

# Rhodes College Digital Archives - DLynx

## "Death of Bessie Smith" Cast Discussion, c. 1968

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David Yellin- Want to sit over here. Let me tell you what I want to do and see if you would like to do it, excuse me. We are involved in a project that I think when I say I think, we are now becoming official and just getting our charter from the state in the next day or two, with the high sounding name of search for meaning, Memphis search for meaning committee and our purpose very briefly to get some sort of publication hopefully a book about all of the events that happened in Memphis in the last several months centered around the assassination of Dr. King. Our purpose is to honestly and consciously find out why it happened. Not how it happened in Memphis but why it happened at all. We are trying to talk to everybody that we possibly can in every strata of society every area to try to determine, make a determination of what is all about and hopefully we might be able to help somebody and help alleviate conditions not that this will be in and of itself any suggestion of a cure but we think that we can make this contribution and I can't disclose now but I have just been notified that we are to be funded with a considerable amount of money. Considerable amount of money to have offices and so on and all of us are doing this for free and we are going to devote as much time as we possibly can. We are a group of, and we are a group of citizens of Memphis it is going to be Memphis done and we got some pretty good people both at this university Southwestern and more important I think in the community who are devoting their time, I think we have close to 70 people at this point. It occurred to me when I saw this play which I saw several years ago when Edward Albee was just a flicker in the social scene that it was his best play. And when we saw it the other day, I think the second performance...well without I don't want to take my reaction is not important about that. That was a tremendously moving night and congratulate all of you on a wonderful performance. I do not congratulate the television medium on the electronic performance that left much to be desired also the change from the theatre to here is a difficult thing. What I would like, what I would not like to do is that necessarily except that it was a tremendously moving play, I felt it was written yesterday. The whole thrust of this play just bears witness to the fact that what we have been participants in, in the last several weeks has almost the inevitability of a Greek tragedy or an international tragedy. The very fact that this play was selected and was in rehearsal I would gather while the events of the assassination were taking on another chilling thing to go along with the snow storm to go along with the tornado to go along with all the things the sanitation strike and not being criticized for being in one hotel and having to move to another and this is just another series. It occurred to me that if you would be willing you people who were in this play to discuss openly and frankly and this is the only way to have any validity your feelings in relation to this experience you have gone through however it is. I have no way of knowing, I would be much appreciative and I think you would be making a contribution towards, I will use the word history. Because what we are doing also, we are participating with the oral history office of Memphis state university and if you are willing these can be in the archives and I don't know what contribution we can make at this interview but....anyway these are the facts. Nobody is going to get paid, nobody need identify herself or himself if you don't want to although I don't

see any reason that you would not but if you choose not to that is perfectly alright. You will not be quoted if you do not wish to be quoted in other words I am reading the law to you as you can have an attorney before you are accused and I don't know what you are going to be accused of. These are just things that we have to do as part of the oral history. Now is this, is anybody unclear as to why I am here talking with you? Is it clear Glenda? Do you? Can we come in and close the door.

Unknown Male- We will relax the no smoking rule grudgingly.

David Yellin- See what concessions we are getting? Now if anybody doesn't wish to give their name that is perfectly alright but I wish that so that I can identify the voices and if we could just go around, I do know some of you but if you don't mind and we will not have any prejudice in regard to sex we will just start here.

Thomas Terry- Thomas Terry.

David Yellin- Thomas Terry.

Eda Faign- Eda Faign.

David Yellin- Eda Faign.

Glenda Beck- Glenda Beck.

David Yellin- Yeah I mean I know your name but I want the microphone to know your name.

Eddie Henderson- Eddie Henderson.

David Yellin- Yes Gloria do you wish to participate? Were you involved in this in anyway.

Gloria- Just interested.

David Yellin- Alright.

Anne Lumberg- Anne Lumberg.

David Yellin- Ok Anne?

Anne Lumberg- Lumberg.

Al Evans- Al Evans.

David Yellin- Yes. Judy do you want to participate?

Judy- I just want to hear I had nothing to do with the play.

Caroline- Caroline and I am just interested.

David Yellin- Alright and I am David Yellin and this is May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1968 and we are on the television studio of the speech and drama building. So now we are recording. Just at random Terry, when did you first read the play do you remember? Or who asked you to do it did you know the play?

Thomas Terry- I guess it was about 2 years ago and I had been reading it for an English term paper.

David Yellin- So you knew the play?

Thomas Terry- Yes.

David Yellin- When we approached do you remember the date?

Thomas Terry- I just saw they were having tryouts for it, and for the death of Bessie Smith in the student paper in front of law school so I just...

David Yellin- When was it Eddie you are the producer.

Eddie Henderson- Well the two people who had the play on as a lunchbox production George Clea and Annette Harris, had posted tryouts and I had thought about doing it as a lunchbox production oh a year ago I guess and I never had time to do it and so one day Annette came to me and asked did I want to co-direct it with her and I said no I still wouldn't have time. And so they did it and I sort of got interested on the side and then...

David Yellin- I see you were only the producer of the television version. Why did you think of doing it a year ago, what was it about the play that you felt?

Eddie Henderson- Well I read it and I was just searching for a play to do for a lunchbox and it hit me.

David Yellin- How did it hit you?

Eddie Henderson- As the thing to do. It was the kind of play to do here. Because well, because of the situation, this university being in the south and since it is a university it is a place where you can get out and in a sense speak more free than you can out on the streets and that is why I thought this was the play to do here, being the south and being as the race situation is now and was then, I figured it is the play to do.

David Yellin- What did you think the reaction would be...did you have any conception of it? Can you recall?

