

# Rhodes College Digital Archives - DLynx

## William Lucy, AFSCME Headquarter's Staff, 1968

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David Yellin- This is tape 3 with William Lucy November 1<sup>st</sup> 1968. Tape 3. (Tape Break)

David Yellin- Alright I think you said you were going to get to the assassination but perhaps even before then you were talking about the newspapers and you were saying that it was unique the newspaper situation.

William Lucy- We did have a rather strange experience because of the two paper situation. We were getting a tragic affect because of that. One paper would take one position and the other paper would take another position. The editorials, one would take what would appear to be a liberal view and the other would take a conservative view. The next day you would have the reverse. If you have been reviewing these you will see what I mean. One day the call was for the problem to be solved another day it was for the head of the employees and this type of strange thing. We could issue a written statement that would come out with some strange interpretation and completely out of context as to what was said. So we simply had to stop dealing with the press almost altogether. We had provided initially as far as the membership meetings were concerned the press the opportunity to come in and talk to anybody they wanted to and then we started seeing the very slanted coverage come out, very slanted and very bias.

David Yellin- Well have you in your own interpretation in your own feeling was this on the reporter level or did you feel it went higher?

William Lucy- My personal feeling was that it went higher in some instances. There were some reporters regardless of what happened simply would not understand what was going on and didn't care to understand what was going on. I can't say whether it was individuals because you have this team participation in some stories where maybe three guys cover the thing and they get together and maybe get their views together. But all in all the press coverage of the total thing was just tragic. Because it added a lot to the emotions that the community developed.

David Yellin- Now when you say press do you include radio and television or is there a difference.

William Lucy- No I think by and large there is about the same throughout except that at least we got an opportunity as far as television and radio is concerned to say what we had to say.

Joan Beifuss- Directly.

David Yellin- They couldn't change the words.

William Lucy- They couldn't change the words not like they normally do it is a question of where they cut, you know. But I would say there was more of an

objective presentation from our point of view on the TV and radio but then we are getting slaughtered by the editorial ads.

David Yellin- You mean on television radio. Now just again there are some negro newspapers. Did you, do you consider that they played any part and if so what kind of part.

William Lucy- I think they played a role in getting the views across to the black community. They printed practically just as stated. They were around and had greater access I think to the people involved and therefore could gather more information. Maybe it just boils down to a question of trust. You know and their position from the outset was that the issues involved were justifiable issues that should be resolved, and as time went on their relationship as far as the workers are concerned became much stronger. I don't say they were on our side so much because we were right as oppose that the issues were issues that should have been dealt with.

David Yellin- So that you feel that, you feel that at the beginning for instance that the newspapers played any part when do you think?

William Lucy- I think the effect of the newspaper was in sensationalizing of for instance the early discussions. Though it may have been good press to run a picture of some guy shaking his finger at the mayor that had an effect on "x" number of people who love the mayor.

Joan Beifuss- And there are many.

William Lucy- You understand what I am saying they are setting the tone and starting crystallize the attitude of the community.

David Yellin- Just by the same token what could they have done.

William Lucy- We cautioned the mayor that the discussion of the mediation in a fishbowl added nothing more than confusion to the issue because the press even though you been given a prepared statement that said X, Y, Z, but interpret what you mean by X, Y, Z. They would interpret unto their old thinking.

Joan Beifuss- Can you make any kind of comparison here you come across this kind of press situation in other cities where you have been involved in strikes?

William Lucy- Oh yeah.

Joan Beifuss- This is nothing unique then in Memphis?

William Lucy- It is not unique, I would say that the furgo with which they would edit here was a little bit stronger and we related that to the fact that I gathered they had endorsed and supported the mayor in every other venture.

David Yellin- No as a matter of fact they hadn't.

William Lucy- Well I just assumed they had supported him up the line.

David Yellin- Though I guess against Ingram they both supported him but they didn't in the primaries, neither one did as a matter of fact. Or maybe the Commercial Appeal but.

William Lucy- Well one other thing they did on the editorial cartoons, I don't know if you ever saw any of those, really some....

Joan Beifuss- Want to take a look at them again?

