

# Rhodes College Digital Archives - DLynx

## Rev. Darrell Doughty, Southwestern at Memphis, 1968

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David Yellin- This is June 26<sup>th</sup> 1968, and we are in our offices and we are talking to Darrell Doughty, Joan Beifuss and David Yellin this is tape 1.

Joan Beifuss- You are not going to test it back?

David Yellin- Go ahead.

Joan Beifuss- You are confident?

David Yellin- Yes.

Joan Beifuss- Ok Darrell tell us how you got to Memphis in the first place or give us some of the background material.

Darrell Doughty- You mean you how I came to Memphis.

Joan Beifuss- Yes how you came to Memphis and what position?

Darrell Doughty- Well I have lived in Memphis about 2 years, over 2 years. I am a professor of religion at Southwestern College here in Memphis. My home is Oakland California which I was at the university of California San Francisco theological seminary. In 1962 to 1965 I was in Germany studying for my doctorate, where I received my doctorate degree. Returned to the United States in 1965 and spent one year in Princeton New Jersey where I taught Princeton Theological Seminary. From there I came to Southwestern and we have been living here ever since.

Joan Beifuss- Darrell hat university in Germany.

Darrell Doughty- University of Guddeenton.

David Yellin- And your denomination?

Darrell Doughty- United Presbyterian church USA.

Joan Beifuss- On your studies in Germany what areas were you concentrating?

Darrell Doughty- New Testament studies.

Joan Beifuss- Translation?

Darrell Doughty- Interpretation.

David Yellin- We know about your new baby but you tell it. Your family consists of...

Darrell Doughty- 4, Jean Earle this daughter is now 4 years old, she was born in Germany and then our 2<sup>nd</sup> baby was born here in Memphis last December and then my wife Mary.

Joan Beifuss- Was your father a minister?

Darrell Doughty- No. David Yellin- How did you get into the ministry here?

Darrell Doughty- Well that is a very difficult and long story because I graduated engineering physics from the university of California and did a year of graduate work in that before I went to theological seminary. But the reverse question is more interesting, how I got into engineering because I went through the grammar school and high school at a time when everyone was funneled into sciences. Everyone who did well on a math test was destined to be an engineer and I was lucky enough to flunk out in college.

David Yellin- Everyone told you how good you were at this?

David Yellin- It was partly a number of reasons actually, upon graduating from college I studied engineering physics and as I found the more course I took my curiosity about physics became satisfied. I suddenly decided I didn't want to do this for a living.

David Yellin- That is kind of interesting. Well look can we get tot a few things, Joan I have a few questions that I think might be appropriate. You came to Memphis 2 years ago.

Darrell Doughty- I have been at southwestern for two years.

David Yellin- Yes, you will begin your third year. Right. Can you recall your first reaction to the city of Memphis and or let me put it this way coming in the south midsouth whatever this area is called is a different experience for you isn't it?

Darrell Doughty- We have lived a lot of places, we have lived in California and Europe and now Memphis so we are fairly used to moving around and there is a lot of diversity there and we traveled all over Europe. Now you ask about first coming to Memphis. We are, my first reaction when I came down for the job interview and went back and told Mary about it, I was impressed with the city. It was clean, pretty city. We were I think to begin with and still are in fact very impressed in what one broadly defines as southern hospitality. The friendliness of the people and the day won't come if they bring over lunch and everything and willing to help all your neighbors and how friendly the people are. So out initial impressions of the city and such things like that were very very positive I would say. In a number of ways.

David Yellin- The cleanliness, the opens spaces and such.

Darrell Doughty- Yeah well Memphis is had a reputation of the cleanest city in the united states, streets are clean the parks are well kept up. I remember when we first came here driving along Riverside Dr. and noticing how the, how the garden was well kept up down there by the river. This impressed me about Memphis, streets were more or les broad, tree-lined. It was a nice looking city.

David Yellin- Therefore, without hopefully be-laboring the point, but can you sort of go back in time and trace your feelings as you went on, did it, your first impression become stronger or did it alter?

Darrell Doughty- These initial impressions are still valid it's just so much has been added to them you see. I don't know where to begin you see.

Joan Beifuss- Well begin at, becoming involved at parkway gardens church, how did that happen.

Darrell Doughty- You can begin with churches in general one of the first things you do when you come somewhere is look somewhere for a church home.

David Yellin- That is a southern expression isn't it?

Darrell Doughty- Yeah.

Joan Beifuss- Did you do that?