Eddie Henderson- Well I really hadn't thought really too much about what the reaction would be because of, we had just finished Hi John the (muffled) which was pretty controversial. I figured, I didn't really expect a real strong response.

David Yellin- In what way do you mean?

Eddie Henderson- Anti-play, against it but I thought well I am going to say this and that is all, I will wait and see what will happen, I won't say it. I really didn't get a chance to say it at the time because I was tied up in several things and so I put it on file for doing later.

David Yellin- Could you and I hope that this is a friendly atmosphere, well I don't know that I mean that, but I mean an atmosphere congenial to frank discussion which is kind of a fancy way to say, can you say it like it is. What do you mean you wanted to say this? I mean would I be putting you on the spot if I asked you?

Eddie Henderson- Well what did I want to say by the play?

David Yellin- Yeah what does the play say? And to whom?

Eddie Henderson- Well I think it says we live in this big free land where people aren't really free. You have a people that really aren't that free.

David Yellin- You mean the black people.

Eddie Henderson- The black people. And this, it in the time and the place it really means the black people here in the south but it also means just a little more than just the black people here in the south. It means that we live here in a country that shouts to everybody in the world that we are a free country and we have free peoples and you still have the minorities not only negro, but the Indians and to a certain extent the Chinese who are not really free in this free country, "free". And I read the play several times and that is what it said. And every time I think about it that is what it still says.

David Yellin- Glenda how about you if you want to take off from there, do you agree with this, what did it do to you, you are the villain in a sense and in some ways not. I don't want to get into the play, how did you feel?

Glenda Beck- Well when I first thought about doing the part, George the director, one of the directors told me he was doing it and I hadn't read the play and I didn't know what it was about. Being an actress I want to get involved in as many plays as I possibly can so I went and read a scene from it and it was the scene with the intern.

David Yellin- Which one? The first one?

Glenda Beck- Yeah. Which you know it doesn't really talk about so much racial or prejudice or anything like that. So I said god that is a female that you know I can really sink my teeth into. So I went and tried out and got the part and but you know it slowly you know began to gnaw into me.

David Yellin- Were you from the south?

Glenda Beck- Yeah.

David Yellin- Where are you from?

Glenda Beck- Memphis.

David Yellin- You were born in Memphis?

Glenda Beck- Was born in Knoxville but I have been here for years.

David Yellin- Now what do you mean slowly?

Glenda Beck- It well the whole thing, everything, I like for things to seep into me slowly because I think I grasp it that way much more, but the whole idea began to take form I know Eda and I had talked and she say feeling the way I do about the situation.

David Yellin- And how do you feel about the situation?

Glenda Beck- Prejudiced you know about how so many people you meet and how the play is built on this prejudice situation. I don't know if I can play that type of part. I said well I feel like you play the total opposite of how you feel, because she was the total; opposite you know in her prejudice.

David Yellin- You mean what you are saying, in order to kept he record so I am clear maybe you tell me?

Eda Faign- Well the things was, I don't know it was really just a play I didn't know that much about it when I read it I thought his would be a good thing to do because it need sot be done but I didn't think it would do so much good and after Dr. King's death I was very hesitant with going on with it because it was a very hurtful thing to me and a very hard thing to say the lines I had to say. And to hear them over and over again and to be, to have to put myself in that kind of an atmosphere for say 2 h ours every afternoon when it cuts as deeply as it does to see it all over campus and all over a city that while I am not very sympathetic with and my allegiances aren't here I am still in the situation and nothing is being done. And for a long time nothing is going to change.

David Yellin- Where are you from?

Eda Faign- I am from here, I was born, well I have lived in Mississippi also.

David Yellin- You lived in Mississippi?

Eda Faign- Yes.

David Yellin- You said you didn't think this would do any good or mean anything..

Eda Faign- No I still really don't, I think the place to start with a play like this is the drama department because I know how several of the people feel, not several, their attitudes are basically pretty lax, like they are going to just do their thing. Like Glenda said as an actress you go after the role but socially it means alto more to me than just that and socially I don't think it had that much affect because the people who needed to see it didn't see it the people who already sympathetic to this kind of

thing are not going to be yelled at they are not the ones that need to be made aware of what is going on.

Glenda Beck- It need sot be taken to Mississippi you know, they are not ready for it but....

(Muffled)

David Yellin- Well alright this is a good point but how about the audience that saw it. I don't mean to excuse you, please feel free to kind of fall in on this I don't mean to be sitting here and pointing at you when we get started please say what you have to say at each other and so on. Did....I don't mean to exclude you. We will come back to this, and what I want to come back to is what you felt the audience reaction was here. And why? Or why it wasn't or why it was and so on. How did you feel when you read the play?

Al Evans- Well when I first heard about he play Eddie walked up to me and asked me did I want to be in a play and that is all he told me about it. And then I got to the tryouts and I read a small portion of it, and then I decided to read the whole play, and I did. After I found out that I was (muffled) I was chosen to dot he role of the orderly. Well at first I couldn't see myself doing this because I really, I feel quite the opposite if I have anything to say it I say it.

David Yellin- Why did you think you were chosen?

Al Evans- I don't know.

David Yellin- Well did it ever occur to you hey, why was I chosen as this?

Al Evans- Well I didn't think of this no ever.

David Yellin- Where are you from?

Al Evans- Memphis.

David Yellin- You are from Memphis?

Al Evans- Yes. And anyway well I just kept telling myself it is a play you have to do it and you have to feel the way you probably did at the time. Which when you really think about it is easy to do because all you have to do is read about the period that he was in and really just place yourself in the situation.

David Yellin- Do you know people like the part you are playing?