=There was some terrible cartooning. They had us labeled as anarchists and insurrectionists and all kinds of stranger things.

David Yellin- Now when you were here, and again this is getting personal did you have any personal confrontations, did you have any personal threats against yourself?

William Lucy- Oh I used to get them on a regular basis through the mail and by telephone.

Joan Beifuss- At the union office?

William Lucy- No at the hotel. We had the mistake being that the telephones were bugged, had the distinct feeling that our rooms were being searched, which is sort of the normal thing that takes place anyhow but...

David Yellin- You mean by the police.

William Lucy- We would have to assume it was by the police as much as no one else would have the authority to have the hotel allow them in.

Joan Beifuss- This isn't the normal thing?

William Lucy- Oh yeah , it happens al the time.

David Yellin- You mean in other cities?

William Lucy- No I mean here, I haven't experienced...

David Yellin- Well that's what I say when you say normal thing we wanted to know where normality ends.

Joan Beifuss- Do you think it is normal in Memphis for the police to move into those areas.

William Lucy- Oh yeah.

David Yellin- Had you ever spoken to Mr. Holloman?

William Lucy- I never met him all during the sanitation strike, my first meeting with him occurred during the present situation. I think there view of union representatives goes way back to the 1930's and your all assumed to be some sort of subversives of something that travel in the dead of night and therefore bear watching all the time.

David Yellin- Now could you in relation to the sanitation strike. Who did you find among the city representatives most cooperative? I mean you don't look like a person who is satisfied to (muffled).

William Lucy- When you say the city do you mean the council and the mayor...

David Yellin- The council and the mayor later on in the negotiations any of he attorneys...

William Lucy- Well in the, in fact to be quite honest with you during the discussions with the mayor's office aside from that one little meeting we had it turned out that no one was cooperative. Absolutely nobody. When they addressed us (Muffled) councilmen Patterson appeared to be the one that grabs more what we are talking about. And attempted to do something about it through whatever avenues the council had open. As the relationship developed I think personally he was joined by councilmen Blanchard who was 180 degrees the other leading up to oh maybe a week before the first march. And although he was objective he had some very strong reasons for being the other way. And then as the things became clearer and clearer to what we were saying and the attitudes, see he was with us on the march.

David Yellin- The 23<sup>rd</sup>?

William Lucy- Right and he was in the building and watching when the tear gas and the clubbing was going on and it became clear to him that many things that we were talking about in terms of the attitudes and the reasons..

David Yellin- How do you know this?

William Lucy- He said so.

David Yellin- You spoke with him personally?

William Lucy- Oh yeah we had become, I shouldn't say good friends but we had developed a sort of repoire that we could sit down and ..

David Yellin- Did he come and seek you out or how did this come...

William Lucy- He sought us out on a couple of occasions when he was trying to get a little bit more background himself on the issues. He would come down and he would just sit and talk. Not promising to do anything he was just trying to get information.

David Yellin- He just came down the union and...

Joan Beifuss- Nobody else, none of the other councilmen did that?

William Lucy- Besides Patterson and possibly Neders on one other occasion no others.

Joan Beifuss- Did you see any hope at all through Downing Pryor.

William Lucy- We saw hope in him and as much as he was the chairman of the council or whatever his position was, except that he wouldn't use as I assessed it he wouldn't use his influence there to address the entire council to the problem. The council took the attitude of whatever is going on is the mayor's problem. You know sort of a hand's off none involved type of thing, whereas it is a problem of the whole city, I can't see why the council should not involved itself. Particularly if they are the ones who have to adopt something.

David Yellin- Can I go back to something that I think I would like to get your viewpoint on. I believe it was Mr. Worth and I only have this from hearsay that pointed out to somebody that no indeed we did not call the strike or have anything to do with it. We would never had called this strike, a garbage strike in winter, a new council, a new mayor and so on. What did you do about it when you found that out.

William Lucy- What did we do when we found out we had one?

David Yellin- Yeah I mean what did you do to the local people, Mr. Jones in particular, do you care to discuss this?

William Lucy- Well we didn't do anything to him, there was nothing that we could do.

