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Sendstacke Family, 1968

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SS187.mp3

David Yellin- This is tape 2 side 2. June 25th 1968 the Sendstacke family joined by Mr. Harris ex-official member of the family. Ok, I think we can get going again. Let's go back a little if we may to kind of recover territory. Whittier Jr. You were as you say involved early and personally and right specifically with the activity of the strike, was the 23rd the first time you were, did you go to any of the marches before then? Did you cover any of the marches before then that were going on in city hall? Or going on, on Main St. or was the 23rd the first time. Yeah excuse me, here you go.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- I think we covered one before, didn't we cover a meeting before that at the union hall?

David Yellin- Did you go to meetings and so on?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- No the first meeting we went to was the 23rd.

David Yellin- Now can you recall your experiences on the 23rd?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- We went to the auditorium to cover the first meeting and...the city council was meeting with the strikers. And the union leaders and the men who had joined the union and they sort of bulldozed through what seemed, they seemed to bulldoze through a resolution where they give the strikers a 5 ½ cent raise, right? 5 ½ cent raise and they didn't like that. And so they started complaining and the city council, when they asked questions from the floor, they said there can't be any questions from the floor in this meeting it is strictly from the council and they called the meeting, they...

David Yellin- Adjourned the meeting.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Adjourned the meeting. And walked out and everybody started complaining and Vasco Smith showed a picture, showed a cartoon in the Commercial Appeal of what seemed to be a negro sitting on a pile of garbage and it was(muffled), everybody booed that. And now this may not have happened in order but Ezekiel Bell got up and gave a speech.

David Yellin- Do you remember his complaint about the motto was that when he said about the Memphis city motto, do you recall? I know it is awfully hard at this point and unfair if I ask you what you recall, but I am trying to get you to think terms that later on you have to remember something. You know we are trying to get you back in time because little details are what are important and what will make it distinctive as you know as a newspaper man and as a photographer. And think this was the time that reverend Bell suggested that...Pardon? Well alright go ahead I was wondering, I am trying to get you to recall things and if you can't please go ahead that means at this point there is nothing to recall. That is distinctive.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Well another thing that happened they asked that the microphones be left on.

David Yellin- Who asked?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Jesse Epps, he is one of the union officials.

David Yellin- Yes.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- And T.O. Jones, well they were all asking, everybody was asking that the microphones be left on. They said first they will have to get permission from somebody and they went and got permission the microphones were left on and they decided to boycott the commercial appeal, march and march down Main St.

David Yellin- You say they decided to boycott the Commercial Appeal, at that session when Jesse Turner showed the cartoon.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- No Vasco Smith showed the cartoon.

David Yellin- Excuse me Vasco Smith.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Vasco Smith showed the cartoon.

David Yellin- And then what happened do you remember? How did this come up that they should boycott?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Because, why did it come up? Because they felt the Commercial...

David Yellin- How did it come up, whose, did somebody say why don't we boycott it?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Vasco Smith, yes.

David Yellin- After he showed the cartoon?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- After he showed the cartoon.

David Yellin- What did he say do you recall?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- No.

David Yellin- Something to the effect they should boycott?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Because of unfair coverage.

David Yellin- And so everybody raised there hands and said I or what did they do?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- I think they raised their hands I am not sure.

David Yellin- Well as I say I hope I am not being unfair to you.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Well you aren't but all I can remember is Vasco smith standing up it was so long ago and well we took his sister back to the Defender she was with us.

David Yellin- Whose sister?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Edward's sister and then we came back and joined the march.

David Yellin- And where were you Edward?

Edward Harris- Well I was him, going...

David Yellin- So the three of you went.

Edward Harris- Right during the meeting of the auditorium.

Tom Beckner- You went back to the defender, yes please go ahead and tell it in your own words I interrupt you.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Well we came back to eh, well it wasn't the auditorium we joined the march at the, what is the name of that little store, Loeinstein's. New Loeinstein's, I think it was in front of the new Loeinstein's and we were marching and the, everybody, the people who were leading the march said ok we will take this half of the street they said we could have it, don't go over on this side, and let's you know march down and everybody was in a jovial mood marching down the street. And they march and the police car comes nudging the people over, it seemed that it was.

David Yellin- Where were you?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- I was in the front of the line, I ran back about twice.

David Yellin- Where did you run back on which side of the street? The left side of the street going downtown?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Through the line, the middle of the line.

David Yellin- You didn't cross the line?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- No.

David Yellin- Were you in a position to see the car?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Yes, when I got in the back, not the back but about midway of the line.

David Yellin- Yeah.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- What were we doing, well I got back there and somebody said, kept telling us we hope you are going to cover this and tell the truth, we hope you don't work for the Commercial Appeal and a whole bunch of stuff like that. I said yeah we are with them so we marched on. Let's see when we got to Goldsmith's we got to Goldsmith's, and I can't remember what I was doing. We got to Goldsmith's

and we heard all this, no we didn't. We heard people yelling and I turned around and flash ran, Edward ran back, Edward Harris. Ran back to take pictures and I was taking pictures in the front. Now I couldn't get back on the sidewalk because everybody was being pushed over to the sidewalk so I said I went to step out in the street and a policemen told me get back on the sidewalk you know.

David Yellin- What did he say?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- He said get back on the sidewalk, and he had his little mace can in his hand and was aiming it at me and he said get back on the side walk. I went to step back up on the sidewalk and before I could get back up he sprayed me, he sprayed me in the eyes with that stuff. I turned around and I couldn't see and I opened my eyes and I saw, when I did open my eyes I think I saw Mrs. Crenshaw and then I closed them again because it was still burning, I went down and looked for Flash. When I found Flash and opened my eyes again I saw Flash.

David Yellin- Now who is Flash?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Edward, Edward.