Al Evans- A few, not very many, just a very few and if you think it was very difficult for her to continue her role after the death of Dr. King well it was twice as...it was really more difficult for me because I felt well at this time everyone especially the negro should stand up and stand on his own two feet and tell everybody where he is going and here I am playing this role and I decided well, you have got to play it because that is the way things were at t hat time, you have got to do it. And....

David Yellin- Why was it the tradition that the show must go on?

Al Evans- Partially. Partially...(muffled) no no.

David Yellin- I mean these people are saying we got to do it why?

Eddie Henderson- Well they cancelled a couple shows because of the troubles and things.

David Yellin- What troubles I mean say it Eddie, we will all feel better if you say it.

Eddie Henderson- The week interrupted everything and because things were so interrupted by his death that they cancelled several shows because of that and this show could have just as easily been cancelled.

David Yellin- Were you in rehearsal then?

Eddie Henderson- Yes.

Eda Faign- We cancelled so many rehearsals and ...

David Yellin- But you say it had to go on why? What was so special? Why do you feel compelled to go on? To whom did you owe the greatest loyalty?

Eddie Henderson- I think I owed it to everyone to let them see this play, just not stop it because of my personal feelings. Well I am not going to do this role because this isn't me and I am just not going to do it. At the time the events occurred the play at the time the play appeared well I mean this is the way that it ought to be. Well he had to act at the time and if you can understand the time that he was in and probably how desperately he wanted to escape then you could understand the role and really I began to feel sympathetic for this character because I know he just had to do it. He didn't have to, but his chances are if he didn't he wouldn't have made it.

David Yellin- (muffled).

Eddie Henderson- I disagree, I don't think he should have been the person he was. If I had been at that time I can't say that I would have acted like he did or I would have acted the opposite the way he acted but....it makes you wonder how you would act.

David Yellin- How much different is it today?

Eda Faign- Not any.

Eddie Henderson- Well I am afraid not.

David Yellin- So what are you saying back in those days?

Eddie Henderson- They are beginning to speak more.

David Yellin- The negroes are speaking more.

Eddie Henderson- Yes.

David Yellin- What about the white people? Are they listening?

Eddie Henderson- Well many are listening but it has to go beyond the point of just listening. I mean because you have got to understand and then you have got to take action.

David Yellin- What kind of action, I mean....

Eddie Henderson- Action to eliminate the causes and circumstances. I mean the things that caused this you have got to eliminate what is in existence now, all prejudices and things like that.

David Yellin- Have you ever encountered prejudice?

Eddie Henderson- Yes every negro child in some point of his life has to.

David Yellin- Do you remember when you first were aware that you were a black person?

Eddie Henderson- Yeah whenever if you were very small whenever you walked in any stores or ....

David Yellin- What happened can you remember?

Eddie Henderson- Well you know very simple things such that you probably never paid attention to, the drinking fountains colored and white. Some places that you weren't allowed to go and it was very, it really hurt you very much because you would see these big signs open to the public and you knew that you couldn't...

David Yellin- Didn't your parents tell you this?

Eddie Henderson- Well yes but they kind of told you gradually I mean you know they just didn't want to come right out and shout it to you because they hoped that the times would change.

David Yellin- I mean you know it is not like the facts of life supposedly talk where you sit down and I want to tell you what the world is like?

Eddie Henderson- No.

David Yellin- Just alluded to it hinted at it?

Eddie Henderson- Yes.

David Yellin- But it didn't make an impression. Can you remember and Eddie if you don't mind this can you remember when you first were aware that you were prejudice. Now just for instance Martin Luther King said he could.

Eddie Henderson- Well it is for me it wasn't too much of the being aware you were born into a world and here you see the white and colored and for a long time you don't really even try to think about it or understand it. Nobody tells you well this is the way the world is and you grow up in it like this and all of a sudden somebody comes along and says well you can go and drink out of either one of those fountains. And they take the signs down. That is when you start to think about it.

David Yellin- In other words the supreme court law of 1954 starts all this trouble.

Eddie Henderson- And when they start taking the signs off the bus saying colored move to the back. This is about the time I really started thinking about it and then realized that something was wrong. Really, it truly this is what happened and as a kid I can remember little signs saying colored and white....

David Yellin- And it had no effect.

Eddie Henderson- It really didn't have much affect on me because well, nobody said anything about it and you know you say well when you are that young you take it...well this is the natural order of the world and then all of a sudden they take the signs down and then you start wondering and you start asking questions and when you get old enough to read about it you start reading about it and wondering. And then you realize well all my life I haven't been as free as I thought I was? I didn't know.

David Yellin- How does that make you feel?

Eddie Henderson- It makes me feel like well, well it doesn't make me feel awfully bad about it because well I didn't really know, I really didn't know. But now I think about it and then I wonder well am I free now?

David Yellin- What do you mean?

Eddie Henderson- Well really can I go and drink out of that water fountain that had the white over it now? Well they still say move to the next one.

David Yellin- You mean you still don't believe it?

Eddie Henderson- Well it is not the point whether I...well it got to the point where it has been like this for so long did they just take down the signs or are they still up there really in reality? Are they still up there see. Well if I go and drink out of the other fountain will they still yell that's the wrong one and the signs are just down the y expect you know it by now and that is the way I felt about it when I first realized it. And so I started reading things and I started listening and paying attention and it finally dug into me well really it is a lot of change they took the signs down. And in most cases that is what it really mean they took the signs down. They took the signs down saying colored not allowed in this café and you go into the café now and that is about what you can do. You can go in and they will give you a nice cup of coffee and almost pour it all over you accidentally.

David Yellin- This is now?