Joan Beifuss- It was too late by then.

David Yellin- No, I know you didn't spank him, or anything.

William Lucy- No.

David Yellin- Did he ever explain to you what happened?

William Lucy- Yeah as the events prior to the strike I related to you what he gave to us and what other people have given to us.

David Yellin- Now did he ever explain why he came with the overalls and changed in Mr. Blackburn's office and said now I am going to put on my prison clothes.

William Lucy- We discussed that on two occasions, and was more dramatic than anything else.

David Yellin- He was ready to do this wasn't he.

William Lucy- Well there was no basis for him going to jail. You know, I think it was just a show more than anything else and he wasn't an employee of the city, so what would be the city's reason for putting him in jail. The city didn't recognize the union so they couldn't say the union called a strike. It had no legal responsibility or any

other responsibility for the course of action that was taken down here. These were the things that nobody looks though.

David Yellin- Of course the answer of the city is Mr. Jones and others were already under the injunction of the 1966 which was the problem.

William Lucy- That very well may have been.

David Yellin- That is their end.

William Lucy- See you got to take a look at that injunction also, this is a thing that came out in court that when they moved for the contempt of court citation, and they added new people the contempt of court was issued prior to a hearing on the violation of the injunction so the courts had to back up and re-issue a supplementary injunction and then have a hearing on the injunction, and then formally issue the contempt of court citation. See the contempt of court thing was made prior to them either issuing the supplementary injunction or having a hearing on the injunction. So this was a decision that was made, this is the course of action we are going to take and so on. The original injunction they had a mass of people covered by this thing, many of who haven't worked for the city since 1966, many of whom some have died in 1966...

David Yellin- (muffled)

William Lucy- It was a sort of a broad thing and it was interesting the area that it covered. The injunction said that we cannot discuss the issues involved in the strike with anybody, we could not participate whatsoever in pursuing the demands upon the city. It boiled down to where the only thing you could do was sit with your hands folded. If you are seen in the company of another union member, technically you are violated the injunction. So it was a thing that was impossible not to violate.

Joan Beifuss- Let me check one other thing with you, who exactly came in from the union? You came in, Mr. Worth is in and out, Mr. Champa and who else?

William Lucy- Mr. Paisley.

David Yellin- He was from the state?

William Lucy- He works in the state as a whole.

Joan Beifuss- Headquartered in Nashville?

William Lucy- Yes. Mr. Epps came from Mississippi. That's about all it was in terms of international stuff except for Mr. Jones, at the local level.

Joan Beifuss- Now the day that Dr. King was assassinated, well did you meet Dr. King came in that Wednesday morning did you meet with him on Wednesday at all, the day before he was killed?

William Lucy- As I recall I think there was a meeting at a church earlier that day.

David Yellin- Yes, reverend Lawson's.

William Lucy- Yeah, were a lot of people were there and discussing and planning for the march and also there was a meeting schedule that night at Mason Temple. That is about the extent of it.

David Yellin- That's where he made the speech.

Joan Beifuss- Were you at the (muffled)

William Lucy- Yeah.

Joan Beifuss- Did the speech strike you, did anything strike you about the speech, at the time can you remember it certainly is hard to think in hindsight.

David Yellin- Now that was the mountaintop speech.

William Lucy- Yeah it was as far as the speeches I had heard it was probably one of his greatest speeches in a sense that it had dealt more with his own personal views and his own personal philosophy. Nobody thought much of it that night. Other than the fact that he was (muffled) geared himself up for a tremendous march. I think what struck people as strange was more the introduction he was given.

David Yellin- Do you have a copy of that or do you know of anybody that has a tape of that? That is one of the few things we have never been able to...

William Lucy- I don't know I can do some checking I am not sure.

David Yellin- I mean you are talking about of course reverend Abernathy's introduction

William Lucy- Right, and when some of us start to think back you know and couple the two things together and came up with the feeling that there was something beyond what he was saying that was involved in the presentation because the introduction was quite an introduction and it covered a whole gambit of experiences and himself as an individual. There was a strategy committee meeting after that speech that night do you recall? Did you regularly attend the COME strategy meetings?