David Yellin- No you can call him flash, we now know his code name.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Ok se I got, I went to the, I really didn't get, I was passed Goldsmith's and I couldn't get back down there for some reason and I saw Mrs. Crenshaw and said did they get you they got me and she said yeah but keep on marching and so then I went a little further and I saw Mr. Champa and he was just in miserable shape, he was crying and he couldn't walk, he looked like he was falling down . They got him, well these are the things I remember most. We got to the Main and Beal and they had let Mr. Champa rest in one of the doorways. So on Beal between Beal and what is the street after Main street 2nd?

David Yellin- Which way?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Yeah 2nd they were marching and the police said a few threatening words which I don't remember but I remember I said now if they try anything here we are caught between them and the buildings and it was a very narrow passageway. We marched past the Defender and we stopped at the Defender, no we went on ahead. We went ahead and when into the defender and told my father and everybody what had happened.

David Yellin- Were you still affected by the mace?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Yes in fact everybody in the place was crying from the mace that was on us and we had gotten used to it by this time and the people in the Defender were tears, like the secretary had tears in her eyes from the mace we had.

David Yellin- Alright now and then where did you go to the Mason Temple?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Mason Temple with my father. We drove to Mason Temple. The marchers passed by the Defender on the other side of the street that is Danny Thomas, we waved and they wave and they went on and we told everybody what happened rested up and drank cokes and then we went down to the lobby, no Mason Temple and Daddy was telling me, when we got down there Daddy was telling us to get pictures of the police with the long nightsticks and...

David Yellin- This is what he was saying was he whispering it?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Whispering? No he wasn't whispering. He was making it quite emphatic and the policemen would look out the window and you know laugh every once in awhile because they were nervous then.

David Yellin- Looking out of what window?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- The car window, several were in cars and they would look out and smile and then they would move on down the street. We had and then we went up there, what is the name of the police, Ben (muffled)?

Edward Harris- Ben Whitley.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Asked my father if anybody knew where T.O. Jones was?

David Yellin- And who is Ben Whitman is he a patrolmen?

Edward Harris- (muffled)

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- No he is an officer.

David Yellin- He is a negro officer.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Yes, and he, what did he do. My father didn't tell him, we went in and we, I can't remember we covered the meeting they were having.

Margarie Sendstacke- Why did the police run from you?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- They didn't run from us they just ran down the street for some reason. Suddenly everybody all the police started heading back down the street and disappeared. And then the helicopters, is that the day the helicopters started flying over.

Whittier Sendstacke- I think they were frightened that day because us negroes started....they got you know.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- People coming out the projects.

Whittier Sendstacke- People coming out of the projects if you know what I mean.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- And told them you are in our neighborhood now so don't be bothering those people.

Whittier Sendstacke- Talking black power and all that stuff and they got out of there in a hurry. They disappeared in 2 seconds flat. I don't know where they went to.

David Yellin- Now where is this?

Margarie Sendstacke- Around Mason Temple.

David Yellin- Around Mason Temple.

Whittier Sendstacke- (Muffled)

Tom Beckner- I just remembered something about this march that Martin Luther King led.

David Yellin- Yeah go ahead.

Tom Beckner- Well, one of my mother's friends when we were coming back up the street she was telling about this policemen and she had all the children with her and this policemen pointed this gun in her face and told her that nigger if you don't move I am going to shoot you and she told him that I am sure you pointing the gun at the right person you know. And she told him some thing you know, then he walked off, something happened and then he walked off, I don't remember her name.

Margarie Sendstacke- Gwynn Kyle.

David Yellin- Gwynn, somebody pointed a gun at her.

Tom Beckner- A policemen.

Margarie Sendstacke- The children.

David Yellin- Now Edward what were you doing in all this is he telling it right, the way it was?

Edward Harris- Well yes.

David Yellin- Oh excuse me Flash where were you?

Edward Harris- When was this Saturday February the 23rd?

David Yellin- Yes sir or wherever you want to start, but we are covering February 23rd.

Edward Harris- Ok well we were all in the auditorium that was where we first joined the sanitation workers in their meetings. They held their meeting and the city council told us that they were under, the sanitation workers were under the impression they would be given a chance to voice their grievances.

David Yellin- Yeah, was this the first time you had confrontation with this whole experience?

Edward Harris- Right.

David Yellin- Right ok.

Edward Harris- The sanitation workers were disappointed. Several speakers got up after the city council close the meeting and made several emotional type speeches.

David Yellin- Who were the speakers? Were you there?

Edward Harris- Yes I was. Jesse Turner, A.W. Willis, T.O. Jones, Jesse Epps, Vasco Smith, Let's see, Ezekiel Bell.

David Yellin- Is reverend Lawson?

Edward Harris- I think he was up there, I am pretty sure he did make a speech.

David Yellin- You are pretty sure he did?

Edward Harris- Right that he did make a speech. At one point of the speech T.O. Jones said we are going to march to Mason Temple and since we see that we can't have any competency in you, I can't be responsible or my men, I can't be responsible for what my men do because of the lack of faith that you have shown them. At that point they all left, and we left too, we took my sister back down tot the paper because I figured it could get kind of rough. I remember two speeches ok, O.Z. Evers told the people, told the marchers that it was obvious that the city council hadn't acted in good faith so he was going to call Stokely Carmichael and Ratt Brown and I can't think of the name.

David Yellin- A councilmen?

Edward Harris- Oh it is stupid what is his name, representative to the state.

Margarie Sendstacke- Willis.

Edward Harris- Willis, said A.W. Willis said, he said for us, for the people, for the sanitation workers to keep working down here and he was going to keep an eye on the people up in Nashville because they were, some of them were trying to pull the same thing, Those were two speeches that were made.

David Yellin- Right good.

Edward Harris- We went back tot eh Defender and came back and I parked my car right across from court's square.

David Yellin- Now did you, were you in a position to see the car?

Edward Harris- Which car?

David Yellin- That went over the line.

Edward Harris- There were several cars.

David Yellin- There were several cars.

Edward Harris- Right.

David Yellin- Did you see the incident of pushing the car or the rocking of the car?