Darrell Doughty- Being a minister, an ordained minister and having relations with the church, I should say to begin with that we have never been too happy in churches even though I was ordained. We weren't very happy in Princeton with the churches, although Princeton is a southern city in a lot of ways. Anyway, we began to look for a church home and here is probably where the first problems began to arise. Of course this didn't take place until several months after we had been here, we had decided not to affiliate with any churches here.

David Yellin- Did you arrive in the summer?

Darrell Doughty- Yes, in August. We didn't join Parkway Gardens until next summer so it was almost a year, but so we visited churches, Mary visited churches I didn't visit many churches, but mainly they come to visit you. You see they send out there little delegations, and every time a church did send out a delegation we questioned them very deeply on the concerns that I am interested in which is social concerns and how these churches relate to these concerns, receiving always a negative response. They are not. They are not. Concerned with these issues and above all that the racial question we could not find any church that was integrated. A number of the visitors who came to our house made a point to say they were not integrated that they had always been open but we got around that problem one way or another, we have no negroes in our church. So generally we recognized that the church at least plays a different role in the culture here. It is a totally different role than I would ever envision to be able to fit into so we had just about given up being related to any church. Then along in between times that winter some time we made friends with Vasco Maxine Smith and got to know them very well and they were members of Parkway Gardens church.

David Yellin- How did you make friends with them do you recall?

Darrell Doughty- Yes as a matter of fact, I had been here for about 3 months and somebody called a meeting in people who were interested in, this is a pretty radical thing actually, interested in integrating housing by what some people might refer to as block busting. We had some radical plans formulated about integrating suburbs around Memphis out there first instead of the inner city and we were going to buy houses and sell them to negroes and bring somebody from Chicago and buy 40 or 50 houses in key places and anyway we had this massive plan we were working on. And we were meeting over at Dana Curtis' house to talk about this and we, Dana had asked Vasco to come and give us his reactions. The first evening I met Vasco we sat around all night talking. Finally gave up this plan.

David Yellin- You mean as a result of your talking?

Darrell Doughty- Well no partly, we did give it up but I got to know Vasco very well that evening. We talked all night and then we started a relationship with them and then we became friends with them and then it was then after that, one time we were over at his house talking about churches in general I said I didn't like churches so much and he had suggested to me that I might like Parkway Gardens church, he is an elder in the church there so. Reverend Bell and Vasco came over our house one day and asked us to join and I couldn't join because as a minister I can't join a church but my wife could and she decided to join and then we felt there was some role I could play in the church there because of their desire to have an integrated church and they didn't have the resources to hire and associate minister at the time. So I decided I would sort of play that role in the church, which I have done ever since so now I think the whole role is open for re-examination now.

Joan Beifuss- How integrated was the church at that time?

Darrell Doughty- None, it had no white members at the time, Mary is still the only white member although now we have a significant white attendance. Well we have a number of white people who are going to join within the next few months.

David Yellin- Now was your role an official one or just kind of...

Darrell Doughty- Unofficial. Yes.

David Yellin- How did you react to the city itself when you found this out about the churches. Could you separate this from the city?

Darrell Doughty- Well this is not uncommon in churches, like I said when we were in Princeton New Jersey, it is the same thing all over the country and one way or another but you soon realize that the church, because see in general Memphis is about if I compare it with Oakland California which is a city I know, where I grew up and a very similar city in a lot of ways in a sociological structure, the size is almost identical. Memphis is much like the city I grew up in that it is about 20 years back the church here. And in all kinds of ways not just church, in the way people live and the role of the movies and the cultural life, everything is about 20 years behind Oakland California. The church here is a real fundamental part of culture. It is, they

are proud of their churches that there are more churches than gas stations. You soon realize that the whole city, one of the struts upon which the city rests, it is a board which sustains their entire way of life, is their church. This didn't change my impression of the city in anyway.

David Yellin- The physical city in a sense.

Darrell Doughty- No. It wasn't the churches. Anyways I am pretty negative on churches anyway, so this wouldn't have done anything .

David Yellin- But now the idea that you depict Memphis as 20 years behind is that a normal space, when I say normal was Princeton 20 years behind?

Darrell Doughty- No, no, no, Memphis is 20 years behind in it's self understanding of where it is you see it culturally, their attitudes in terms of...I don't know it is both positive and negative which one could get into in a lot of ways. The fact that they are 20 years behind means they haven't made a lot of the mistakes that other big cities have made.