William Lucy- Oh off and on I wouldn't say it was a nightly affair because there were so many meetings going on and we had some specific areas of responsibility and they were overlapping in some cases. I am trying to recall, I may have been but I am just not sure.

Joan Beifuss- It doesn't matter, just that a couple of those strategy meetings right before he was killed there was a Baptist minister that had a dream that he shared...

William Lucy- Oh reverend Jordan. If I recall indicated that he had a dream and I am not sure if it was...



Joan Beifuss- Did you hear about that before he was killed?

William Lucy- No. No I didn't hear about it before, it was afterwards when I was told about it.

Joan Beifuss- Ok then on the day Dr. King was killed do you recall that day at all?

William Lucy- Oh yeah.

Joan Beifuss- Could you give us a quick run through.

William Lucy- Yeah we were planning, you know naturally planning for the big meeting at Mason Temple that night and it was really being billed as best we could and the weather I recall wasn't too great that day. So we were trying to make sure that we had a good crowd and that you know Dr. King would be able to have the feeling that there was lots of support and he could carry on. So we had spent the biggest part of the day mobilizing people doing workshops with marshals that were getting set up for the march the sanitation employees who were going to act as a supplemental support for the marches.

David Yellin- You know something we have never had, if you don't mind if I interrupt I think it will be interesting. When you say you are giving instruction to the marshals, what kind of instructions?

William Lucy- Well, as to how to handle the crowd where we want the crowd kept.

David Yellin- Well where and how?

William Lucy- Well for instance you know we can anticipate the size and we wanted to make sure they would be in the middle of the street and away from the sidewalks. We had instructions that we didn't want anybody on the sidewalks that were participating in the march to any degree or another and that they were to keep a particular eye out for anybody taking any actions on the sidewalks.

David Yellin- Oh I see you mean this was in preparation for the march that was to be Monday, I thought you were talking about the meeting.

William Lucy- No this is for the march because we were anticipating a tremendous number of people.

David Yellin- But in spite, even though the injunction was, you felt there was going to be a march in any case.

William Lucy- Oh we were going to march no question about it.

David Yellin- Yeah.

William Lucy- In addition...

David Yellin- I interrupt and I am sorry about that day. So when did I guess you were busy then just mobilizing people and so on?

William Lucy- This was basically and also since there undoubtedly was some fear among people to march again after the first thing this had to be overcome, doing a lot of workshops with singing groups, and just mobilizing I think you can sum it up and also concentrating some attention on that night's meeting too. And we had planned a meeting with Dr. King's staff later on in the evening, at the Lorraine Motel.

Joan Beifuss- That was to be after the meeting at the Mason Temple?

William Lucy- No this was to be before the meeting at Mason Temple and then we had planned to get back together with him after the meeting. And this was...

David Yellin- That would be the staff, those who weren't going to the reverend Kyle's.

William Lucy- Right, now we didn't know who was going to reverend Kyle's and we had set up a meeting with Andy and Jim Bevel and this was always almost an informal thing, there was a meeting every evening to go over points of things although they hadn't been in town an awful long time so the other staff had been here working all the time. So you know later in the evening I suppose just prior to 6:00, if I recall there was, this was the evening of the national broadcast of Johnson's speech I am not sure but there was something that kept us glued to the television.

David Yellin- Now Johnson's speech was Sunday night the 31<sup>st</sup>, but...

William Lucy- I think it was a newscast but there was something that kept us we were up in the conference room.

Joan Beifuss- Maybe the 5:00 news.

David Yellin- Yeah.

William Lucy- Well whatever it was anyhow we stayed there, until approximately 6:00.

Joan Beifuss- Who is we?

William Lucy- Reverend Middlebrooke, Jesse Epps, Dr. Jackson, and two other people I can't remember who they were. That was a good sized crowd but as far as the people that would normally be traveling the same direction. And then, I think we heard the sirens first and really didn't pay too much attention to them because there were all kinds of things going on at the time.

David Yellin- Oh you were at the minimum salary building.

