

*Civil Rights History Project
Interview completed by the Southern Oral History Program
under contract to the
Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History & Culture
and the Library of Congress, 2013*

Interviewee: Joan Trumpauer Mulholland
Interview Date: March 17, 2013
Location: Arlington, Virginia
Interviewer: Dr. John Dittmer
Videographer: John Bishop
Length: 02:06:04

John Bishop: It's rolling.

John Dittmer: Today is Sunday, March seventeenth, 2013, St. Patrick's Day. My name is John Dittmer, and I am here in Arlington, Virginia, with videographer John Bishop to interview Ms. Joan Trumpauer Mulholland, a leading activist in the Civil Rights Movement. This interview will become part of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C.

We are delighted to be here today and we thank you for taking time to talk with us. I'd like to begin by asking you about [phone rings] your home and family.

Joan Trumpauer Mulholland: Cut.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

John Bishop: We're rolling again.

John Dittmer: Okay. I'd like to begin by asking about your home and family. Where were you born and raised?

Joan Trumpauer Mulholland: Well, I was born in Washington, D.C., and raised in Arlington, Virginia, basically about a mile down the road in Buckingham Apartments, which at that point were known as being the only place in northern Virginia that would rent to Jews. And this was early forties. Folks had come from New York looking for that good government job in the Depression, met, now starting families, and wanted out of the boarding houses. And they could move to Buckingham, and that was about it. So—

JD: What did your folks do? What did your dad do?

JM: Oh, they had those good government jobs.

JD: Um-hmm.

JM: My father came from southwest Iowa during the Depression. And my folks met at the midnight shift at the Old Post Office building in the elevator.

JD: How romantic! [Laughs]

JM: [Laughs] Mr. Trump. And he, when I was born, was working for the Department of Labor and continued in that, I guess, into well through the fifties, and then switched to the Department of State, but doing pretty much the same thing. And my mother had worked as a secretary and became a stay-at-home mom, as was the custom. She came from rural Georgia.

JD: Um-hmm. And what was it like growing up in Arlington in the 1940s?

JM: In the forties. Well, Arlington was definitely the South, maybe not the Deep South, but everything by law and custom was segregated.

JD: Um-hmm.

JM: So, I lived in an all-white world. But, with so many of my neighbors and their kids with this liberal New York Jewish outlook, I think that was one of the influences on me.

JD: What about church? Was church important?

JM: Church was a big part of my life. I was Presbyterian, because where my dad grew up, it was a Swedish town, and the Lutheran church, which would have been the natural, was in Swedish.

JD: Oh! [Laughs]

JM: So, all those “others” were Presbyterians.

JD: Um-hmm.

JM: So, I went to the Presbyterian church that was nearby. And we memorized all these Bible verses and got our gold star if we could recite it. You know, “Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me,” “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you, for such is the Kingdom of God,” all that stuff. And sang those songs about “Jesus loves the little children, red and yellow, black and white.”

But the church was segregated by law and, of course, as soon as we left the church, we were—continued to be hypocrites.

JD: [Laughs]

JM: And that bothered me. I was sort of a literalist.

JD: Um-hmm.

JM: For better or worse.

JD: So, when you were a teenager, were you still—you were still going to church?

JM: All through my teenage years.

JD: All through, okay. And this—was race *ever* brought up in any context in Sunday School or from the pulpit?

JM: Not that I remember so openly. But I was always going to the Sunday evening Youth Fellowship. And one Sunday, we were told that next Sunday there would be some colored students coming to meet with us, but we were to keep this absolutely quiet.

JD: Oh.

JM: We were not to tell our parents, our friends, anybody. And the reasons being that the American Nazi Party was around the corner, their headquarters, and of course, it was illegal, so the police could come. And some of the church—I don't know if "elders" is the word in the Presbyterians, but church leaders might be against this and lock us out and fire the minister forthwith. [0:05:00] So, we kept it quiet.

And I guess at least twice this same group of students, organized through the black Y, came and had our standard spaghetti dinner with us. And I don't remember what we talked about, particularly, but this was in the throes of the county wanting to go along with *Brown versus Board*, and the state of Virginia in the throes of massive resistance. This would have been the late fifties. So, I think a lot of it was so that a few students would know each other across racial lines when it came. And I stayed in touch with one of the girls for a while.

JD: Were these the first real conversations you had had with black people?

JM: Yes, and the first with white, too.

JD: [Laughs]

JM: Years later, I tried to track this down a bit and I—to get back to that. It was a county gathering at the school that was the first integrated. And I raised the question: Did anybody—could anybody fill me in on how this was organized? Did the white ministers reach out? Did the

black community reach out to the white ministers? Was this happening all over the county, and we just didn't know about it?

Nobody knew a thing. One woman said she thought if anyone knew, it would be her mother, who was ill and could not make it that night, and she would ask her. But a week later her mother was dead.

JD: Oh.

JM: I'd still like to know.

JD: Yeah.

JM: I've heard that it may have been happening a couple other white churches, but—

JD: Um-hmm. In 1955, Emmett Till was murdered. He was your age. For black activists in the South, this was a turning point, something that they would never forget and made them realize how vulnerable they were and how rotten the system was, if they didn't already know. Did the lynching of Till have any impact up here? Were you aware of it?

JM: I don't even think I was aware of it.

JD: Yeah.

JM: You know, I may have heard of it, but it was not a big deal.

JD: That was the same thing in Indiana. I vaguely remember and saying, "Oh, that's too bad." But—

JM: Yeah, but I was—grew up down at Grandma's in Georgia, that there would be discussions of the Leo Frank lynching.

JD: Uh-huh.

JM: So, the concept of lynching was not shocking, because there would always be these big debates as to whether Leo Frank was innocent or guilty. And the lynch mob had gone by my aunt's house, as I understood.

JD: Oh, really?

JM: So, you know, lynching was not breaking news.

JD: What was it like at Grandma's when you were visiting?

JM: So, it was wonderful! Fresh biscuits every meal, and grits, and snap beans, and great time!

JD: Did you go every year?

JM: Every year we'd go down for two weeks. My mother would load the girls in the car, me and my sister, and drive down, three-day trip, back before the interstate.

JD: Um-hmm. Where did your grandmother live in Georgia?

JM: Oconee, which at that point was a company town out in the swamps for the logging.

JD: Oh, wow! Yeah, I know that area.

JM: The *town* was Oconee, down near [08:29]. It's not Oconee County.

JD: Um-hmm. What was it that motivated you to become involved in the civil rights struggle that was just now beginning, in the late 1950s, was beginning to attract attention? You had Martin Luther King and the Montgomery bus boycott, you had the Little Rock Nine.

JM: Well, I think, you know, going back to this memorizing the Bible verses, and then, we had the Declaration of Independence in high school. We had to memorize it. And once, when I was down at Grandma's—I must have been about ten—this girl that I used to hang out with, sort of dared each other to go walk through “Nigger Town,” we called it, and just the striking disparity. Of course, everyone just sort of evaporated as we—saw these two white girls coming

down the road. But I could see with my own eyes the difference between the black school and the white school that was a new brick building and all that. And that really struck me.

And then, in high school, the girl next to me in Spanish class had been in one of those jurisdictions in Virginia where the schools were closed. So, instead of enjoying her senior year, she was sent to live with relatives or somebody [0:10:00] and doing eleventh grade a year late. And just seeing the effect of segregation and knowing the hypocrisy of it from what our founding documents and the *Bible*, I just sort of felt, as a Southerner, that we needed to change. And when I had my chance to help do something, I would seize it.

JD: You're anticipating my next question, and that is a broader question that Southerners were the first white people to seek out the young black activists in SNCC and CORE—talking about people like you, Bob Zellner, Casey Hayden. Why do you think it was white Southerners who were first in the Movement rather than Northerners?

