifuss- Is that Dr. Williams Church?

Frank McRae- Yes. There is only one family Bill Twitty. Bill Twitty is a negro married to a white woman with 5 children. My family happened to belong there, so we are, we know Bill and Alice Twitty and Bill sings in the choir every Sunday at first Methodist. So this is a "integrated" church although I am afraid that is nothing more than token integration.

Joan Beifuss- Afraid Dean Demmick said he had one negro member down at that cathedral and I know at St. Louis church has one negro family. So he is always saying don't move of and leave me. Don't segregate the church.

Frank McRae- Robinson is the member at St. Louis.

Joan Beifuss- Yes (muffled) Robinson.

Frank McRae- Yes he is a good fellow. We worked together, in fact I taught (muffled) another committee we were working on.

Joan Beifuss- Did you work in say, 4 or 5 years ago did you work at all with the Memphis committee of human relations that Edmund Orgill headed?

Frank McRae- No, until June of 67 I was pasturing the Methodist church in Collierville and 5 years in Whitehaven before that and 2 years before that I was in out in the Shelby Forrest. This is the first time I have had any responsibility for a church in Memphis and had no affiliation with Mr. Orgill or really anything in terms of Memphis in that regard.

Joan Beifuss- You were born in Memphis?

Frank McRae- Oh yes.

Joan Beifuss- Where did you go to school?

Frank McRae- I graduated Central High School and then I graduated Memphis state with a baccalaureate degree and then I finished the bachelor's divinity degree at

(muffled) university in Atlanta and then I finished at BMA at Memphis state a few years ago.

Joan Beifuss- What BMA at Memphis state?

Frank McRae- Guidance.

Joan Beifuss- Ok then did you marry a Memphis girl?

Frank McRae- Yes married a Memphis girl who graduated from Shirley Wilkes, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Carlton Wilkes, and she graduated at east high school and later Texas women university and she has an MA and a MED both from Memphis state and she now is on the (muffled) faculty at Memphis state.

Joan Beifuss- Oh is she I didn't know that my husband is at Memphis state too. In the English department now. Do you have any children?

Frank McRae- Daughter, 11 Teresa Lynn, and a son Steven Lewis who is 9. We live at 4507 D Rd. in East Memphis.

Joan Beifuss- Well then your heritage isn't really Memphis heritage is it?

Frank McRae- Oh yes, we discovered America here in the Memphis hospital, I did in 1930 and my brothers did at varying times before that.

Joan Beifuss- Well when you came back into Memphis from Collierville, could you make any assessment of Memphis as far as race relations went.

Frank McRae- Well of course I wasn't unacquainted with what was happening in Memphis over that period of time having been in the county. But I was quite surprised because I have very deep roots here and I have a great deal of compassion for this community and I am very concerned for its future. But I suppose I was greatly surprised by the transition that took place in terms of various communities and a great exodus from some people from other states, predominantly in the south Memphis area where the whites moved out in such rapid number and of course the negroes moved in. So, here comes a woohoo. Wohoo yourself. Whoever she is she is yelling I know that.

Joan Beifuss- Do you know each other Frank this is (muffled).

Carolyn Yellin- I am very glad and I heard I came in yelling.

Frank McRae- Yes you are read your name on the door. We are playing a game over here now.

Joan Beifuss- We took all the soft chairs.

Frank McRae- Please take this one it is not as soft as it appears believe me. Why don't you take this one.

Carolyn Yellin- No that is our company chair.

Frank McRae- Well I used to live across the street from here I am not much company.

Joan Beifuss- You lived across the street where?

Frank McRae- 3562 Walker, they got a YMCA there now, but I used to live there when I was in school.

Carolyn Yellin- One of my little boys played basketball there, and baseball there a couple years ago.

Joan Beifuss- I started talking to reverend McRae and we were just to the point when he came back into Memphis.

Frank McRae- Well I came back in of course a different responsibility altogether.

Joan Beifuss- did you come in as district superintendant?

Frank McRae- Yes, I had served as pastor and the only experience and training I had was as a pastor. But then no one has any training of preparation for the problems that are in front of us now, particularly in this city. I think I had to offer was some local orientation, at least I knew where the streets were and had some background in that regard but I have no credentials for this office of district of superintendant.

Joan Beifuss- Well how are you doing then?

Frank McRae- Well I guess history will have to decide, I am a little too close to the subject to evaluate adequately.

Joan Beifuss- Where is your office located?

Frank McRae- 1254 Lamar, in the Delmar building in room 402. We have the penthouse down there.

Joan Beifuss- Now does this include any pastoral duties? Do you occasionally give sermons or do you..

Frank McRae- Yes. I preach most every Sunday one place or another, but the responsibility that I have is of course largely administrative because this is the office of the district superintendent of the Methodist church. But mine is unique in that I am also called upon to try to develop new ministries. Hopefully in an ecumenical way but specifically with the Methodist church and so in this regard it is different. At the time it took place it was the only place in the country where this type of structure had been attempted by any bishop.

Joan Beifuss- You mean the inner city...

Frank McRae- Yes the structuring it with the small little cities under the direction of district (muffled). We have all sorts of work going on in inner city areas throughout the country but not under the direction of superintendant.

Joan Beifuss- Where is the bishop located?

Frank McRae- He is a resident of Nashville.

Joan Beifuss- He is in Nashville.

Frank McRae- Yes.

Joan Beifuss- Well now do you have, are the pastors under your jurisdiction or does that come under the bishop, the moving of pastors or anything like that.

Frank McRae- All of this takes place ultimately by the bishop by this is done through the bishop and the cabinet. The cabinet is composed of the district superintendents within a conference. The Memphis conference is proposed of West Tennessee and West Kentucky. The area between the rivers, really south of the Ohio and between the Mississippi and the Tennessee. The responsibility, we have 8 districts and I just happen to be one of the 8 superintendants we have.

Joan Beifuss- Ok well go on up to the chronology of the strike. When did you first hear about the strike of the sanitation workers?

Frank McRae- I think my first exposure was probably when Mr. Jordan at Beale Ave., it really is Street you know. Beale Ave. Baptist church called and told my secretary about a meeting at Lane Ave. Baptist church the next day. I remember this was, I don't remember the date but it was the week that it was, this was Friday. The telephone call came on Thursday and the meeting was on Friday, the first week of the strike. So there were a group of about 12 or 15 ministers black and white who met at Lane Ave. Baptist church. Most all of those there were pastors, one man from the seminary because they had called him there. And we met and we were informed by the Jordan and others as to what had taken place. Our feeling was that we could probably best operate at that junction under the direction of the Methodist ministers association because they at least had some structure already. So our concern was to determine what our stance would be.

Joan Beifuss- Now did the reverend Jordan, did he think at that time that it was a racial issue or did he present it as a kind of mistreated group of workers, and (muffled).

Frank McRae- Well I think because of the association with the sanitation workers and although I didn't know the percentages at that time, that is the racial black to white. I later learned what it was. It had racial overtones but even then it was a matter of trying to determine if any injustice had taken place. I have been and hopefully will continue to be a very close friend of Henry Lobe and I have a deep appreciation for Henry and high regard to him personally, we have been good

friends for a long, long time, (muffled). So I felt like that in time we should look for some equitable resolution of the problem because it might not come from the mayor. Following this meeting, no later that day contact was made with Rabbi Wax and Dean Demmick was present for this meeting and we agreed, I am sure you have this history really, but that night about 10:00 we met at the Peabody with the members of the labor union, Champa, Bill Lucie and Jesse Epps, and Bill Paisley, and John Blair, and all of the crew from the labor union to hear what they had to say, we met I guess 12 or 1:00 Friday night.

