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Gerald Fanion, Dir. of Shelby County Dept. of Community Relations, 1968

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Joan Beifuss- This is the 2nd tape on the Gerry Fanion interview. Ok go ahead.

Gerald Fanion- Back to the policemen they didn't try to show any force and I would think this was very wise at this point because there was a lot of strong feeling and a lot of resentment about the newspaper's attitudes of the newspaper. We felt that everything was against us at this point, police, newspaper and the total city's, city fathers of Memphis. Which, we felt they should be more responsive to the problems you know and they had just walked out on us all the councilmen and the mayor didn't give us any consolation so in protest we decided that we would go and walk down Main St. you know this is our city and it is not just one part of the community citizen. This is why we chose to do this. And the police told us that we wouldn't be able to do this and they had walkie talkies with constant contact with the new director Mr. Holloman I am sure. I found out later that is who he was talking to (muffled). So all of us went out the president of the union was there and I would like to mention Mr. Gerry Worth was here at this particular meeting. Reverend Lawson and on this front we all lined up on the street on the front line I will never forget he very front line. I was telling someone or someone was saying something about the union and I was saying back, I responded back to them and told them that particular day more than any other time I knew that you could be taking your life in your hand because we had gotten face to face with these policemen, I guess there might have been 10 rows of them right in the middle of, right in front of federal building and we were face to face just that close to them and Lawson, Jim Lawson was telling them when we all lined up we got about 10 abreast and Lawson was telling the policemen, and I respect him for his wit he was saying now listen fellows there is no need you all being against us here because what we are doing is going to help you. If the sanitation men organize then you can organize and all this can come into light. You read something about the policemen's will fight another day and it just makes me sick the trouble you have to go through to get people to move an inch. He was telling these people he was going about talking and he was very cool and very, showing a lot of leadership at this point because everybody was really, it might have been some people in the crowd that might have been ready to do anything and that is when you really need leadership you know. These police had the long billy clubs and their mace equipment and some of us Vasco Smith, Mrs. Crenshaw, reverend Starks, Ralph Jackson and myself. I was hooked on Vasco Smith and Cornelius Crenshaw and then on the other side was Baxton Bryant, we all got on the front row. We said we were going to march and stand in the middle of the street anyway. I heard over the walkie talkies saying permission granted but keep them to the right side of the line. But Lawson wasn't on the front line at this particular time, he was back trying to make sure that you know, keeping the men's...

Walter Evans- Where was reverend Bell at the time?

Gerald Fanion- I don't know where Bell was, I think I have a picture I think Bell may have been on that front row too, Bell may have been on this front row too I am not sure. And all right next to (muffled) was a fellow named Jack Wilma from the civil

rights office. Jack was close by, all the staff was round from the civil rights office was pretty much close by. Things was really hot then, so then they granted us permission to walk down the street. We began walking and singing and jovial, not a militant group, let me remind you not a destructive group. You didn't have this in the makeup of sanitation men's you had men's who come from low income families who hadn't been (muffled) orientated who had a lot of resentment and they did want decent living and the right to organize this type of thing. I would think and you know you didn't have any looters in these men, nobody was going to break out any windows. But what had happened was, we proceeded down south on Main St. in a very jovial mood and I think this also let steam and also the resentment that I seen up there really is a good thing but the problem was it goes back to the same old thing and I keep going to it saying racism and hatred and the inability to understand your fellow man as he, the men at the local level before the rank and file. They began to take, they began to wear the establishment stops off they take it as a personal thing, I can stop easily because this type of thing, I have heard too many times. I think this was the general attitude maybe not the attitude of the director, but the man who he gives his order to. So we got down to maybe Gayoso and this is where all the trouble broke out. They said the car was being overturned and they just started spraying everybody.

Joan Beifuss- Did you see the car?

Gerald Fanion- I did not, I did not and the car see, as I said I was on the front line we were walking right to the front row, pictures in the newspaper show. And I walked all the way up to the front row and when they started to macing consequently I didn't see it. I didn't know they started macing me all in the face the crowd was hollering and people were scattering and I did, try to pick up a lady up with (muffled) and when I kind of got my composure I tried to get a lady up because she had been knocked down and I tried getting in Goldsmith's and Goldsmith's immediately locked their doors, I became very hot with the workers. (muffled) you lock your doors, so I couldn't get the lady up and so Vasco smith and I we turned up a call that came back up because my car was still up at the court house up to city hall, a lot of us were going to walk from up there. So we just decided then after the crowd had been dispersed that we would go back up and get our cars. But you know at this point in our city was were city leadership more than ever could have turned the attitudes you know. Rather say, newspapers jumped in saying giving slanted stories like people were breaking windows and turning over cars. What had happened was the car actually had, there was some women on the side of the lines and the car was, this was the yellow line that was down the middle of the street and we were on the right side. And this car was inside the line see actually as Mr. Holloman was saying there were supposed to be on this side. And then they were on this side of the line and still moving in on the women's feet. So I don't know maybe they did shake the car, I am sure they did but I said they was very much responsible for this. They had actually given us permission and we had marched, we had walked 6 or 7 blocks all the way from Adams and Main all the way from Washington.

Walter Evans- Now this was a police car?