JM: Because those Yankees up there were looking down their nose at us. [Laughter] And, well, we were at home. We were working at home on what we saw as our own problems. You know, think globally, act locally; bloom where you're planted. Those things came in later. But back then, we were very local-oriented, particularly in the South. We had to be able to place people, know where you were from, who you were related to, very community-minded. A trip to the next state was a big deal; for some people, to the next county. And so, I think it was natural, between our community orientation and our deep religious convictions.

JD: Um-hmm. Well, Casey was saying that it was through the Methodist church, going to interracial meetings out of state, that she first became involved in activities.

JM: And for me, it was the Presbyterians, my Presbyterian youth group, and then I went to Duke University, because my mother wanted me to go to a name school that was safely segregated.

JD: What would have been your first choice?

JM: It was some small church school in the North, I think, maybe Ohio. But I had gone to such a massive high school that it was just totally overcrowded with growing suburbia in the fifties that I wanted a small place where you were known, for better or worse, but not where you were lost in the mob. And Mother was afraid of integration, a product of her environment, and she was all about status.

JD: Um-hmm.

JM: So, I went to Duke. But it was there, after the sit-ins got going in Durham, that our Presbyterian chaplain—and I was going to their Sunday evening meetings—told us, and it was like *déjà vu*, that some students from North Carolina College who were doing the sit-ins would be coming over next week. “Don’t spread the word unless it’s somebody you think would really want to come, because the administration could lock us out, the police could show up, or the local rowdies could visit us.” And these well-dressed, well-spoken students came over and explained all about the sit-ins, legally and morally, and at the end, invited us to join them.

JD: Before we get to—

JM: That was my moment!

JD: Yes! Before we get to that, what were your impressions? Tell us what Duke was like in 1959?

JM: All about status! It was big. It was—well, I don’t know if it was literally dripping ivy, but it certainly fits that impression. By chance, luck of the draw, I had a roommate from

New York, not the city, but out that way. And we decided we didn't want to rush with the sororities. You know, the first—

JD: That was a big decision.

JM: The first or second week—you know, you're no more on campus and didn't have your bearings, and they had rush, which meant you got dressed up and went and sat and got picked over by these girls that you didn't know to see if you were suitable for an organization that you really didn't know either, and it cost money. And the International Club, which was basically graduate school guys, was having a potluck party the same night. And we thought, "Oh, graduate guys! This sounds much better!" [Laughter] So, we went to that.

Well, my lands! Typically, Duke rather got upset with this. They sent counselors around to see if we were unhappy. Was it a financial situation?

JD: Just because you didn't rush?

JM: Just because we didn't rush! I heard that it had never happened in the history of the University [0:15:00] before, which I think probably made me all the more determined not to do it. But, you know, graduate school guys were good news!

JD: Yeah. So, there was a lot of status?

JM: Oh, it was all about status, just what Mom wanted.

JD: Um-hmm, yeah, yeah. The sit-ins, they started—you were still a freshman?

JM: I was a freshman.

JD: It's the second semester.

JM: Yes.

JD: Tell us about your involvement beginning with that.

JM: Well, they invited us to join. And a few graduate guys and Lucia and I—fortunately we were roommates—went down and got on the picket lines. And when it came time for a sit-in, which wasn't too long into it, we joined them at the lunch counter. I don't have strong memories of it now, you know, the details, but twice in jail, and it was—

JD: Were you nervous? I mean, this is a big change from the way you were brought up.

JM: I don't remember being nervous as such, but in jail—I mean, it was fairly quick, so there wasn't time to be—and you were surrounded by fellow sit-in folks.

JD: Where were you when you were arrested?

JM: I think it was Kress, but I really couldn't swear to it. Woolworth?

JD: And you went in and sat down?

JM: Went in, sat down.

JD: In an integrated group?

JM: Um-hmm. And I don't remember if the whites sat down first or not, but there weren't that many whites. So, I suspect we just sort of went in and sat down.

JD: Were you told to leave, or were you just arrested right away?

JM: I don't remember, but generally you were asked to leave. But, in jail, the whites were—that's where it had its potential for being scary, that you were in with the regular white prisoners, or by yourself—

JD: Um-hmm, yeah.

JM: And you didn't know what would happen. I think some of the guys were roughed up. Well, one of my favorite moments comes out of that. When, after we got out of jail and we were talking about it with the black students, they had had a pretty good time, because Durham was not the Deep South. They had made the most of it.

And once they realized that the white students didn't have quite such a good time, they came up with a plan. An awful lot of us had Native American ancestry, or claimed to, black and white. So, North Carolina state law—someone checked it—provided for separate cells for white men, white women, colored men, colored women, and “others.” Didn't say anything about men others and women others, just “others.” And so, we decided we would all be “others,” get arrested on Friday, refuse bail, insist on being locked up together in one cell, and party all weekend! [Laughter] And make bail Monday morning to get to class!

JD: [Laughs] Did it work?

JM: No! [Laughter] Attorney McKissick said that was frivolous, but it was a great plan!

JD: [Laughs] Yeah.

JM: The other moment from that: I understand we would have been expelled. The administration at Duke wanted to kick us out and called us over to the Dean's Office when we got back from jail. There was a note in our mailbox saying to call the dean, and she wanted us to report to her office, which was—by now, it's after dark, and it's the only light on in the building. You know, I had to walk over to this administrative building. And we came in, and she locked the door and put the key in her pocket.

And we had quite a little discussion. And had we called our parents? Well, of course, neither one of us had, Lucia and me. So, “There's the phone.” And obviously we weren't getting out, since she had the key in her pocket, until we made the phone call. And I've understood since then that we would have been expelled except the professional organization for the professors and, you know, their associates—

JD: AAUP?

JM: Yeah. They intervened. But I remember telling one of my English teachers, my English teacher, that going on—a sit-in was coming up, and if I were in jail, and he gave a pop quiz, could I make it up, because he was good at pop quizzes. And he sort of laughed and smiled and said, “No, I’ll just bring it down to the jail. You can’t cheat in there!” [Laughter]

JD: That’s wonderful!

JM: And so, we had support from the faculty, just not from the administration.

JD: Was—did Duke have a separate women’s and men’s college then?

JM: Yeah, separate campuses.

JD: You’re on your own campuses, yeah. [0:20:00] And so, it was, that you were very much isolated there.

JM: There was a bus that ran between campuses, and you might, particularly after your freshman year, cross over to the other campus for a class or a special event in the Chapel. Of course, the men’s campus had the Chapel.

JD: Um-hmm. What was that phone call like to your mother?

JM: Couldn’t have been good! I don’t remember a whole lot about it, but it—

JD: You’ve spoken very openly about your mother being a segregationist.

JM: Yeah, a product of her environment.

JD: Um-hmm.

JM: My mother, I’ve heard in recent years from one of her friends, thought I had been sort of sucked up into a cult.

JD: Um-hmm, so you need to be debriefed or deprogrammed? [Laughs]

JM: Brainwashed out of it, yeah. Plus, it went against everything she had grown up and believed in. I can say that a little more generously now than I could have then.

JD: Yeah, um-hmm. So, was there tension at home when you went home?

JM: Oh, yeah, lots of tensions. And I don't think things really got on anything like a normal footing—never really normal but, you know, like it—until the grandkids came along.

JD: Yeah. How did your dad react to all this?

JM: Well, my dad, I think, first and foremost, was afraid his darling daughter was going to get killed. And being a good government bureaucrat, he believed in working from the top down, you know, *Brown versus Board* versus take-it-to-the-streets.

JD: Um-hmm.

JM: With a demonstration, you might have an effect very locally, but there was all the rest of the area that took a Supreme Court decision.

JD: Um-hmm.

JB: John, let's pause for a second.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: Okay, we're back.

JD: Well, so you had your freshman year at Duke. Did you go back? Where were you in the fall?

