

**GREENSBORO VOICES/GREENSBORO PUBLIC LIBRARY ORAL HISTORY  
PROJECT**

INTERVIEWEE: Furman M. Melton

INTERVIEWER: Eugene E. Pfaff

DATE: April 12, 1979

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

PF: This is a tape for the Greensboro Public Library Oral History Program. It's being taped on April 12, 1979, in the boardroom of the public library. With me is Sergeant Furman M. Melton, Jr., who was on the Greensboro police force at the time of the 1963 civil rights demonstrations in Greensboro. Sgt. Melton, I'd like to ask when you joined the Greensboro Police Department.

MELTON: I became a police officer on February 15, 1958.

EP: And what was your rank in 1963?

FM: I was a detective, but I was reassigned back into patrol, into uniform, to work the demonstrations. I was at that particular time a investigator in the vice squad.

EP: Did that indicate that the police administration felt they didn't have enough men on regular patrol to handle the situation?

FM: Well, not that they didn't have the correct number of men. There were sixteen police officers that were selected to, and assigned to, Captain [William] Jackson, who was in charge of all of the demonstration marching activities.

EP: What was the basis of their selection?

FM: We were assigned to this special unit. And we, we followed all of the marches, demonstrations, that occurred in the city, wherever they may be. We were sent to that location. And we worked those demonstrations--sit-ins, marches, or whatever-- until they ended.

EP: [tape malfunction] your experience in crowd control and that sort of thing?

FM: Well, that was part of it. And I think another part of it was our size. I think all sixteen of us were probably over sixteen--six foot tall. But I think that what, what they felt like that mainly, the main purpose, I think, behind it was that there was this particular unit that was unassigned in any other area. In other words, for three months we were assigned to that specific detail and we didn't have any other assignments.

EP: What was the usual procedure for marches by demonstrators?

FM: Well, they--first they, they got a permit to, to march. And most of the time we knew when they were going to march, the streets that they were going to cover, and if they were going to have any speeches or anything. A gathering at any location, we usually knew that.

EP: How did you know that?

FM: By--well, by the coordinators in the, I don't know what, what did they call it? The--I know Jackson was the head of it, Jesse Jackson.

EP: CORE [Council of Racial Equality]?

FM: The CORE. They, their coordinators coordinated with ours. And they were, they were very cooperative as far as their organized marches were concerned and their demonstrations and everything.

EP: Was this an attempt to prevent violence?

FM: Right. It was, it was an attempt to, to allow the marches and demonstrations in an orderly manner. And we would be, we would be there in case--at that particular time, we had some, some unorganized groups that were trying to hassle the CORE or the demonstrators that were organized.

EP: Are they what the paper called the "Confederate Cavalry?"

FM: Right. Something, something like that, yes.

EP: What was the reaction of the spectators and these white hecklers?

FM: Well, we got a--we kind of were thrown in the middle, because they, they heckled us and harassed us along with the demonstrators and the marchers. Sometimes they would be for us. Sometimes they would be against us. They would put the police officers down and the demonstrators down.

EP: The paper indicates that sometimes there were about an equal number of black and white spectators. Was that true?

FM: That's true. Most of the time, though, there was, there were more black than there were white, because I think that--well, one reason was because the blacks were organized and they had more numbers than the whites. They [the whites] weren't that organized. And plus, I think a lot of them didn't know whenever these things were going to happen, and they didn't have time to organize and, and be there and cause that resistance that they were trying to cause.

EP: There were daily demonstrations, if I'm not mistaken. Did they mostly occur at night?

FM: In the afternoons, most of the time. And then on occasion they would be at night. There were, there were demonstrations at Carolina Theatre and the Center Theatre at night.

EP: What steps did the police take to keep the two groups separate and to prevent violence?

FM: Well, the police kept the area that the marchers were in surrounded, cordoned off, you know, to, to prevent the two groups from clashing. Now it was a little more difficult when they were marching, because sometimes occasionally you'd get vehicles that would pass and be throwing things and harassing and heckling. But in the uptown area, there were, there were enough uniformed officers and reserve officers that we could, could seal off the area or march along with them. And there would be an officer about every ten or fifteen feet so that if there was something that happened in any specific area, there were enough officers within sight of each other where they could close in and close anything off that was going to happen.

EP: Did you see any incidents of violence?

FM: Well, not too many. There was, there was one night at the Carolina Theatre that there was a group of hecklers. And they, they were throwing--I don't know whether they were throwing bottles or rocks, but they were throwing things and shouting and carrying on. But whenever the officers approached them, they ran.

EP: Were these white or blacks?

FM: They were white. And of course, before we--there was a small group of whites chased a group of blacks down East Washington Street. But we, we headed them off down at, where--at the train depot. We stopped them there. We were able to get in front of them and stopped them there. Of course, we were just trying to protect both groups from each other, really. And if they had gotten together at that point, I'm sure there would have been some people hurt. But we were fortunate enough to, to seal them off there at the depot and, and we moved them back uptown.

EP: Did you ever find any evidence of organizations from such groups as the KKK [Ku Klux Klan] or anything like that?

FM: The KKK was involved. But they weren't organized to that, to a degree where they--the people that were more or less siding with the KKK didn't, they weren't that aggressive or organized. They would, they would mostly just holler obscenities and this sort of thing. And they never would show a force movement. And I don't think they were that organized. You know, there were a lot of sympathizers with the KKK, but they only sympathized. And they may, they may shout and carry on for a while, but there was never any force movement from them--not, not in that particular, you know, when we were having our marches and all.

EP: What sort of instructions did this group of sixteen officers receive from their superiors?

FM: Our instructions were to march along with the demonstrators, just keep a surveillance of all the marchers, plus the hecklers. Never speak to either group unless spoken to directly. As long as they were in the formation that they were supposed to be in, in the route that they were supposed to take, then we did not force any issue either way. We were instructed to, to take the verbal abuse and only defend ourselves if we were attacked personally.

EP: Did the demonstrators cooperate with these restrictions on the permit, [unclear--both talking at once]?