Edward Harris- Yes I did I saw the rocking of the car, but I couldn't get to close to it. The marches, well I joined the marchers across from court square near Loeinstein's. I covered, I was taking pictures from both sides of the street from the middle of the street just of the front and back of the marchers. We got on up in front near Goldsmith's. I don't know whether it was in front of Goldsmith's or not but I believe it was. All of a sudden I heard a commotion near the middle of the march and I saw this police car rocking and there were about 5 policemen in it and it was an emergency squad station wagon.

David Yellin- Do you remember the number of it?

Edward Harris- No I don't.

David Yellin- Did you take a picture of it?

Edward Harris- I wasn't in a position to get the whole car, I got part of the top of the car and you couldn't identify the car by the picture. The police began to move all the marchers out of the street and on to the sidewalk at that point, using the mace and night sticks. I began taking pictures of policemen squirting the mace, trying to dodge mace myself. One policemen threatened he said don't take a picture, give me that camera with his nightstick over his head and I snapped his picture at that spot and ran. A few minutes later I was sprayed in the face with mace. It rhymes. I was having a difficult time focusing my camera or seeing and I saw P.J. Champa laying in the street after he had been knocked there by a policemen I imagine who is just lying there on the curb.

David Yellin- Lying or sitting?

Edward Harris- That's right lying. I took a picture of him as he was getting up and I asked him what happened?

David Yellin- How did you know who he was?

Edward Harris- Well I had seen his pictures in the paper earlier and I knew he was one of the union leaders and he said this was the worst case of brutality I had ever seen. He said a few other things but there was so much going on that is all I remember. And, Braxton Bryant pointed out too, that a policemen that shot him with mace and I snapped his picture.

David Yellin- Was this right after this, I mean Braxton Bryant was there and you saw him get maced?

Edward Harris- Right and Jacque Wilmoore was there too.

David Yellin- Did you see him get maced?

Edward Harris- I didn't see him get maced, I saw him after he had been maced. From what he said he showed his card to the policemen saying he was with the civil rights commission and the policemen didn't pay any attention to him and sprayed him anyway. Several people with proper credentials showing that they weren't actively a part of the strikers, were just observing and shows the credentials but they didn't mean anything to the policemen. We were the only negro newsmen on the scene and we were the only ones that I observed that were sprayed with mace. We had the proper credentials and paraphernalia.

David Yellin- There were other newsmen on the scene?

Edward Harris- Right.

David Yellin- Did you recognize any?

Edward Harris- Yes, one in particular was Sweat, Joe Sweat with the Commercial Appeal who had covered the entire sanitation strike.

Margarie Sendstacke- Could I say one thing.

Edward Harris- Sure.

Margarie Sendstacke- Is it true that the Commercial Appeal, the Precimeter, and other newsmen were allowed on that day to freely take pictures in the street and they wouldn't let you on the sidewalk.

Edward Harris- I was told to get on the sidewalk several times but I was in the street.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- They didn't let me off, when I went to get off the sidewalk as I went back up...the thing was I was pushed back on the sidewalk, when I went to get off the sidewalk, step off the sidewalk. One minute I stepped off they sprayed me with mace. I had my camera and my news card in my hand and they still sprayed me with mace, or he still sprayed me with mace, one particular cop.

Margarie Sendstacke- But the other reporters in the street freely taking the pictures?

Edward Harris- Yes.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Why so.

Edward Harris- When it first started I was in the street too. They didn't bother me then, but the macing all this and the garbage men.

David Yellin- Both of you had your back to whatever all the action was when the macing started? Or did you? I mean when did it start?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- No.

Edward Harris- The macing started right after...

David Yellin- How many people rocking the car?

Edward Harris- About 6 I counted.

David Yellin- Were you able ever to identify the woman who has supposed to have been run over?

Edward Harris- Yes I talked to her and I tried to find out who it was and it was Gladys Carpenter?

David Yellin- Yes have you ever spoken to her since?

Edward Harris- Yes I have.

David Yellin- She is still, is her address on Parkway South?

Edward Harris- To the best of my knowledge I think it is.

David Yellin- And did you ever write a story about or was it ever printed...

Edward Harris- Right I wrote exactly what she said happened to her, she said it was her foot that got run over.

David Yellin- When did you talk to her?

Edward Harris- It was at Mason Temple.

David Yellin- Oh that same day.

Edward Harris- Right.

David Yellin- And is the story in the paper?

Edward Harris- Right.

David Yellin- So it would be on when would it...

Edward Harris- I don't remember the date of the paper but it is a whole page of pictures on page 12 of that paper.

David Yellin- If it happened on February the 23rd, it would be the publication of the 28th.

Margarie Sendstacke- Well actually it is dated the, it is dated the Saturday that February...

David Yellin- Right the 24th.

Edward Harris- No it should have been on the second because we already sent a copy of papers out on the 24th.

David Yellin- Well it will be one of those two weeks.

Edward Harris- Right it was on page 12.

Margarie Sendstacke- (muffled).

David Yellin- But none of the other papers made any attempt to find out, did you make any attempt to find out who was in the car, the policemen in the car?

Edward Harris- No.

David Yellin- Would that have been possible?

Edward Harris- It was, at that time I remember some of the policemen took their badges off.

David Yellin- You mean they physically took them off? Where did they put them?

Edward Harris- Right, I imagine in their pocket.

David Yellin- Wouldn't they have been afraid they would get stuck with them?

Edward Harris- I don't know what they did with them, all I know is they took them off.

Margarie Sendstacke- (Muffled)

David Yellin- Yeah well ok. Well that is fine. Now Mrs. Carpenter has been kind of mysterious, she can't be found or some thing, do you know any reason why she can't be found?

Edward Harris- No I see her around every now and then, as a matter of fact I gave her a lift...

David Yellin- Would she talk with us?

Edward Harris- I imagine she would.

David Yellin- Because that is important the thing that we have found that every little incident is not a little incident it is not isolated it is all part of, you know this is my son Tom incidentally. My hungry son Tom.

Carolyn Yellin- This is Mr. and Mrs. Sendstacke, and this is (muffled) and another Mr. Sendstacke. Mr. Yellin.