JM: I dropped out. In the fall, I was out of school, working on the Hill.

JD: Um-hmm. Talk about that.

JM: Uh, by fall, I was living in D.C.

JD: Um-hmm, on your own?

JM: On my own. And I think my—well, I'm trying to remember exactly. I had gotten back the government job I'd had, which was a summer temp, that I had had making money to go to college, down at the FCC. And that ran out, and then I ended up getting a job with some

Wisconsin senator, just very menial office work, and then Senator Engle eventually. But I had joined up with the Howard group, Nonviolent Action Group.

JD: Now, that is something that I want us to talk about, want you to talk about a little bit more. This was, for that time, probably the most militant group of activists that were around. How did you get—did you just walk onto the Howard campus? How did you get involved with them?

JM: Well, when I left, was leaving North Carolina, some of the students at NCC said, “Well, now, we haven’t heard anything from Howard since the founding meeting of SNCC at Shaw at Easter break. And we haven’t heard anything from them! So, when you get up there, go up to Howard and find out what’s happening. And if they’re not doing anything, get something going!” [Laughter]

Well, of course, I had no clue where Howard really was, growing up in Arlington. But I got there and was walking around campus, looking lost and asking people, stopping them, if they knew anybody who was involved with student demonstrations or sit-ins or what-have-you. And I understand that they had been having sympathy pickets at, say, downtown Woolworth’s and things like that. But there was a meeting planned that night or the next, or something, to talk about sit-ins. They were planning, as it turned out, to go to Arlington, because I think some diplomatic sorts had been denied service.

Well, I was from Arlington. I had a little experience with sit-ins and jails, so I was welcomed into the group. Now, it wasn’t just students at Howard University. It was people from the community, some with CORE affiliations and what-have-you and possibly, I think, other universities in town. And so, we went out to Arlington and sat in, and the American Nazi Party

showed up. And went to the local high school and encouraged kids getting out of school to come up where we were sitting down in Cherrydale. And—[0:25:00]

JD: Who were the activists that you remember from that?

JM: Well, the main leaders were two older guys, you know, in their mid-twenties maybe, Lawrence Henry and Paul Dietrich. Paul was white. Lawrence was a Divinity School student. And there was Michael Proctor, who went on to be a doctor, and there was Dion Diamond, who is still around.

JD: Um-hmm, became a full-time activist.

JM: Oh? Yeah. Those are the main ones I remember.

JD: Was Stokely there then?

JM: No. Stokely apparently came down with a group from New York to see what was happening with the students in D.C., but he was not a Howard student until that fall.

JD: Um-hmm, okay. So, you were really there before Stokely came and Cleve Sellers and others?

JM: Yeah. This was not a particularly militant group then.

JD: And it was integrated?

JM: It was integrated. Gwen and Connie Greene.

JD: Um-hmm.

JM: I have a whole list of them upstairs. Somebody who is writing a book just asked who was at those counters, and I got out the old clippings and wrote down all the names about a month ago. I think there were about 13 of us, 12 or 13, the first day. We sat at one place, I think the Drug Fair, which is now gone, and then we—some moved down to Peoples. I mean, they

closed the counters, but did not ask the police to arrest us or anything. But crowds were coming in, because school was letting out.

I really think, though I haven't researched this or know, that these were local chains, locally owned, Peoples and Drug Fair, probably with these same sort of liberal New York Jewish connections, the founder or the owners—particularly Drug Fair, I know was—and that they were not going to break the state law by integrating. They were sort of waiting to be forced.

JD: Yeah, um-hmm.

JM: And after about a week of demonstrations—including down at Woolworth's in Arlington right near where we ate, and we had a couple of department stores, also locally-owned chains, New York Jewish—we had a cooling-off period, negotiating period, that lasted about a week. And then, lo and behold, they were open!

JD: Oh!

JM: So, in retrospect, I really think they were just waiting to have their hand forced.

JD: Yeah.

JM: And they said that to everybody, and the police said, well, they weren't going to take the initiative to enforce segregation laws and wanted to serve us.

JB: [28:01], could you take your vest? It's rubbing a little bit on your—that's better. You can be comfortable. It's starting to rub a little.

JM: Oh, sorry.

JB: No problem.

JD: Let's see. Now, I've lost my train of thought.

JB: I'm going to stop there.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JD: I'm ready.

JB: We're going.

JD: You were in Arlington. Did anybody recognize you?

JM: I don't think so.

JD: Any local folks? It didn't make the newspaper that this—

JM: Well, it made the—

JD: White girl was stirring up trouble?

JM: It made—pictures were in the newspaper, but I don't think anybody really connected this with—my family had moved out to Fairfax County by then.

JD: Okay.

JM: If anyone connected this, I didn't hear about it.

JD: Um-hmm. And what next happened with NAG? Talk about that whole period of your life.

JM: Well, the lunch counters were integrated. The school year was over. What are we going to do now? Let's take it to the beach! But, of course, the beaches were a bit of a drive. Couldn't really commute back and forth on that one so easily. So, Glen Echo became the next one. And I wasn't in on the planning end of things. I'd just show up after work.

JD: What was Glen Echo?

JM: Glen Echo was a Disney of its day. It was an amusement park, and it was where white Washington went for summer fun, and of course segregated. And the—it was at Bannockburn community, which was sort of a coop community of the same sort of Jews who had lived in Buckingham and then, after World War II, were buying, wanting housing. And, of

course, there were restrictive covenants [0:30:00] in a lot of the housing, so they started this community over near Glen Echo in Maryland.

And they had been pushing the county—Montgomery County was sending, in the summer programs, the white kids to swim at Glen Echo and the black kids into D.C., and they wanted everyone to go to the same place: Glen Echo. So, they had been petitioning the county or, you know, starting to raise a ruckus on this, and I don't know how much some of the folks in NAG may have been aware of this. But, anyway, we all ended up at the same place.

And I and maybe some other folks could, of course, buy tickets. You had tickets, and if you wanted to ride, you gave a ticket for the ride. And I went and bought a whole bunch of tickets and handed them over to the black students, who then could go zooming through the arch and down to the merry-go-round or whatever and get arrested on the merry-go-round, which of course doesn't have a back way out.

And this later got into the whole issue, as I understand it, of private security guards or whatever being used to enforce the state law or whatever, but the use of private guards in making an arrest on this. And so, after they were arrested, it became a summer-long picket, with strong support from the Bannockburn community with union-made signs, and sandwiches, and picking us up on hot days and taking us over to their homes for a little R&R and lemonade and pit stops. And the American Nazi Party was out again.

JD: Was that George Lincoln Rockwell?

JM: Yes, George Lincoln Rockwell. He made it to the lunch counters in Arlington with swastikas, and he made it to Glen Echo, which was—got a little tense, because you had folks from the World War II concentration camps with numbers on their arms. So, the police required certain degrees of separation. So, you had pickets and counter-pickets and occasionally

somebody driving by the road there and yelling something or throwing a little something. But basically it was this pretty long peaceful summer of picketing.

JD: So, what was the upshot? What happened?

JM: Closed segregated, and the next year it opened integrated.

JD: So, another victory?

JM: Another victory, but the days of places like Glen Echo were numbered, you know, small non-chain amusement parks.

JD: Um-hmm.

JM: Plus, they stopped running the trolley out there, which was the main way folks got out there.

JD: Yeah.

JM: The trolley ride out there, as a kid, was almost as exciting as being in the amusement park.

JD: Yeah, yeah. So, you had frequented the park?

JM: Oh, yeah! You know, at least once a year, you got your mom to take you out there. It was one of the big events of the summer.

JD: Hmm, that's interesting. What else with NAG?

JM: Well, NAG was sort of "Have Movement, Will Travel." There was a theater, I think, in Bethesda where there was a picket line. And I think we went as far as Hagerstown, maybe, and out toward the Eastern Shore. And then, with the jail-in in Rock Hill, South Carolina, the call went out to come down and join them.