William Lucy- Minimum salary building. We were getting ready to go to the Lorraine Motel and we heard the siren and didn't think much of it and then somebody just

immediately after that came in and said they had heard a radio that Dr. King had been shot. Very short span of time so we got into Dr. Jackson's car and headed to the Lorraine Motel. I am not sure the timing of it but it was, couldn't have been more than 5 after 6:00 or somewhere in that neighborhood. And we got down to S. 3<sup>rd</sup> I guess it is, one way that way and you know there were more police than you can shake a stick at down there by then and we were stopped, and we were told that we couldn't go through, but we had a pass through Holloman that had been secured by Baxton Bryant you know Tennessee council of human relations so that we could at least travel during the curfew time and I think we finally got clearance from the higher ups or somewhere to go into the Motel Complex. The time span was very short but by the time we got down there, there was a good sized crowd of people there and a good number of police all over the place and we sort of more milled around than anything else. Talked to some (muffled) trying to get an idea of what took place. And we stayed on until quite late that night and I think we had our meeting our evening meeting with the SCLC staff people. Still trying to figure out where we were going with the meeting that night and we decided not to have the meeting that night and to get the people who were at the church by then to go home but I think at that point you know there was mixed views as to whether they should have it or not anyway. Someone went over and maybe conducted it for a little while and broke the crowd up.

David Yellin- That is right we never found out what happened to the meeting at the Mason Temple that night as far as I can recall.

William Lucy- I think someone went over and explained to the crowd what had taken place.

Joan Beifuss- Reverend Starks?

William Lucy- I am not sure who it was but then we had to leave someone there to stop all the other people who would be coming there expecting to have a meeting. I think they imposed a curfew if I recall. We had tried to work with them for them to make exemptions for those who were already out and headed for that meeting or those we had sent home. We spent the rest of the evening ourselves trying to get the kids off the street, because they were coming out by the ton. Going to Mason Temple, many people headed for the Lorraine Motel. So our staff and whatever people we could round up that had passes.

David Yellin- Now how did you designate yourself?

William Lucy- Well we didn't, when you said designate ourselves what do you mean?

David Yellin- If you were going around in the curfew how would you identify yourself as being permitted to go around?

William Lucy- Well we had a pass, we had no other identification.

David Yellin- I see and to people who were milling around who didn't have identification..

Joan Beifuss- Could you get people to move back home?

David Yellin- Yeah could you show some authority, I mean why would they listen to you?

William Lucy- No it wasn't authority it was just a discussion of what we felt might take place with people going in one direction in large crowds and large groups because we completely as far as we were concerned understood the attitude and the philosophy of the police department. And we didn't want any situation to develop that provide an excuse for either beatings or jailings or anything else.

David Yellin- What is, or even was then your reaction to what happened in Memphis as regard to other places there wasn't as much? Or in a hundred other cities they had...

William Lucy- It is a hard thing to judge.

David Yellin- Because you weren't at the other cities all we know are the reports.

William Lucy- I think maybe this attitude had been projected that there was such great race relations in existing here in Memphis probably had something to do with the level of damage that took place immediately after the assassination because Memphis was actually the quietest place in the nation. Why? I just don't know.

David Yellin- Why don't you tell us we want to know. What was, do you recall that you had any reaction that you care to talk about in relation when you found out that Dr. King had indeed been killed.

William Lucy- Well I think that struck me and it struck most of us the tremendous waste involved in how the adamant position of maybe both sides of this thing had caused this to happen. For instance explore both sides as I personally saw him, some of us who were directly involved, raised the question to ourselves as to whether the sacrifice was worth each point that you refused to back up beyond a certain limit on. You sort of raise the question of had you given in to this yesterday there would be no need for this today. In all these questions goes through your mind and a particular in my mind because I was directly involved in the negotiations all through the thing and therefore had some influence as to whether or not we went with this point or compromised on this issue or what have you. From the other side as I see the mayor's position is that the question of the demands that the employers were making were not so unreasonable, not so costly, or anything in terms of the total city operation. As admittedly on many occasions they should have been done the question was it is called for him in order to do them to reject a part of his philosophy and he was unwilling to do that. So it is a question of...