Edward Harris- Hello how are you doing.

Tom Yellin- You can all me Tom.

David Yellin- (Muffled) Ok now,.

Edward Harris- Back to the macing, we continued down the courts of the march which was named Beal, Beal to Danny Thomas and we followed that course all the way except for a brief stop we made at the (muffled) on the corner of Beale and Hernando. Or was it Beal and 3rd? I think it was Beale and Hernando to pick up some film, I ran out of film at that time. And I bought about two rolls of film and then we left for the march and went on down to the office where I left all the film that I had shot. We rejoined the march at Mason Temple with Mr. Sendstacke. Where we observed these four foot long billy clubs.

David Yellin- Now hadn't they been on the march these foot long billy clubs?

Edward Harris- Yes, right, I have a picture of a policemen with one on Main Street. It was the same policemen.

David Yellin- But it was after this...

Edward Harris- After the macing. During the macing when this one particular policemen I saw.

David Yellin- Yeah but those policemen who were on the march with you didn't carry those longer clubs.

Edward Harris- No they probably had them in the car though because one had, I remember seeing one and I took a picture of one.

David Yellin- But after the macing, and you got to eh temple then all of them.

Edward Harris- All of them right.

Carolyn Yellin- Was there anyway you could tell whether they were city policemen or sheriff's policemen?

Edward Harris- All I remember was city policemen I don't remember any others.

David Yellin- Alright well then what is the next incident that you were involved in. I want to ask something else, let's stop here for a minute and I want to get back to what I would call the family situation. What did you do as a family?

Whittier Sendstacke- We stuck together.

David Yellin- What does that mean?

Whittier Sendstacke- Well that means that everybody was pulling.

David Yellin- I mean did you talk about it at home?

Whittier Sendstacke- Talk about it at home, at the office, on the telephone, that is why I said my wife should tell you some of the things that she...

David Yellin- Alright well that is some of the things we want to get to because I think that...

Whittier Sendstacke- It is very important, he called the commissioner and the police captain...

David Yellin- Which commissioner?

Whittier Sendstacke- She can tell you exactly.

David Yellin- Alright well let her tell it?

Margarie Sendstacke- Well after this.

Whittier Sendstacke- Tell it separate in there.

Margarie Sendstacke- Ok, after March the 28th when they beat up these men in the Big M...

David Yellin- No just before that February 23rd your son was maced.

Margarie Sendstacke- Oh that is right he was maced.

David Yellin- What did you do as a family?

Margarie Sendstacke- What did we do? Very angry.

David Yellin- What does that mean?

Margarie Sendstacke- Well Whittier called me and he told me what happened and then he came home and told me what happened.

David Yellin- Then did you do anything?

Margarie Sendstacke- No, I just felt that we had the evidence, since they had pictures of it and I had already, this (muffled) children of goodwill meeting, I had already had it out with Mr. Holloman over the rest of (muffled) and the family. In the (muffled) he was one of the speakers at one of the meetings.

Carolyn Yellin- That was sometime in....

David Yellin- That is February 29th.

Margarie Sendstacke- February yes, and I had already told Mr. Holloman that I realized that some policemen were responsible but he had some irresponsible policemen.

David Yellin- Mr. Holloman was a t this meeting?

Margarie Sendstacke- He was at the meting and he was the speaker at this time and that he did have irresponsible policemen and what did he plan, was he trying to do

anything to correct them or screen them so they would not...I also told them of an incident where a policemen had called Freddy a nigger in the park when he was 15 and Mr. Holloman informed me that negroes call each other niggers and I told Mr. Holloman sure they do so do the Irish have a pet name for theirs and the Jews have a pet name for theirs and I ended up saying that all the ethnic brothers have pet names for each other but we don't want any white folk calling us niggers and everybody laughed so loud that Mr. Holloman left the (muffled)...

David Yellin- This was in public?

Whittier Sendstacke- This was at Idlewild Presbyterian church.

David Yellin- But this was not in a private conversation.

Margarie Sendstacke- Oh no this was about 60 to 80 women.

David Yellin- Right.

Whittier Sendstacke- I am going to bring out one other point now, my buddy (muffled). Speaking of a family we have got to include Edward in this. Now during this strike it brought us together not only the Tri-state Defender but Chicago Defender too. We had tight control of everything, Whittier Jr. never went to Chicago to make the paper. We had meetings in the front room, we wrote editorials at night. We did a number of things, during the sanitation strike we were busy around the clock writing editorials taking pictures.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Going to meetings.

Whittier Sendstacke- Going to meetings.

David Yellin- Why was this because something happened to you?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- No, it was obvious, well we had experienced not the macing or anything like that but the fact that the newspapers, the white newspaper have a habit of slanting everything to some, just slanting it just so much that if it is some thing that seems to maybe change the status quo it will be slanted. Take for instance we were on the march when they had the first march to Mississippi with Martin Luther King, this was after the...

Carolyn Yellin- Meredith march...

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- The Meredith March yeah. Ok they were yelling they were saying...when they came up with the phrase black power and I heard it in Washington before. And when we asked them to explain what they meant in Washington they said well economical power.

David Yellin- Where did you hear it before in Washington? Who said it?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- It was at a meeting, well the white house conference was taking place but there was a park meeting a meeting in a Washington ghetto. This

group had come from New York and several other places to protest the meeting because they said it was a big front and they really didn't mean anything.

David Yellin- And who used the phrase do you remember?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- I forgot his name he was a one of the...

David Yellin- Floyd (muffled).

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- No, no, somebody who did rent strikes in New York, Joseph Gray I think.

David Yellin- Joseph Gray, oh really?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- It was black economical power. At the time it didn't have....oh I hate to go into all this.

David Yellin- Go right ahead.