Eddie Henderson- Oh this is still happening, oh yes things like you walk in and you will be politely waited on and you will sit there for 15 or 20 minutes waiting for your food to come. Oh you are allowed to come in and you are allowed to eat there if you could ever get food. And a very instant, well sometime sit is not the pressure of the people who own the place, sometimes they could care who they wait on and serve they are there for business and you walk in and then half the restaurant walks out. I have seen this.

(Muffled)

Eddie Henderson- Last week we went tot eh B and S restaurant up here and sometimes it is the pressure on you, not by the people who runt he place but by the other people that patronize it. You walk in and there are these two old ladies and they sit there and they go, oh, they get up and make there neat little entrance or exit and you sit there and go, why did they do that? 13 years old.

David Yellin- Did they finish their coffee?

Eddie Henderson- They hadn't ordered yet.

(Muffled)

Eddie Henderson- And so I think now it is a large place like Memphis there are less incidents of the waitresses and the people who own the places to tell you to leave but then there is the pressure of the little old ladies who sit there and go I never and get up and walk out.

David Yellin- You mean this is still happening?

Eddie Henderson- Oh definitely last week this happened.

David Yellin- Alright now what do you think that the effect of Martin Luther King's death had on this or has had on this?

Eddie Henderson- Oh it had, you will have less old ladies walking out I think.

David Yellin- Why?

Eddie Henderson- Well because it sort of hit some of these people that there is a problem, they have been sitting back and watching television saying oh yes, the negro do, the negro on a whole has a problem yes. And it really happened to hit home, until then they say there is Martin Luther King and he is a rabble trouser and he makes a lot of noise and he does all this and then all of sudden, I think the television helped a lot to deliver to these people what really happened.

David Yellin- Now we are talking about people in Memphis.

Eddie Henderson- People in Memphis.

David Yellin- Where relations were good and everything was wonderful and we have never had a riot and so on.

Eddie Henderson- And then they notice all of a sudden there is a riot and then they notice that all of a sudden for three whole days the press has been talking about this man that they just thought was a rabble rouser.

David Yellin- (muffled) all over the world.

Eddie Henderson- All over the world. And they notice that he is not just a rabble rouser he has done something and then they see what he is doing and see what you have been sitting here in Memphis thinking all is good and they find out that all is not really good and some people get...

David Yellin- In other words somebody has taken down the signs for the white.

Eddie Henderson- Yeah that is what they see, somebody took down the signs and that is about it and all is not good and all is not well and in good old beautiful Memphis it is not really all that beautiful.

Unknown- Can I ask one thing here.

David Yellin- Sure.

Unknown- Ed, when you go and went in the café the other day specifically and other times in general. Do you think the reaction is that you are coming into the café or is a reaction against you and Anne coming in together.

David Yellin- Anne being white for our unseen microphone.

Eddie Henderson- I have seen it both ways, I have really seen it both ways. I negro person or several walk in and they sit down and they order and they wait and they wait and they wait. And finally they get waited on. Sometimes sneeringly, sometimes sneeringly, sometime because well it is a crowded restaurant and they serve the negroes last, I have seen this., It is not just if I were to walk in with Anne or anybody here it is not just that, it could have partially been that the other day I don't know but...

David Yellin- Still the other exists...

Eddie Henderson- The other exists always.

David Yellin- ...It is not yet the point. Just one thing and then we have to give equal time because we don't want to be accused of being prejudiced and as I recall somebody I think it was his father, Dr. King's father who said that when Martin Luther King until he was 6 had a white playmate and it was then that the playmate was 6 and went to school and told him he couldn't play with him anymore because he was black, it was the first time that Martin Luther King remembered that he was black and this whole thing came up to him. And just again I am really fishing for

incidents and specific things, can you recall, is this to the point or do you think you will help him recall please do.

Eda Faign- I can recall the first instance that I knew that I was white. There, I lived in a neighborhood where it was all elderly and the only playmate I had was Rosie our maid and she wasn't just a maid. She was more or less a friend of the family.

David Yellin- Where was this?

Eda Faign- In north little rock.

David Yellin- That also was once heard of.

Eda Faign- Yes, Little Rock, this is North Little Rock.

David Yellin- Yes.

Eda Faign- Ok anyway, later on I didn't want my parents to thin of anything with me playing with Rosie's daughter but later on I was back in the alley back behind my house, our neighborhood had alleys and that was the favorite playing ground of everybody and I went up the alley to another street and there were some colored kids playing with some wagons and things like that and I had a new tricycle and their stuff wasn't as good. But they, I guess they just didn't have the means to get their children what they, new tricycles. I was playing with them and I had them into my backyard and I was playing on their stuff and they were playing with my stuff and I was just having a good time and all of a sudden mom called me in saying that I needed to come in it was hot that time of day and I needed a nap. Well that is and then all of a sudden my grandparents were telling me, you shouldn't play with these kids. And I was having a bal with them and then I realized that I was white and somehow or another that was supposed to make a difference and then all through grade school and junior high I was more or less oriented not just by my family specifically but in my whole environment I never had any contact with any colored people, no contact, no social contact and so I thought well maybe there is a difference and I grew up with this attitude all through until I got to high school. And we got two colored teachers in my high school and they were terrific teachers, they were really great, and I was more or less prejudiced all through this period and all of a sudden I found myself at the art club Christmas party and one of the teachers was colored and all of a sudden it dawned on me hey bingo, I am at an integrated party.

David Yellin- (Muffled)

David Yellin- Now how did it hit you, you mean you were pleased with yourself?