FM: For the most part, yes. There were, there were a few instances where we were subject to a, a lot of verbal abuse from the demonstrators. I know at the K&W [S&W?] Cafeteria we were subject to a lot of harassment and a lot of abusive language-- you know, more or less nose to nose. They were real close.

We, we had blocked off the entrance of the K&W. And that's--they wanted to go inside. We were instructed to, to keep the ones out. So anytime we, we faced a

confrontation of that nature, then we got a lot of physical--not a lot of physical, a lot of verbal abuse.

We never did--well, sometimes a little pushing and shoving, but I think that it was not intentionally done. It was just because of the force of numbers. If you've got five, six, seven, eight hundred people crowded into an area and they're moving around, you know, just their physical force, there's going to be some pushing and shoving. But I think for the most part, it wasn't intentional on, on their part.

EP: What was the usual procedure at the four targets of the demonstrators, that is, the Mayfair and the S&W cafeterias and the Center and Carolina theatres?

FM: What were the what now?

EP: The paper indicates that a frequent tactic they would use is they'd line the sidewalks but not blocking the entrance, and that three or four would circle. And then periodically one or more would then come to the door. And at that point, if they refused to move at the instruction of the officer, they were arrested.

FM: Right.

EP: Was that a frequently repeated pattern?

FM: Yes, it was. The, the purpose for that was that they would line up in large numbers, which would block, really, anyone else from, from getting in. Of course, the ones that really wanted to, they just walked past them. But most people just backed away that were trying to go to the cafeteria or the theatre.

But then the smaller groups would circle, and they would try to enter or try to purchase a ticket. And they would be refused. And the managers would ask them to leave the premises. And if they didn't leave, the officers would instruct them that they would be charged with trespassing if they didn't leave. And if they didn't leave, they were charged with trespassing.

EP: Did most of them agree to arrest--for those that wouldn't move back off the premises, or did--were there any instances of resistance to arrest?

FM: Most of the time there was no resistance. There were a few instances where there was resistance, but I think that it was not a design of the CORE, the group in charge. It was more or less an individual situation. And when, when an individual would be placed under arrest, then his resentment--or he would try to resist because of his own individual feelings.

I'm--there was too many, and especially students, of the CORE. They never resisted. The only thing that they ever came out with were verbal abuse. There were some of the people living in the community that were not members of the CORE but they, they joined in, you know, for the cause. Now these were the people that usually caused the resistance.

We had a few incidences on the square. One, one day they--or it was one evening late--there was probably five or six hundred people just sit down in the square there at Market and Elm.

EP: I believe this is the night of June sixth.

FM: I'm not sure about the date. But there were, there were two incidences as I remember, that one at Market and Elm, a sit-down in the street, and then the one on Greene Street beside of the administrative building, where the administrative building and the police building and the public library [are] there.

EP: Let's take that night first, if we may. What, what happened that night?

FM: Well, they, they started their march. And most of the time, it was from the campus area, A&T [North Carolina A&T State University] campus area, where they formed and they marched up Market Street. And then usually they come Market to Elm and then north on Elm Street. And they would come around to Eugene [Street] and down--I mean, Greene Street, down Greene Street. Now this is their normal marching pattern.

On this occasion they came--and we were along with them--and they came to Market. They turned and went north on North Elm and around the O. Henry Hotel, down to Greene Street. And when they--their purpose were, was to come to the administrative building. And I'm not sure what the, the main issue was, but this was where they were going to specifically stage a sit-in. I think it was something to do with they were wanting to talk to the city administrators for some, some reason or another. And this was where they were going to, to do it.

So they came and, and they, they all--well, first they were refused entrance to the building. So they stood there. And Jesse Jackson directed the group there, and he spoke to them for probably ten minutes or so. Then they were ordered to disperse or to proceed with their marching demonstration. At that time, they refused to, and he ordered all of the people involved to, to lie down or sit in the street. And they blocked the whole street off, Greene Street.

Well, there was an order directed to Jesse Jackson to, to tell his group of people to disperse. And if he refused to, then he would be charged with inciting to, to riot. And he was given that order, and he did not order the dispersal of his group. So I placed him under arrest for inciting to riot.

EP: At, at that time?

FM: At that time.

EP: Why was he not taken into custody at that time, but rather not until the next morning?

FM: Because of the--

EP: Tension?

FM: Tension and all that had been displayed there at the time. In fact, that was probably one of the closest instances in all of the demonstrations where if someone had have gotten out of hand, chances are there would have been a lot of trouble and probably a lot of people hurt. Because I--both sides at that particular time, the groups and the police officers, were really under a lot of stress. They'd been going for, for some time, and it had reached a point where there was--everybody was getting edgy and, you know, it was a lot different than it was when we first started out. Everybody was a little, you know, they were more relaxed. And they would sing their songs. And sometimes I'd see officers singing along with them, you know, because it was, it was just something to do.

But then as, as the marches proceeded and the day-in and day-out situation, then the tension all built up. And it would have been problems that night if they would have arrested him at that time.

EP: The paper refers to it as a nightmare scene, a mob action. Would you characterize it that way? You had mentioned how tense it was. And I know that in the subsequent trials of a number of those arrested, they said, "Well, the police cordoned us off too tightly," that, "Some of us wanted to leave but we were told we couldn't break a police line." How do you see the situation?

FM: That particular night it was, it was very tense. They--there was a hostile situation there. And like I said, I think that if he [Jesse Jackson] had of had a stronger group, or if he had have gotten them worked up a little more, or if he had have said, "Well, let's break the police lines, we're not, we're not being arrested, we're not going to be arrested," then it would have been a bad situation.

EP: Was the charge, incitement to riot, a technicality, or do you think he really was inciting them to riot?

FM: Yes, he was, because--I know later on the charge was dismissed in court. But the reason I think that it was dismissed was because that there wasn't, per se, a riot. But the law says there don't have to be a riot to be charged with inciting to riot.

Now we had an instance where we had vehicular traffic that we had to block off. And there were a lot of irritated people that were trying to, to go down Greene Street, and they were being refused. And the chanting and all of this grew larger and larger as a result of him not telling them to disperse or move on.