JD: Did you go?

JM: Well, a bunch of us went down as sort of a weekend support thing. We did not go for the jail-in, but we went down that way. And I was in contact with Reverend Ivory, who was the adult, you know, college contact on that.

JD: This must have been your first action in the Deep South.

JM: That was the furthest south I'd been at that point.

JD: What was—was that different? I mean, you were in Durham at Duke, of course, the great progressive state of North Carolina; Arlington is a suburb of Washington, not as reactionary; but now you're in Rock Hill, where terrible things are going on.

JM: Well, I didn't feel, you know, terrified or anything. It was just the next step, and we were sort of an on-call Movement, NAG. And I may have been—I remember we visited [0:35:00] jail, where some folks were from D.C. Frank Hut was in jail. He was a reporter for *Afro*. Some of our group did get—some NAG folks got arrested, but did not stay the whole sentence. And I've heard that I was arrested, but I think I was just—I don't even remember being booked. I may have been booked, but I think it may have been more of a protective custody, "we're taking you in," type of thing. There was never any trial or what-have-you.

JD: Um-hmm. Were there many whites on this particular venture?

JM: You know, I don't remember it racially. I would say it was predominantly black. NAG was predominantly black.

JD: Um-hmm, so maybe they were singling you out because they didn't want you to—

JM: Paul Dietrich may have been in on that, but if we were picketing, and I think things were on the rough side, it may have been justified as protective custody. I just don't remember.

JD: Uh-huh. Was Carmichael there then?

JM: I don't remember Carmichael then.

JD: Um-hmm. So, were you still working on the Hill while you were doing all this?

JM: Yeah.

JD: And you were just sort of—

JM: Now, the thing that's interesting to me about Rock Hill, and this diverges a little bit from me, but to draw the connection: Diane Nash of the Nashville Movement is one of the people who had answered the call. And this was like in February or something, January or February, I'd have to check. But in December, the Supreme Court had made a ruling on the facilities in interstate commerce.

Diane was in the jail, stayed the sentence. Tom Gaither was down there from CORE. Leaving Rock Hill after the jail-in, Tom and I think Cary on a Greyhound bus started talking about doing something to test the Supreme Court ruling, and the whole idea of the Freedom Ride was formed. SNCC had its April meeting in Charlotte and referred back to the Supreme Court decision and called for students to test the ruling, not necessarily get arrested in a strange town, but see if it's being enforced.

Well, you had this SNCC thing that came out in April, Diane had just been in the jail-in, so when all hell broke loose in May in Alabama, things were primed from two directions for the student movement, the kids who had been in the Deep South, in the South with the sit-ins, to continue. It was just like you had been priming it.

JD: Well, the Freedom Rides started in Washington, didn't they?

JM: Started in Washington.

JD: Were you aware of what was going on?

JM: Oh, yeah. Paul Dietrich, who was one of our leaders—it was the restaurant that he was manager, at the Chinese restaurant where they had the last supper. Hank Thomas was one of

the original 13. And, of course, John Lewis was involved in this. So, he was a SNCC person. So, we were, you know, well aware of it. So, when the bus was burned in Aniston, and there was the picture of Hank standing outside the burning bus, NAG was just as quick out of the shoot as Nashville, but Nashville was closer to Alabama.

JD: Yeah. [Laughs]

JM: So, they got there first. But, I mean, three of our guys left right away: Paul, John Moody, and Dion Diamond. But by the time they could get down there without all the interstates, things had moved to Montgomery. And they were trapped in that church that was surrounded by everyone and the tear gas and all that. And Paul called me from the basement of the church when you had like a minute or two to call. He knew I was in an efficiency apartment, and the phone was very close to the bed. That was better to call that than, say, a dormitory at Howard, where you'd have to go wandering around, and your two minutes would be up. And it was just, "We're trapped in the church. I can't talk, but send more people." And we started sending more.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JD: So, on May 4, 1961, thirteen Freedom Riders leave Washington on a bus tour of the South to test the Supreme Court ruling. [0:40:00] A month later, you are arrested in Jackson, Mississippi. We were just talking about your getting the phone call from the church in Montgomery that was surrounded, saying, "Send more people." What happened next?

JM: Well, we started trying to get folks from NAG to see who could go and filtering them in, two or three at a time. Actually, NAG ended up sending second only to Nashville in numbers of the students in the Southern Student Movement, so we were right there, just further. So, by the time I went, things had gotten very routine. The Kennedys had struck their bargain with the power structure. You came into Jackson—

JD: Talk about what was the bargain that they—

JM: The deal was the Kennedys didn't like the bad PR worldwide, and Kennedy and Khrushchev were going to be do-si-do-ing. And it was bad press, and they wanted that stopped. Mississippi wanted to arrest those outside agitators. So, Mississippi agreed there would be no violence like Alabama, but they could arrest people on a local charge. So, we were charged with breach of peace, meaning we made other people feel like beating us up. [Laughter]

So, you got off the train, you got off the bus, whatever. Captain Ray would arrest you. "Y'all move on! Move out! Did you hear me? You gonna do it? You're under arrest!" And then, you got in the paddy wagon. And it had gotten down, scripted, by the time I got down there.

JD: Um-hmm. How did you get down there?

JM: We flew to New Orleans.

JD: We being—?

JM: A group of NAG-ers: Stokely Carmichael, Jane Rosett, Gwen Greene, Travis Britt, and those two later married, in spite of what Stokely wanted to do, Helene Wilson, and a couple of more joined us from other places. In New Orleans, we had a day or so of orientation, not real training, as I remember, because we were already trained.

And got the train tickets and got off in Jackson. And didn't try to get off anywhere else. There were police. There were maybe a few rough-looking characters on the platform, but that's probably true on any given day, on the train platforms. And there were some white college students in the car, who made a couple of little remarks but, you know, nothing—

JD: You got off the train and you walked in—

JM: In Jackson, after pretty much an uneventful ride, walked into the train station, did our little do-si-do with Captain Ray, walked out to the paddy wagon.

JD: Now, why—were you going to the Negro side, or how were you arrested?

JM: I think we were all on the white side, but as a group, black and white together.

JD: Oh, so you were breaching the peace, just as anyone else was? [Laughs]

JM: Yeah, we were making whoever might be hanging out, waiting for us, feel like hitting us. But when we got to the city jail, what has really stuck with me is—it was sort of a big step down from the paddy wagon, and I was looking like this sweet young thing, and the police officer just automatically reached out to help me down. Now, he would not have done this if I were black. I know that.

JD: Did he call you “ma’am”? [Laughs]

JM: “We don’t want anything to happen to y’all.”

JD: Oh.

JM: And then, it was like he was struck by lightning. “Oh, my God! What am I doing?” And jerked his hand back! [Laughter] But what has stuck with me is that his first instinct was good!

JD: Yeah.

JM: It wouldn’t have been good if I were black, but he showed a definite humanity.

JD: Civility, yes.

JM: Yeah, and that sort of gave me faith that it was all going to be okay in the end, which I mentioned when the Freedom Riders were back and treated to brunch at the Governor’s Mansion. And I told that story and wanted to thank those who had helped to make that true, as we had the black chief of police, the black head of the state highway patrol, you know, all of them, etcetera, etcetera.

JD: Yeah, and Haley Barbour.

JM: And Haley Barbour, who did more than he is generally credited with.

JD: Yeah. So, you were taken to the Hinds County jail?

JM: No, we were taken to the city jail first.

JD: City jail, okay.

JM: With my lovely mug shot.

JD: Um-hmm, famous photo, now famous.

JM: [Laughs] Infamous. [0:45:00] I think I look sort of calmer in that than most of the Freedom Riders women, white women, because I was within my own culture.