Eda Faign- All of a sudden I realized that this was the situation and it didn't make any difference. And then I...well my folks always said people are people no matter what. You know they have got feelings don't hurt them, be courteous to everyone, and so I wasn't what you call redneck prejudice but I did have some feelings of

prejudice and now that I have been here in the situation and working with negro people I mean....

David Yellin- Now you would say you are not prejudice?

Eda Faign- Yeah I am now.

David Yellin- You mean you are now....(muffled)

(Muffled)

David Yellin- If you want a lawyer..

Eda Faign- No it is the working situation. It is the contact always before I had no contact with colored people, I didn't know them. I mean as far as, I always thought well maybe there is a difference but it is the social contact that does it.

David Yellin- That does what?

Eda Faign- That brings people together, it is the working conditions, the your talking with them being with them you know having fun with people. And I don't think you are going to change people by saying hey this is the way it is people have to accept it themselves. It is something within a person that tells them that this is right.

Glenda Beck- Yeah in many cases it is parental influence that hinder that, that make you prejudice.

Anne Lumberg- Can I make a point here?

David Yellin- Yes maam.

Anne Lumberg- One thing, that I noticed and this is one of the reasons I think that a lot of people who well, really have never been prejudice but they never have associated with negros (muffled)n and don't give them a chance is this tremendous pressure on a white person who associates frequently and in public with a negro because I know going with Eddie I have always the prejudice is towards the white person as a rule because I have been called trash and many other things.

David Yellin- What other things have you been called?

Anne Lumberg- Well I don't think you want them on tape to be real honest.

David Yellin- Yes we do.

Anne Lumberg- Well I have been called a whore and prostitute and all sorts of things like that because I associate with negros.

David Yellin- And who calls you this?

Anne Lumberg- Well, we were walking down the street across campus and this car drove up one day and it had two men and a girl I think in the middle. We weren't

paying attention we were talking about something we were going over speech and drama.

David Yellin- Where was this was it on campus

Anne Lumberg- Yeah it was going across campus towards speech and drama and this car comes screeching around they had seen us I guess I don't know but we heard somebody screaming white trash, nigger lover and they turned around and they came back and started cursing people. They obviously were college kids because they were on the campus.

David Yellin- When was this Anne?

Anne Lumberg- This was about what a month ago Eddie?

Eddie Henderson- Yeah about a month.

Anne Lumberg- And...

David Yellin- What is your reaction to that how do you feel about that?

Anne Lumberg- Well my first reaction this has happened many many times, this is not an isolated incident. Usually about once a week but some weeks are worse than others it just depends. But the first time it ever happened I had a great deal of shame. I wanted so much to be black because I was so ashamed that I was white because the people, these white people were like this and that these people could have done these things and still do these things and continue to do the se things.

David Yellin- How come and OI only think of a word and I don't know why I am hung up with this so I got to get rid of it. How come you gravitated towards going with a black person? How did it happen?

Anne Lumberg- Well I think....

David Yellin- Because I mean I want to explain that...

Anne Lumberg- Of course I will bring out the point that I was reared in Mississippi which might (muffled). I think it started...

David Yellin- Where in Mississippi?

Anne Lumberg- In the Delta.

(Muffled)

Anne Lumberg- The little town I was reared in was the home of the white citizen's council and one of the three founders lives two blocks down from my house and I remember back when I was in high school his daughter complained because her

father would not allow her to, I think it was Little Richard that was big then which was a million years ago but he would not let her to have a record put out by a colored group, or a colored instrumentalists or anything like that. But I think the reason that I feel the way I feel started oh 24 years ago, 25 years ago even before I was born. Because 8 members of my family were killed by the Nazis and my grandfather never let me forget. That 8 members of my family were killed by the Nazis.

David Yellin- You mean in Germany?

Anne Lumberg- In Germany. And I have never been able to hate not even the Germans. Because I don't know I think that started it, if you want to know what really started it. And then I mouthed prejudice, because my parents surprisingly enough are prejudiced, very much so.

David Yellin- How are they prejudice?

Anne Lumberg- My mother because she was from Georgia and just white working class factory workers farmers. I think my father because he has lived there for so long and he has had her influence that it is just something that has happened and I don't think he really is but I think that is all he knows to say. I think there are a lot of people like that too that really don't hate but it is a way of life and it has been a way of life for so long. And finally because I am not the type of person to hide things but there are times when I want to run and hide and I do for maybe an hour or 3 hours you know, because I can't take it any longer. But I always come back you know because this is the way it is, this is the way I am. And I can't hate and I can't pretend not to be anything that I am not. But he finally broke down and said, ok if you love the guy you know. But, y mother I haven't talked to her in a long time because of it. But it is still this way, it is the way it is in...well at home, in that little town about a year ago, a negro women was sitting in the hospital there and her baby was sick and it died because she couldn't prove that she could pay the medical help. So you see basic (muffled) is still happening and I would imagine that if you go down tot hat little town or the dozens of little towns just like it you would find the same thing happening over and over and over again it just make me sick. I guess that is it for right now anyway.

Al Evans- This is hard to believe this is happening as it is when there is still fighting going on in Vietnam unless you are acquainted with somebody that has just come back that has died or has done everything. I have had a beautiful sheltered existence and not until I come to college had I met any real colored people, and then it has been so disgusting because I haven't been able to get rid of prejudice against.

(Muffled)

David Yellin- Where are you from?

Al Evans- Originally from North Carolina, and lived in Savannah Tennessee now.

David Yellin- Where in North Carolina?

Al Evans- Clement North Carolina about 100 miles from the coast.

David Yellin- Oh so the east coast. And you say are you prejudiced?