David Yellin- So there was a feeling I guess is what you are saying a sort of a guilt doubt of how much were you responsible for what happened.

William Lucy- I think this is the type of thing that many of us felt although I think as we look at it now, at least as I look at it now you would most likely do the same thing in any other given situation except that you would make a much greater effort to point out the dangers of a given situation. You make a much greater effort to seek a compromise solution to it.

David Yellin- Do you feel, of course you are now involved in the hospital strike and I think without going to much further into it and winding this up in a way what do you feel is the future, I guess you would have to say that the final or the most profound involvement here is one of race relations wouldn't you say?

William Lucy- I think so and...

David Yellin- Rather than a union affair.

William Lucy- I think I saw a (muffled) as the city of Memphis as a fellow designed the 1800 style of living in the sense of the blue bloods and all of this gather at the mansion for the social affairs of the season and not, they are living in a world of planning.

David Yellin- It is appropriate when you mentioned (muffled) that a train should go by right through the city.

Joan Beifuss- I am sure it is an 18<sup>th</sup> century train too.

William Lucy- I think the mayor sees himself as the reincarnation of that type of leadership.

Joan Beifuss- Now he (muffled).

William Lucy- No I think that there are a lot of other people that agree with him and want to preserve something that is completely outdated.

Joan Beifuss- What? What is it they are trying to preserve?

William Lucy- I think there is this aristocratic line you know this blue blood type of superiority based solely on wealth and you know I just see too much of that not only focused by I hear him say, for instance his whole stance on his words being his bond and this type of thing sort of points to the fact that myself is one who dealt with politicians a long time and know they are not to be trusted. Why should I take his word? You know, and yet he makes such a big thing of it his. I think that the city council for instance in responding to their constituencies do it quite a bit solely on the basis of race. For instance the questions of the Frayser housing project. It was a clear cut example of responding to the antis, simply because of the question of race. Well they know there aren't enough low rent housing units within the city situation to meet the needs. They would rather pay out \$100,000 to keep something from

being somewhere than they would to put \$100,000 into a constructive project and all the housing levels raised over the \$8,000 for the map south program.

David Yellin- What do you think of reverend Lawson?

William Lucy- I think he is a tremendous person, a tremendous individual and probably those who are making a contribution to both sides of the community he is one of the leading persons.

Joan Beifuss- Do you see any changes in this community since Dr. King was assassinated.

William Lucy- I think there has been a change in the thinking and attitude of a number of people, unfortunately they don't happen to be in a position to bring about any physical changes or changes in the attitude of the city as a whole.

David Yellin- You mean the power structure still has remained the same.

William Lucy- Right you have got an unbelievable situation to me if it is as I think it is. You have got a mayor who operates on personal whims and instincts and it has nothing to do with how it affects the segment of the community. For instance the business interests, it has been sad without question they have no influence on the mayor, the economic influence I mean the downtown and the chamber of commerce have no influence on the mayor. The religious community has no influence on the mayor. Well who does influence him? If nobody influences him what you have is a dictator. And if you are saying a city can progress under a dictator that is unbelievable. You have got the city council who buries their head in the sand and says we can't involved ourselves any way whatsoever. And I am not speaking primarily of he hospital strike situation but any situation that develops that requires someone to take a position all you see is people running for their hole.

David Yellin- Recognition of the UN day.

William Lucy- Another perfect example.

David Yellin- Perfect yeah.

+You see and what you got is a city with an inept leader, and he is inept elected primarily because of popularity not because of ability. Who one response to the attitude of the blue bloods and the racism of the rednecks. And you got nobody who has a vested interest able to influence him.

David Yellin- We have 3 more years of the mayor, you think the city can ride it out.

William Lucy- I don't personally thin, and this is a personal thing, I don't think that the city can stand 3 years of the mayor if his attitude and philosophy is the same as what it is now. One, because there is too much that needs to be done within the city of Memphis. First of all in the black community secondly I the city as a whole for his attitudes to allow that to take place. Which means it seems to me that there is going

to be constant friction and constant confrontation in an effort to get it done. I don't know how long the council has got but who do you go to, you go to a council that is racist by a 7 to 3 vote. Well I shouldn't say that, that is not necessarily fact but who operates on the basis of race. You go to the mayor's office who operates on the basis of race to a large degree. Where are you going to get things done, particularly if it's true that these other areas who would be concerned with doing something have no influence.