Joan Beifuss- Were they hopeful that the ministers could be of help that the labor could (muffled).

Frank McRae- Well at that juncture there was no real communication between city hall and the labor union. Mr. Champa had said some things that had alienated him from the mayor's office and I think justifiably so if the newspaper accounts are anywhere near accurate. So there was no opportunity for communication at all. Our feeling at this time was that after we looked at the situation that we would try to determine what role we as clergy men my be able to play. I called the mayor and asked for an appointment for Saturday morning and he was glad to receive us.

Joan Beifuss- Who went there that morning?

Frank McRae- Well let's see, Dean Demmick was there, Paul, I believe Paul Jones was there, I am not certain. Rabbi Wax was there, there could have been others, I am not certain at this point but we were good friends of the mayor. I am not even sure, I believe I called Jenny Beard Henry's secretary and we made a appointment and told the mayor, he could not see us that morning and the Rabbi had a service at temple Israel, and so we arranged this to come back that afternoon as I recall, later in the day anyway at this time we talked to him. Tried to..

Joan Beifuss- Were they, the negro ministers that were involved in this (muffled) Or were they in on this meeting with the mayor?

Frank McRae- Minister Jordan may have been there but my recollection is that only white ministers were in the mayor's office that morning.

Joan Beifuss- Was this a decision to only have white ministers present in there?

Frank McRae- It just worked out that way, I don't think we were conscious at that time of it begin one way or another. As I say the mayor and I had been close friends for a long time, I gave an invocation when he was sworn in at midnight to the office.

Joan Beifuss- Oh did you?

Frank McRae- Closely associated for, at the time he opened his campaign at Cleveland over here. So we have been very close. So I think at this time it was a matter of a few friends who wanted to ask the mayor if we could be of service. In which we all at that time tended to say....

Joan Beifuss- What was his response?

Frank McRae- Well at this time he was not willing to acknowledge, I don't know if acknowledge the existence of the union but there was no, until the men went back to work was his prediction at that time, that there could be no communication. Later however, and I am not sure on my chronology here whether it was Saturday or it was Saturday night. I asked the mayor if he would be willing, if he would come to a meeting probably Sunday evening and it turned out that we did meet. We talked in some ways about this and (muffled) ministers who were concerned that he would be willing to attend. Well we felt like our role at this time was in part not to mediate but at least devise a forum where some communication could take place. And this transpired, that Sunday night (muffled)

Carolyn Yellin- Was that the Sunday the February the 18th?

Frank McRae- I guess it was, it was Sunday of the first week. It felt like there was much drama after that in terms of feelings and all this, many things. Our role was one of neutrality at that point.

Carolyn Yellin- Now did you go into some of the (Muffled) that you told him this is really at the root of what was going on, this (muffled) unexpectedly came out of this perhaps (muffled). Where there conferences in the group perhaps, were the city council at least gotten some idea that there was a tremendous (muffled) of reaction (muffled).

Frank McRae- Well there was some, (muffled) that morning.

Joan Beifuss- Many rooms available.

Frank McRae- Well, the ministers were not speaking now I am really thinking in terms of the mayor who did a splendid job of representing his philosophy. I believe the city of Memphis is (muffled), I believed it then and I still do now. In spite of many things that has happened I think that Memphis is fortunate to have a man like Henry lobe who does know what he believes and he can articulate that in a reasonable way. So the labor unions were well represented later in the evening and earlier in the morning by Mr. Worth who again represented the cause of labor, in a revealing way. I felt that each man did a creditable job in terms of representing the cause that held near.

Carolyn Yellin- So that the ministers jobs was more listening that night and mediating and being neutral than any sort of part of oratory on their part.

Frank McRae- The ministers, there were some expressions but these were limited, and I think more than anything else there was a desire on the part of the ministers to solve the problem, to have it resolved that night and in that place, and I think we worked to that end. There obviously came in with feelings that the clergy had but by and large they were reserved, and it was, everything said that....

Joan Beifuss- When were (muffled) (Tape Break)

Carolyn Yellin- Test 1, 2,3,4.

(muffled)

Carolyn Yellin- 1, 2, 3, 4. Now we will assume we are recording again.

Joan Beifuss- If not we will just recollect what you are saying here.

Frank McRae- What was the last question.

Carolyn Yellin- (muffled)

Frank McRae- On Sunday night?

Carolyn Yellin- And we were discussing...

Joan Beifuss- The drama...the drama.

Frank McRae- The drama of course.

Frank McRae- Well I believe that I said that both men represented their perspective causes and very fine fashion.

Joan Beifuss- Did they shout at each other?

Frank McRae- Yes, I guess they did shout at each other, but this was a meeting that was charged with a great deal of emotion and we had been by the time Mr. Worth got there which was sometime, as I recall, after midnight. We had no idea what was going on outside, we had rumors of people from other states coming into the community and we would have some violence, we had no idea what's outside. (Tape damage) The immediacy that we felt of the situation demanded that we resolve this question at that particular time.

Joan Beifuss- Were you there that night at St. Mary's where there was trouble outside?

Frank McRae- We have had yes we had the understanding that there were, well at this time it was like election year rumors. (muffled) But our understanding well there was no understanding but we felt that the situation was highly charged and therefore the things that were said were spoken out of, well I think within that atmosphere you could expect to hear some shouting. The spirit was basically good they were not agreed either side but I think they conducted themselves in a fine fashion all things considered both sides.

Carolyn Yellin- Now there had already been indications that there might be some trouble about the collections that there, that perhaps there would be civil disobedience, had the suggestion that people lie down in front of the garbage trucks?

Frank McRae- Not as this point, not at this point.

Joan Beifuss- This is pretty early, this was the first few weeks.

Frank McRae- No my recollection at this point is that the issue is narrowed down to two things, one was union recognition and dues check off and our lack of sophistication there was many of us who didn't realize what this meant at all what union recognition meant and what dues check off meant. We were trying to go from one group or another to basically listen and also to learn and see if we couldn't assist them, either side in seeing what was right. It became evident to some of us who are very unsophisticated in these matters that this was the heart of the whole thing. The city didn't have any money, so you couldn't gripe about the, the money just wasn't there for pay increase. Other matters, the mayor very early was willing to concede on matter in terms of, as I recall, medical benefits, and hospitalization, vacation and all of this. I thought this is the crux of the matter, the dues check off and union recognition.

Carolyn Yellin- (Tape Glitch) a big deal or was most of the representation of the union side done by others?

Frank McRae- (Tape Glitch) alternated with Mr. Lucie and what was said, John Blair of course the public relations man for the union said nothing as I recall Joe Paisley said nothing, Joe, is a Tennessee affiliate with the union but basically Mr. Champa and Mr. Lucie, spoke. They may have addressed questions to Mr. Jones, T.O. Jones, but I don't remember his having a great deal of anything to say.

Carolyn Yellin- And he seemed satisfied to be represented by then you think?

Frank McRae- Yes and there is no indication to me that he identified very readily with the union people to my recollection but I never assumed anything other than that, so I wouldn't have been sensitive to that. Where the press there all night?

Frank McRae- Yes, some of them may have gotten discouraged early in the morning but I am confident that somebody from the press was there often from the channel 5 if I recall it there, somebody was there all night.

Joan Beifuss- Were the cameras there all night?