So he himself, because of being the leader of the group, created that hostile situation, which I think that the only reason that there wasn't a riot was because of the, the patience and all of the, the Greensboro police officers. I think that--of course, I had seen in other areas and other parts of the country where, you know, a lot of situations where it had reached that stage. And all of a sudden, you know, tempers flared and there was a lot of fighting and, and injury going on. But I have to credit the Greensboro Police Department officers that were in these situations. They, they showed a lot of restraint that they normally don't show.

EP: What was your impression of Captain Jackson's control of the situation at this time?

FM: I felt like that the whole period of time--and knowing Captain Jackson for a period of time, you know, from the time I came on the police department until that present day, and I had worked for him under other conditions--and Captain Jackson did a fine, outstanding job by communicating between Jesse Jackson and any of the leaders that, that were with Jackson.

And there were a lot of times where there were confrontations, and things were discussed between Captain Jackson, Jesse Jackson, or any of the other leaders from his group, and the store managers, theatre managers, and sometimes the press and TV media. And I felt like that he had complete control of the situation every time we had a march or a confrontation.

And really, to know Captain Jackson in the normal routine of things, he comes on real strong. He might, you know, he might be what you might say at times, he could create a lot of steam. But under these conditions, the man was under control, and had, he had more patience and control than I'd ever observed from him before that.

EP: Were his directives to his men clear?

FM: Yes, sir. He, he briefed us everyday on every situation, and we understood exactly what we were to do. And I think really by his actions, his self reflected back to us. And we, we followed suit. We, we were as cool as he was about it. I think that if he had have gotten out of control himself, there's no doubt in my mind that the officers probably would have gotten out of control, too.



EP: What was the feeling amongst yourself and your fellow officers about how the police handled the situation, particularly as compared to Birmingham, [Alabama], for instance, where there were fire hoses and dogs and a great deal of violence?

FM: Well, I think the police department here and the police officers handled our situations better than anywhere else that I'd ever witnessed, anything I'd seen on TV or read about in the paper. I think that--well, I think that our officers were determined, if possible, to keep this sort of thing from happening. We didn't want the violence. We didn't want to have to use fire hoses. We didn't want to have to use any force at all. We certainly didn't want to injure anyone.

I'm sure that I could speak for the, the men that I worked with at that time. We were under a lot of stress and strain, and we didn't like the situations. We didn't like the ideas that, that these marches and demonstrations all were forced on us and the people of Greensboro. We felt like they were in violation of the law. They should be handled otherwise, through the courts or, or whatever.

We strongly resented the fact that they were allowed to just deliberately violate the law. But even though we felt that way, we still upheld our position as being a police officer. We were asked to, to go along with the program. If there was--arrest was necessary, we'd make the arrest as quietly and quickly as possible without any backtalk, any verbal disputes between the persons that were being arrested. We took pride in the fact that we were not going to do anything that would create more problems. And I think we carried it off real well.

EP: These men that were selected, you mentioned they were selected because they were big. Were they selected for any other reasons, as I mentioned before, experience in dealing with large crowds, or that they had a high tolerance to tension or--

FM: Well, they, they--we never had, we never had that much training as far as crowd control. We knew the basic fundamentals. We had been through the basic fundamentals. We had been trained in the, trained using the, the nightstick or baton.

We--I feel like that the main consideration was that we were probably chosen for our high tolerance of--without losing our temper and doing something that we shouldn't do. I think that all sixteen of the men were, were self-disciplined type officers that had been proven in their experience that in stress situations--not to this magnitude, but in smaller groups and areas--that working their regular beats and investigations had shown that they had this tolerance, and could operate coolly and calmly without doing anything that would, would create problems for the department or for that particular officer.

[recorder paused]

EP: Do you recall any instances when you personally arrested anyone other than Jesse Jackson?

FM: Yes, I--well, I arrested several. But he [Jackson] was the leader of the CORE group and president of the [A&T] student body. In fact, he was the leader in this group here.

I arrested a plumber--had his own plumbing business--that created a little problem up on the square on the night that they had the sit-on the square at Market and Elm.

EP: Do you, do you recall his name?

FM: No, I, I can't recall. I know it that well, but I just can't recall it right now. I was trying to think of it the other day, but I can't.

EP: What were most of the arrests for, what charge?

FM: Trespassing and disturbing the peace.

EP: Did the students and other demonstrators go willingly into the vehicles, or did they lie down and have to be carried by the officers?

FM: We had very, very few instances where they, they would lie down and not--not resist, but they'd just go limp. Now, we did have some instances. But most of them went on their own power and did not resist or anything.

EP: Did you ever accompany any of the vehicles to the station or the other places that were used to incarcerate the demonstrators?

FM: Oh, yeah, yeah. We started out arresting them and carrying them to a regular jail on the fourth floor of the city hall, and--for all of the male prisoners, and then all the female prisoners were always transported to the county jail. Back at that particular time, there were no female prisoners kept in the city jail, period. They were all transferred to county jail. But after the numbers got so large, they set up a temporary restraining place, or whatever you want to call it, at the Greensboro Coliseum.

In fact, when they got to the street sit-ins and lie-ins and all in great numbers, they were transported by buses, and [the police] used Duke Power buses or any kind of buses they could get, and they were transported to the coliseum. And all of them were booked and processed out there.

EP: What was the situation on the buses and other vehicles that were used to transport the prisoners?

FM: Well, there was a certain number of officers went with each bus. And then they had officers set up out there that, that would bring the groups in by the bus and all, and, and processed them that way.

There was no, there were no incidences I can recall on any of the buses. They were not real quiet. Most of the time, they would be singing these freedom songs that they sang all during the marches and all. Any time that you arrested them and they were in a group they would start singing those freedom songs.

EP: There was a charge that they'd torn up the seats and advertisement on some of the Duke Power buses. Did you ever see any of this?

FM: Right. They did, they did tear up some. And, too, I--[in] the beginning, I don't think that the persons were frisked well when they first started putting them on these buses. But after they found out--of course, most of the, a lot of the damage was, could have been done without any kind of weapon. But there was some seats cut and they were ripped up, torn, you know. There was a certain amount of damage.