Joan Beifuss- That was our thing we figured it was only about 10 years behind.

Darrell Doughty- Yeah well 10, 20- years. Well Oakland is all black you see the white people have all moved out tot eh suburbs, that hasn't happened in Memphis yet. Things like that.

David Yellin- Yes it is one of the few cities in the country and about the only one of its size that has no suburb.

Darrell Doughty- Yeah well when we were talking about this housing thing to begin with that was all based on the fact that they were 20 years behind here and didn't even have a sophisticated housing clauses in their various housing projects to exclude certain things which could be done here. Which couldn't be done in other places.

Joan Beifuss- I think there is still a chance here.

Darrell Doughty- Oh sure.

David Yellin- That is why I am lingering on this because this is certainly significant to what eventually happened and I think, what I am trying to do is to illicit from you memorable phrases that people used.

Joan Beifuss- Say a memorable phrase.

Darrell Doughty- (Muffled) You know when the mayor's election, when Willis ran for mayor one of the issues we tried to raise was the fact that Memphis still has the possibility of going up or down, forward or backward at least at that time and this was last fall, there was still an option for Memphis.

Joan Beifuss- Darrell how did you get involved in the mayor's (muffled).

Darrell Doughty- This goes on naturally after getting to know Vasco Smith and getting involved with Parkway Church because Vasco Smith is president of Shelby county democratic club and I started attending the Shelby county democratic club meetings last summer. That naturally evolved as the Shelby county democratic club decided to back Willis for mayor and he, well he just asked me to be his co-campaign manager. To begin with there was a sort of small committee sort of a thing and he didn't want to structure it that much. We didn't even want (Muffled) but we finally decided he had to have one because the press wanted to know who he was. So we took (muffled) more as a figure head.

Joan Beifuss- Who was the other campaign manager?

Darrell Doughty- Oh what was his name. That is why I say it is very unofficial see. It was a minister Baptist minister but I forget his name.

David Yellin- I am trying to think of it too and I cannot.

Joan Beifuss- Now had you known Willis prior to his announcing that he was running?

Darrell Doughty- Oh yes, I had met him at various parties, and democratic club, I talked with him, not well, no one knows Willis that well.

Darrell Doughty- Now, I hope we are not skipping around but before we get away from it, your assessment as Memphis as an entity, is this true of the entire community as well as it's two parts the white and black.

Darrell Doughty- Yes, I haven't talked all the way about Memphis yet but in terms of what I have already said, it would be true of both the black and the white communities, in other words the black church actually plays a much more significant role here than it does in the northern cities. And when I am talking about being 20 years behind 10 years behind, definitely I would say the black community too. Shelby county democratic club was an exception.

David Yellin- In what way?

Darrell Doughty- Its political sophistication.

David Yellin- And how does that demonstrate.

Darrell Doughty- Well at one time it was the most sophisticated black political organization in the untied states. This is simply attributable to whoever was at the work of (muffled) and they studied outside of Memphis, at Harvard and at Michigan and then came back and built something in Memphis which was significant but by and large in the black community and this is illustrated hopefully garbage strike when you go through that in terms of sophistication in political methods and things. Black community is also...it is southern. The same problems in the black community and white community are southwest or anyplace else. It is fun when you realize you

are still dealing with southerners. It is different. Some people will argue (muffled). Who was Carl Walters over at southwestern, why did he mention that.

Darrell Doughty- He doesn't believe there is such a thing as a southern attitude?

Darrell Doughty- No right, it's just you know, first of all it is a rejection of outside help is one characteristic, and his holds I the black community and the white community, always (muffled) want to get a Memphian and if they can't get a Memphian, they want a southerner to do the job, city manager or whatever they are looking for. In the black community recently we have tried to bring organizers into the community, black organizers from the north but they just won't relate to these men.

David Yellin- Because again this is important as to what is coming up during the strike.

Darrell Doughty- Oh yes.

David Yellin- What is another characteristic, that you can recall.

Darrell Doughty- Well it all follows along, essentially we will take the outside help but we won't take outside ideas which are by and large many times much more sophisticated in terms of organization.

Darrell Doughty- It's not that is it that they won't listen to them or they will reject them out of hand? Or is this too specific.

Darrell Doughty- Yeah too specific, you have to take concrete examples but I can illustrate in terms of Southwestern college a criteria of excellence is always based on other southern colleges. When they want to talk about being an excellent college they always compare their self to Davidson, they never compare themselves with Wellesley because they are Northern colleges, or Beloit or something like that, they are not in the same ball park, therefore we don't consider. Now it is the same way in other communities too. So Memphis has been able to have this south image as being this progressive city and everything compare with Birmingham, see it all fits together.