Frank McRae- I recollect that ye the cameras stayed as long as we stayed. They were not operating all the time but they..

Carolyn Yellin- Was this at the mayor's suggestion or at the labor people's suggestion or the minister's suggestion, that the negotiations be in front of the press.

Frank McRae- MY recollection is that the mayor insisted that the cameras be there, the union protested, and the clergy couldn't care less. We were there only to serve in a neutral position this is all we..

Carolyn Yellin- Do you feel it was helpful at this point do you feel it was helpful that the press was there or that it was a hindrance towards arriving at?

Frank McRae- From my own personal judgment I don't think it made a whole lot of difference. I think it was an irritant, to the labor people but by the same token I think the mayor is a kind of straight forward honest man who wants everything out in the open and the labor union does not, I suspect, this is what I (muffled) really like to operate in that fashion, not that there is anything submersive or underhanded about the union's negotiations but they just prefer to operate in a little different type of arena than this.

Joan Beifuss- Was the press at all the subsequent meetings that the ministerial association?

Frank McRae- Well we left St. Mary's in the morning and we decided we would meet, as I recall, at First Methodist Church on Monday. I believe I am right, and the press was there. The television was there and I am sure the other boys were too. Then we went as I recall to St. Peters didn't we? And they were there and that is where the ball game I think ended.

Joan Beifuss- How did it end?

Frank McRae- Well on the day that I was not there, I can't answer that. I was out of town because (muffled), there was really no need apparently for thee to continue because after while it became so repetitious that it was a matter that we set out we would go over all thee points, whatever it was 9 or 12 (muffled). It is meaningless to go through this charade because no one obviously at that point was prepared to make (muffled). That we had rendered the only service that we could render to that point. We told the men we were happy to stay there as long as (muffled)parties involved and there was no need at this time in continuing these talks.

Carolyn Yellin- Was that (muffled) among the clergymen that this was all you should do? To your recollection was there ever a suggestion that you might change your tactics in order to break the stalemate?

Frank McRae- Oh yes, well I am not sure how the stalemate would be broken but I don't think we felt that this was all that could be done, we did receive a letter all of us, who were there received a letter. Father Joseph Eckles was another one I didn't not mention. But we all received a letter from the mayor commending us for our participation and thanking us for what, for the service we had rendered to the city by the function that we had performed at this particular time. We were not satisfied at all.

Carolyn Yellin- I was going to say, still nothing had been done.

Frank McRae- No, this is why we didn't see a great satisfaction in this because we felt like the question had to be resolved somehow and we tried to determine if we could play a meaningful role here.

Carolyn Yellin- Who did you feel could have most easily changed at that point. Did you feel the labor people were being more adamant than the mayor at that point?

Frank McRae- Well I am not sure that one was more adamant than the other.

Carolyn Yellin- They both were.

Frank McRae- I think they both were. The union knew because of its long experience in matters such as this exactly what they wanted to accomplish and they knew where to blow the whistle and end the ball game. The mayor's office I felt did not have a great deal of experience in these matters but never the less they knew the consequences involved to the city by softening in any way or making concessions to the union. They were determined that the union had to be stopped at this point or else we would face other things that would be, well more disastrous for the community then...

Carolyn Yellin- Such as?

Frank McRae- More and more unionization of the city government and throughout the whole thing.

Carolyn Yellin- IN other words the city was really seeing it that the disaster would be unionization rather than racial conflict?

Frank McRae- Right, this whole issue and I am very clear on my feelings at my time, but this was purely a matter of the mayor's position being not anti-union but not being in favor of the union coming in. As far as a racial matter, Henry Lobe would have felt exactly the same way if the union had been 97% white and 3% black. As far as the racial aspect of it I did not feel from beginning to end that it had anything to do with the racial question, Henry Lobe is not that kind of a man. I just don't believe that at all. I don't think the racial aspect entered into it at all and I think as...

Carolyn Yellin- How did the negro ministers feel?

Frank McRae- Well they may have felt differently, I am not really sure. At this point Henry Lobe had some friends I am sure he still does among negro ministers. We did not have a great deal of close association with negro ministers other than Mr. Jordan who was there and there was one or two others but there were not very many, negro ministers at that point who were involved?

Carolyn Yellin- Did this concern you?

Frank McRae- Yes when we, when the ministers met and we began to look at ourselves we recognized there was an absence here and we began to ask some questions why, it was certainly not because there were uninvited, there wasn't any negroes present at the St. Mary's that evening and at subsequent meetings and as time went on the number increased to the point where we had to check men at the door to make sure they were ministers when they came in. Henry Stark for example, and others who came in.

Joan Beifuss- Oh you mean just general people were just trying to get into the union?

Frank McRae- Yes, there was some who would come who were not ministers.

Carolyn Yellin- Now were the meetings open to any ministers?

Frank McRae- As time went on, so we had no policy here, in our believe that our second meeting at St. Peters we felt that we needed to draw a line here rather than just open it up to any ministers that happen to come along. But we were not there in any official capacity roughly as ministers representing anybody, certainly not our communions, we were there representing ourselves as citizens.

Carolyn Yellin- It was very much a odd hope summit thing.

Frank McRae- Oh yes.

Joan Beifuss- You were not then representing the ministerial association?

Frank McRae- No, no, because we never went before the minister's association and asked for anything. We were just a group of private citizens who happened to be concerned to see what we could do.

Carolyn Yellin- Now when the garbage workers marched down Main St. the following day, Friday, and the police used the gas and the mace did you think that put a different cast on the situation?

Frank McRae- Well obviously this antagonized a great many black people. This was unfortunate and probably unnecessary. I think now we know probably what did happen and we were fortunate that more did not happen at that particular time. But this very early in the game did tend to antagonize a great many and I think it tended to solidify the feelings in the black community. When people were, if the reports are true and I have no reason to doubt that some men were sought out individually and maced, persons who, well really I can speculate but I don't have a right to and I can only say these are my opinions based on what I heard.

Carolyn Yellin- Well now did that incident well given added (muffled) emergency with the ministers.

Frank McRae- I am not sure if we realized the seriousness of this at that time in terms of what it really meant the black people and the white people who were amazed, I think Dick Moon was in the crowd. But no, I don't think, I think we withdrew after the St. Mary's and the First Methodist (muffle) and felt that we didn't know what to do, so we just sort of withdrew until we could form another strategy. We met from time to time and of course as the stories unveil it reveals that we did later take some action and but this stage in the game I don't think we realized what this really meant.

Joan Beifuss- were you contacted after the black ministers formed the COME organization the day after the macing on Main St. Were you contacted by any people like reverend Lawson?

Frank McRae- To participate in COME?

Carolyn Yellin- Or just to inform you of what was being done or ..

Frank McRae- Not as far as COME is concerned, Jim and I talked back and forth a good deal and now Jim is not in my district he was not in my district at that particular time. But we talked back and forth many times, but as far as there inviting my participation in COME, no.

Carolyn Yellin- Did, were any suggestions made that the white ministers operate in the white community?

Frank McRae- Not, no, not from, I don't think the negro community looked to us for nay leadership at all. I don't think they expected any, I think if anything we, on our own initiative moved in, and we determined what to do and we tried to learn from them but there was no invitation on their part to participate. What we did we did on our own really.

Carolyn Yellin- What was the next phase of what you did what was the next strategy?

Frank McRae- Oh we had so many meetings at that time. I am not sure we accomplished a great deal. Of course it was a case of everybody had his own little idea as to what could have been done, I had mine.

Carolyn Yellin- Can you remember that because that is exactly the sort of thing that is interesting.