EP: At which places that they were being--the demonstrators were being held did the city police have control?

FM: Well, they had all, they had control on all of the, the instances happening in the city of Greensboro and up at the square at Market and North Elm.

EP: It was my understanding that the sheriff's department guarded the polio hospital and the National Guard Armory.

FM: Okay. Right. Now, we did, they did have some prisoners at the polio hospital and, and the sheriff's department assisted in that. Because I, they--well, you know, they had the county home out there at that time and they'd have prisoners, too. And there were a lot of them taken out there. And the sheriff's department did have control over that. Sheriff [Clayton] Jones was the sheriff at that time.

EP: Did you ever go out there or out at the National Guard Armory?

FM: Yes, I was at all those locations. I went to the polio hospital on several occasions. In fact, they had--after they, they moved to that location, they served our meals out there, you know, by shifts. Then so many at a time would go out and eat. 'Cause I guess all of the

law enforcement officers that could be available, were, at that time. They were--all leaves, vacations, time off, and everything was cancelled at that particular time.

EP: Did you observe--what were the conditions like out at the polio hospital and the National Guard Armory?

FM: Do you mean the conditions that the, the prisoners were in? I thought they, they were quartered real well out there at the--they had the, they had all of the facilities they needed.

Now, the fact that when you got hundreds of prisoners, you don't have the facilities, you know, individual facilities like separate beds and all this sort of thing, because it wasn't any room for them. The only bad condition that I noticed was that it was--all of the places that we housed them were overcrowded.

EP: Do you think the prisoners' basic needs were met?

FM: Oh, yes, definitely were. They were, they were fed and allowed to use the bathroom facilities and all. They, they had all of the opportunities of any prisoner would have, only just, they were just so crowded that they may have to wait, you know, to use these facilities because of the, the overcrowding.

EP: What were the conditions like for the officers out there?

FM: Well, they, they were, they were pretty good, too, because they didn't--there were plenty of officers available there. And the only, the only problem with officers were that, that they had to work long hours and without any relief.

EP: Was there any resentment on the part of the officers about having their vacation, their time-off cancelled?

FM: Definitely. They were--all of the officers resented the fact that they had to work long hours and not be off, and subject to callback, you know, on a minute's notice. I'm sure that all of the families of the police officers were very upset and under a lot of stress and strain during that particular time. I know my family was. They were disturbed by the fact that, that I had to spend those long hours there and we couldn't do anything together at all during that period of time. I know after it was all over and everything was back to normal and we were allowed to take vacation, I took my family to the coast, kind of relaxed and took it easy for a week.

EP: What sort of hours did you work during this period?

FM: Well, it would depend on the marches and demonstrations. If they lasted sixteen hours, we worked sixteen hours. If they lasted four hours, we worked four hours. And the, there were, like I said, they were--the sixteen officers that was in, in my group, we had set up at the fire training center. There was a headquarters at the fire training center. And when we weren't marching with them or going with the demonstrations, we were out there. And there were a lot of other officers there, that were there. And we had to remain there and be available just on the spur of the moment.

EP: So for instance, how long would it be, say, before you got home on any given day?

FM: I'd think that on any given day it'd be twelve, fourteen hours at a time that we couldn't, couldn't go.

EP: And a regular shift is eight hours?

FM: Right.

EP: Were you involved in any of the booking process?

FM: Not, not a lot. If it was an individual situation, you know, where there were just a few that were arrested, then we, as individual officers, booked the ones we arrested, processed them. Of course, the booking officer always, you know, they, they make out the--typed out the, the red sheets, all the paperwork they had to do, and printed and pictured the prisoners as they'd come in.

And they had more officers assigned to that assignment, because they usually only had a couple of booking officers, under normal conditions. And under normal conditions, they could handle it. But we had to have quite a few officers that had to assume those responsibilities. But if--when there were large groups, then the officer would just assist in getting those, those prisoners to these locations. And then there was officers assigned to book them, process them there.

We never did, unless we just individually made an arrest. And some of the times, we made arrests at a cafeteria or a theatre or something where there wasn't that many people involved and there weren't that many officers. Then we booked them, we processed them, signed the warrants and everything ourselves, and later on went into court and testified.

EP: What were the conditions like at [unclear, cough]. The paper indicates it was very crowded, that there were so many numbers that frequently officers were--booking officers were up until four in the morning. Is that pretty much what it was like?

FM: That's exactly true, because when you have five, six hundred to maybe eight or nine hundred people to book, you can only do it in so much time. And yeah, I'm satisfied that on occasion they were up all night, probably, booking.

EP: Did students resist or cooperate with the police?

FM: They, they cooperated for the most part.

EP: What was involved in getting a warrant out on Jesse Jackson?

FM: Well, the--we, we wanted to charge him with inciting to riot. And the administrative officers and the chief of police and the city attorney wanted to make sure that, that the warrant was drawn up properly. And so they called the D.A. [district attorney] and the city attorney and the clerk of court, who was going to type the warrant up. And they all combined, got together and drew up the warrant like they wanted it to read, and what they felt like was sufficient to charge him with that.

And it, it was quite a process. Normally, you don't have anyone except the clerk of court. Of course, now we've got magistrates that, that draw up the warrants. And he, he did--he does it all now.

Once in a while, you'll have a particular charge that you want to make sure that--or an unusual charge. And in this situation, it was an unusual charge, because they--we had never experienced that kind of situation where--incite to riot. We'd never had that kind of a situation arise.

So they wanted to make sure, in the sense that he was the leader of the group and all, they wanted to make sure that everything was, was right whenever they served him with the warrant. Because they knew that that warrant, the whole process, was going to be handled by his lawyers, and he was going to go through the whole process. That's the reason that they wanted to make sure that everything was drawn up correctly.

EP: Was it your decision on what charge he was arrested?

FM: Well, not mine alone. I think it was mine, and Captain Jackson and Colonel Burch, which Colonel Burch was a major at that time.

EP: In the other arrests that were made that same night, the paper describes the process by which the police made arrests. And I was wondering if you could describe that process.