Al Evans- Well I haven't found any I can really get prejudiced against yet, that is sort of, I mean I don't know I haven't found anyone to be prejudiced against.

David Yellin- That is a kind of interesting observation.

Al Evans- I mean really I am not.

David Yellin- Of course how hard are you trying? Do you know people who are prejudice?

Al Evans- Yeah I have heard a lot of people mention it well gee whiz he is black and I have heard people even talk about threes two over here being...

David Yellin- You mean Eddie and Anne? I would feel that here that anything you have herd they have hard also, would you think.

Eddie Henderson- Oh several thousand times.

David Yellin- Yeah. I would like to kind of maybe if we could sort of focus on the situation Memphis the relationship with al the things that happened, the strike, the sanitation workers, what you heard, what your reaction was, whichever one. Where were you when Martin Luther King?

Thomas Terry- I was in the law school and I really couldn't believe it happened. I couldn't even believe the sanitation strike..

David Yellin- Are you....do you go to law school?

Thomas Terry- Yes.

David Yellin- Yes go ahead.

Thomas Terry- It just sort of seemed like Memphis of all the places I would have never suspected it.

David Yellin- Was that your first reaction?

Thomas Terry- Yeah, I just could not believe any where in the world except for Memphis. I don't know anything about the prejudice that they received and I (muffled) I just don't know.

David Yellin- How can you account for your sheltered life?

Thomas Terry- Well it was just the way I had been brought up I just haven't been in any position or any way where I could associate with them and I haven't really gone

out of my way, oh there is a black boy let me go over and say hello, or anything like that. I don't do that with white people either, it is just the way it works out.

(Muffled)

David Yellin- Now your first was kind of disbelief or was it anger, this disbelief did it then propagate some anger? Or did you feel well?

Thomas Terry- It was more like a shock and then disgust.

David Yellin- Disgusted, well.

Thomas Terry- Disgusted that it happened, that he got shot, there was no way to prevent it.

David Yellin- How did you find out? Were you watching television?

Thomas Terry- No, I was in the law school and somebody came in on the radio...

David Yellin- What did they say?

Thomas Terry- And said well guess what is happening and listened to the radio and by George it had really happened and...

David Yellin- What was the reaction around you?

Thomas Terry- Same thing you know couldn't believe here in Memphis.

David Yellin- The first reaction was that Memphis was (muffled)

Thomas Terry- Yeah I mean in New York alright or Chicago maybe but Memphis it is such a wonderful clean little town where no one has any problems and things just go along every day life and...And then they had, well the assassination strike came out.

David Yellin- Did that have any affect on you?

Thomas Terry- No real affect.

David Yellin- As a lawyer did it, were you interested in it even as a lawyer and I don't mean too...

Thomas Terry- Well yes I was interested in the legal part of it because legally they are not supposed to be able to strike because they work for the city. And yet their strike obviously had something more to do than just pay raises it had something to do with human dignity and pother things that go along with it and...

David Yellin- Did you think they were right? What would you do if you were a garbage worker?

Thomas Terry- Well it is like I don't know what I would do if I was in the jungle fields of Vietnam. I have never been there and I can't imagine being in a room like this with beautiful electronic things around us it is sort of hard to imagine as a jungle field in which you don't even have a toilet you can go to. I don't really, I don't know.

David Yellin- The sanitation workers don't have a toilet to go to either.

Thomas Terry- I suppose I would be quite provoked.

David Yellin- but I mean it never, until this moment now would we be right in saying that well what has happened to you since? Are you now becoming more aware or do you think you are going to close in again?

Thomas Terry- Well more aware, well I don't think I was really ever closed in I was just not, or maybe I was and just wasn't aware of it and wasn't really trying to open a few doors and say hello to the world. (muffled).

David Yellin- Well what do you think is going to happen to you, did this play have anything to do with anything?

Thomas Terry- No I read the play many years before.

David Yellin- I mean meeting Eddie and meeting Al here and you have not been able to dislike them?

Thomas Terry- No I really (muffled)

David Yellin- Now what do you think has it made any affect on your life? Or this is unfair question, you are not sure yet or you think it might?

Thomas Terry- As it gets closer and closer this is really happening this prejudice really goes on but the prejudice is blind prejudice. I mean I have prejudice against people. That I don't and some I just don't want to associate with because...

David Yellin- I mean it is possible for Eddie to be stupid even though he is black.

Thomas Terry- Yeah. And for that I might disassociate with him. Not because he is black....it doesn't ring true or anything why should I dislike him because of t hat. Now if he comes up and hits me alright now I am going to get upset, but it is gradually hearing people talk about it and getting closer and closer to it and getting them to believe that this is really what happened.

David Yellin- But what? Can you recall anything that people said or do? Or that made you think you are closer, why are you closer and what are you closer too?

Thomas Terry- Well I had heard about Eddie and Anne before and I heard people say golly there is a white couple and a white and black going together. Well how about that, so what? Big deal. And sort of dismissed it. I was working in the play and really met them and the way I had heard them before I was really supposed to

dislike them because by golly they broke all the social norms and everything and just having met them (muffled). That sort of thing.

David Yellin- Yeah (muffled).

Anne Lumberg- I don't know what do you want?

David Yellin- I don't know what do you want to say?