Frank McRae- Yes, I put this in writing at the time. I made a proposal in a secret meeting, a little secret meeting that became rather public I learned, but in a meeting a the temple of Israel, and this was sort of my immature boyish unsophisticated way of looking at all of this, but again this is my home and my future is here and I am determined to stay and bit the (muffled). That sounds very patriotic but its just he way I feel about my home town. I felt like we needed to look beyond the present crisis and look at several things that were needed. I made several suggestions in terms of mass education. For example and I still advocate that we need some type of understanding of the moral implications of collective bargaining. Maybe it was only my feeling but I felt like this community had never faced the question of collective bargaining from a moral standpoint, or really form any standpoint Memphis has not traditionally been a labor town, we know this. So we don't really have any understanding about, I say we don't, obviously some do, but I do not. This is one thing I proposed, several other things in terms as setting up specific churches in terms of worship and prayer, during this time. I don't know what the other proposals were I have them in my office in a letter

Carolyn Yellin- What did you mean a place of the specific place of prayer?

Frank McRae- In communities, where people might go at this particular time because of the tension because of the fear that gripped this community, where the white community was plugging shells and the .22 rifle ready for anything that might come. This is why I think we needed some spiritual guidance but my presentation, my proposals to the group were met with, this is like an aspirin when we need neuro-surgery. So they rejected my plan, these are my friends there is nothing personal here at all, I love them. But they felt like contact needed to be made with council members and this was a part of our strategy in that meeting, that they would contact various moves of the city council to see if they wouldn't be assaulting in their position, trying to shift the responsibility from the mayor to the city council.

Carolyn Yellin- Hold for just a minute. Now is this an official meeting of ministers?

Frank McRae- Noooooooo.

Carolyn Yellin- Oh this is not. Can you name the people who were at the secret meeting?

Frank McRae- Yes, it was in Rabbi Wax's office and Monsignor Leopard was there, Nick Veron from the Greek Orthodox Church, as I recall Father Joseph was there, Father Joseph (muffled) came. Oh who else? Dean Demmick I am sure was there. I believe Brooks Ramsey made an appearance at this particular meeting and there may have been some others that I don't recall. They felt like specific persons, I am sure Brooks was there, that specific persons needed to be contacted to get it in the hands of the city council where it might be neutralized a little.

Carolyn Yellin- I want to go back just a moment to the question that, of the collective bargaining and your suggestion of mass education. The moral implications meaning, could you elaborate on what you meant by that just a little bit.

Frank McRae- I wish I had thought to bring this paper with me.

Carolyn Yellin- If you do have it, do you still have it?

Frank McRae- Yes, I am sure up there somewhere in that office, I haven't thrown all those things away. I imagine I do I don't know.

Carolyn Yellin- Well let me, I will explain right on tape, in fact we are collecting this kind of memoranda that were made during the if you would be willing to either let us Xerox it or send it to us, because.

Frank McRae- I will be glad to send you the copy of it it is in my desk, I may have thrown it away. You will probably get a request from the Mississippi Valley Archives where we are collecting this material and any such papers (muffled) we are now collecting for history.

Frank McRae- Well my feeling was that the role of the clergy was not at this point to give direction as much as it was to try to play, well to try to determine what the moral implications were in all of this because we didn't know. I had no particular love for the union per say or for the city of Memphis per say although that's not true. But in trying to maintain the right position as the clergy here, and I felt at this time it was not to declare this way or the other, so anyway if I can find the tape I will send it to you. So anyway they bypassed my idea again I was thwarted in my efforts and so I went back to the drawing board, not to give up, I was not discouraged because the spirit among the clergy was wonderful and this ecumenical involvement by the clergy there created a fellowship that will last a long time, and it had.

Carolyn Yellin- That is very interesting.

Frank McRae- We worked together through the downtown church and other groups now and so this much was good. Now we ultimately I suppose we come to the last week before Dr. King's death.

Joan Beifuss- Wait a minute go back tot where the meetings where various council members were contacted did you go to see any of them?

Frank McRae- No, no, the only Methodist in the group was Bob James. The feeling was that Mr. James was such a temperament that I believe (muffled) he would not have done a lot of good. He was determined to leave it in the hands of the mayor and I have a great appreciation for Bob James and I think it probably would not have been advisable to see him.

Joan Beifuss- Were they trying to get clergy men of the same denomination..

Frank McRae- Generally, right, right, because you would have more immediate identity with them.

Joan Beifuss- Did you...

Frank McRae- Not to pressure just to point out possibilities.

Joan Beifuss- Did you attempt to talk to Mayor Lobe at all?

Frank McRae- Did I? Oh I talked to him constantly.

Joan Beifuss- I mean on this specific issue?

Frank McRae- What do you mean?

Carolyn Yellin- What was the tenor of your talks with mayor Lobe, were you at this point urging his special consideration of any particular point?

Frank McRae- No, not at this point. You know when things were so revealing to me. Henry and I had lunch together one day in his office and I think this more than anything else at this point really alarmed me. Henry and I have been friends together we have been places oh goodness, for a long time but when Henry lobe and

I ate lunch in his office had to be, two armed guards watching over us., This is think was more revealing to me at this point than I think anything else. The situation was this serious at this particular time who these two men who had not entered request but Frank Holloman, who is one fine guy, had requested they be there. This was very alarming to me.

Carolyn Yellin- Do you know how early the armed guards were in the mayor's office, this is one of the things we haven't gotten around to. Were they fairly early on that they he as placed under arms?

Frank McRae- This was fairly early, I don't know what fairly early means, I say it without qualifying it.

Carolyn Yellin- Was it still in February?

Frank McRae- I can't answer, I just don't remember. Now there was an account that I was involved in somewhere along the line, Baxton Bryant, do you know Baxton Bryant?

Joan Beifuss- I just spent all day Saturday with Baxton in Nashville.

Frank McRae- Well I got a phone call, I can't remember the date, I was in a meeting over on Lamar saying that Baxton had said to call Frank Holloman that the negroes wanted to open some channels of communication with the police department. So he asked, he said Frank Holloman agreed he would attend the meeting if I would set up the meeting. Frank Holloman and I have been good friends a long, long time. Again I have the greatest appreciation for Frank. So I called Frank, no Frank called me I guess and said if I would have the meeting at a place I would designate that he would come., This was a meeting I would preside, so we decided to have it at first Methodist church. It was on a Saturday night, the curfew was on, we met Jim Lawson was there, Sammy Kyle was there, Mrs. Crenshaw was there, Dr. Vasco Smith, Dr. Ralph Jackson and Mrs. Vasco Smith was there. Henry Lutz who was another good Methodist as Holloman is was present and we had a real good sharing of ideas. But the thing that impressed me at that point was the real lack of communication all the way down the line between these two parties wherever the blame lies is not for me to say. The police were picking up negro boys because they had tikis around there neck. Until that time Frank Holloman and Henry Lutz didn't even know what a tiki was, they thought this was a sign of some subversive organization and really I got disturbed at that point because I thought if they don't know any more about it than this then where are we? And there were many things that transpired in this conversation but it was very constructive and Frank Holloman was the gentleman all the way, as was everyone there, really. Well more could be said but I guess I won't say it.

Carolyn Yellin- I was going to say (muffled).

Frank McRae- Some other things I could say. So the meeting again was helpful in that they agreed, Henry Lutz was very complimentary of Jim Lawson's commanding

position during the first march down Beale street and how Jim turned the crowd back and averted further trouble at that time. So it was a very good meeting and good attitude expressed by almost everyone there.