Gerald Fanion- Police car, right. So I think they wanted this opportunity to do this you know.

Joan Beifuss- Now did the front line just fall apart too when the macing started?

Gerald Fanion- Oh yeah they just came up and they just sprayed mace you this is something, it happened at a place if you can just picture right there I had gone on passed the corner of (muffled) I must have been in the middle of the block, there is no where you can get around you know. Goldsmith and the (muffled) there is no alleys there, so we were pretty much hemmed in just spray them and hitting people you know.

Joan Beifuss- Were the policemen saying anything while they were shooting the mace at all.

Gerald Fanion- Well that brings about a lot of commotion.

Walter Evans- Commotion yeah. Do you remember exactly what happened Gerry at this time. Did someone holler mace or?

Gerald Fanion- No, I mean somebody started shooting mace you just get out the way.

Walter Evans- But nobody said anything, was an order given or something like that?

Gerald Fanion- Well I tried to tell a guy who I was and he shot mace all in my face, I couldn't very well..

Joan Beifuss- Gerry did you know it was mace at the time?

Gerald Fanion- Well you know mace is something I hadn't given a thought to. I didn't realize it, until, I thought it was some tear gas because it has the same effect. It was blinding and I just saw them running people up Front St. as we were walking on back and they were just wild then just like cops and robber sand you didn't have nobody doing anything.

Walter Evans- I mean once you got out of the line, were you okay or did they pursue you?

Gerald Fanion- Oh no they pursued you, they continued to pursue a lot of us, a lot of people you know. In particular I would think maybe the worse the person was dressed the worse his chances are. Well I say this you know I think on this day I had on a shirt and tie (muffled) and a few others I know but I couldn't, but this was after I got over on Front St. but there were just after everybody. Pushing and shoving and hitting with clubs.

Walter Evans- Now what reaction other than running did you notice from the men themselves. Was there any kind of retaliation towards the police?

Gerald Fanion- No. And as I said there wasn't this type of men,. There wasn't this type of group. Nobody got back and threw a brick or nothing like that. They were just harmless, they were just helpless. They was completely out of the question, out of the realm of their performed duties. So then I went back to my car I went first to city hall and told the mayor's executive assistant how disgusted I was with the city and how disappointed I was and that they had failed in how they had treated us, they gave us permission. Then I left.

Joan Beifuss- What did he say?

Gerald Fanion- Gerald Moze this fellow who I talked with administrative assistant and he said he was very sorry that had happened and there wasn't anything he could do about it but he was very unhappy that something like this would happen.

Joan Beifuss- Did you try to see Lobe at that time?

Gerald Fanion- No I did not at that time as a matter I didn't.

Walter Evans- Do you I know of anyone who did after this?

Gerald Fanion- No. but later that night we did have a meeting with Frank Holloman, 5 of us, by the civil rights office.

Joan Beifuss- Oh did you who was in that meeting?

Gerald Fanion- Jesse Turner NAACP, Baxton Bryant, we had it in Baxton's room and I said to Jim Lawson and myself. We met in Baxton Bryant's in the Peabody the other night. It looked like there was someone else who I haven't called their name, there was another minister I cannot remember. We talked about what had happened, it wasn't a reprimanding anyone it was just saying what we thought occurred at this particular time. And the next day and night I think we immediately sent out telegrams to some 150 ministers asking them to come, no I beg your pardon. We went to the Mason Temple that evening right after I had come down from city hall. And had a brief meeting, we had a meeting we were supposed to have a mass meeting but we had a meeting that was with some members a lot of people the gas and the sanitation workers we talked to them over there and you couldn't hardly stay in the building you know that stuff gets in your clothes and just makes you cry just like it was in this building you just cry you know. Then this was Friday night then Friday of noon we sent out telegrams to some 150 ministers to be held in this Mason Temple this next Saturday. We called for a meeting and that was when we formally started COME, Jim Lawson's sort of charity. This is when the real unity started to form.

Walter Evans- What was the attitude that night in this particular meeting of the 5 people you mentioned and Mr. Holloman?

Gerald Fanion- Oh it was a very openly discussion type of meeting. There was no real, we just told of incidents as they happened as they were as they have happened in the past and some of the consequences that we have had to suffer.

Joan Beifuss- Did Holloman express any regret that the police had...

Gerald Fanion- Oh yeas he expressed, well he didn't take a attitude that the police was wrong more or less a lack of communication at some points, some things that weren't clear to him. '

Walter Evans- Was his attitude anything near where he thought this was necessary at that point? Did it seem he though the police action was correct.

Gerald Fanion- No I can't say that it was if I remember I can't say that he said what they did was right.

Walter Evans- He just didn't comment?

Gerald Fanion- NO we just talked in general as I remember which I felt was real good you could very easily go into a thing of having not any communication and the line of communication is open you know. Which is sort of bad and then we had a meeting that Saturday and all the ministers came and they all old young, some who hadn't been very presence hadn't been as strong as it possibly should have been was there and they all agreed and then a few nights later is when we met down at this church and organized. Jim Lawson came in and said he had been thinking over and he thinks we should have an organization called COME, give it a name we need a name we want the papers will help the sanitation and we will start, also then he said that, Jim recommend that we would have nightly mass meetings and we set out to have nightly mass meetings at 10:00 or 11:00 and then we would have strategy meetings until 1:00 and we have a strategy meeting on Sunday morning, I mean Sunday night from 9:00 to 3:00 in the morning. Then we would get up on Monday morning and we would march. After we get through march we would come back for the mass meeting.