Eda Faign- Well the whole thing for me did two things, first with the sanitation workers. I marched with them one Saturday and it is so damn easy and sit around here and say how unprejudiced you are about everything but until you work and until you are in some kind of social contact, some kind of thing where you are actually working with people, not as black people or red people or yellow people or anything else but just people. Do you really know what it means not to be prejudiced and to be...Well Dr. King's death for me, well it (muffled) me because I am not white anymore I mean it is not I am white there is black, there is no distinction for me anymore and with that march, with this one little march I was in I can look at anyone now and know that I don't have to say with any part of me that I am not prejudice because I am not. You can talk about it and you can talk about it but until you do something it doesn't make any difference I really don't think. I know I heard about Dr. King's death coming to a night class. (muffled) and the first person I saw was what's his name Jack, Jim. And I couldn't believe it and there was like no reaction and I went to my class and everyone was like oh god it happened in Memphis they are going to burn us out. And that was a turnoff. I go into the dressing room nothing. It was like nothing had ever happened like there wasn't even a Dr. King or a racial question in the whole damn country and there was no place I could go like I could just go and cry with myself. But there was no place I could go.

David Yellin- Did you?

Eda Faign- Yes I did.

David Yellin- Where did you go?

Eda Faign- There was no where to go and that is the thing that brought it all onto me. You can sit around and you can talk and say no no I don't have any prejudice, well my gosh I like everybody. But then in very revealing moments you find a lot out about people.

David Yellin- Are you angry?

Eda Faign- Yes.

David Yellin- Any more than angry?

Eda Faign- It is something that I will be paying back the rest of my life because I am just as guilty as his death as everybody in this room that is the way I think.

David Yellin- Why?

Eda Faign- I don't know about anybody else's guilt.

David Yellin- Why are you as guilty?

Eda Faign- Because I haven't done something up to now, I haven't made a positive action, I haven't made positive, I haven't done any positive thinking just said no I am not prejudice and that is enough for me but it is not enough and (muffled).

David Yellin- Yes.

Glenda Beck- Sometimes I like to rationalize it and say that I didn't bring it on, I haven't done anything against anybody so why blame me, just because I am white. And yet, it is hard for me to rationalize it because as Eda said I haven't done anything and the thing is it is hard for me to do anything because social pressures on me as being white. So...

David Yellin- Social pressures from whom?

Glenda Beck- So I am supposed to act white. Instead of acting me and it is not just home it is on campus, not just here on campus it is anywhere. I am white and I am supposed to associate with white, I am supposed to be white instead of just being me as another human having social interaction with other human beings.

David Yellin- Why did Edith come into this place and maybe the rest of you and find no reaction? Why did they walk out of your play as they had been seeing Mary Poppins?

Anne Lumberg- Because it didn't affect them.

David Yellin- Why?

Anne Lumberg- It didn't reach them. I don't know why you would have to question them yourselves.

David Yellin- Did they walk out as if it were Mary Poppins? I couldn't move standing against the wall I was trying to bang the wall and as soon as the lights went on people started to talk about the things that they probably stopped talking about when the lights went out, Why? Or did you feel it as an actress?

Anne Lumberg- Oh yes.

David Yellin- What kind of reaction did you feel?

Anne Lumberg- You mean from the audience?

David Yellin- From the audience.

Anne Lumberg- Very passive.

David Yellin- Passive?

Anne Lumberg- Yes.

David Yellin- Eddie you weren't in it.

Eddie Henderson- Yeah I was I was in it.

David Yellin- I thought I saw you in it. I have been seeing a lot of things.

Eddie Henderson- What happened was the lights go down on the play and you get a silence for awhile and everybody is cheering and happy oh it was a beautiful play haha. And that is what it was.

Anne Lumberg- They looked at it from a performance point of view.

Eddie Henderson- You come in at lunchtime and they say oh that was marvelous that was a great play and a lot of people still don't realize it's a little more than a play, it is a lot more than a play. And they come to theatre and it is a theatre of illusion that is there and you walk out into that nice sunshine and everything is bright and sunny again and a lot of people thought of it just like that. It is good acting, it is nice lights and everything, it was well run and that is it.

David Yellin- Well you are the one that said you had to do this play?

Eddie Henderson- Well then this is the majority in hopes of finding one person out of 50 or 60 you know if you can bring one person to look up and say this is more than a play.

David Yellin- You sound like a teacher.

Eddie Henderson- Well that is one reason why, what I just told you was the mass reaction, the whole group. Yet out of that whole group you might find one person you are doing this in hope of finding oh one or two, somebody, somebody to listen and sometimes you do. In fact, I think we may have found a few.

Anne Lumberg- Well the things is we said, I said that the audience was very passive. Some aren't, a lot of them afraid of showing how they felt about it. They felt it, I am sure there was a lot of people that felt it...

David Yellin- How do you know that? Would they tell you?

Anne Lumberg- Because I have done that many times myself we are all guilty of it. You don't express yourself all the time truly what you think verbally, bodily, if you are really upset someplace and you really want to cry you don't get out and do it, because even as a boy you are taught you know boys shouldn't cry and you are grown up to think that you shouldn't like colored people so you know it takes a long time to change attitudes.

David Yellin- Have you changed?

Anne Lumberg- Many years, yes.

David Yellin- When did you change?

Anne Lumberg- I don't know it has been a couple, I have changed many values within the past two years but it takes a lot longer, it is not going to be done over night. It takes so much longer to do it that way.

David Yellin- Can I...

Anne Lumberg- It has got to come from right in here, and I like she will go out and march. I don't know I can't say that I will or I won't but as long as I can have a decent relationship with people I know somebody else is going to see it and they are going to see that people can work that way. Well then if they are going to look at me and say well she can work that way. This is my way.

David Yellin- well why are you any different, you grew up in Memphis would you say that a great percentage of the people in Memphis don't feel the way you do. Why? What did you eat for breakfast?

Anne Lumberg- Because I am young. And a lot of them here are older people, when you are 50 years old there is hardly any changing. My father is dead prejudice and I, I refuse to argue with him anymore because what is the point there is nothing I can do.