JD: You're right. In the book of photographs, of all of them, why, you look like—it might be a yearbook photo. [Laughs]

JM: Yeah, but I was at home, whereas all these folks that came from the North were going into a war zone in their mind, hostile territory. And they didn't feel one bit comfortable. Furthermore, they couldn't understand the language or know what the food was. [Laughter] I had to explain that.

JD: Yes, you were their ambassador.

JM: But we were in the city jail until our trial.

JD: How long was that?

JM: Oh, that just took a few minutes. I mean, I don't even know. I don't remember if we were overnight or not. But the trial was scripted, literally. And then, we were taken over to the county jail. And, of course, all of these cells were segregated. And the women's cell, white women's cell, where I was, before we were taken to Parchman, it had gotten so crowded that if you don't count the space taken up by the shower stall or the bunks, we had less than three square feet of floor space per person.

JD: Wow.

JM: Now, we had people sleeping under the bunks, doubling up, one person curled up in the shower stall, and it dripped all night. But they needed bigger facilities. But I felt so culturally isolated from all these Yankee girls that I had more culturally in common with the black girls in the next cell, who were Southerners.

JD: Yeah.

JM: We knew about grits and black-eyed peas. [Laughs]

JD: Yeah, yeah.

JM: And years later, one of my cellmates that I've become good friends with, up in Minnesota. She's the one who wants to go to Ireland to visit her father's home country. Her main memory of me is sitting over by the wall where I could talk to the black girls, that I was so culturally just separate from the white girls—

JD: Yeah, interesting.

JM: From New York and California and such.

JD: Yeah. Did you have any visitors while you were in Jackson jails?

JM: Well, the lawyers dropped by a few times. Womanpower Unlimited—

JD: Talk about that. Clarie Collins Harvey. That's a group that people should know more about.

JM: They don't get the credit they should. It was a group of, as I understand it, basically black church women, but also some white church women, working on almost a cell basis, at least in the white community, where nobody knew but one other person in another cell, to support the Freedom Riders, raise money, [48:05] attorney, and get us things we needed. And we could get a lot of things in the jail then. We literally made out a list: you know, shower shoes, tee shirts, we

got postage stamps, paper, sanitary products, toothbrushes. Anything we might need, they got the money to get it for us, and it got delivered to the cell. I finally gave my shower shoes to the Old State Capitol Museum—

JD: Oh, really? Wow!

JM: Where they displayed them until Katrina came through. And then, after we got out of jail, because people—it was “fill the jails,” but with the six-month sentence that a lot of folks got, you didn’t want to spend six months at Parchman, so you had 39 days to bail. But after you got out, then you got—they arranged, you know, showers, homes you could stay in overnight, get a shower, get clean clothes. I got clothes given to me when I got out, because you basically had the clothes on your back that you’d worn when you got arrested.

JD: So, you didn’t—you weren’t prepared? You didn’t have a bag with you or anything when you came into—?

JM: Just had a little overnight case of stuff, which you had to turn over at Parchman, and they rifled through, and so you might not get back everything. Often you had a change of clothes in it, but what you had when you got out of jail was a little iffy. But, you know, a good hot meal, a nice soft bed, [laughter] a shower, shampoo, all these good things!

JD: Yeah, yeah.

JM: That Womanpower Unlimited organized on an ongoing basis.

JD: The founder of that, Clarie Collins Harvey, ran one of the leading funeral parlors in town.

JM: Yes.

JD: And quite an amazing woman. [0:50:00]

JM: You probably know a lot more about Womanpower Unlimited than I do.

JD: Well, the daughter of Euvester Simpson, Tiyi Morris, has written a book-length manuscript on Womanpower that I read, so, yes, I do. [Laughs]

JM: Oh, I hope that gets to be a book.

JD: Yes, oh, it is.

JM: I would love to know more.

JD: Because, again, the focus is, again, away from the local people and all on the people coming in from the outside, but the locals *were* active.

JM: I met on a trip somewhere in the Arctic, I would say probably off Baffin Island, on a ship, some women from Jackson, just by chance. It was open seating for the meals, and we sat, and, “Oh, where are you from?” Da-dee-da-dee-da. And I had been in Mississippi. “Oh, *where* in Mississippi?” “Tougaloo.” And did I know anything about the Civil Rights Movement? “Yeah.”

But these two elderly women were saying that back in that time, they kept telling the people at their church that these folks are not violent, they’re not really breaking the law. You know, they were very supportive verbally. And how much they may have done under the cover I don’t know, but it was so nice for them to hear that what they had been saying was true.

JD: Yeah.

JM: That we weren’t all a pack of wild-eyed Communists. I was invited over for tea sometime when I was passing through Jackson and took them up on it.

JD: Wow. [Laughs] How wonderful!

JM: But this was people coming out of the woodwork years later.

JD: Yeah, yeah. And, of course, the newspapers, the Hederman Press.

JM: Oh, my, my!

JD: Did you read *The Clarion-Ledger* and *Daily News* when you were in jail?

JM: Sometimes we got that in Hinds County. The trustees were—would take care of us that way.

JD: Do you remember your trial at all? It was a quick one, wasn't it?

JM: Very quick and, like I say, it was literally scripted. And I got two months suspended, two-hundred-dollar fine. They kept upping it. I was sort of at the medium level, and then, before long, it was up to six months, five hundred dollars, which was the max.

JD: And so, what were you thinking? Parchman Penitentiary is one of the most notorious, had one of the most notorious reputations in the country. It was a cotton plantation. It was isolated out in the middle of nowhere.

JM: Not far from where Emmett Till was murdered.

JD: Um-hmm.

JM: Yep!

JD: So, you're on your way up. And was there conversation? What were you anticipating?

JM: They weren't really telling us where we were going.

JD: Oh, um-hmm.

JM: There were rumors that we were going to be taken to Parchman. And I think the guys—some of the guys may already have been taken up. But you were so isolated, even in the county jail, as far as who you had communication with—

JD: How long were you in the county jail?

JM: A couple of weeks. Kept a diary hidden in my skirt. Still have it.

JD: Oh?

JM: But when they actually took us, they didn't say where we were going. We were loaded into the back of a—I guess it was a paddy wagon or a truck-like paddy wagon thing, and taken up. Now, I knew, just intellectually—I had heard of Parchman, that it was bad, but the full horror of it had not reached northern Virginia. Angola you heard more about, at least up here.

But the scary part of the ride, aside from not knowing where you're going—and some of the other girls had heard more about Parchman than I had—was when the driver turned off the road. And this was before interstates; this was a two-lane. And he turned off, went back a bit where there was this house, and these guys were coming and looking in on us.

We didn't know what was going to happen. Some of us thought we'd get killed. In retrospect, he probably needed a pit stop [laughter] and was seizing the moment at a friend's house. But anything could have happened and, you know, things like that did happen.

JD: Um-hmm. Went through the gates?

JM: Went through the gates. Basically stripped. They gave us of course black and white striped skirts and, I think, a tee-shirt for a top and took our stuff and bagged it and even gave most of it back at the end. And then, we had the vaginal exam, which [0:55:00] was nasty.

JD: Yeah.

JM: One of my friends said she thought that the woman who was doing it to us, who was matron, probably—she seemed uncomfortable with it. One—this same person I'm good friends with now, didn't remember this at all.

JD: Wow. Blocked it out?

JM: Yeah. But then, when we talked about it, well, she knew that the smell of Lysol gave her the chills.

JD: Still?

JM: Yeah. This was a good 45 years after the fact. But she didn't remember—she didn't know why.

JD: Oh, how interesting.

JM: She had completely blocked out the vaginal exam. But the smell just still got to her.

JD: So, you were put in a segregated wing?

JM: We were put in a—well, the cells were segregated. But it's this one cell block, so it's just one side of the wing. But it could be a white cell, a black cell, a black cell, a white cell.