Walter Evans- Now this was the main organization COME.

Gerald Fanion- COME.

Walter Evans- What was the symbols representing.

Gerald Fanion- The C-O-M-E?

Walter Evans- Yes.

Gerald Fanion- Community on the move for equality for justice and hobs.

Joan Beifuss- Did it have an elected board of directors or how did it, a strategy committee.

Gerald Fanion- We didn't have time to really put it to document anything.

Joan Beifuss- The membership didn't vote on.

Walter Evans- At this time the leadership was more or less Dr. Lawson.

Gerald Fanion- Well he was chairman of the strategy committee which was the main artery of the COME organization, and reverend Donelson was later elected as the chairman.

Joan Beifuss- Who, reverend Donelson?

Gerald Fanion- Reverend Donelson.

Joan Beifuss- What is his first name?

Gerald Fanion- I don't remember. His name is L.R. Donelson. And we proceeded to function and our biggest problem was escalation. We couldn't get the mayor to move and we realized we were going to have to escalate this thing. Some of us were really worried to go to jail but we were going to have to go to jail to draw more attention to it and we decided to go to city hall one day and stay in and wasn't going to leave. This afternoon when they put all everybody in jail, at night, it was done and it didn't do enough to escalate because they walked to jail and they didn't have to carry anybody off. And some of us wanted to stop the trucks. You can't win a strike if people are continue to work on the job. That is what Dr. King even was going to do.

Walter Evans- Now are we up to the point where SCLC came in?

Gerald Fanion- Well we knew we had exhausted all of our efforts, we brought in young people which always bring about crisis. We knew we had to have a crisis to continue to win this battle and we were draining the community of money and we went to a real critical point in just a matter of a few days, I don't know, this is so important why we couldn't lose time negotiating when time was tot eh citizen's advantage and time was definitely against us. So this is what I told you somewhere back on the other tape about why I, the union say they are going to walk out of the meeting and the city. These folks, the white power structure didn't like this. Keep them talking and we possibly got them happy. And when I told them they were going to walk out, they assumed that I said this so (muffled).

Joan Beifuss- Gerry were people in the white community now calling on you to try to mediate at all?

Gerald Fanion- Well I have a responsibility to the position I hold as community relations to do this and I was trying to negotiate and to mediate between the points. As I said I constantly tried to keep the lines of communication open.

Walter Evans- Were you approached directly by any public white official.

Gerald Fanion- Oh yeah I talked with the president of the council rather frequently and I talked with Mr. Blanchard, Mr. Jerry Blanchard who is a member of council frequently. He and I, he carried me home one night and he came upstairs and we sat

up there and talked with Dr. Jackson one night. He went into this thing himself now there was a man who made tremendous gains I would think is Jared Blanchard, a white member of the council who really took an about face and said now this thing is all wrong these men should have a right to do this you know and I would have to point him out. It is understanding that the negro councilmen should feel like this but he was one in particular.

Joan Beifuss- Did you feel like you had any help from anyone else on the council?

Gerald Fanion- We could get, we could possibly get the president if he got two more, but we needed two more councilmen's to really swing it really and that was, let me see we had three negros, Blanchard was 4, and the (muffled) was trying to get to 2 more let me see. Blanchard was 4, and we have got the president which was 5 and then we needed two more to get 7 to get a majority vote see. We got ministers to go talk and we got whatever it was rabbi or ministers to go and talk with these people you know to try to, white community you know. There was one scheduled meeting with the white ministers and the negro ministers but they sort of backed down on it, A lot of things like this happened along the way that never materialized and that was some private meetings behind doors and businessmen.

Joan Beifuss- I wondered if you had anything to do with those under the table meetings and...

Gerald Fanion- Well not really I didn't have a lot to do with them I was on some of them but I didn't organize a lot of them.

Joan Beifuss- Can you tell us who some of the white business men were that were actually being contacted for these behind the door meetings.

Gerald Fanion- Well Downing Prior was in on some of them and John T. Fisher started to move and I was in the room with Ned Cook. I really can't remember all of them but a few of them did start for one reason or another start having meetings.

Joan Beifuss- None of them took any kind of a public stand though did they?

Gerald Fanion- No none. As you know I talked with a group of women out at the church that day and they asked what can they do. I told them well the mayor won't listen to me, I told them at least I think I did or it was brought out...

Joan Beifuss- You and Lucius Birch then.....

Gerald Fanion- Yeah, I said the mayor won't listen to me because he don't thin I put him in office, he him enough votes. But he will listen to you so some of these ladies went down to the mayor's office the next Thursday.

Joan Beifuss- Listen that was great Gerry that was a great afternoon.

Gerald Fanion- Yeah. So we finally decided I don't know what I am leaving out but we finally decided to bring in (muffled) King there was talks of trying to bring COME back. We got to that point where he wouldn't come and give no speeches.

Joan Beifuss- You actually contacted Carmichael?