David Yellin- What does he think about your reaction?

Anne Lumberg- I don't see him that often for him to get it, I only see him like 4 or 5 times a year and we just, he is in and out and..

David Yellin- Does he have any remark about Martin Luther King?

Anne Lumberg- I don't think I have talked to him since then, I really don't, I don't think so. Like you know everybody says, the thing I am so sick of hearing is why did it have to happen in Memphis? Why did it have to happen at all?

Eddie Henderson- I have a point on that, I heard it on the news one day, I was looking at television and this struck me as very strange, a lot of people here in Memphis weren't really shaken up over the fact that Dr. King had died but because of the fact that it happened in Memphis because really if he had died any place else, I think the general reaction would have been oh it's a shame, that is the way those people are over there and this is the city can endure. I think it really hurt so many people not because the fact that Dr. King died but because the fact that it was here in Memphis. I mean the rally in Crump stadium, was that Sunday. You couldn't have gotten that many people out to save your life if this man hadn't died in Memphis. I mean if it had happened any other place and they still would have asked you to come to Crump stadium that Sunday I don't think you would have gotten any people.

Unknown- Are you saying then that it had to happen you at least are not sorry that it happened in Memphis?

David Yellin- Well that is a kind of a new approach, kind of interesting.

Eddie Henderson- I think, well if it had to happen I am rather glad that it did happen here because at least now Memphis is at least feeling gee this is a shame and had to happen in Memphis they will be, why in Memphis and they will begin to question themselves.

David Yellin- And you think questioning is good?

Eddie Henderson- Well if you find the right answer it is great.

David Yellin- Alright can I ask you a couple of things about what you like, about what you're called. Does it mean anything about what you are called, colored, negro, I mean we know about nigger and I don't think we have to ask about that.

Eddie Henderson- No not that really I, it does really, I mean I really hate to be called a nigger not because of the fact that I am being called this, because of the fact that somebody else told me that is a dirty word and you shouldn't be called this. I mean I don't want to be called a nigger because of that and partially because of that and partially because I know that the person who says it means it to be a dirty word or something to be looked down upon. I never accepted people as of race and I think I have very seldom looked at another person and the first thing that came to my mind is he is white and I am black or he is black or he is yellow or red you know. I am very lucky because of the fact, for every one of me who has never accepted a person I looked at him, looked particularly at his race and for everyone of me there is about 1,000 or maybe millions of others who haven't. Who still whenever they look at a person the first thing they see is he is black and I am white and for many people that is really something for everything. I mean you see a man and if you see, if you hear somebody being killed the general reaction is who got killed, what was the man who did it, was he black or was he white. Or whenever a notorious crime is committed usually sometimes I find it happened with the media was he black or what.

David Yellin- You ask that?

Eddie Henderson- Sometimes very seldom but sometimes when they find a really notorious or something like that, and I find myself was he black or was he white. And totally disregarded the fact that somebody had been killed, that a person could do this but well the question was he black or was he white?

Unknown- Did you ask this question when you heard that King had been shot?

Eddie Henderson- No because I think I knew immediately it must have been white. Now at first I said some poor white guy and then said why white because really he

must have had some black enemies too and then I said yeah it really began to why white. And then I really something came across my mind why white because really if Dr. King was a friend of anybody's and the people that really needed him was the white, all the white people in America.

David Yellin- Why?

Eddie Henderson- Because he saved a lot of people.

David Yellin- How do you mean.

Eddie Henderson- He saved a lot of things, I mean he saved a lot of people because I mean I don't care how many people, how many black people who did not agree with him, I mean who did not totally agree with him on everything they said they would on this.

David Yellin- Did you agree with him before his death?

Eddie Henderson- Yes.

David Yellin- Did you, would you have called yourself having been, a follower and if so what kind? Were you a close follower or an avid follower or do you believe in his nonviolence and so on.

Eddie Henderson- I do believe in his nonviolence.

David Yellin- Would have gone down to hear him speak at any time that he would come to Memphis?

Eddie Henderson- Yes.

David Yellin- How devoted were you or devout?

Eddie Henderson- I (muffled) because of the fact that I don't think I really was as closely followed him as much as could have.

David Yellin- So the point is that while at the same time the white people were finding out what Martin Luther King said, so were the black people.

Eddie Henderson- Yes.

David Yellin- And many of whom had very seldom heard what he had to say. And he was a well, he was an entity, he was a force but nobody was quite sure what?

Eddie Henderson- Yeah that's what I think was the biggest problem because everybody had a vague idea and I don't think anybody really until he died really understood what he was trying to do. I you have ever heard of the, if you ever heard the name Martin Luther King mentioned I think immediately you would associate what he is saying negros civil rights. And you wouldn't look at the fact that it is not

negro civil rights it is just human rights period, not the negros or white or anybody it is just human rights for people of the world.

David Yellin- Do you think that if Martin Luther King had to die?

Eddie Henderson- No I don't think he had to die. I don't know I don't think he had to die.

Anne Lumberg- But it needed something like that to make people realize his worth.

Eddie Henderson- His worth.

David Yellin- Do you dislike white people?

Eddie Henderson- No, there again I was very lucky because I was born in Memphis and then at an early age we moved to Germantown and there like any other part of the country, yeah it was country and up from how the houses were located and my, I guess you could say next door neighbor was white and they had children and we played together.

David Yellin- When were you first called nigger.

Eddie Henderson- There again I was very lucky because I have never been just in one point directed to as nigger. And then when we moved to the city this relationship it continued because both of our...(Tape End)