Carolyn Yellin- So this must have been this meeting you were speaking of now took place during the week between Dr. King's 1st march which broke up and the assassination. (Muffled) And so then at that point even at that point you felt that the police weren't well informed, or that there was a lack of communication that...

Frank McRae- Yes, and at that time Jim's concern, Baxton was at the meeting too, but Jim's concern was that, a matter of police brutality. And we reviewed, they reviewed at that time several cases where a police brutality did take place. This was there, there black communities gripe. Frank Holloman had some things to say about how the black community was not cooperating with the police department. Frank Holloman let it be understood that he was not the defender of city hall but rather was the police commissioner over all of the people and I really think Frank did a good job under the pressure this man had been under I think he did a splendid job in keeping this cool.

Joan Beifuss- Was that also the weekend that statement was issued by the 3 bishops?

Frank McRae- Well we were involved in that.

Joan Beifuss- How did that come about?

Frank McRae- Well we were hopeful that some statement could be made by the three bishops that could, we felt that in some way the church needed to be heard in terms of at least pleading for an understanding amongst the people to resolve the issue.

Joan Beifuss- And when you say we are you still talking about this small group within?

Frank McRae- Yes, we were an official group.

Joan Beifuss- Still unofficial.

Frank McRae- Yes, and we remained that way until maybe the last. So let's see, I believe Dean Demmick talked to Bishop Vandross and Monsignor Leopard talked to bishop Durrick and I talked to Bishop Finger. Yes, this was the weekend because I remember bishop Finger was in Virginia and we talked 3 or 4 times that day. So finally bishop Durrick and bishop Finger who are very good friends both living in Nashville, contacted bishop Vandross who was somewhere I don't remember and they agreed on a statement which Monsignor Leopard read to me over the phone that Saturday night the three of them agreed. We were looking for something that was sort of, as I said to bishop Finger down the center and slightly to the left. I am not sure how that was interpreted by these three Episcopal leaders but be that as it may, they made up a fine statement. It was not printed in its entirety by the

newspaper it was misinterpreted by the newspaper in its editing and it was instead of being down the center and slightly to the left it came out down the right side, I suspect. And I think, I don't want to say justice took place here but I don't think this is what the three Episcopal leaders had in mind at the time and I think the newspapers may have well you hate to make accusations but I think in the editing of this statement the whole, their feeling was not fully conveyed.

Joan Beifuss- Do you have a copy of the full statement?

Frank McRae- No Monsignor Leopard had one, I suppose he still has it. I am sure the bishops, bishop Finger I am sure his office would have a copy of that. So I am not sure what this accomplished except to say that these bishops were saying let's get on with the show.

Carolyn Yellin- Could I ask a question, among the ministers was there any talk of any flak of feedback they were getting from their congregation on either side. Where the ministers themselves getting pressure during this period either to be more this way or more that way.

Frank McRae- Ministers were under I think a great deal of pressure. Now the pastors feel this more than a person like myself who is in an administrative position. Ray Dobbins for example had come from the Presbyterian summit. There was another person who was very closely associated with all this. The boys out at Memphis theological were not under the kind of pressure that a pastor was. He really was on the front line I was really in a protected position, but they received all sorts of comments from members of their congregation which is fine, because the people of their congregation are entitled to express themselves. And they did not refuse to do so. Brooks of course caught a lot of this, Bob Troutman over here, Prescott Baptist had his share of it. Some of our boys did too and more came later when we strolled to city hall one morning.

Carolyn Yellin- One of the questions, I think perhaps you asked this earlier Joan but was there any sort of discussion in Methodist churches in particular as regards Jim Lawson and the very definite circulation of mail concerning him? Did this come to your attention? Well you said he wasn't in your district.

Frank McRae- No, but it came to my attention from interested people both ways. I received phone calls from prominent citizens who were concerned that Jim was being maligned in this way and who were suggesting that some action be taken.

I discussed it with Jim, Jim was very aware of this, we had of course several meetings down there from time to time and Jim was very conscious of this.

Joan Beifuss- What kind of meetings at Centenary?

Frank McRae- More of the same type of meetings that we had all along sat and listen and see what we can learn type of thing but Jim was very, the smear sheet, did not

come out as I recall maybe until after Dr. King's death. We found alto of this later in the year.

Joan Beifuss- I think (muffled).

Frank McRae- I don't recall this in an early stage?

Carolyn Yellin- The reading them. They indicated they were written during the period of the crisis because they would refer to something that happened last week, or when , or Bayard Ruston was coming to town and some of these things would indicate that they were put out at that time but then I think that a lot were reproduced.

Frank McRae- And this may be true, I saw 3 different sheets but all of this was after, definitely after, but the three sheets that I saw all, as far as I know where telling the truth, people would call me and say are these things true they are saying about Jim. I would say, as far as I know they are true but you see if you read them carefully it says that Jim Lawson ran for school board. Now beyond this at Mr. Orgill's luncheon at the Rivermont, bishop Golden a negro bishop of the Methodist church was asked to speak, I asked him to speak. I introduced him, sat on the platform and then introduced bishop Golden. Well this same type of sheet was issued on behalf of bishop Golden's and that he too was affiliated with subversive groups.

Joan Beifuss- Oh really.

Frank McRae- Yeah, so I after awhile you learnt o interpret these and learn that these people do tell the truth. That is but it is of course all by association.

Joan Beifuss- Now are you still going to meetings at Jim Lawson's church , information meetings at Jim Lawson's church during the strike?

Frank McRae- We attended sessions down there and I don't even remember now the nature of them except that probably it was a matter of listening to what they had to say.

Carolyn Yellin- When the black ministers were talking to the white ministers?

Frank McRae- Yes, what Zeke would have to say and of course Zeke, (muffled) .

Joan Beifuss- Well now is the still the same group of ministers who were going to these meetings also?

Frank McRae- Yes they were. The numbers increased as time went on there were others who became interested and realized that we were related and they wanted to become involved in some way. I don't think they were looking for a cause to champion except, well we welcomed them on board. We weren't doing any good, if they could do any good they. I feel like their presence was welcome certainly was as far as I was concerned.

Joan Beifuss- Is there any point where you can pinpoint where suddenly more ministers became involved?

Frank McRae- Well, I think we became sources of information because we were involved in the initial situation at St. Mary's etc. And we, it's just a grape vine you just know what was going on when the Memphis ministers met, the group outside, which they at least got involved you want to know something go see them.

Carolyn Yellin- I have to hold it.

Joan Beifuss- You want me to hold it for him.

Frank McRae- I think we had a minister's association meeting and I don't even remember now the particular program but where others ask questions is when we became very conscious of other people coming on board but I don't think there was any one event that transpired that triggered that.

Joan Beifuss- When Dr. King came in and led that first march, some of the ministers marched with him you did not?

Frank McRae- Very few, Father Greenspun at St. Patrick's marched with some down there, I don't think Monsignor Leopard did.

Joan Beifuss- Yeah Monsignor Leopard did.

Frank McRae- Did he? I wasn't sure.

Joan Beifuss- Yeah because he got caught and all that.

Frank McRae- I am sure Dick Moon was there and I think some boys from seminary was, maybe Dick Wells. They got tear gassed I believe.

Joan Beifuss- Now what was your feeling about Dr. King coming in to Memphis, or did you have any feeling about it.