Gerald Fanion- Well I know he said this, but as I said reverend Lawson was I think very true to say he as the one man were the one who opposed it.

Joan Beifuss- He and King?

Gerald Fanion- Carmichael.

Joan Beifuss- Oh Carmichael.

Gerald Fanion- He was opposed to bringing in anybody he really wanted to settle it from here on out. That was what hurt some when people call hi communist because there was a man who could, who really in his way could really in this way possibly destroy a whole lot of things. Lawson was a man he didn't want to bring in anybody.

Walter Evans- Would you mind saying what Carmichael actually said on...

Gerald Fanion- I can't say what he said, I don't know the exact, but he said that he wouldn't as I understand it from very close sources he would come and make no pep talks.

Walter Evans- No speeches.

Gerald Fanion- No speeches if he was going to do something.

Joan Beifuss- And Lawson did not want to bring in Dr. King.

Gerald Fanion- At first he didn't he didn't want to bring anyone into it. He said that it is better to win a battle that you are in yourself and people will always look at you, you know we want to build up a good black organization. You see if we could win without King, and he was right, he was right. So he didn't want to so we brought in Roy Wilkins and Barrett Ruston. And we got (muffled) So the next day we knew we were going to have to escalate so then we started to bring in King. (Tape Break) We knew we were running out of time, we were running out of money in the community and we knew we were really going to have to escalate it into a crisis where someone, where we could possibly win this thing and it was a real crisis at this point and we did get Dr. King to say he would come into the community and break away from his schedule, his plan for the poor people's campaign.

Joan Beifuss- Gerry do you know who actually contacted Dr. King.

Gerald Fanion- Yes, Jim Lawson. Jim had the greatest possible relationship amongst these guys other than well Jesse brought in, Jesse Turner brought in Roy Wilkins of course and I think Barrett might have come through the union (muffled). And I think

Jim got King to come into town he called him he was of course very close, an old fighters together, civil rights fighters. So when King came, as you know he came into Memphis and he was greatly impressed from all indications, there was a moving point on here compared, but not compared to anyone else in the country of a real movement of black people who are trying to bring about some justice and King felt this was a place where he should be. You know this was a fight that had been so typical of many fights he had been in helping every lowest people or minorities in this sought these kind of people being sanitation workers, garbage men come to know. This is why he decided he would come back, I don't know there has been some talks and some one said well I don't think we need to come back over to Memphis you know. But he came, he decided he would help us in the fight.

Joan Beifuss- Gerry Did you know Dr. King personally?

Gerald Fanion- I only, a man like Dr. King who meets so many people to personally know, personally know, I have been with him a couple other times and when he was here once. Alabama and....

Joan Beifuss- In Alabama?

Gerald Fanion- Yes I went down to Selma Alabama and I had a chance too...

Joan Beifuss- You marched in the Selma march?

Gerald Fanion- I went down I didn't march I wasn't able to stay that long and this time again I had this hang up as being a waiter. Tear down my clientele but I was simply always get to stick my nose in like Meredith March and all these things. But, so Dr. King he said in some of his staff people Jose Williams and James Bevel and Jesse Jackson, and after he was in town and he would come back. That was after the big snow and we started to formulating plans you know.

Joan Beifuss- Now did the SCLC people meet with the COME strategy committee?

Gerald Fanion- Yes oh yes.

Joan Beifuss- Was this guided by the COME strategy committee or did they..

Gerald Fanion- They made it very plain that they didn't want to come in our community and take over this movement (muffled) they would like to come in and they told the papers they were to come in here and work with us and this is what they did. So we scheduled the first march with Dr. King, the march not the proposal march because it snowed on the first proposal and second the march was primarily was arranged by us and by the local people you know.

Walter Evans- Was this the first march?

Gerald Fanion- The first march yeah.

Joan Beifuss- Who was...

Gerald Fanion- The one that got out of hand.

Joan Beifuss- Yeah who was in charge of arranging that march do you know.

Gerald Fanion- I wasn't, is that loud enough. I wasn't. It is not meant for criticism.

Joan Beifuss- Oh that was a terrible march.

Gerald Fanion- We thought it, it could have very well gone on without any problems it was just a few people who were responsible for this, not in the organization namely.

Joan Beifuss- Wait a minute Gerry did the strategy people have any contact with the kids prior to that first march?

Gerald Fanion- Yeah we were talking to them we had brought them into our black organizing project if that is what you mean. Yeah that is part of the militant group I think and they had been invited into our group and of course I don't think they felt that they were really a part they felt sort of alienated from what I can understand from the past you know. So you know what happened in the first march it got out of hand.

Joan Beifuss- I read Louis K. Pittman Black's article was it? Yeah you were.

Gerald Fanion- Well I made a lot of (muffled) with short wave radios and we bought walkie talkies and we had marshal meetings but as I said it was sort of sabotaged, by a few people an the tension was already high, that was just the dividing line no question about that between races and feelings. All this happened to (muffled) real crises of this riot we had here.

Joan Beifuss- Gerry did you go out top Hamilton High School that morning?