Joan Beifuss- It just happens if the county goes for Wallis next week the mayor is going to...

David Yellin- Well as long as the county goes, as long as the country.

Joan Beifuss- no but I mean the mayor is going (muffled) it is going to strengthen his position I think.

David Yellin- Well it sure is going to go, have you sent the high school votes?

Joan Beifuss- I saw that it was pretty funny.

David Yellin- unanimous. I wouldn't even have wanted Stevenson to be unanimous.

Joan Beifuss- Well I think what you better do is move your family back here you may be here for a long time.

William Lucy- Well, I would say that the city is in a very difficult position, I don't think the majority of citizens in this community are racist by any means except in their responses to the races.

David Yellin- Well you are something if you are not against something we have learned in this world.

William Lucy- Well I think the point is the people who are supporting of an issue are not nearly as vocal as people who are against.

Joan Beifuss- This is true there is a great deal of fear in this community I think, fear if you write a letter to the newspaper and sign your name that...

David Yellin- Oh byes you will get all kinds of letters. Well I guess on this low note.

Joan Beifuss- (Muffled).

David Yellin- Say something joyous.

Joan Beifuss- The strike settlement was pretty good don't you think when it finally came.

William Lucy- I guess maybe do you think you want to say anything about the strike settlement after the assassination and Mr. Reynolds came in and Mr. Miles, were you involved of course during all of this with Frank Miles and so on, he tried...

William Lucy- He tried a great deal to the settlement, because even after that some rally unbelievable things took place. After the city agreed to negotiations or mediation rather we came in to sit down to get the process going and then they objected to us being there because we had been cited in contempt of court and we were as a part of that meeting participating in areas that the injunction prevented us from doing. This really caught us by surprise it was kind of wild. If they couldn't settle the strike with any of the strikers of the union then who are they going to settle it with?

Joan Beifuss- We spent seven hours at Frank Miles house taping from 10:00 in the morning until 5:00 in the afternoon. Her has a terribly good memory doesn't he, an incredible memory.

David Yellin- Well he has been at this. Now is there anything special that you can think of? And the final settlement when Mr. Reynolds came.

William Lucy- I think the settlement as I said earlier victory is the eye of the beholder. What we felt that we accomplished was not so much the 15 cents an hour, but a change in the manner in which the employees would be treated. The establishment of a grievance procedure that is clearly spelled out the type of representation they could have. The fact that they got their union recognized in a formal sense by the city. These are the things that we consider to be tangible things.

David Yellin- Now you think these things have held up?

William Lucy- Oh yeah in the sanitation department I do believe they have held up. I haven't made any survey or investigations since then but there have been difficulties but the guidelines set down by that agreement almost forces the parties to sit down and come to some rational conclusion rather than going off and not talking to one another.

Joan Beifuss- What do you reply when, I am throwing this back at you that one of the contentions you know Lobe had from the beginning was that this was just the foot in the door for the union.

William Lucy- Well it is probably true and for his reason, see the best organizer is the employer not the union, because if there were not problems going without solution there would be no reason for a union to be in existence. If the employer did simply what is right by the employees then the employees would have no desire and need for a union.

David Yellin- There are a few companies still who don't have one.

Joan Beifuss- Do you think that what happened to Memphis speeded up settlement of some of the other strikes in other places, the sanitation strikes?

David Yellin- Well St. Petersburg didn't really...



Joan Beifuss- Yeah well Atlanta. Do you think they looked at Memphis and said let's not, that kind of a thing...

William Lucy- I think so.

Joan Beifuss- I think Atlanta, in fact I was in Atlanta right when that thing broke and of course what was interesting to me was to see the full attitude, and the whole attitude of the police and coming down and the marchers when the trucks went out the police were there and regular uniforms with no clubs or nothing, nothing. The whole approach to it was so different.

William Lucy- I would say in a general sense that it did affect the attitudes considerably.