David Yellin- Now this rejection of outside help would another thing be the conservatism, the economic conservatism.

Darrell Doughty- I don't know, you find that in southern California and all over.

David Yellin- Yeah,yeah. Because all these thing shave been mentioned as being part, and what we are trying to do is to see when the saying we are in it maybe different...

Darrell Doughty- These are broad questions, economic conservatism.

David Yellin- The relations to unions for instance.



Darrell Doughty- Oh this is a silly phenomenon, there is no doubt about that. The first time I ever came to the south, I was here one week and they asked me to preach in Mississippi at a church down there. I was really shocked because I didn't know what to do about one of my actual sermons and I worked very carefully on the racial parts of the sermon, but mistakenly I arrived on the scene, (muffled). I didn't realize that labor was an issue in the south until after the sermon was over.

David Yellin- Yes, how did you realize it.

Darrell Doughty- When they came storming out the doors.

David Yellin- They didn't say anything to you did they?

Darrell Doughty- Oh certainly.

David Yellin- They did.

Darrell Doughty- Oh definitely, I learned about labor being communist and everything. Immediately after this, this was in Mississippi, Corinth Mississippi so it is not very you know that far away and it is in a very progressive Presbyterian church.

David Yellin- Very progressive.

Darrell Doughty- Corinth Mississippi, lives on the Corinth machinery works. But I didn't even know these things when I came here. Because I came out of a background that just took unions for granted my dad was labor.

David Yellin- Well do you think we might be ready to get involved here?

Joan Beifuss- I still want to get back to the Willis campaign, are there any, what factors would attribute most to fear in the negro community.

Darrell Doughty- This is a very complex question also. Very interesting there are a number of factors but looking back on one of them, in black community and this again was (muffled)...less than year ago last Fall, they weren't ready for someone who talked about black power even in positive ways, they are just turned off by the phrase.

David Yellin- Now they being..

Darrell Doughty- The black people. The language Willis was using the issues he was trying to draw, police brutality wasn't an issue in the negro community you see and Willis was forced to the review board and they didn't recognize the significance of this. So something's like this and so the ministers the black ministers you see they were terrified by Willis' use of the phrase black power. The very same ministers who during the garbage strike then completely reversed themselves when the chip was down, but last fall, Willis' political opponents were able to use this against him

and even the newspapers were able to turn this sort of language against him and make him appear as a radical. You see and therefore frightened people, that is one thing I am sure there are a lot of other reasons, I mean one can go into political dynamics of the black community in Memphis which was split (muffled) and is still divided today.

Joan Beifuss- Did you ever track down what started that Willis having sold out to Lobe?

Darrell Doughty- He didn't sell out to Lobe, I mean I don't know how deep you want to go into it I have my own theory.

Joan Beifuss- But that story was widely circulated wasn't it?

Darrell Doughty- Oh certainly.

David Yellin- It's significant.

Darrell Doughty- Do you want to go into all this?

David Yellin- Yes.

Darrell Doughty- Ok.

David Yellin- See this is very important to us.

Darrell Doughty- Ok I don't know, I just, I would not like to be quoted on some of this because this is pretty wild stuff. I am going to speculate on some grounds. I would like to begin with the fact that Willis is a wheeler dealer. He is a pro politician the guy knows all the ins and outs and has all kinds of relationships with taller figured in Washington. This guys is a real pro, he is probably a real pro in Memphis.

David Yellin- Now to be sure you are being quoted correctly you mean this not in a derogatory sense?

Darrell Doughty- I mean in the traditional political sense. It could be positive or negative. I would see it negative because I don't like those kinds of politics anymore but I am sort of idealistic. In terms of traditional politics Willis stands top along with a lot of other people. So in the history of black politics in Memphis Willis has certainly made a lot of deals on all different sides. With Plymouth for example and on often with Hooker and with various people and the most complex relationships are with Bill Farris. When Farris ran for mayor of Memphis they, see I forgot all thee things.

David Yellin- Against Ingram.

Darrell Doughty- He ran against, first he ran for governor once, and they supported him.

David Yellin- This is Farris yes.