Gerald Fanion- Yes I did. I was called, I got called and when I first got here I saw a dispatch I talked to a dispatch up here. We set up a abase now all these (muffled) some of the things I was able to do and putting short wave radios out, these citizen bands more the less. And so I immediately got this message that there was some problems at Hamilton. So then Jesse Turner and I think Father Greenspun, as a matter fact I remember and Dick Moon we all, all three of us went out to Hamilton. And...

Joan Beifuss- What was happening at Hamilton when you got there?

Gerald Fanion- Well it had, the crowd had been disbanded, parents were coming in to get their children out f school and we talked with, I talked with the assistant principal about a young lady named Gray whom I know, Willy Gray and she had been hit in the head and there was a couple such incidents where kids had allegedly been beaten by police men. I say beaten or hit by policemen. And we got this information and then we came back to the march.

Joan Beifuss- Well do you know where the rumor came from that a girl had been killed from at Hamilton.

Gerald Fanion- No I don't. I don't know where it come from but I, you know this kind of thing.

Joan Beifuss- I mean did you hear it?

Gerald Fanion- Oh yes, well I heard that somebody had been killed but not at Hamilton I thought it was at Lester or something I don't remember exactly, somebody had been shot or something.

Walter Evans- I think it was a rumor to Hamilton.

Gerald Fanion- You may be right. I can't remember at this point. And so we, the march we came back here and I stood, I think I might have seen you, I was standing on a flat bed truck peddling out Precimeters. I had a walkie talkie, not I had a short wave radio in the car and I also had a high frequency short wave radio that was picking up the police transmitting messages. I heard them when they got to somewhere on Main St. say they are breaking out windows. I hear this a couple times over my short wave radio.

Joan Beifuss- Now were you still in front of the building?

Gerald Fanion- I was down here, I heard Evans, I heard Lutz an Evans talking to Mr., assumingly was Frank Holloman saying they are breaking windows, they are breaking windows and the crowd was out of control and we would like permission to disperse the crowd. He continued to ask for it he said the crowd was out of hand. Well they were unruly from the very beginning because what we went rough on the second march was to keep people off sidewalks. A lot of those rules and regulations we se the second march that we didn't have at this, it was sort of a freestyle thing in the first march to say the least.

Joan Beifuss- It was indeed.

Gerald Fanion- Then I heard over the radio permission granted to disperse the crowds. He said disperse them permission granted disperse them . And then that is when I hear a lot of hollering and we had walkie talkies down there and I could hear them talking back to ,my radio because I was parked at the service station. I didn't get there much further, I went there in the movement to get my car because I had my kids out of school I had four kids, no I didn't. I had about 3.

Joan Beifuss- In the march?

Gerald Fanion- In the march and I think my wife didn't stay out of school that day. I was mostly concerned about them, that really added to my problems, compound my problems had a little boy who was down here and he was everything was going wild he was in the back of a WLKO truck and I had a little girl who was 13 and was marching named Cheryl, who is a real emancipator in my family a real crusader in

my family she was out and I became immediately concerned that the thing was going wild and then I saw some strange things. I saw a fellow walk up the street with a guitar two or three things that I didn't really know what was going on because (muffled). I saw a little boy with what looked like a bottle of wine looked like a big jug of something, young boy you know and I realized what must be occurring down on Beal St. You know they said they just breaking out the windows and they. You know I was saddened to hear this because this wasn't part of what we had intended to do this was certainly not the intentions of COME or anybody who I had been associated with to destroy property or things. I saw a fellow parked in the same spot (muffled) And I saw a fellow walk up to his, I will never forget what he looked like he ride back like a baseball player and he throw a brick through the main window and I said oh no. You know is this what we are coming to you know. Then I start, I put some people in the back of my car and then we moved off and we wanted to try and find some of the kids and I had some people who just got them a car so I wanted to get them out of the horn, I wanted to get them out of the way in oh this little fellow was out there and he was with me and my daughters showed back up and I got all but one of the kids and things were going really wild then so I just moved out and they started calling my number until 1, they started telling me not to come back near the building, it was telling (muffled). What was going on you know, I started circling in the community and run across some people who had been beaten and hurt real bad and I called in and got ambulances, I called back here and said send ambulances to 588 Pontotoc and all. You know like its is 288 Pontotoc, a man down here on Vance street was beaten, I guess the police had beaten him. I got an ambulance to go down there and they told me not to come back and they kept stressing I don't know why this fellow he caught me watching he was the one doing the transmitting he kept continuously telling me not to come back up here but I did I came back anyway and I was, police was running in I saw them going into the church next door and then they would come out. I just pulled up to the corner you know, some of them recognized me and some of them, I was at this time kind of an official and some of them didn't give a damn. Oh I must mention if I can just go back for a minute into backtracking and tell you. During one of our mass meetings I don't see how I forgot this out at Mount Moriah Baptist church this is before, a few days before King come into town. I was called out of the church by a photographer and knowing that I had official capacity for the county. He said you should go outdoors, he said they are police are just putting tickets on cars all up and down the street. So I went out and this is at Mount Moriah church so I went out and I had a camera around my neck and I kept it with me constantly during out marches. Is it already if I go back like this?

Walter Evans- Sure.