Carolyn Yellin- It is interesting.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Well at the time black power didn't mean, there wasn't any idea of you know this kill and hate and violence but what it was, I had heard it once before when I was very young, not young I would say about 4 years on the television program, we want to lead our own people, we want to have our own economical power, we don't want white people leading us. Now this is what they said. Now back to this, ok, black power, the idea was black economical power and for it to be in the negro community and know why stores and you know what is it stores and yeah stores that's what they have. And on the march it was also like that, but when they got to Jackson Mississippi and started Greenwood, when they went to Greenwood Stokely Carmichael got up and made a speech on it and it was still we want to control our own thing and if somebody comes up and hits me I am going to hit him back but the way we read it in the newspapers it came out the papers said that we are going, they twisted it so much. It looked like we are going to kill and...

David Yellin- So they had done this before this strike and before you were involved.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Yeah were in a interview,. We were on the front steps of the church, (muffled) and they were asking Martin Luther King and Stokely Carmichael and Floyd McKissick, they were asking them questions these same reporters who had twisted the news.

Carolyn Yellin- Were they lovely?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- No this was local, Washington Post, Washington Post is most outstanding.

Carolyn Yellin- Any television reporters?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- There might have been but I didn't see any that night, they were inside. And they were asking questions and Stokely and Stokely Carmichael and Martin Luther King were actually afraid to answer the questions. They said we don't know if we should answer them because you have twisted them around so much.

David Yellin- Well alright now what we are getting at is...

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- That the newspapers had twisted everything around too because it seemed that mayor Lobe the police department, the newspapers, even WDIA which I hate to say because nobody said it...WDIA they were all tied up together to put this thing down. Take for instance the picture in the Commercial Appeal, this poor, poor lady coming out of her apartment, I take it her fabulous apartment you know,. With all this garbage to worry over, she didn't bother to put the fact in that some garbage men might have been starving and he probably was starving and some garbage man was trying, garbage man, sanitation worker had to send his child, had to take his child after school. They did put that in that he had to come out of school, or that a mother might have needed medicine that was about to have a baby they didn't bother to put that in they put this poor lady with all her garbage and this little cartoon of a man sitting on top of a garbage pile. A poor rich lady whose husband was probably an executive downtown you know. Riding one of the golden people as they call it. But that is what, and we came together on this.

David Yellin- Yeah well....

Carolyn Yellin- I want to ask something, you came together, do you mean as a family and as a group of newspapers and or you came together do you think the whole community? Did you feel here was a different feeling in the negro community than there was before?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- There was.

Margarie Sendstacke- Yes.

David Yellin- What was it about, what was this feeling about, I mean what was this feeling? Everybody has said, yeah the first time we were united, what does that mean? What were you united, did you go hold hands and cross the street?

Margarie Sendstacke- On marches, on the position we were united.

David Yellin- I mean, here you are a family, you know you are well off in the sense you are not worried too much other than all our, everybody that is worried about paying bills, you know. You are going to eat tomorrow and the next day and so on. And then suddenly you become involved in the sanitation strike, Why? What was so special about this? Because this is what we are trying to find out why this was so special?

Margarie Sendstacke- Well, my feelings are, I simply felt sorry for these men. They were being underpaid and they were not covered by maybe insurance, they were given no consideration whatsoever.

David Yellin- But they were being paid for over 12 years.

Margarie Sendstacke- But you see I just came to Memphis 6 years ago.

David Yellin- They were being underpaid for 6 years.

David Yellin- Why didn't you care before then?

Margarie Sendstacke- I cared.

Whittier Sendstacke- But you are missing the point we started this long ago on the garbage strike.

David Yellin- I am doing this for a reason, you understand.

Whittier Sendstacke- I understand but you see I explained that we have been fighting for the garbage men when Farris was in office.

Margarie Sendstacke- Well look, I don't know, ...

Whittier Sendstacke- It is like this...

David Yellin- You were in a pair, but nobody seemed to care about the garbage men until you got maced.

Whittier Sendstacke- No, no , no.

Margarie Sendstacke- no, no,no.

(Muffled)

David Yellin- Alright Ethel go ahead.

Ethel Sendstacke- As a negro teenager, you know I see, we are not (muffled) but when this happened, you know this brought out hate and stuff like that.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- One thing that it was when they did mace everybody maced, all those people downtown. When they maced Cornelius Crenshaw and maced Champa and maced the garbage men, maced me, maced everybody. There was one thing apparent, the ministers we were all niggers as far as the cops were concerned and Champa was just another nigger lover. That is what it was, it was like somebody was going to come, like you and your wife having an argument that is alright but if somebody came, well, or you and your son, if somebody came into your house and started an argue with your wife, naw I wouldn't say you would but suppose you hit her, if somebody else came in your house and hit her you would be pretty upset wouldn't you.

David Yellin- Sure.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- As far as the race is concerned the race is like a family and we saw that those police and we have seen ever since Martin Luther King has been shot, since all this took place and with the campaign in Washington as far as they are concerned we are everybody here.

David Yellin- (muffled) got killed.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- He did, Metger Evers got killed and everybody said well, this Metger Evers got killed and they caught he killer. Bobby Kennedy got killed and then right after that Martin Luther King got killed.

Whittier Sendstacke- Not Bobby Kennedy but John Kennedy.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- John Kennedy I am mixed up. Anyway, what was I saying. All these people....well that doesn't...it....

David Yellin- Well yeah the important thing is yeah we want to try and find out, here is a group, or a group of people and I want to find out, when I say I, I think it is important to find out how you came to get this feeling and certainly nobody is sitting in judgment you all know this.

Margarie Sendstacke- Well you know how I felt, I felt if they could do that to them they could do it to me.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- They did do it as far as...

Margarie Sendstacke- Yes That is right now I ma speaking of beating the garbage men up, but I am speaking of underpaying, and taking advantage of a job, a man on a job and I think union is good for the poor man and I think that all poor people should be in a union because that is their only protection in spit e of the fact that (muffled)

Whittier Sendstacke- Other important point here. When we took a stand.

David Yellin- Who are we now you as a...