Frank McRae- Well I was skeptical as to I have a high regard, had a very high regard for him personally that is in his own life. I had some real reservations about the effectiveness of this because I know the mayor and I feel like the mayor was not going to change his position and according to Dr. King's death or some other tragedy I don't think he would have changed his mind then. So I didn't feel this would be very effective for in terms of resolving the thing.

Carolyn Yellin- Did you feel alarm, or was it a little disquieting when you heard Dr. King was coming in? I mean were you apprehensive that knowing the temper by this time of the black community were you apprehensive and knowing as you say that the mayor would not change did you feel like this was escalating?

Frank McRae- Well I felt like Dr. King was a friend and not a foe. I felt like his philosophy of nonviolence if anything would tend to maybe ease the situation though in other cities of course violence may have followed his appearance. I don't

think I was unduly apprehensive except at the point at what this would attract nationally and there were persons, I understand, and I am sure this is true from outside communities who did come in. And this was a thing that was more frightening to me, I had no apprehension about Dr. King per say, but the fact that this would affect nationwide attention so that great hoard would come in from another community. Who could play the game of let's come over and burn your town and I thought this could happen. So this was, if I had apprehension it was at this point but not for Dr., King per say.

Carolyn Yellin- How did you feel about the newspaper coverage of Dr. King when it was announced that he would come did you feel or where you aware of it.

Frank McRae- I don't want to say that it was unfair but I felt like it could be minimized more than it was, I felt like the press did not help in the whole thing. I felt like the press took an extreme position to the right that was not consideratory, was not helpful to the community. And I really didn't have a good feeling about the role of the press at this time.

Carolyn Yellin- May I interject one question here. Do you feel that the press has changed somewhat or have your feelings about the press changed since the crisis and watching what they are doing?

Frank McRae- I feel like we are sort of locking the barn door now that the horse is out. I think a lot of the things said now are really to sort of keep the fires down rather than a genuine concern on the part of the newspaper to bring about reconciliation. Honestly this is their concern, this is being terribly judgmental but I think the economy...

Joan Beifuss- Everyone else is so you might as well.

Frank McRae- See, well I want to be fair but my opinion we are trying to protect the economy more than we are concerned about the citizen's who live here. In all this great Hurang by the chamber of commerce about promoting the economic picture here, and yet the clergy was not invited to my knowledge to participate in that in any way. The church you see, if nothing else was true the clergy men in Memphis in this crisis realized what his real status is and he doesn't have nay position. The clergymen doesn't have any real dynamic image in this community.

Carolyn Yellin- That is curious because the first thing mentioned to a new comer is the number of churches and the importance of the church in the community.

Frank McRae- Yeah I know. This is what we have hidden behind for a long period of time (muffled) real influence except on such social issues as liquor by the drink and something that well, the clergy was not as active in that as the laity was I feel, liquor by the drink now. So anyway we emerged out of this with a better understanding of ourselves as clergymen and I don't think our image is very high. I think we are fine to give invocations at football games and annual meetings but as far as being a dramatic and motivating force with this community I don't...

Carolyn Yellin- Have you any idea why this would be?

Frank McRae- Well it think it is connected to a traditional concept of what the clergymen's role is. And it is pretty well (muffled)...

Carolyn Yellin- Do you feel this is a nationwide?

Frank McRae- Well I think it is probably a little more exaggerated in our section of the company than in other areas.

Carolyn Yellin- And yet it seems a paradox because in this particular area there is more, it seems to me there more church goers and there is more of the formalized, the sort of thing you say, the invocations at the football game, and the sort of thing goes on here.

Frank McRae- This is our history in this section of the country and we have the church as we have to have other parts of our culture but as far as really being an influential force I do not feel the clergymen have this kind of influence. It is particularly true for us in social matters where we are just generally forbidden to go. This has again been our history to leave social issues alone.

Joan Beifuss- You think this, that you this, you spoke of this feeling that had come out of this group, a feeling of closeness, do you think this is sort of a shared feeling about this now, an ecumenical, that you are more aware of?

Frank McRae- It would have been too many things to follow, I will be in a meeting this time tomorrow afternoon with a group that in part was an outgrowth of all this association. We are trying to form a definite type of structure that would be a permanent and ongoing agency here. The Memphis interfaith association, you talked to Bill Jones probably or the dean, If you haven't done Bill Jones you should. Yes. Out of this there has developed a wonderful relationship and spirit. We had a meeting at Memphis theological just a few weeks ago where many of these issues were brought out.

Carolyn Yellin- In an attempt or a hope that there can be more leverage for the clergy.

Frank McRae- We need to develop a strategy and a new image we all need to be retained from ministry to the heart of the city. That is all we will get it it is just it will take us a little time.

Joan Beifuss- Is the reconciliation complete between the black and white ministers?

Frank McRae- I really don't know what to look for here. Of course the white clergy is not united at all in its feeling as to what should be done and as much criticism as some quarters as to what was done. So I would say we have built some trust relationships between whites and blacks but we have a long way to go. For a period of time I look for more polarization here in the white and black community, there is a great deal of fear in our community at this time. I look for this to continue, and I

look for us to go our separate ways in a general way for a period of time. I think there are some of us hammering away now, trying to by exposure build trust relationships, this is what I have been involved in all summer with day camping and programs and 1,000 other things you are not interested in trying to stay in the ball game and keep the conversations going but I don't think right away we are going to have nay running together, we are going to have the opposite.

Joan Beifuss- Well then go back to the week that Dr., King was killed. Did you think he should come back in after that first march broke into violence?

+Well there was some unfortunate things that happened at that time, he appeared of course in a bad light. He stayed in the Rivermont, which was a mistake as far as his image was concerned. He was hustled away in the midst of the conflict which didn't enhance his image among the troops. And he some how had to justify his role and so this is I think basically why he came back and I had the same apprehension as I suppose others did about his coming back in terms of what might ensue.

Carolyn Yellin- Well I was going to say did you at any time during that week, talk with the mayor, or was there any attempt to get the strike settled before he came back? As I recall there were or what do you recall about it.

Frank McRae- I can recall that on Wednesday of that week I had lunch with the mayor in his office, with the guards. One thing that impressed me so much at that time was the fact that the people who were surrounding the mayor were all saying basically the same thing to him. Which is, Mr. Mayor everything is under control we have not worry, we have no fear, there is nothing that we really need to get excited about I have been to Clayborne Temple I had seen the spirit of these people, I have been with the labor people time and time again, meeting after meeting trying to explain the issues, we have been to St. Patrick's we have been Lord knows where. And everybody was saying to Henry boy don't give up the ship you are doing a great job and I kept saying Henry you are sitting on a powder keg, please realize but I didn't really feel that Henry heard this. He heard not maybe what he wanted to hear but he heard what the people there were telling him. So that afternoon we had a meeting this was, he was killed on...

Joan Beifuss- Thursday night King was killed on Thursday night.

Frank McRae- This meeting was probably on Tuesday. I had lunch with Henry on that Tuesday that afternoon, it was Tuesday.

Carolyn Yellin- He came back into town on Wednesday.

Joan Beifuss- Dr. King came back in Wednesday morning.

Carolyn Yellin- And then Wednesday night was the tornado when he spoke.

Frank McRae- We had a meeting at St. Mary's at that time. A group of clergymen there was a lot of feeling expressed there.

Joan Beifuss- Can you, I a little bit confused on that you got in this meeting on other people's case but there was a meeting of the ministerial association on Monday of that week do you recall that?

Frank McRae- Yes.

Joan Beifuss- And then this Wednesday meeting an outbreak of the ministerial of was this again...