FM: Well, I'm not sure what you--

EP: In other words, they said they would section off a small number of them and pick them up from the street, and then take them to--call up a bus from the square. This is the Greene Street incident I'm talking about now. And then they would load them into the buses and, and that way arrest in small groups eventually a large number of people. Was that pretty much how it went?

FM: Yeah. What they did, they sealed off the area there around the city hall and administrative building from Sternberger Place to Friendly [Avenue], along in that area. And the only way you could handle them was to take just so many at a time, but load them on a bus. And we used cars, too, you know. We'd take two or three in a car, fill up a bus, eight or ten in the paddy wagon, you know, whatever vehicles that we could work in there and move them out. And, too--

[End Tape 1, side A--Begin Tape 1, Side B]

FM: --to be as organized as we could under those circumstances. And we, we had officers that were directing the vehicular traffic into the area, because we had a lot of individual traffic from just the citizens that were trying to get through Greene Street and all, and everything was bottled up. So we had to take care of that traffic. Plus we had to move the vehicles in there that we were going to transport prisoners with.

So it was quite, quite an ordeal to get all of that organized and to get them out of there as quickly as possible, without any trouble--or the less trouble we could. Because the theory's always been that when you arrest someone, especially in a group--or you, you've got a group of people, whether it's a lounge or something--like today, you may have two or three people, two or three hundred people at a lounge. And all of them are irritated because of the fact that the police are there.

So the process is, if you arrest someone, arrest them, get them in the vehicle, and get them out. Move them out of the area. That way--because if you start having to struggle with a group, then this is whenever all your problems start happening. So our, our process has always been arrest the person, get them out of the immediate area as soon as possible. And this is the way we did it that night.

EP: When the police circle was formed around the demonstrators to be arrested, did--were all of them circled or just a certain number?

FM: All, all of them were.

EP: Now at that point, is it against the law to step outside of that circle, because a police line has been formed?

FM: Yes.

EP: So once that's been formed, the people in there are going to be arrested.

FM: All of them. All of them were told by bullhorns. They were all told that they were under arrest and that they were instructed not to break a police line. Of course, like I say, in these particular situations, they, they more or less wanted to be arrested. So, it's not in, it's not exactly like you would have, if you've got a, a group of riotous people and there's violence and all going on, then certainly they're not going to abide by what you tell them; they're going to break through the lines. They're going to be fighting and resisting all the time.

We didn't have that kind of situation. And thank goodness we didn't have, because I've seen a lot of them where you--it's hard to have crowd control if they're, if they're resisting or they're going against. You just can't do it without a certain amount of force.

EP: Was this one of the nights that you were up for a number of hours?

FM: Oh, yeah, yeah. It was--I don't, I don't remember exactly whenever we got there. But I would say it would be on up in the wee hours of the morning before we finally got everything calmed down and where some officers could be relieved.

EP: Did the mood of the officers on duty change after this night, inasmuch as this was the first night that there were massive sit-downs and massive arrests?

FM: I think that, that, that it changed to a certain degree, because, well, I think they felt like, well, you know, we're really going to get into this thing big. Something's really going to happen and there's going to be people hurt. So I don't know whether it was that they, they probably felt uneasy about it because they really didn't know what was going to happen next. And, and when you've got large groups like that, then they, you're always subject to, to some officers getting hurt or other people getting hurt.

EP: Were you present the next night, when the large number of people sat down in Jefferson Square?

FM: Yes.

EP: What was the situation that night?



FM: Well, that situation was a little bit stronger than the one on Greene Street. There was more resistance that night. And several, several of the people arrested were carried out by officers and they were resisting the arrest.

EP: What do you think was the reason for the difference in attitude?

FM: I think that the, the leaders, more or less, they lost a little control of the group. And--well, now, when I'm speaking of the group in particular, the largest group and the more disciplined group were the student group. They had been instructed on what to do, and they, they went along with the instructions. And then there were a lot of elderly people, and there were a lot of small children in the group. And they were instructed on what to do, and they didn't go against it.

But then we would get into the--into this particular group, we would get rabble-rousers and outside individuals that, that really wanted to cause some problems. And these were the people that we had the resistance with. They weren't really with the group. They never did attend their meetings. They, they didn't go along with the program. They wanted to, they wanted some action. They wanted to do something. So these were individual-type people that just really wanted to cause trouble. So those were the only ones, really, that resisted.

EP: Was it pretty much the same procedure for arrest and, and booking as had been the night before?

FM: Yeah, the procedure was the same. Now the ones, the ones that created problems and caused the resistance and all, they were taken to the jail. All of those were housed in the jail separate from the group that wasn't causing any problem.

Because we--we had to separate those, because if we put them in with the other group, then they would just incite the other group to do more damage or resist that much more. Because even though you've got an individual that's resisting, these other people want to get involved whenever they see the resistance. Because it, it was a question--I mean, there was no question about it. The group was basically against the establishment, which the establishment represented law enforcement.

So naturally, if you've got an officer that has to bodily take somebody and put them under arrest and place them in a vehicle, then if there's a resistance, then the sympathizers are going with the person being arrested. And it's going to create the same problem if you, when you start housing prisoners. So we took the ones that were causing the problems and separated them, put them in the jail, away from the other group.

EP: Were--was everyone taken, who was arrested the next night at Jefferson Square, to the coliseum?

FM: Yes.

EP: And they weren't separated male and female at that time?

FM: At that particular time they weren't, no.

EP: Now the next night, according to the paper, they had an hour and a half march through downtown, but there were no disturbances and no arrests. Is that what happened?

FM: That's correct.

EP: Were you surprised at that?

FM: Well, not really. I think that they, they wanted certain situations where they wanted arrest. Other situations they didn't want arrests, so they didn't do anything to be arrested for. They had their permit to, to march and that's what they did. It was--except for the singing their freedom songs and all. Then there was no, no violations. They stayed in the street and marched together. They didn't cause any problems to no one.

EP: Inasmuch as there had been two nights of sit-downs and masses--mass arrests--this is the reason why I ask, were you surprised, did you anticipate another night of sit-downs--

FM: Yes.

EP: --arrests?

FM: We did.