Whittier Sendstacke- The Tri-state Defender. Took a stand a strong stand for the garbage workers we lost a lot of accounts. In fact we almost went out of business, you can look through the paper.,

David Yellin- This is early on?

Whittier Sendstacke- Yes a lot of advertisers pulled out because they said they weren't going to run in the Tri-state defender anymore.

David Yellin- Why did they tell you?

Whittier Sendstacke- Beg your pardon?

David Yellin- Why did they tell you why?

Whittier Sendstacke- Of course they told me why because we were for the garbage workers.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Not all of them.

David Yellin- What were some of the reasons.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- We can't advertise now because we don't have the money.

Whittier Sendstacke- I called a lot of names that pulled out.

Carolyn Yellin- Have any of them come back?

Whittier Sendstacke- They have.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- They did after they saw we were going to stick behind the stand.

David Yellin- Have you gained in circulation?

Whittier Sendstacke- We have gained in circulation ad advertising.

David Yellin- And then during the strike when the commercial appeal lost 20,000 did you gain?

Whittier Sendstacke- But I don't thin it had anything to do with the strike, I thin it had to do with Martin Luther King. King being killed, had it been for a garbage strike alone, we would have lost some and probably still wouldn't have them. I think that the fact that Martin Luther king was killed helped us to gain those accounts back like what is the name of the account that pulled out...

(Muffled)

Whittier Sendstacke- Cathryn (muffled). Pearl and Loeinstein. I think they had a guilt feeling they felt guilty so they came back, but had it been a garbage strike alone I don't think we would have gained those accounts back because they were mad with us.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- I think some of them saw the solidarity in the community and the fact that all those, that the strike and that boy are going to hold out until the end no matter what happened and they did. I think that is another thing...

David Yellin- Now you did, I mean that your community did.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- That the community did, I think we gained some accounts before Martin Luther King I don't know.

Carolyn Yellin- I just want to carry on a little further, Whittier has been saying that Maddy should tell a little more of what she did and I know she spoke with me a

couple of times, this was about during a period when Maddy and I were co-hostesses at a Saturday lunch group so we were in telephone contact at that time. And I know you were telling me at the time Maddy what you were doing, you were going to the union hall and what did you do there, you said daily. Sometimes I couldn't reach you at home because you were at the union hall?

Whittier Sendstacke- Now listen, can I qualify that statement before she talk? And pay her a compliment.

David Yellin- Yes.

Whittier Sendstacke- My wife worked at the union hall daily and I had to take her lunch up there she was saying what she was doing, she helped them write editorials. She was there with us all the way, believe me and some.

Margarie Sendstacke- Well anyway,. I went up there...

David Yellin- This is not a paid advertisement though.

Whittier Sendstacke- No it is (muffled).

Margarie Sendstacke- Jim Lawson called me and told me that they needed somebody else, that they were short on money...

David Yellin- When did he do this was it early on?

Carolyn Yellin- February 12th was when it started.

Margarie Sendstacke- Yes well that was a Monday? It was probably around the...

David Yellin- Was t his after the formation of COME?

Margarie Sendstacke- Yeah.

David Yellin- I, so it was after February 24th ok.

Margarie Sendstacke- Alright and he told me they needed some people, really lay social worker. Somebody to just deal with the problems and tell the men don't get panicky and this sort of thing. (Muffled) went with me and the first day I went there, there was about 500 men I guess in these rooms and the smoke was so thick you just couldn't see and well being sheltered by Whittier and associating with all middle class folks, you know these men were in working pants and they were just working laborers. There was no ash tray and we worked on the 3rd floor of this building and I thought any minute that boy a spark would fall and this building would cat h on fire. Well anyway, a Ophelia stayed with me for two days up there. By then I was attached to the men and they were just like anybody else. I found out that many of them were deacons of churches. They were nice men, I won't say that they never, they really never, they were very gentlemanly and I will say this despite of the fact that I am old there were some younger women and much more attractive working there and they were still...

David Yellin- Impossible.

Margarie Sendstacke- They were really gentlemanly...

Carolyn Yellin- You know Maddy you told me of a man who said he didn't want charity or I believe you told me a man that almost came with tears and I wanted you to tell that story.

Margarie Sendstacke- Yes this man, was in the office who got some, well actually he wanted to pay his mortgage. He owned a house,.

Carolyn Yellin- Yes this is when you were planning the rent for them.

Carolyn Yellin- Yes we wanted to pay his mortgage and the girls kept giving them the run around. Well you almost have to give the owners the run around because you know that they are not going to be put out right away but the renters will be put out if they don't pay. But you have to go through court and everything in order to put a persona that is buying a house out. So this man said well I have been back three times, and he said and I just simply can't come back anymore. He said Miss, I am a working man I am not a beggar. And he said I simply cannot beg and I am going out of here and getting a job somewhere else.

David Yellin- Oh I see.

Carolyn Yellin- He was a striking garbage worker who had to pay his rent.

Margarie Sendstacke- Yes.

David Yellin- When you went down there what did you do?

Carolyn Yellin- Wait just a minute Dave, we do it in our family. Go ahead and tell then about your rent party because this fellow is directly from this.

Margarie Sendstacke- Oh yes now that was one man and he was pretty, he did not have tears in his eyes, but I saw about 8 men that were buying their homes actually cry. One man came up and he had been sometimes a man waiting in the hall for two weeks and his name will finally come up and then when his name came up.

Margarie Sendstacke- This was at the union hall to get some help with their mortgage.

Margarie Sendstacke- To get some help with maybe groceries and every, his name would come up and everything he had to pay didn't qualify. And mortgage was in this too and then when you look at the man and tell him well we can't pay this because this is not an emergency, you don't have a red light gas and water bill. A red bill is an emergency, when you get your red bill come up and see us and we will pay this bill for you.

Carolyn Yellin- So your lights won't be cut off.

Margarie Sendstacke- Yeah so your lights won't be cut off. Then you had nothing to do so finally when they would come up with the mortgage, and then they would get tears in their eyes like that, I would just tell them look what about your grocery bill? Look let's get some groceries out of this, Let's get something, I think they must have gotten wise to me because they put me downstairs to doing something else.