JD: So, it was just segregated by sex, then?

JM: There were no guys around, but, say, two or three white girls would be in together, but the next cell would be all black.

JD: Oh, I see. So, you had communication?

JM: You had communication but you didn't see people. You knew voices, perhaps. And, actually, it was at the Freedom Rider reunion thing that I met this one woman, Helen Singleton, from California, and she remembered my voice and name, but she had no idea what I looked like.

JD: Oh!

JM: And it was like, "Oh, wow!" This was a great moment. But if you—you would go down the cellblock for a shower, but the matron would be on the side between you and the other cells, the cells. And you would just zoom down it and back, so you didn't really get to see people and connect a face with a voice and name. So, we were in the cellblock, not really having any mental image of the prison farm beyond our cellblock. We knew it was death row, but we didn't know exactly where the death chamber was.

JD: They had cleaned out death row for you.

JM: Yeah, they cleaned it out. And actually—

JB: Could you just say that?

JM: What?

JB: Could you just say that?

JM: They cleaned out death row, emptied it out. And it was much cleaner, and the food was a lot better, and we had a lot more room per person than we had had at Hinds County.

JD: So, Parchman was a step up then?

JM: In—you know, physically, it was a step up. But in Hinds County, you could scream bloody murder or you could even sing as a group, and they could hear you on the streets of Jackson. Here, as they pointed out to us, no reporters are coming to get you. So, the psychological component, after you go through this little exam, and then you're in complete isolation and at their mercy, really played on a lot of minds.

JD: What was a typical day like in Parchman? You woke up—

JM: You woke up. You got breakfast.

JD: What was breakfast?

JM: I don't remember anything noteworthy. You know, grits, fatback, that type of thing.

JD: Yeah.

JM: The one meal I really remember—I mean, the food to me was unremarkable, but it was Southern, so it was normal—was we had fried chicken and lemonade for the Fourth of July.

JD: Wow! [Laughs]

JM: And Mississippi had not been celebrating the Fourth of July for that long because Vicksburg had fallen on the Fourth, plus the fireworks never got down there in time anyway, leading to a great New Year's.

JD: [Laughs] Yeah.

JM: But I was surprised that they would do something special for the Fourth of July, especially for us.

JD: Um-hmm.

JM: We got coffee.

JD: Um-hmm.

JM: That's where I took up drinking coffee.

JD: What did you do with all your spare time during the day?

JM: Well, we had some quiet times. We had reading.

JD: You could get books?

JM: *New Testament*.

JD: Oh, that was it?

JM: And that led to some fussing by the Jewish girls. And I think they got *Old Testaments* in on that one. Made decks of cards out of—we could get mail, censored mail, once a week, [1:00:00] on a good week, and send out a letter. So, we could use the envelopes and things from our mail to make a deck of cards and play Solitaire. In fact, my deck of cards, I'd forgotten about, but it's at the American History Museum.

JD: Oh? What were your conversations like with the women in the other cells?

JM: We'd be getting news. You know, if you had new folks come in, you'd get the world news and what have you, maybe where they were from, where they went to school, just routine stuff. And then, we would have lectures. We had people who had expertise. We had one woman who was a Greek classics professor. And so, we would have lectures, you know, college level lectures.

JD: So, you were all sitting in cells, and you hear this voice that you can't see, who is educating you?

JM: Yes. And somebody might know a language, this language or that language, and we would be having lectures in Swahili or French or whatever. And we'd have enforced—we'd have quiet time.

JD: And that was—this is quiet time?

JM: This is quiet time, you know, for a while. Somebody would announce it. But we sort of—we had exercise time. Somebody was counting out, "one, two, three, four," you know, and you'd be doing whatever exercise was announced.

JD: How much time did you have outside of your cell?

JM: Well, I think once, or maybe it was twice a week, you got a shower. Walked down, quick shower, and back.

JD: You had toilets in your cell?

JM: We had toilets and a wash basin.

JD: Had wash basins.

JB: Can you describe the cell?

JM: The cell was, I think it was maybe seven or eight feet long—eight might be a stretch—and maybe six feet across. I figured it out once that it was a little bit smaller than the cell that Nelson Mandela spent years in, and we had up to three or four people in it, but usually two. And mattresses, unless they got—you know you aggravated the jailers by singing and they could take your mattresses away.

JD: Did they do that? I knew they did that for the guys.

JM: Oh, they did it, yeah. And there were bunks, and it was like a metal sheet with these little holes in it, which made it softer, but it could be a little uncomfortable without the mattress—and cold.

JD: Did you sing a lot?

JM: Oh, yeah. There'd be singing. Now, those Yankees didn't know how to sing.

[Laughter] You know, they had sort of a union singing, whereas we had a spiritual singing in the South.

JD: And didn't know how to clap either. [Laughs]

JM: Oh, heavens no! Their clapping was way off. Now, I can't carry a tune in a bucket, but I knew *they* didn't know how to sing. [Laughter] Now, the other time we had—well, the lawyer could come once a week, and he'd work down the cellblock but always accompanied by somebody from the prison.

JD: Who was your lawyer?

JM: It varied, who came up, but you had Jack Young, and Carsey Hall, and I think R. Jess Brown.

JD: These are local black—

JM: Local black lawyers.

JD: Local black lawyers, um-hmm.

JM: I don't think—you had to be a member of whatever, the Mississippi bar. You couldn't have Attorney Kunstler or Floyd coming down—

JD: Yeah, yeah.

JM: Because they weren't recognized.

JD: Um-hmm.

JM: And then, there was about a two-hour window, or maybe three-hours, once a week that a religious person could come.

JD: Talk about Rabbi Nussbaum.

JM: Yeah, we're getting to him.

JD: [Laughs] Okay.

JM: Rabbi Nussbaum is truly one of my heroes. He would drive up from Jackson—where the Jewish community was not, you know, smiled upon by the power structure—every week, faithfully. And I figured the only reason he was not killed on one of those roads is that the power structure had given the word, “Don’t kill him.” But, you know, you could have had a rogue Klansman any day take him out. He came up faithfully every week.

And they’d come down. They’d call out, “Want a prayer with the rabbi? Call out your cell number!” And they’d push a little button to open up your gate, and you’d go up. And by the time this had happened a few times, I remember it as we were standing more or less in a circle. You know, at first we may have been sitting on benches. But we’d be gathered around, and he would start to pray in Hebrew. [1:05:00] And it would sort of lull off the wardens and all, and then he’d be slipping in little bits of new, world news. And then, he’d switch back to Hebrew, and after a while, he’d slip in a little more news.

And then, he would get to see each of us individually for a couple of seconds and maybe, “Your mother says your aunt is sick,” or “Tell my mother da-de-da,” and he’d send out a form letter to all the families with a note at the bottom to keep this communication secret, or it may have to stop. And that was our big thrill of the week. Now, one week, a couple of Catholic guys showed up, and I think they were seminarians.

JD: And Freedom Riders?

JM: No, they came to minister to us. And you could pick between the rabbi and the seminarians. And, you know, I grew up in a Jewish community, or a lot of Jewish playmates, and a man of God was a man of God. I wasn't going to be picky, but if we had a Christian, I would favor the Christian, even though I wasn't Catholic. But there were no Presbyterians. So, I went to pray with the Catholics. Now, we had girls from Jewish families who were not observant or practicing or whatever. And they had not gone to see the rabbi, because they thought that would be sort of hypocritical of them. Man, some of them were down on me for deserting the rabbi and going with the Catholics!

JD: Oh, um-hmm.

JM: I really heard about it. [Laughter] They didn't have anything else to stress over. But I had betrayed the rabbi that they didn't go to pray with!

JD: Oh, I see.

JM: But the rabbi and I were friends after I got out, and he was out at Tougaloo a lot.