EP: And suddenly that was the end of the demonstrations, according to the paper. The paper then says there was a compromise worked out between the black leadership and the city administration. Were there any other demonstrations after that night?

FM: Not that I recall. Now, it could have been small incidents that happened. But I don't recall any that, not in large numbers, no.

EP: Did the police officers that were assigned to this duty continue for several days to observe and monitor the situation?

FM: Yes.

EP: When were you reassigned to your regular duties?

FM: The whole period of time covered three months.

EP: Three months.

FM: Three months.

EP: And that would run from what time to what time?

FM: I don't know whether it started in May. I'm not sure about that.

EP: The paper said May eleventh was the start of the big demonstrations.

FM: Okay. All right. May, June, July. I think it was the first part of August in there where I was reassigned back to my regular duties. I know it was a period of three months.

EP: Were there times there when you were on that duty and there were no demonstrations?

FM: Oh, yes, yeah.

EP: Did you observe any other demonstrations at any other time in relation to this? There was, I believe in October there was some picketing of the Oaks Motel and the Travelodge Motel downtown. Were you assigned to that duty?

FM: I don't think so. If it was--we were, during all of that time we were assigned to all, all of the theatres. You know, if we were--there were certain officers assigned to certain locations. And then this was just for observation purposes, because a lot of times they'd have small groups that would try to go to the restaurants and theatres and all. All of those instances were handled, you know, by a smaller group of police officers.

It was only whenever they formed together in large numbers that all of the officers were involved in the same movement. But that, that took up a lot of the time, too--that, that we were assigned to all these different areas over this period of time. We had those kinds of assignments. Then we'd fall back on other assignments whenever large groups were formed.

EP: Were you ever present at the S&W or the Mayfair, or the Center or the Carolina Theatre when the, during the mass demonstrations, when they would try to enter?

FM: Yes, I was present at all of them.

EP: What was the normal procedure that the students followed at that time?

FM: They--it would be a group, and from what I observed, there would probably be twenty or thirty, forty people. And apparently they were assigned to go to the cafeteria, the S&W or the Mayfair, or the Carolina Theatre, whichever theatre.

But I, I think what they would do, they would assign a certain number to go to these locations. And when they would get there, they would start, start their demonstrations. And they would try to, to enter the cafeteria or the, or the theatre. And each one individually, you know, would attempt to, to go in. And the manager was there, and he would refuse them entrance and refuse to sell them a ticket. And they would continue to try to gain entrance to the place. And they would get on the premises of the property, whether it was the S&W or whatever.

And what--after all these attempts had been made to gain entrance and refused, then they would just move into the property. And the manager would tell them to, ask them to leave. And the officer in charge would say, "If you don't leave, then you are subject to be arrested for trespassing." And if they didn't leave, they were arrested.

EP: At some of these locations, there was a fire marshal or representative of the fire department there to determine if they were breaking fire laws also. Was there any such person from the fire department assigned at any of the locations you were?

FM: Yeah, they were, they were there at all the locations.

EP: Did you wait upon his determination that the fire law had been broken, or did you make the determination that it was either trespassing or fire law violated?

FM: As I recall, I don't know whether any of them were ever charged with violating any fire, fire laws. I think all of them were charged with trespassing. Of course, they, they would tell them, you know, that they were violating the fire laws by standing at the exits and all, blocking the entrance and that thing.

EP: You've said there were sixteen officers who were assigned specifically to this unit. Were there other police personnel also assigned to it?

FM: Oh, yes.

EP: How many officers would you estimate were assigned to the area?

FM: All of the officers that could possibly be assigned. Now they had, they had a certain number of officers that were, were off, you know, that had to carry on the regular duties. And they, they were relieved, and they took up their duties when they were on duty.

We had--I don't mean to imply that, you know, there was sixteen and they took care of everything. Definitely not. There's no way it could have happened. There were as many officers and reserve officers--and in some instances state highway patrolmen. There were FBI agents and state bureau [SBI] agents. There were all kinds of law enforcement officers, and they were present in a lot of these locations.

The SBI and the FBI were assigned for observation, surveillance. A lot of information was gained by their contacts that would supply them with information on what date their plans were, what they were to do, along with some of our officers that had that assignment. We had a lot of uniformed officers that were present at each one of these locations.

EP: Did this--

FM: What we did as a group of sixteen, it was Captain Jackson. Now Captain Jackson was, was more or less in charge of--he and our sixteen were in charge of more or less going to wherever the problem areas were. In other words, they might--on one occasion, the S&W Cafeteria was the target for that particular evening. And we knew this.

EP: From the CORE?

FM: From the CORE, and from our own sources of information, that they were going to attack, say, this S&W Cafeteria. So we would be there, at that location. One night it was the Carolina Theatre. One night it was the Center. And, and sometimes they would just move from one location to, to another, and you never did know exactly which one they were going to try to approach. So it was, it was a kind of a continuous thing. So we, more or less, we followed the ones that were, they were more subject to, to violate the law and try to force their selves into these situations.

EP: Were you uniformed or plain clothes?

FM: Uniformed.

EP: Were there--you mentioned that there was a feeling amongst the special unit of officers that you tried--wanted to keep it as low key as possible and exercise restraint. Were there any units of other police or law enforcement officers that perhaps didn't react with the same kind of restraint or purpose?

FM: No, I don't think so. I think that, that all of them--well, this was stressed more so than any other thing. I know we had a lot of, we went over a lot of this riot control exercise and everything at the fire training center. During our time that we were waiting for things to happen we, we covered all these areas because we didn't want those things happening.

We practiced--and not just, not the sixteen so much as the regular force, or numbers of police officers, that were assigned [to] squads. And they had the, the squad leaders in the wedge formations. And all of them were instructed on what to do in case they had to move a group of people, say, out of one block into another block.

So all of these things were practiced and gone over and everything daily, you know, on what to do. So it was--I think the whole police department should not have any more riot situations like that. They went through quite an extensive training program during that three months, because it, it was present and they had to do it. They had to, they had to learn, and they had to know what to do and what all the other officers were going to do when, if the situation arose.

EP: When was the next time period in which you were involved in civil rights disturbances or racially-based disturbances?