Gerald Fanion- So I went out and started observing these policemen putting tickets, two it was one, I said these policemen it was two policemen in the car that were putting tickets t hey were just stopping and then they made a U-turn so I stopped and I got out and observed them and they made a U-turn and come back down so they resented me so I walked on the street as they passed me up here near where

your mother and law lived on Park Ave. By Gold and (muffled) it was something I guess. I started walking up parallel and looking and then he made a u-turn so by the time I was at the next corner going east from (muffled), going east from Mt. Moriah, what is that here?

Walter Evans- Hamilton?

Gerald Fanion- Hamilton possibly I think it was. He said alright come out the police stopped and told me to come out and put my hand on the car. I tried, I tried to identify myself at this point who I was and I told them I was Gerald Fanion director of community relations Shelby county and he said he did care who I was that you are under arrest. I asked him for what and he said for jay walking. He was very bitter and very, he wasn't understanding at all. And He carried me to Armor station over here and arrests me for jay walking. This was something I shouldn't have forgotten to tell you. Earlier in the march and there was one or two other things I might mention that I was side walk visuals, two things I left. I participated in an all night march that NAACP, we took the first action on the sanitation strike early in the strike. We had the first march it was an all night march it was very cold that night we marched we took turns I marched from about 10:00 until 2:00 in the morning right in front of city hall. Also there was a couple of 3 or 4 other people that went out to Lobe's house for a demonstration I don't know if anybody Mrs. Jean Rothchild and her soon were out in front of Lobe's house and they did some demonstrating out there. And at midnight we were maced on Main St. ON February 22nd and we realized that we were going to have to continue our marches to keep the faith. You know we were actually beaten and treated so badly on Main St. One thing we couldn't do was stop marching, so this next Monday morning we resumed our march right in front of church. That was when we had so many oh we had police and all type of you know visuals from the police department at this particular time. These things were very important the daily marches the afternoon marches. The kids had a, the youth got involved in it and one thing that happened. I have to tell you I am sorry I am back tracking on you.

Joan Beifuss- Ok.

Gerald Fanion- But one thing that we said, Dr. Jackson said at this meeting as Saturday when we sent the telegrams out he said Mr. Lobe is not going to listen it is very obvious he is not going to listen to anything from the black community. But he said who he will listen to is the chamber of commerce, had reference to the boycott downtown. So this is when we initiated the boycott we just called in view of what the newspapers, the attitude of the newspapers had taken and the only hope we had was making the white business men in the community speak out further. Say now you listen these people stop spending money down here and you are just going to have to the point of this is trying, they wasn't, so we said we were going to boycott until we get jobs and justice or vice versa. These were some things that I think were very important. Now getting back to the day King was here and we had the riot and the day Larry Payne was killed. After the riot had sort of simmered down, this was about 4:00 in the evening and they had put up the police in all the corners and

blocked up streets and everything and we all went to King was picked up on Main St. I understand somewhere at Main and Front. He was put in a car and rushed over to the Rivermont, he and Dr. Abernathy and Bernard Lee. Bernard Lee, Abernathy.

Joan Beifuss- Who is Bernard Lee?

Gerald Fanion- Well her was King's administrative assistant he was sort of his personal assistant. I believe that was all that came at that time of day there must have been just about 3 of them came in there in that march.

Walter Evans- Do you know what car picked up Dr. King or whose car?

Gerald Fanion- What, from where?

Walter Evans- From downtown?

Gerald Fanion- You know I don't know anyone, I was thinking about that when I was telling you I don't know anyone who knows whose car it was. I think it was just a car just somebody who came along I sure would like the person to come forward because it is interesting but anyway they came to the Rivermont and we all went over there,. a number of us rather Jim Lawson and Billy Kyle and Starks and a few other people. Oh, Heal from down in Mississippi one of the staff members in (muffled) is also staff member in Mississippi. They all was at the Rivermont, there must have been 20 of us in the room. I never forget King laying in the bed up under the covers, he had his coat on but he was just laying in the bed because I went down and bought him some Kitt cigarettes and we were discussing what caused it and where would we go from here and his way of saying you know he always, that tone of voice he had is just something that you, you just can't hardly forget. You know he was saying we must go through and have a march he said we very definitely have to have a march. He said what he was going to do was to go back and send some of his staff members in and help us in the community. We just discussed things in length.

Joan Beifuss- Gerry did he seem angry or...

Gerald Fanion- No there was no anger in him at all he was very cool. Very very relaxed and not aroused as he wasn't upset at all. I guess as he would always do as I seem to notice his eyes moving about the room because every once in awhile someone would come in, John Spencemen was after the civil rights office and I would imagine that Jack Wilmers was there with us. I could just, I noticed King how he would be looking as the door would open and I don't care to comment why I just said the guy would always have to be alert to who was coming in always wondering who they were. So he did say he would send the people back and he did he net in Jose and that Sunday night we had, now that was on what day, what day did we have that march?

Joan Beifuss- 28th.

Gerald Fanion- What day was that do you remember?