JD: When we first came into Jackson in 1967, there were two Klan bombings we heard. The first was at the synagogue. The second was at Rabbi Nussbaum's home. And that was six years later.

JM: Yeah.

JB: I'm just going to move this over a little bit.

JM: I just don't sit like I should.

JB: No, you're just doing a terrible job of sitting here, but the talking is alright.

[Laughter] We'll let it slide.

JM: [Laughs] Thank you.

JB: We're still rolling.

JD: Okay.

JM: You can edit that part out.

JB: No, that's my little cameo. [Laughter]

JM: Okay.

JD: Was there—were there any acts of violence committed against you or anyone that you knew in Parchman?

JM: There was a girl who needed some medicine, and they wouldn't give it to her or call the doctor. And we banged in protest on that one. But as far as, you know, knocking us around, no. Now, the guys, I've heard, had a different story. But not that I knew of then.

JD: Um-hmm. Most people bailed out after 39 days. You didn't. Why?

JM: Well, I didn't need to. I had a two-month sentence, which covered. And then, I had the two-hundred-dollar fine, which every additional day counted three dollars against. And I had free room and board for the summer. I had been accepted at Tougaloo College before the Freedom Rides. And I figured, "I'm in Mississippi," and the idea was fill the jails and make it so inconvenient for the great and sovereign state and the feds that the law would be obeyed.

JD: Um-hmm. So, you saw a lot of people come and go, then, when you were there?

JM: I *heard* a lot of people come and go.

JD: Yeah, you heard, yes. But did you get new cellmates when your cellmates were—?

JM: Yeah, we'd get new cellmates. And sometimes, if there was a big influx, there might be three, and I've heard up to four, women in one cell, and just put the extra mattresses under the cots, the bunks.

JD: And so, you got out what—the end of August, early September?

JM: Early September, because the rabbi—I remember him telling us that, “Next week I won’t be here, because it’s a holy day, and I have to be with my congregation,” and it must have been the New Year. And I got out that week. School started, you know, not the first of September. So, if we went back and checked the calendar for that year, we could figure it out.

JD: Yeah. Had you ever set foot on Tougaloo’s campus before you—?

JM: No.

JD: Talk about your coming out and what you experienced.

JM: Well, I came out, and you could only leave Parchman on one day of the week, whichever it fell. [1:10:00] So, I came out. I went to the Freedom House on Rose Street.

JD: In Jackson.

JM: In Jackson. And I was there for a couple of days before I went to Tougaloo. But this was where I got, you know, clothes provided by Womanpower Unlimited and freshened up and saw some old friends at the Freedom House. And then went out to Tougaloo.

And I had applied to Tougaloo in reaction to when Charlayne Hunter-Gault and Hamilton Holmes had gone to Georgia and been driven off with riots and tear gas. And the picture of Charlayne clutching her Madonna just spoke to me. And my family was from Georgia, and somebody could have, relatives could have been in the crowd.

So, I had felt that if this school integration was for real, it had to be a two-way street. And I would apply to historically black colleges. And, okay, they may not want me, but I will reach out. And Tougaloo accepted me. Somebody in SNCC suggested I apply to Tougaloo because there had been no student movement there yet, and “it’d be good for you to be there.”

JD: There had been the Tougaloo Nine.

JM: Not when I applied.

JD: Oh, okay. But the library sit-in—

JM: Yes.

JD: Had occurred.

JM: You know, after I applied, all the library sit-in and the Freedom Rides broke loose, so Mississippi was central.

JD: But you didn't seek out Tougaloo because of its reputation as being a liberal black college?

JM: No, just being black.

JD: Did you apply elsewhere other than Tougaloo?

JM: Somewhere in Tennessee, and I forget where else, but probably three or four. I wanted a school that was accredited.

JD: Um-hmm. Did you hear from the other schools?

JM: I don't think so. But, on the other hand, I didn't get all my mail after I left on the Freedom Ride.

JD: Yeah. [Laughs]

JM: But Tougaloo had figured that its charter was older than the segregation laws, so it was like grandfathered, and its financial support was from the North.

JD: Um-hmm, and occasionally, you had the children of white faculty who had been attending classes there.

JM: I'd heard that, yeah.

JD: So, it's not that you were, as is often said, the first white student at Tougaloo?

JM: No, there had been white faculty students taking a course or two, but I don't think regularly enrolled full-time.

JD: First enrolled—

JM: Yeah.

JD: Talk about those first days at Tougaloo.

JB: Hold on one second. Okay.

JM: Okay. Well, in the meantime, Charlotte Phillips, who I think was from Pennsylvania, a white girl, had applied and been accepted. She was having her semester abroad thing. And the first few days, or the first semester, people couldn't tell us apart too well.

JD: All look alike?

JM: Yeah, we all looked alike! And she was about the same height, same size, long hair. Hers was a little darker than mine but, you know, we looked alike. So, that led to some interesting and confusing moments. "No, that was not me you saw walking back into the woods with that guy!" [Laughter] My roommates—there were four of us in one room, and they—

JD: What dormitory were you in? Galloway?

JM: The brick one? Is that Galloway?

JD: Yeah, yeah.

JM: Yeah. And they didn't know they were getting a white roommate. And I was asleep on the bed, and that was a little surprising. But it was fine. The most interesting or amusing moment was that first night, and the word had not spread. They had bathrooms down the hall, you know. And I was tiptoeing down the hall in sort of a little flimsy outfit. And a girl was tiptoeing in the other direction and saw me and thought I was a ghost and screamed! [Laughter] And the word got out!

JD: True story, huh? True story!

JM: True story, yeah! True story. It was a pink and white flowery little—what we called “shorties.” I must have looked otherworldly in more ways than one. [Laughter] But there was no unpleasantness from other students.

JD: Uh-huh. Were they curious?

JM: There was some curiosity and there was sort of a wait-and-see, but people were friendly enough. And the Freedom Riders had already been back in August, when they were called back for a court appearance to set trial dates, those who had bailed. And so, the idea of white students on the campus was not, you know, breaking news.

JD: And the faculty was predominantly white, too.

JM: The faculty was strongly white, probably a little more [1:15:00] than fifty-fifty. And there had been these social science forums, where white students would come out, and white citizens of Jackson that wanted to come out to Tougaloo—

JD: Dr. Ernst Borinski?

JM: Ernst Borinski, yeah, down in the lab.

JD: “Ze lab.”

JM: “Ze lab,” which was a glorified cellar!

JD: Yeah.

JM: An amazing—a book needs to be written about that place.

JD: Yes, yeah.

JM: But the idea of whites on campus, including students, was not altogether new. But a full-time, enrolled—

JD: Living in the dormitory.

JM: Living in the dormitory. This was new. And one girl, an AKA, said to me, “Well, I wasn’t sure about you at first, but then I saw you had to study just as hard as we did over in the library.” And so, I think, particularly when I came back the second year, I was in. I was still involved with SNCC and CORE down, a little part-time—

JD: What were doing that academic year, ’61-62, in terms of Movement activity? It should be pointed out that Tougaloo was about six miles north of downtown Jackson, so it was somewhat isolated at the time.

JM: To the extent we had a movement on campus, I was involved in that. I mean, whatever was happening. I was also involved in other campus activities. It wasn’t just Movement. But I would, I guess, on weekends or when I could, go down—they had the SNCC/CORE Office down on Lynch Street, a block or so from Medgar’s office, and I would do secretarial work down there. It was generally—well, white women with SNCC did not go into the Delta, did not go outside of Jackson. It would be counterproductive to go get us all killed, which made sense to me. But I kept that Movement connection and had to get my lessons out. God help me with math and science!

JD: What were you majoring in?

JM: Anything that avoided math and science. [Laughter] I thought it was going to be sociology, but it ended up being history because of that three hours of statistics.

JD: Oh, yes, yes!

JM: So, I have a—would have had a double major, except for that three hours.