FM: It was in 1969. Now I can't give you the dates, because I'm not really sure of the dates. But it was some, it was, it was in the spring or early summer before school was out, I think. It could have been in the fall. I'm not sure. But it was during school, regular school time.

And that was the instance that happened at--well, it started. And this--in '69 they, the CORE itself had kind of, I don't know, kind of disbanded. They wasn't as strong. The leader, Jesse Jackson, had gone on to, to other things and all. They didn't have the leadership in it continuously from '63 to '69.

And it kind of took a back seat to--the [Black] Panther movement at that particular time was the strong movement, and it was not as organized as the CORE. They had a lot of, I'd say undesirables that were bent on their--they were more bent on destruction and violence than this group was in '63. They were, they were wanting to hurt somebody. I think they felt like that they weren't getting, getting the things that they wanted by being--just marching and demonstrating. They wanted some action. They felt like that [was] the only way they could get what they, what they wanted.

So we had this group. And they were, they weren't organized, there was nothing planned. It was all spontaneous-type thing. I'd say probably there was a small group of people that maybe planned their own thing. And the plan was to go out and just get all of the blacks that they could, get them psyched up and fired up and get something going. It didn't matter where or what.

And at that particular time, there was the incident at Dudley High School where this black student [Claude Barnes] was trying to, to--he was running for student body

president, and he wasn't elected. The school--the officials down there, and principal and all the administration--says that, you know, the vote was fair, everything was fair and all. But this guy by the name of Fuller, and Johnson--

EP: Howard Fuller?

FM: Yeah, Howard Fuller. And I forget what this Johnson's first name was [Nelson]. But those two, and the other fellow that was president of the student body down at A&T, they picked up this incident at Dudley. And they got, got to arousing the, the people in the Dudley community, and really all, I guess, the sympathetic groups that felt like that the blacks were being discriminated against.

So they, they started causing problems. They went down disrupting classes. And really the administrators there at the school felt like that their students were in--they were fearful of being harmed down there. So they called for some officers down there just to maintain peace and tranquility there.

EP: Were you in vice at this time?

FM: No. I was, I was in non-residence burglary, assigned to detective division at that time. And Captain Jackson was my captain. And of course, he was the captain over the Detective Division in '63. But he--and he was still captain. So he sent, he sent myself and five other investigators down there.

EP: Was it because of your experience in '63 demonstrations that you were sent?

FM: That was one reason, I'm sure. And I think there was three other investigators that were with me in those sixteen, that were assigned in detective there working for me and my squad that went down to Dudley. We had--I had two black detectives that was working under me at that time, and they were assigned to this assignment. And I had three other investigators. There were six of us. And our assignment was to go down there and observe what was going on, just walk the halls and keep anybody from disturbing any of the students down there.

And like I said, it--everything was kind of quiet and peaceful there for a couple of hours. And then this two hundred or so group formed up at the junior high school, which is just northeast of Dudley High School main building. And they charged down across the school grounds toward the Dudley High School, throwing rocks and bottles and breaking out windows and all, and just disrupted the whole school.

The whole school turned out. And a lot of the students joined that group, I'm sure sympathized with them. And they regrouped up back up at the junior, Lincoln Junior High. And they came back in full force, probably five or six hundred.

EP: Now what was the reason that they left the first time? Was it because of your unit or some other reason?

FM: No. They--the issue was still this student president issue, the guy by the name of [Claude] Barnes. And he was a, a rabble-rouser, too. So this was a sympathy group for him. And I think, too, it was--you know, any time you can do anything to turn out school, you always do, you know. We have bomb threats and all that sort of thing continuously, because I think students basically, they, if they can get out of class, then they think they've accomplished something. And I think some of this was to contribute to this.

But--and it wouldn't have, it wouldn't have been bad if they'd have just went out of school. But whenever they formed and they--I think what they were bent on then was just plain out and out destruction. Now whether their intentions were to harm anybody, I, I can't say for sure. But they were certainly bent on destroying that school property, because they, they charged that school grounds, and they broke out windows and glass all over the place, throwing rocks. And my group of people had to, to move into one area, and back-to-back, to keep, keep these students from charging us and throwing rocks.

EP: How did you hold them off, or was it necessary to hold them off?

FM: Well, we didn't really have--it didn't really come to that because about the time they got us cornered into a situation where we may have had to use some kind of force to, to protect ourselves, then we had walkie-talkie radios and we had called for, for help. And so, all the other officers started arriving. And we got the tactical unit there with the tear gas equipment and all and were able to move the crowd back and disperse them back up on Lee Street, moved them all the way back up there.

And other than just property damage, there was no personal injuries, other than maybe some of the students may have gotten, I'm sure, saturated with gas, because a lot of police officers, including myself, got saturated with gas without--we didn't have any tear gas equipment, no masks or anything. So the officers that came there to offer assistance, they were, they were prepared for it. So this, this incident calmed down.

EP: Did it go on for several days?

FM: Yes, it did.

EP: And what was your assigned duties at that time?

FM: Well, after, after that incident was broken up, then that night all of it started down at Market Street in what they called the block area, which is the block between Market and



Powell and the next street up--I forget what the street is. But it's there at the A&T campus.

Well, that night there was a group formed, and it was no organized group at all. And they--there again, it was, they were after, or they were bent on, on hurting someone, on destroying property, because they started rocking and bottling the business places there. And all of this broke out, so they called officers in to try to break all this up. Then officers started being fired on. So in fact, we had a couple of officers that got pellets in their, you know, helmets and all in that. We had a couple of officers shot there at, I don't know whether it was Market and Powell or it was Powell and the next street over. I forget what the street that goes through the campus.

EP: Was this after the National Guard had been called?

FM: They hadn't been called at that time. And where they got sprayed with shotgun--I think it was birdshot--they didn't get hurt, you know, besides the fact that it penetrated the skin. They had to get the birdshot picked out.

But this situation just progressively got worse. You know, it had a lot of flare-up incidents happening. You know, one block and the next block they'd all--and it--the only way that we could control the situation was cordon the whole campus and the Market Street area. When we had the whole area sealed off, from Lindsay Street to Highway 29 on the other side of the campus, and Sullivan Street in behind the campus over toward Bessemer [Avenue]. We had the area sealed off. That's the only way we could control it.