Carolyn Yellin- You were a soft touch.

Whittier Sendstacke- Well let me (muffled) speaking of a soft touch and I want you to gain this point, this is the first time my wife has been busy in movements like this. Talking about the thousands you spent down to a friend down in Mississippi and never came back. She has been working in these movements for...

David Yellin- Look we only have a limited time on this tape and we want to get around to one very important point and that is the day that Martin Luther King was assassinated, can you all kind of recall where you were that day?

Margarie Sendstacke- I was at home.

David Yellin- And how you heard the news and what you did.

Margarie Sendstacke- I heard it over the 5;30...

David Yellin- You had been home all day?

Margarie Sendstacke- I had been home all day and I heard it over the news. And the first person I called was Erma Law who kept up with the movement. Erma was screaming all over everything. Oh no, she said he is shot ok. SO we hung up and then she called me back and we had just gotten word that he died and Erma was screaming and she said I am going out of here. I said Erma wait are you going to run out and get your car and come here, you got to calm down, she said I am leaving, and I said come over here, come over here. Ok so she came...

David Yellin- Now is she a reporter?

Margarie Sendstacke- She is a woman's editor for the Tri-state Defender.

Carolyn Yellin- She was at the office?

Margarie Sendstacke- She was at her home.

Carolyn Yellin- Oh her home and she came over to your house?

Margarie Sendstacke- No she didn't, she never came. Then Whittier's secretary called me and well they had all run out to the Lorraine Hotel, and the secretary she was doing the same thing.

David Yellin- Screaming...

Margarie Sendstacke- Yelling and screaming and just hysterical. And then (muffled) she said no you are by yourself calm down. Then I said I will come down or somebody will come down there. Well I knew I was going to keep getting these calls. So his father, Edward's father came by to go and pick up his mother, she teachers at Delta Education and was teaching at night at night school. It wasn't time to pick up his mother and you had your father's car and he had your car or something.

David Yellin- Can you tell where you were and how you heard Edward?

Edward Harris- Oh yeah..

Margarie Sendstacke- But wait so the father went down to stay with the secretary, this is how hysterical these people were. His father had to go down and stay with Whittier's secretary because she was completely out of her mind just about. But I did very well with Martin Luther King, I did worse with Bobby Kennedy thinking it couldn't happen again.

David Yellin- Alright Edward would you go on?

Edward Harris- Alright well we had just gotten in from Chicago that day about 5:30 I imagine Gerald Fanion came to the office asking for some pictures we had taken for him earlier. Just then the phone rang and the secretary said that somebody had called in and asked had Martin Luther King had gotten killed. At that point we all ran out into a Fanion's car and rode down to Lorraine but when we got there the police had blocked it off and we couldn't get up to the area. I had left my car at the office and Fanion was somewhere else, so the only thing we could do was to run into WDOK radio station so we could call back and confirm the story to Audrey with the news. While we were there they had a wire service machine, a UPI, a teletype and we got the details from that until my father came and picked me up to get my car. From that point we went to the hospital and stayed there until we received word.

David Yellin- When did you guys get to the hospital?

Edward Harris- Oh there was about 45 minutes after he had been shot.

David Yellin- Did you get into the hospital?

Edward Harris- Right, we were there.

David Yellin- Where were you in the hospital?

Edward Harris- I was in one of the reception rooms where all the news men were where they made the official announcement that Dr. King had expired.

David Yellin- Who made the announcement do you recall?

Edward Harris- I think it was the hospital administrator but I don't know his name. But I did take a picture of him making the announcement.

David Yellin- And you have these pictures?

Edward Harris- Right.

David Yellin- Where were you?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- With them.

David Yellin- Oh you were all the same. Yeah. Sir we are going to save you for last.

Whittier Sendstacke- Yes well I was in my car and I heard it on the radio.

David Yellin- Where were you going?

Whittier Sendstacke- Beg your pardon I was headed to the office and it wasn't a shock to me because I expected him to be killed but not in Memphis. So I didn't cry.

Carolyn Yellin- How did you feel?

Whittier Sendstacke- How did I feel? Well I felt sorry, and...

Carolyn Yellin- Angry?

Whittier Sendstacke- No I didn't feel angry because had he been killed in Mississippi I know some of those backwoods states or counties down there I would have felt angry, due to the fact that he was killed in Memphis I figured it was just some individual just didn't you know have anything, not any Memphian would do some thing like that. I didn't think that anybody in Memphis killed Dr. King.

Carolyn Yellin- You didn't.

Whittier Sendstacke- No not a Memphian. That is what I felt about it, he was going to Alabama and Mississippi and things like that I expected him to be killed.

Carolyn Yellin- So did you feel surprised, you felt surprised simply that it had happened in Memphis?

Whittier Sendstacke- Right.

David Yellin- How about you?

Ethel Sendstacke- When I heard I think I was at home and my mother told me about it and I couldn't believe it you know.

David Yellin- What did she say?

Ethel Sendstacke- She told me turn on the television because she had heard that Martin Luther King had gotten shot you know. And I kind of figured it because the day before you know they had told the 5:30 news they told his room number and what hotel he was staying at you know.

Carolyn Yellin- Which news was that do you remember?

Ethel Sendstacke- On channel 3.

Carolyn Yellin- It was channel 3.

David Yellin- I heard it.

Ethel Sendstacke- They told the number and everything and I couldn't believe it and I was mad and angry and everything.

David Yellin- You were mad and angry when you heard them tell the number or when you heard about the...

Ethel Sendstacke- When I heard he was dead and shot.

David Yellin- But you have used this term a lot mad and angry, what does that mean?

Ethel Sendstacke- I just wanted to get out and tear up the town, just tear it up. Yes I am not kidding I wanted to go burn down Goldsmith and everything.

Whittier Sendstacke- Why Goldsmith when you spent so much time in there anyway.

Ethel Sendstacke- Everything, I don't know you know.