Joan Beifuss- Thursday March 28th,

Gerald Fanion- Thursday and that is Sunday night, the following Sunday night he sent in his staff people, he went back to Atlanta and he sent in Jesse Jackson from Chicago bread basket, Jose Williams from, who is field director of SCLC and also reverend Owens out of Philadelphia came here with Jed T. Johnson. And in Bevel they all came in and of course met with our staff. And we started mapping plans for a much larger march and then the word came I think someone said, Barrett Ruston who likes, who assumes the title of being the march organizer, he said he would come back in and help us with the march. He offered to help, we met with Barrett Ruston up in his room one night until late in the morning after he spoke here and he said that he would offer any future support that we might need. So King and them left and it wasn't until things, I can't think of any significantly important things that transpired between the time in that Wednesday.

Joan Beifuss- Oh wait the night of the mini riot where there was kind of sporadic looting and burning.

Gerald Fanion- Oh yeah.

Joan Beifuss- were you out then?

Gerald Fanion- Oh yes this was, I shouldn't have skipped that. This was possibly the day that made this possible that when I decided I was going to have to leave the county more than anything else at this point was I called the man whom I worked for, and he told me he said well just don't get involved just go on home and relax. You know this is Jack Ramsey saying this. And I said gee whiz now is the time that people need me more than ever you know, besides I would possibly part of it, there was a whole lot I was planning on being a part of it, and I couldn't go in that night so I didn't take issues with him on it but I realized then that wasn't the right position for me as much as I was this was something I said to myself that it wasn't a good position to be in because I know he had an obligation as an elected official to all the people and he didn't want me out there with newspaper people easily ready to quote me and this type of thing you know. So this helped me to decide. Now they then they call on the, they call for curfew and this night, they called for immediate curfew then so we went down to the police station that night I did and picked up some curfew passes., We told them that some of our staff of COME would have to be moving about and we needed passes because we wasn't trying to start a riot we were trying to clear one in anyway possible and the police director was very very cooperative about passes and I got as many as I needed for most everybody that wanted one. And I think that this Sunday night as I told you the staff people of SCLC came in and they made a proposal what we could do to escalate. We discussed the possibility of bread basket which means that a white merchant who lived, I discussed this with a man this morning on the way down here I was telling him about a fellow who was building a property in my community, I told him I said it

wasn't the smartest or the best thing to do because our schools already fit private you know. The more apartments they built, I mean they built 100 apartments in the community but they don't add classrooms. This is something similar and I was telling the needs, he is a white man and he has a grocery store not to far from where I live and he owns a lot of apartments and he was saying that his attitude what he had done for the community and I said that you really hadn't done anything that you weren't paid for and there is a need for you to get involved. You could join the PTA, or buy him an NAACP membership, do something. Just don't go out to east Memphis and take all the concern you have in the community is to come and take something away from it and in turn not make any contributions back to it. So this is what bread basket is all about. This is what Jesse Jackson is so popular and so successful in Chicago. We discuss a lot of things (muffled) until that I can, we did a lot of organizing here in the community, the SCLC did trying to get both groups,. Oh they very carefully went and met with the invaders, they met with COME. They were trying to get both of them together and then they came back and then they went back to Atlanta to prepare for the big march and this brought King back in that Wednesday morning and I (muffled) my churches back of my churches right to my window when I got, I had been out and come back around 10:00 and there was a meeting, the first meeting he had when he came back top Memphis was a scheduled meeting with the ministers at my church I could look right out my window so when they, when I saw them go in I saw I think (muffled) oh now Mr. Holloman called me and told me, he said Gerry I would like to know when Dr. King is coming back into town, we have got some threats that he is going to be killed if he comes back into Memphis. I said well I will certainly try and find out because you know well I was thinking too much of it,. Well Jim Lawson said that and I know it to be a fact that King doesn't solicit protection, they don't ask for protection but when I got to the church on April the 3rd at about 11:00, inspector Gagne who was in charge who was already there and had King under surveillance. I think this was the same day it was, and we left the churches and (muffled) and King spoke and then Abernathy spoke and then Lawson spoke.

Joan Beifuss- He spoke where?

Gerald Fanion- At our church.

Joan Beifuss- What church?

Gerald Fanion- To a group of ministers.

Joan Beifuss- What church is your church?

Gerald Fanion- Centenary.

Joan Beifuss- (muffled)

Gerald Fanion- Centenary Methodist church out on Macelemore. And then the same afternoon was the day that the mayor had got an injunction, the man the director of police had gotten an injunction against King and Abernathy and SCLC. Forbidding