EP: Did any officers return fire?

FM: Yes. At that time--well, I don't know that there was--there was a couple of incidents, I think, that night. Then it got to the point where there was so many people involved that they felt like they was going to have to have the National Guard unit. So they called the National Guard unit in.

Well, this group of people that were in Scott Hall, which was a men's dormitory at that time, there was a lot of fire power coming from that Scott Hall. We had a group of officers that were down on, on the bank across the street in the parking lot down in--we had a tactical unit in there that were getting fired on real heavy. And this went on for several hours.

And we got the National Guard unit got, got here, and they were trying to decide what to do about the situation. So they, they pulled off all the police officers and everyone back over to Grimsley High School for a conference and to find, you know, exactly what would be the best move to make. And so they decided, you know, to just surround the whole campus area and maintain their hold position there.

EP: Was there ever any attempt to rush Scott Hall or--

FM: Well, there was. Now, let's see, I'm trying to get my nights and days correct, because this went on for three days. [coughs] All that, that first, that night that all this happened was the biggest part of it. We had a group of students that broke into the student union building, which is on the back side of Scott Hall. And where all of the, the firing was coming from was Scott Hall. And we had, you know, incidences flaring up all around the campus. They'd pop up here and then somewhere else.

So there was a lot--there was about eight or ten that, we saw the group going into the student union building. [They] broke in there and they were, were carrying all of the equipment and everything. They were stealing everything inside the student union. So Captain Jackson directed me to take a group of officers into the student union building and arrest those people that we could find in there that were, were pilfering the place.

So we--there was probably six or eight plainclothes officers and myself, and we had about five or six uniformed officers that went in the student union building. And we arrested, I think, seven or eight students. And while we were in there, they were firing on the student union building. They were--and it sounded to me like the BARs [Browning Automatic Rifles]. They had some big weapons, because they were knocking holes in the concrete, in those posts and all, that big around. So there was just a continuous barrage of firing on the student union building. And so the only way we could get out of this place was on the back side of it and keep the building between us and where Scott Hall--where all the firing was coming.

And we had officers all around the perimeter, and there was firing from the officers, too. Whenever they'd see the firing, you know, from these windows and all, they'd return the fire. So when we left the group, I instructed my men. And then we had the prisoners and all. And I told the uniformed officers to, to move directly back, keeping the building there.

Well, there were several of the uniformed officers decided to branch off and go across this open field, back in the direction where their cars were. And when they crossed that open field, three of them were shot. One, one of them was shot up pretty bad. So after these officers were shot, we got our group of prisoners out and, and got them away from there.

And all--this incident happened. Then about, I guess about daylight, we decided to just take that Scott Hall by force. So we had--the National Guard just moved in and they, they took the Scott Hall. And there were probably two or three hundred students in that building that were forced out of the building back in behind there and surrounded and all. And all of them were arrested, you know, at that particular time, just--and the buildings were searched for weapons and all.

But during some time, the time there was about a two-hour lapse of time between that incident and whenever they decided to take the building, that apparently these

students that were causing all the firing and using these weapons slipped out from around there. So we didn't find any--we found some .22 rifles, which we, we knew that was a lot stronger firepower than that there, because we had evidence of it.

EP: Was this the time in which the A&T student [Willie Grimes] was killed?

FM: Yes.

EP: Do you know--have any knowledge of that incident?

FM: Well, I probably have a certain amount. I was with the group of officers that was covering the area off of Sullivan Street when, when this group of blacks came across the, behind the nursery over there and crossed the street and into the--there was a creek runs by the, the street there. And so there was some shooting going on, and they forced these students back into the campus. And during all this firing and everything--and you couldn't tell, you know, who was firing or what they were firing at--this was whenever this Snipes [sic, Grimes] got shot.

EP: Do--there was indication that he was shot while running, and I believe the paper said shot in the back. Was there ever any indication of where that shot came from that, that killed him?

FM: No.

EP: Was he ever--

FM: No, we, we worked on that case for I don't know how many months and never--because at that particular time, there were both police officers and this group were firing. And there's no telling where the bullet come from or what direction, because there was a lot of crossfire going on at that particular time.

EP: I believe you said that's when the snipist was killed. Was he a suspected snipist or just--

FM: No, that was his name.

EP: Oh.

FM: His name was Snipes.

EP: Oh, Snipes.

FM: That was the, that was the student that got killed.

EP: Was there ever--

FM: Then there was a group. I think that what happened, we didn't even know at the time that this person had been shot. But then there were three cars that came out of the campus. And they sped up the street, up to Bessemer Avenue, and they were being chased by police officers. And really, there was firing going on at that particular time when they, when they come out of there. And what they were going to the hospital. This is the way we found out that this person had been shot.

EP: These cars were stopped by the police and it was determined--

FM: Yeah.

EP: How did the incident conclude?

FM: After, after the National Guard took Scott Hall and cleared it out and all, it just, it all more or less ended right then because--well, the students that were in the building and all--in fact, I'd say that the majority of the students that were on campus didn't, you know, really were just caught in a, in a situation that they didn't want to be in. They were there in the middle and they couldn't get out. And they weren't really involved. Of course, you couldn't tell how many were actually involved in the, in the firing, in the shooting and all, because it was night time. But it was rather hectic during all that.

EP: Was anyone ever charged with any crimes as a result of this incident?

FM: Oh, I think there was two or three that were charged. I know that there's one--I don't know whether they ever charged this guy for shooting these two officers to begin with or not. I don't think they--I think they had insufficient evidence to charge him. They suspected him. The guy that was the one that did the firing on the--he ambushed these two officers, you know, that didn't get hurt that bad. But no one ever knew who shot these other three officers that were shot up pretty bad. Never did find out who did that.

EP: How were these two officers ambushed?

FM: They were there at Powell and, I can't think of that street. It's the intersection there at the cafeteria just before you get to Scott Hall. But that was--there was somebody hiding--

[End of Interview]