David Yellin- Well what happened in Memphis was soon (muffled) in many ways.

William Lucy- I think it as far as the labor movement was concerned it was probably the greatest event in spite of the tragedy, that has occurred in the labor movement because it focused all the things that the labor movement ought to be and is.

David Yellin- Now can you enumerate those just for the uneducated.

William Lucy- Well first off you had the civil rights aspects, of the strike, you had the human rights aspect, you had the economic goals, you had the very basic question of equality and relationship to the employer.

David Yellin- And you were as you said before, if I may you were at a lower level.

William Lucy- Right and the fact that there was a unlike in the private sector the employees didn't know if they were going to get any benefits or not they simply put life and limb on the line so to speak. I think they would have been out there just as long if they hadn't got any assistance at all because they were just one step above poverty to start with.

David Yellin- Of course workers who work a full time and then come home and have to get food stamps.

William Lucy- These types of things aside from the fact that in the south with the attitudes not only of the general southerner, but southern labor, they can relate to his type of a struggle with all the factors involved and when you get southern white labor people who can walk side by side with NAACP people, SNICK people, CORE people, not be ashamed of it or worry about it but say I relate to this segment of the fight or the total fight or whatever part they decide and whatever reason they decide for being there, it represents maybe a change or a step towards change.

David Yellin- You are not saying of course that was total?

William Lucy- Oh no, not at all.

David Yellin- At least it was somewhat token or it was a step.

William Lucy- No not at all it was a step for instance we had people telling us I will help you all I can but if the NAACP becomes involved you can forget about me. Well now we can just left it at that because maybe the person represented 50 people, or 100 people.

David Yellin- What kind of people are those? Labor people?

William Lucy- Labor people, and community people for that matter. But we said, we tried to explain the nature of the thing and how their support was valuable for this reason and how other support was valuable for this reason and that you can't get upset when you tell the truth. They know the attitude of the mayor and the philosophy of the mayor, then it shouldn't bother them when someone speaks out about it, If they happened to share the same philosophy they happen to share it but if they can understand what the struggle is all about then they will take their proper role.

David Yellin- What happened with the white unions really?

William Lucy- As a matter of fact they marched in support themselves, twice. They marched with once. And many of them joined the last march, many of them opened their membership up for us to speak. Not saying what the attitudes of their membership was but they gave great opportunity, many of them contributed money.

David Yellin- In other words there was an improvement?

William Lucy- Oh definite improvement.

David Yellin- And the fact that they copped out in a lot of places was to be expected.

William Lucy- Exactly, the building trades, we got absolutely nothing from the building trades. Not even the time of day.

David Yellin- That is not their province, they don't build blocks.

William Lucy- The typographical union, the rubber workers, international harvester, the newspaper guild to a degree.

David Yellin- Well they turned the strike down though.

William Lucy- Well the executive board approved strike support and then the membership turned it down, but then you have to take a look at the vote and take a look at the dynamics that went into it.

Joan Beifuss- Bill Ross told us about that.

William Lucy- So there was quite a change and aside from the fact that they had a vested interest also. Because you know for the first time you had a much bigger mobilization around a labor cause regardless of how it took form afterwards. If they lost then the rest of labor ran the risk of being stamped up.

David Yellin- Yes. Of course that was the point and then you wonder of course some of the labor people then held a higher or a prior right with their whiteness rather than their union card or whatever how ever you want to say it.

William Lucy- All in all you know the movement represented a coalition of all of these various factors that is just bigger than anything that has ever occurred in the labor, as far as I know before.

David Yellin- So this was a significant and..

William Lucy- We never had one single struggle effect so many people. For instance the national coverage and worldwide coverage . Here is a thing that everyone was aware of and everyone could relate to in one form or another because of the various factors involved.

David Yellin- Well you have helped give us some clarity and some insights and you have been real good. I am about exhausted, have you anything Joan.

Joan Beifuss- No, I can't think of anything else.

David Yellin- I think this is splendid and we are very grateful to you.

William Lucy- My pleasure.

Joan Beifuss- It was very nice of you to say that...(Tape End)