them from marching. Well they forbidden, an injunction. So then after we had this meeting in the church they said that deputy marshal is on the way with the injunction. So we said well he can come over here we sit around the church, a lot of news people here, there were a lot of news people here. There was some reaction, something happened in Vietnam and they were just questioning King about this came out about reducing or stopping the escalation in the war in Vietnam and they asked King his response to that you know. Immediately we left there, we left Centenary church and went to Lorraine. I was very happy to see after Mr. Holloman told me about the possibility of the threat of an assassination of King. I was happy to see he had a lot of police around him even though King wouldn't want t his, I was pleased to know this. And he did that Wednesday I saw him they was at an angle that Wednesday, I would say this is Butler St. South on Butler, and over here is where the shot was fired. They had their car parked like this and this is Lorraine motel here where King was hit from over here. This man would have had a much better, if they had kept that car over there he would have had a much better chance of seeing somebody, this is just an if. Stick a gun out of a window you know then what it s when they went up to the fire station. So but this is till on April the 3rd we went to Lorraine. I think I might have gotten a call I talked to someone, Lucius Birch and them office. Now Lucius Birch and them came up to the Centenary Church before I pull off. Lucius Birch, Dave Caywood, Walter Bailey and Louis Lucas, I think it was 4 of them and talk with King about the injunction, they had been in court that morning. And so then the marshals brought the injunction because I got a copy over here (muffled). I got Abernathy's copy. So then (muffled) came in and discussed it with them and said we could still go on for a march but what we can do, is the supreme court will uphold the march, it will take time to do it but we wanted to march that far and few days, I don't know what day it was but anyways. Lucius told them what we will do is we can just possibly make some concessions with some light marching 4 abreast or 5 abreast and you know not having a lot of people on the sidewalks we can go into Bailey Brown's coat and we can get this thing. It was just a few of us in the room when we discussed this, King and maybe Kyle. I don't think Lawson got there he might have came on, but King and Abernathy and they was saying they had a stack of injunctions you know so they were just going to put that in the cigar box you know. So then Birch went on and left. Then King asked that guy Birch say, this is something I have never mentioned to anybody he seems like he really on the ball, seems like he really was a nice person. Somewhere he went on to relate maybe, someone went on to relate well see he is one of the old family. Birch is prominent his practice and everything, so he is Mr. Turner in town and he was very, seemingly he said he knew something about I don't know in reference to Ralph McGill or something like that you know. A real liberal in our town like McGill is in Atlanta you know. And he was real pleased an ten shortly thereafter I left the Lorraine and no I didn't we went down to the restaurant and they had ordered some catfish and we sat down in the restaurant for awhile and I left. I had seen Dr. King one other time, that next morning that Thursday morning before he was killed. NO we had a mass meeting that night, we had a mass meeting that night, and a speech. Yeah we had a mass meeting that night and a speech and...

Walter Evans- Were you at the mass meeting.

Gerald Fanion- Oh yeah there are a lot of little things that went in I just can't take time to tell you about like you know getting universal life to close up (muffled) and all these people work stopped. All these things went into it but it is just impossible for me to tell you about them, I mean someone else will certainly tell you we did call the number of business people and we got people to make statements like Meso Walker, Like Dr. Price and lieutenant Luther. Lieutenant Lee own radio you see and this is very significant in the negro community all O.Z. Evers, Cornelius Crenshaw, Dr. Vasco Smith, these are factions that ordinarily don't gel too well together with the same thing in mind you know. So we went to the mass meeting, yeah I went to the mass meeting that night before eh was killed and heard his speech and everything and the next day I went down to the motel. I peeped in his window he had his hands on the telephone then I left again. I talked with Charles (muffled) or the police told me that day in my statement and I left and I guess I came on back down here and Beverly and Big Owens, big playful guys, great big fellow. Was asking me my daughter was down here and they had been marching to go and take them back to the motel. I had to go to, I had to go to tri-state defender and had I carried them back I would have been right there when Dr. King was killed and I said I will meet you when I got the paper and when I started around, when I started back up Danny Thomas coming back, going back to Lorraine and then 4 cars of police just passed me flying and then somebody hollered across the street, I was turning right round down there in front of Pentecost temple and said King has been shot. I got right behind the police cars and I got down there but they had got the ambulance and it was just pulling off. Blood and everything was still there. So then I spent the rest of the night down there, I went I got Ben Hooks and reverend Lawson came with us to 3 television stations and we went tot eh police station at the security to get passes from various people. Then the next morning they asked me some time right before 3:00 or 4:00, no Jim Lawson called me when I got home my wife was crying she said that he was dead and I felt that he was dead from what they told me when he left, that his face was all tore up. So then I immediately went to Jim Lawson's house and he had already gone to DIA and I drove to DIA where he was making a statement and then so we came on back. I didn't tell Lawson, Lawson says you know he is very sorry it happened. I didn't tell him and then when he was riding in the car, they talk like he is dead you know. Because it had been flashed on televisions long before that King had died, and then we parked his car at A.W. Willis' night and we parked Jim Lawson's car and we rode in my car the rest of the night because we had a short wave radio and could sort of keep up with what was going on and then Dr. Abernathy asked me that morning after, the sun was very beautiful I saw these, all these staff people of SCLC, Bevel, Jose, Andrew Young, (muffled) and all these fellows in that room that morning about, they let 3 of us in, 4 of us in. They let Jim Lawson, Kyle and myself in this room and they were sort of making a testimony to Abernathy about hw they would stick by him and support him and they would like for him to continue to pick up the torch that King had. One of them made a statement said well he had a good amen's as Christ had and none of us would sell you for selling pieces of silver. You know it was really sort of fitting him, men's make

testimonies to him. I haven't heard, I have never heard a negro make this sort of testimony to each other and I thought it was very fine thing for him talking, and (muffled) we stayed in the room for a couple hours and then they, we decided we had to make some pressure release and they said, well someone said Billy Kyle told them I would be the man to do this you know. So then we stayed up and I called some newspaper people were just swarming all over me I got CBS, NBC, and (muffled). I called the police and they gave me a police escort and we, I put Abernathy and Jim Lawson I the car and...(Tape End)