Frank McRae- This meeting was on Wednesday it was up at St. Mary's it was on Wednesday, that was the day I had lunch with the mayor Wednesday afternoon. What was your question? Joan Beifuss- Had you gone to the ministerial association meeting which I think was on Monday?

Frank McRae- Yes, yes.

Joan Beifuss- Now do you recall what they were talking about at the ministerial association meeting on Monday?

Frank McRae- We elected officers, I am not sure.

Joan Beifuss- Nothing...

Frank McRae- I don't remember anything significant.

Joan Beifuss- They didn't feel a crisis had risen?

Frank McRae- Well, as a group no, I didn't feel that, but there were individuals there who did very definitely feel the need. The meeting on Wednesday at St. Mary's. I had lunch with Henry we came to the meeting and a strong feeling was expressed, Zeke said some things and Ralph Jackson made a speech and Dr. Tom Wood tried to smooth it all over, we need to have more love and Zeke then jumped on Dr. Wood and said yeah you talk about love when black people can't even get into the door of your church, a lot of things.

Joan Beifuss- Who is Dr. Wood?

Frank McRae- He is pastor of Lindenwood Christian Church. So we had no strategy, so the only thing I think the white man could do because he had no strategy was to accept the strategy of the black man. And the strategy of the black man was to take some decisive action and pressure the mayor. I said to the group if you feel this way then why don't you go to city hall and tell the mayor? Even with the mayor, he is a man whom I trust, he will receive you gladly. There were some there who wanted to go and were willing to go. But the others were reluctant they were not as deeply involved in it as some of us were. And so they said no we won't do this but instead we will have a meeting with the ministers alliance, which is the negro counterpart on Thursday, and then we will decide what we will do. We met and then this meeting broke up. We met Thursday with the minister's alliance at the Mississippi Blvd. Christian church and really I don't think a great deal took place. I left hat

meeting to go to another meeting so I don't really know what happened but not a great deal.

Joan Beifuss- Wait would you have marched that Wednesday afternoon?

Frank McRae- Oh yes, I just forgot. But I felt like instead of having a march what we need to do is get up and walk down to city hall and say this is what we feel.

Joan Beifuss- Did you think since you had just said that to Mayor Lobe at lunch you thought it would be more effective if a group of people came and said it to him.

Frank McRae- Yes.

Carolyn Yellin- You felt he needed to have more than just your representation.

Frank McRae- Right, he needed somebody to say Mr. Mayor was sitting on a powder keg can we really do something here to resolve this. Not to take specific direction as to what should be done but to say let's get on with it.

Joan Beifuss- Did you see anything at that point that he could do?

Frank McRae- That he could, that the mayor could do?

Joan Beifuss- Yeah.

Frank McRae- I felt like the mayor could have given in on the dues check off and done it as it has been done.

Carolyn Yellin- In the actual settlement, as was done in the actual settlement?

Frank McRae- Yes they did this through the credit union. See I established this with Bill Lucie in the basement of St, Mary's at whatever meeting that was. Bill if there are any alternatives, here are other ways you can do it, how you can do it and save face. He suggested the credit union and to me it made sense. But again I felt like everything was breezing along at city hall, you know, business as usual.

I felt that Henry needed this from men who were in this group. Thursday, yes I think in retrospect I wish we had gone quietly that afternoon to speak to the mayor this is what we believe. Not be dramatic in how..

Carolyn Yellin- Do you think it would have made a difference in the mayor's thinking?

Frank McRae- It is an interesting thing but I called Henry that night and told him what had transpired.

Carolyn Yellin- That Wednesday night you called him?

Frank McRae- Yes. And I said Henry this is what we had in mind. We had talked about meeting again on Friday after we had the meeting on Thursday, in fact the

meeting was already established for Friday, I think maybe Friday morning. Henry said fine be glad to see yah Frank but he said you are going to waste your time and all you are going to do is get yourself in trouble with your congregation's and you are going to be misunderstood, you are not going to change my mind one way or another, I know how I feel. And I said well that is fine but I think we need to say to this community that we as ministers again our have this concern. So Henry said fine I will be glad to see you, this was Wednesday night.

Carolyn Yellin- Did you feel discouraged by the attitude?

Frank McRae- Well I felt like at least we were saying to the community that the clergy is alive and that at least the church is saying we recognize a crisis and we are at least praying for some type of..

Carolyn Yellin- So in some respects you felt this needed to be done for, that is was needed on both sides, the mayor needed to hear this and the clergy needed to say it and there was a double need there really.

Frank McRae- Well because Henry Lobe has a high regard for the clergy I felt like Henry would listen tot his because he had expressed an appreciation for what we had done earlier in terms of the service..

Carolyn Yellin- So he might be more likely to listen to you than perhaps another mayor may have.

Frank McRae- Oh yes I think so but again I am so tied up because of my personal feelings.

Joan Beifuss- Well and had it come to you during this strike period that as much of a crisis as the garbage strike was a relevancy of the ministry here?

Frank McRae- Well, I don't think we really realized until later what our lack of image was, or at least our negative image was. I don't want to exaggerate that point but it was revealing to some of us anyway. So the clergy meeting took place and I don't know how it concluded but it was agreed we would meet Friday morning. An interesting thing was Thursday night that Dr. King was killed Henry had asked me to go to Ole Miss I think where he was going to speak to the law school and he asked me to go down there with him. As it turned out I had some other plans and I cancelled out with Henry to go with the family. Of course Dr. King's death was that night and of course things changed dramatically after that.

Carolyn Yellin- One of the things was that mayor Lobe as actually in the car on the way down there as I recall.

Frank McRae- Yes, yes, well the sheriff stopped him, I think he was in Whitehaven. So it happened from that point on, Rabbi Wax called me, well I guess I talked to the rabbi that night.

Carolyn Yellin- Well now yes, may we just go back just a moment and you personally do you recall where you were the moment you heard the news?

Frank McRae- Yes, yes.

Carolyn Yellin- And both the news of the shooting and the death or did you get them concurrently?

Frank McRae- No my wife and I were in Collierville at the (muffled) Presbyterian church, We hard the news firs that he had been shot and then shortly thereafter we heard the other news.

Carolyn Yellin- Did you hear it announced at a meeting?

Frank McRae- Over the radio, now it was a group of friends.

Joan Beifuss- What was the reaction?

Frank McRae- I don't know, an emptiness, a feeling you know what now. I felt so much of a responsibility because it happened in my district, it happened, Jim Lawson invited him here and Jim was devoted to this man. I am, well not paternalistic but at least I have a very fatherly attitude about this city because I happen to be born here. I took all this very personally.

Carolyn Yellin- And your closeness to the mayor.

Frank McRae- Yes and I felt so sorry for Henry and then I remembered I was supposed to be with Henry at that particular time, so we came home immediately. We were stopped by a sheriff in Germantown.

Carolyn Yellin- You were stopped?

Frank McRae- Yes. Stopped by a friend a fellow who I had married some years before a deputy sheriff of course he let us on through and so we went home and I called Father Greenspun at St. Patrick because I knew he would be in the middle of things and we talked a little. Of course there was great fear then on the part of everybody and I was fearful not for myself because I felt I was far removed from where the action was. But a real, I knew that forever and ever Memphis would be involved. I was sorry for the death of Dr. King, but I think really in all honesty my sorrow for him was overshadowed b y my real concern for the city, which is bad to say.

Joan Beifuss- Did you try to get in touch with mayor Lobe then?