David Yellin- Did you ever tell anyone this?

Ethel Sendstacke- Yeah my friends, we talked about it.

David Yellin- And you would talk about it?

Ethel Sendstacke- Yeah.

David Yellin- And you all felt the same way.

Ethel Sendstacke- Yeah, I mean you know like when we hear something, when teenagers like us hear something the first thing we want to do is get out and shoot people and burn down things and stuff like that, me too believe me. I did I really did.

Carolyn Yellin- And that is telling it like it really is.

David Yellin- You are surprising your parents.

Ethel Sendstacke- I am not kidding if I had a gun, I am glad I don't have a gun because if I had a gun and I saw a policemen I would shoot him, I mean I would.

Carolyn Yellin- Can you feel that way, do you feel that way as much now, or more now? Do you feel it is better now or that anything has changed or it is just the same, do you feel hopeless?

Ethel Sendstacke- I feel hopeless, I feel like killing (muffled) I just feel hopeless that is all.

Carolyn Yellin- Did Kennedy make you, now your mother said that Kennedy, did Kennedy make you angry in the same way?

Ethel Sendstacke- Sure it did. He didn't make me angry, I just cried for him because you know he was like a personal friend and you know I just cried that's all.

David Yellin- Tom can you understand her anger?

Tom Beckner- Not easily (muffled).

David Yellin- Alright do you feel better now? Well ok anybody feel now that there is anything they would like to add too the picture of the time that all of the is happened, the whole setting of your relationship with the city, your relationship together as a family, we have had a good expression of Ethel who started out quietly and, anybody feel they want to say anything that they didn't get an opportunity to say? About an incident, about a feeling, and we are greatly interested in how you reacted to things.

Carolyn Yellin- Whittier didn't say how you felt when you heard Martin Luther, or Edward either about you were...

David Yellin- Well (muffled) Martin Luther King...

Carolyn Yellin- It was a very calm telling but you must have had feelings about it inside.

Edward Harris- I did, my first feeling was a feeling of fear.

Carolyn Yellin- Fear? For what?

Edward Harris- It wasn't a sorrow, his death didn't hit me in any type of emotional way other than fear for myself t the present time.

David Yellin- You thought this was the beginning of?

Edward Harris- I had hear a quite a bit of talk about he annihilation of the negro race and that sort of thing. When I was in Nashville you know I felt free as a reporter, my press card would keep me from getting beat up by the policemen in the case of a riot or something like that. When I got here and al this stuff started happening, you know, I was just afraid.

David Yellin- Now you are talking about that day when you were in Nashville?

Edward Harris- No, no. riot in Nashville.

David Yellin- But you felt safer in Nashville?

Edward Harris- Right, I did.

David Yellin- Why? What all happened here?

Edward Harris- Well I was arrested one night and sprayed with mace and I showed policemen my press card and it doesn't mean anything to them.

Carolyn Yellin- Did you feel that the Memphis policemen paid less attention to a press card than in Nashville?

Edward Harris- Right. Exactly, I had a press card issued by the police in Nashville.

Carolyn Yellin- So you felt fear rather than anything else.

Edward Harris- Right,

Carolyn Yellin- How did you feel about Martin Luther King?

Edward Harris- It came on me slowly the day of his funeral.

Carolyn Yellin- Had you felt or had feelings about him before one way or the other?

Edward Harris- Well when I first heard the news I was too shocked but...

Carolyn Yellin- I mean before as a leader.

Edward Harris- To go out and get pictures, no not as a leader no.

Carolyn Yellin- You hadn't thought of him as your leader?

Edward Harris- Oh as a leader, no not as my personal leader, I am not a follower of any let's say organizations as far as joining or being a member of it. I sympathize with him, but as far as actively joining or participating with him.

Carolyn Yellin- You think of yourself as a reporter more than..

David Yellin- Ok we have about 2 minutes...

Edward Harris- Not just any civil rights organization or any type of organization.

David Yellin- Yeah Whittier how do you feel?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- About the death of Martin Luther King? I didn't feel bad, it is usually a feeling, when he, the minute I heard he was shot it was like both Kennedy, I felt he was shot but he probably isn't shot as bad you know, he is not going to die, I was hoping and in fact I just felt that he wasn't going to die. But I, when I got there he died.

Carolyn Yellin- At the hospital?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Yes. But for feeling like I am not a joiner either but I felt that there was, it just seemed like a national movement on some kind of undertone

movement. Just part of a movement part of the system to do away with every body who goes against the system, that Martin Luther King. I was, and things like genocide were running through my mind and wondering when I should get out and I thought about Ethel and she would be like Anne Frank or something writing a diary on the top roof. It sounds funny and I still feel that way, like the poor people's campaign if nothing is done about that, or something is going to be done about it but it is not going to be what people expect, it will end up the same way as the Christians did in Rome or the Jews did in Germany.

David Yellin- Well what is the general feeling here that we are in a hell of a shape.

Margarie Sendstacke- Yes.

Whittier Sendstacke- Definitely.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- Yes.

Margarie Sendstacke- Actually I share that opinion of this genocide that everybody is talking about, at first I laughed it off you know, but the more that you see and the more things happen, just like this young man that is supposed to have killed Bobby Kennedy, I just somehow think that there is more behind this. He had these new bills in his pocket and I think he had a gripe, but I think also that somebody knew that he did and this is his weak point.

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- But the horrible thing that people I feel people don't realize, the white race doesn't realize that even getting rid of us, if they attempt to get rid of us, I mean we aren't the only thing, if the country is going to keep going the way it is going we aren't the only people that have to be gotten rid of or become expenditures. They are going to have to get rid of the poor whites too. And maybe the middle class whites, or some of them..

David Yellin- So how many of us will be left?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- That is what I am trying to figure.

(Muffled)

Margarie Sendstacke- They are out to get anybody that is sympathizes with..

(Muffled)

Carolyn Yellin- What do you mean by they?

Whittier Sendstacke Jr.- By they? When did I say they?

(Tape End)