Darrell Doughty- Then he ran for, he ran for governor and they opposed him against Clement, he ran for mayor against Ingram and Willis backed him against Ingram you see. Now there were all kinds of reasons for this, but I think one has to begin with the one that Farris is a real estate and so was Willis so there are some tie ups there. Now in the last election, I am just pointing some facts and we can go back and elaborate but last election Farris was mad with Bill Morris. I would say if there was (muffled) anyplace it was between Bill Morris and Willis. That is just what I would say and that Bill, Willis was supposed to take enough of the black vote at least from Ingram to let Morris get into the run off, that is the way I look at it. Because Morris would certainly take the black vote in the run off against Lobe. That looks to me that might have been the kind of deal and they might have had a deal even set up so that after that was done then Willis would have got some points in the....I don't know. I just talked to a lot of people, we talked about this with various people and no one that I know would deny it. That was the way politics was running. We backed Willis and I worked for Willis for various reasons including the issues he was fighting for. This could have been, this was possible.

David Yellin- Are you saying that Willis didn't feel like he could win, he felt though that he would rather have Morris.

Darrell Doughty- I don't know, I don't know what Willis felt because we never talked about this. And we just always ran the whole campaign as if we were in it to win or at least get Willis into the run off, which we hoped we could do, but Willis has done a lot of other shady stuff too that hurt him in the campaign, the big congress universal life insurance. (muffled) labor issues.

Joan Beifuss- Get on the labor...

Darrell Doughty- His employees when on strike and he fired them all. This cause..

David Yellin- Where is Willis in this?

Darrell Doughty- He is part of, he is the vice president of the university. So during the election this is like Cornelius Crenshaw fought Willis because she has grudge with him on this one issue, will fight Willis every time he raises his head on this one issue that they fought before and even today this issue still divides COME, last night it happened again. This is a violent issue and so now you begin to enter class problems in the black community where you have Jesse Turner and Willis and Sugarman and (muffled) Walker of the bourgeoisie (muffled). Lower class which Ingram strangely enough can appeal too.

Joan Beifuss- You were. (muffled) Talk about Willis that night, was he surprised?

Darrell Doughty- I don't know if he wasn't surprised he put on an awful good show. But really from everybody I talked to and from what I saw strangely enough it really seemed as Willis thought he was going to at least be in the run off and I think he was disappointed, very disappointed. Because he is a very idealistic kind of person and he is the kind of person who would make these kinds of deals with Morris and then

try and beat Morris. You see this is the kind, you have to realize Willis he has taken I mean I know of a grievance he has made with labor down through the time and years and then just turned around as a black man taken their money and then worked against them anyway. Some people say Wills is for Willis but he also has always worked for the black people at the same time. So just because he took the money from them Morris was meaning out to win you see and it might disappoint him when he doesn't win. In think he was very very torn apart. But the black community was so divided.

David Yellin- Again this is not to jump and you can come back, does this torn apart, the fact that he was torn apart account for him staying out of the strike?

Darrell Doughty- No.

David Yellin- Why did he stay out of it?

Darrell Doughty- Partly perhaps that might have been, I might say, I don't, you know that Willis I am sure is giving people all kinds of family problems right now.

Darrell Doughty- (muffled)

Joan Beifuss- That was funny because that was the continuing question where was Willis?

Darrell Doughty- He was there one day and he focuses on the city council meeting.

David Yellin- Yes he made a speech on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Darrell Doughty- But he wasn't around much.

David Yellin- yeah he told him that he would do well up in Nashville and he would take care of it. Now maybe the things...

Darrell Doughty- Well they were in Nashville during this time actually.

David Yellin- And that was part of it to and they were never even asked I would guess. In a sense they weren't asked to take part in the thing.

Darrell Doughty- Well you know I wouldn't use that as an excuse they could have been here.

Joan Beifuss- They could have (muffled).

Darrell Doughty- If you noticed, we can go deeper into this that certain people do not play an active role in this garbage strike, Vasco Smith didn't either really. They just were there and they presence was noticed. Jesse Turner even didn't play a huge role, this was another thing, this was a whole leadership thing.

Joan Beifuss- then when the coalitions came out.

Darrell Doughty- Yeah well his leadership in the midst of the coalition. And they didn't play an active role for a number of reasons which are now becoming clear.

David Yellin- Well this is what we could if you could give us your assessment so that you can help us lead so that we can follow this because we will talk to Willis and Sugarman and we have talked to Turner and we have talked to all of these and it would be great for us if we had some idea, a little more sophistication when we went into it. We are coming to the end of this tape which is why I was taking over here I didn't want you to get started on it...(Tape Break)