Frank McRae- No, well I called he has a private unlisted number and I called and the line was busy and after that there wasn't any effort and I thought that, I thought I might have been with Henry but then I would have only been in the way so. There is nothing to do and I don't know when I talked to Henry I suppose it was the next day. So the Rabbi called that night, we talked several of us. Dean Demmick called, he and

Father Joseph had talked and so the next morning they agreed that they, we planned to have some type of stroll on Friday anyway to city hall and I felt that morning it would be a sacrilege to go to city hall now, under the circumstances. Rabbi disagreed and Dean Demmick disagreed. So we went to the service at St. Mary's that morning and I went still convinced that it was not the thing to do to go under the circumstances, but we were involved in a very emotional memorial service and those who were not there I think could not evaluate what we did, or judge what we did in going to city hall if they had not been in the service. So we had the service and it was very moving, very emotional service only because of the conditions not because of what was said in particular.

Carolyn Yellin- Who conducted this?

Frank McRae- Dean Demmick was in charge Nick Veron participated in it. Jim Lawson read the scripture, I believe bishop Gates had some part to play it was not a lengthy service. The announcement was made that after the service we would adjourn to the parish hall and then a statement would be read and we could decide what we should do. Even then I felt we should not go to city hall.

Carolyn Yellin- Some one had been working on the statement?

Frank McRae- On Thursday night Bill Aldridge and Henry Stark had prepared a statement that we were to consider as the two representatives of those groups. So we met that morning, the paper was read. I still have some reservations about some things that happen but the paper was read, but the emotion of that moment we should have gone to city hall but the things which took place there were unfortunate. So we agreed that we would go, the only way to have voted that day was in favor of going and presenting the paper, the paper it turned out was minor, nobody even knew it happened. So I called city hall and talked to Jenny Beard Henry's secretary and told Jenny that we were coming that we would march on the north side, we didn't use the word march, I think stroll is what we agreed. Down the north side of poplar and we would be orderly and we hoped Henry would receive us and it would probably be better if he received us outside. So we walked and we hadn't gone a 100 yards before the police met us. So we walked in an orderly friendly way, there was no problem with our group at all.

Carolyn Yellin- Who did you walk with?

Frank McRae- Dr. Mac Daniel at urban (muffled). So we are at city hall, we got to city hall and the group all out front and I suggested that Henry would come down outside but he didn't think this was good so I told him to wait and I went upstairs to the mayor's office and I told him we were outside and that he could receive us and Henry said to come right on in right here. So we did and Dean Demmick carrying the crucifer and the mayor met us in a fine way. The whole group was in the mayor's office and this was the unfortunate part of the whole thing as far as I was concerned. Rabbi Wax launched out against the mayor saying we were a group of angry men who had come there to say that we were making certain demands. I didn't feel that

this was the reason that we were there. This was not the occasion to be angry, I was not angry and I stood right with the mayor the whole time, physically beside him and he received us in a fine way and this was a difficult moment for him but the national cameras were grinding away and it was unfortunate but if you don't know the background here, for years there have been some strange feelings between mayor Lobe who has been, well you know his background, and Rabbi Wax they have disagreed on many issues, so this was unfortunate. I saw some things being said that really should not have been said at this particular time, specifically by Rabbi Wax. Henry Stark made a statement that was very fair and far less inflammatory than what Rabbi Wax had said. And then Ralph Jackson made a statement that was in line with what you would expect Ralph Jackson to say, The mayor responded in a fine way I thought and then we left. They all regret this paper which nobody the national television missed altogether and I feel like our going that day was a real fiasco. It did not communicate the feelings of the group and then of course Dick Moon decided to throw a hunger strike, which was alright but I didn't think this was, it was a matter of propriety here, I didn't think this was the occasion to do what Dick did., I feel like this was a day of mourning and not a day for men, for angry meant o march on city hall. I really didn't. I went with the group but I went not in the spirit to make demands or to be angry with the mayor, but rather to say please, please Mr. Mayor before something else happens. Let's get on with it. We made an attempt that afternoon, not many people know this, We made an attempt to reach the labor people. Ned Cook stopped me and said if you will contact the labor people and make the same presentation to them I think the mayor may be in a position to do something. So with this in mind the Rabbi called and he could not make contact. I finally got hold of Bill Lucie out at the labor temple, at union hall at Firestone and told them that a group wanted to meet him that afternoon, as far as I know contact was never made, it may have been I don't know. But this was unfortunate, and what we did was misunderstood and again if you do not know the background of the relationship between Henry Lobe and rabbi Wax than you really cannot understand what was happening that day in the mayor's office. I understand that and I therefore could accept it but around the world people misinterpreted what happened. It was not good strategy on our part, we were misunderstood. We were saying the city is in trouble and this is what I think we were trying to say, that the city was in trouble please let us do what we can do. I think we were unfair to the mayor not in the march but in leading up to this, encouraging Henry to keep a stiff upper lip philosophy and I don't think we were fair in telling him what our real feelings were, a lot of us and I thin he was done a disservice. I think Henry was a t fault in his own willingness to make some concessions earlier that might have been made but that's just my personal observation. Since that time of course there has been an awful lot of reaction on the part of some people as to what we did do. We have been in some ways alienated from some people because of this and the things we endeavored to do I suppose have been in jeopardy.

Carolyn Yellin- Have you had national reaction?

Frank McRae- Oh I don't know what you mean by national reaction but...

Carolyn Yellin- What I mean is was there a difference in the national reaction as opposed to where there any favorable reactions nationally in favor of this march.

Frank McRae- Oh yes.

Carolyn Yellin- That were reported to you?

Frank McRae- Yes. Of course I heard immediately, I heard before we marched that (muffled) in the New York office but since then have been reactions of this kind we had people of course from national offices that came for the march namely the memorial march,

Carolyn Yellin- Were there any in that march with the ministers, were there any people from out of town.

Frank McRae- Not to my knowledge, yes Henry Sloan Coffman who was he and Dr. Spock were related, this is William sorry was here and he did march that day. He is the only person whom I can recall, a national figure.

Carolyn Yellin- He was at the memorial service that morning where...

Frank McRae- Yes, he came with Jim Lawson in fact Jim introduced me to him. So he came down and worked with Jim and was in the march, I cant recall any others outside the community who were in that group. But we were not trying to say what I think came out which was unfortunate.

Carolyn Yellin- Could it have been said at that time?

Frank McRae- This is why I was opposed initially to the march I felt like the occasion just did not warrant this. But they were determined to go and I was not undermined under those circumstances.

Carolyn Yellin- Did you talk to mayor Lobe privately?

Frank McRae- I talked tot him that night.

Carolyn Yellin- That Friday night?

Frank McRae- Yes. Did he tell you what his reaction had been to the ministers?

Frank McRae- It was not any change in his position. I think Henry felt hurt in part at this and I wouldn't do a disservice to him? But of course I don't think he appreciated this, it did not, well change his mind but these people were not coming to say hip hip hooray for Henry.

Carolyn Yellin- Does he react usually to this sort of thing, I mean a criticism of his sort would he react hurt, or was this just the very seriousness of this thing.

Frank McRae- I think any problem, well who can say this man was living under a terrific strain because it might appear that Henry Lobe was singlehandedly responsible for the death of this man. Which is just not true of course, but Henry I think as any politician is just so keenly aware of his public image that he did not want to in any way (muffled).

Carolyn Yellin- Do you feel he has changed (muffled). In your continuing relationship.

Frank McRae- You know I have not been closely associated (muffled) (Tape End)