JD: Um-hmm. Do you remember any of your history professors?

JM: Now that you’re asking me, right off the top—

JD: No! [Laughs]

JM: I remember them and I can picture them, but I can't call their name right now.

[1:17:53], maybe?

JD: Um-hmm. Were they white?

JM: White? Yeah.

JD: So, the summer between your first and second year at Tougaloo, what did you do then? Did you stay in Mississippi?

JM: I think—you're asking me to dig back awful far.

JD: Oh, yeah. Well, that's alright. It's in the quiz. [Laughs]

JM: I think I stayed in Mississippi and worked in the SNCC/CORE Office.

JD: Well, in '62-63, things were really heating up. SNCC had moved up into the Delta, and some students there, like Joyce and Dorie Ladner, were commuting up there. And then, a movement started on campus with the campus youth chapter of the NAACP.

JM: Now, that was in Jackson, North Jackson.

JD: North Jackson, yeah.

JM: We had our Nonviolent Agitation Association of College People, NAACP, on campus.

JD: [Laughs] I see.

JM: But Ed King's back room became—

JD: Okay, Ed King was the—

JM: Ed King was the white chaplain from Vicksburg, and he was very strong on the Movement. That's why he was there. And the back bedroom, which was accessible from the back porch, was just sort of the Movement room. You could use it as a study hall. His wife, Jeanette, always had coffee brewing sort of just outside the room. It was also the guest bedroom

if Attorney Kunstler was down. And I remember typing up—I could type as fast as he could dictate, so I was typing up legal documents as he was pacing around in his boxer shorts.

[Laughter] And what is happening in '62, and what is happening in '63, I really could not tell you.

JD: Um-hmm. But just that whole year—

JM: That whole—yeah, and into the next year. [1:20:00] When John Salter was there—

JD: Salter was—?

JM: John Salter was a political science professor, Northern or Western radical organizer, professor, and he started the North Jackson—well, he was the adult sponsor of the North Jackson Youth Council of the NAACP. And it's a small campus. His house was also a Movement headquarters. If you weren't over typing for a lawyer or hanging out or something at Ed's, you were over at John's stuffing envelopes for the boycott that got going.

JD: Were there any black faculty involved in these activities?

JM: I don't remember precisely black faculty involvement, but some of them were supportive, I feel. I couldn't call names unless I got out a yearbook and—I think Michael Brown had borrowed my yearbooks. They keep passing around.

JD: [Laughs] No, Yeah. I ask because, at least when we were there, why, it was basically the white faculty who were the activists and the black faculty who maybe were doing other things in town, but they did not have that kind of relationship with students.

JM: They were not the people whose homes you gathered at for things. But I remember in '66 for the Meredith March, it was Dean Branch's house that was turned into the big breakfast buffet where I sat next to Marlon Brando.

JD: Oh, wow!

JM: That makes it, you know, when you have to have trivia questions about yourself later in life, that's mine! [Laughs]

JD: And it was at Branch's house that they had the long meeting the night before the final day of the march when they had to hash out who was speaking and in what order.

JM: Okay, I missed that part, but—yeah.

JD: So, back to the North Jackson Youth Council, John Salter is the adult advisor. And what sort of actions were—were you involved at this level with them?

JM: I was not involved—well, I would be at his house a fair amount, but I was not going to the North Jackson meetings. I wasn't in North Jackson. I was with the NAACP agitation group out at Tougaloo, and Joyce Ladner and I were co-chair of that. We were supportive. We might be stuffing envelopes, but we weren't going to the meetings in Jackson. We were back at campus studying, because we were students first and foremost.

JD: Yeah. Joyce told me once that she—well, we'll get into this. A boycott was called, and Joyce was saying that she thought that was pretty tame, that she was more interested in what SNCC was doing in the Delta. Do you—?

JM: That's possibly true. There were different settings. I don't remember Joyce on that point, and we ended up being roommates and sorority sisters. But I was getting the field reports from the Delta. And I would take them and pull out gossip and news and make a little, I don't know, three or four pages, maybe two or three pages, stapled together that we'd run off—these were carbon copies, *The North*—let's see, *The Mixissippi News*. [Laughter] So that, before the internet and cell phones, people would send me a copy of their field report, I would combine it and send it out, so that everyone knew what everybody else was doing, professionally and personally.

JD: Are there any copies of that still available? Do you know? I would have loved to have come across that in my research.

JM: If there are, that would be in the stuff that I have given to the new Smithsonian Museum.

JD: Yeah, um-hmm.

JM: I gave them the originals of the field reports, which is some of the—I think the first SNCC reference to Fannie Lou Hamer, for instance—but I have copy machine copies of that.

JD: So, you were very much aware of what was going on elsewhere in the state?

JM: Oh, yeah! I couldn't go up into the Delta, being white, but I certainly knew what was going on. And people, for R&R, would be down at Tougaloo or at the Freedom House on Rose Street. So, I was, in some ways, more in touch with what was going on here and there than some of the people out there were. I remember we went up to Hodding Carter's office, Ed King and I, and I forget who else was in the car, once. And, oh, my lands, to openly go up into the Delta! I mean, that was a *big event!*

JD: Was this the young Hodding?

JM: No, this was the old guy.

JD: Oh, old Hodding. Oh, I see. [1:25:00]

JM: I guess it was the old guy.

JD: Yeah.

JM: '62-63?

JD: Yeah. No, that was—

JM: That would be the old guy, yeah. Then it was amazing years later to meet the grandson, who had written a book on his travels. And I had traveled the same routes. And I

mean, the Seal River in Northern Manitoba, and we had both been there, days apart! [Laughter]

You know, things like that!

JD: Small world department! Coffee spills? I got it! Sorry.

JM: Coffee time?

JD: Coffee time.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: Okay, we're rolling.

JD: In 1962, Jackson, Mississippi, the capital, was a segregated city. And the civil rights activists were trying to change all that, and events unfolded that would have national and international significance, in terms of what was going on. Talk a little bit about the boycott, your role in it, the mood on campus in town in early 1963.

JM: Well, the boycott had been going, I think, over Christmas.

JD: That was the boycott of downtown merchants.

JM: The downtown merchants. And I guess building. I don't—I was busy being a student.

JD: Yeah, um-hmm.

JM: But by spring, they decide to escalate a bit. And demonstrations—there had been some picket demonstrations, and people arrested and students and faculty, and the point now coming that they needed to step it up a little bit more. And apparently, a sit-in was planned. I wasn't in on the planning of this. And I wasn't supposed to be part of that sit-in. There were going to be—I've heard different versions of this. There was either going to be two demonstrations, complete entities in themselves, or the picket line down the street was to be a diversion to draw the police down there. That's what I'd always understood. And I was going to

be a spotter. Now, a spotter is a person who just sort of blends into the crowd, sees what's happening, has some dimes in their pocket to call Medgar Evers' office and say, "Hey, they've been arrested, they've been beaten up," or whatever.

JD: Now, Medgar Evers was the—

JM: Medgar Evers was the state's NAACP man, the longtime civil rights person before us outsiders got into the act, the key figure in the state. And so, Lois Chaffee, who was a dorm mother, though not really much older than us, and I were the spotters for the picket line. And we didn't think they were going to get arrested right away.

JD: And Salter's wife, Eldri, was in the picket line?

JM: I don't remember who was in it, to be honest.

JD: Yeah, um-hmm. Was it integrated?

JM: It was an integrated picket line. She may well have been in it. Eddie O'Neal, the student body president, I think was in it. We thought the police would come down and arrest them right away, and that would give time for the people who were going to be sitting in down at Woolworth's to get into the store, and make their little purchase, and get situated. But the picket line was arrested right away. So, here Lois and I are. We phoned in. And, "Okay, now what are we going to do? Let's go down to Woolworth's and see what's happening there."

JD: And they didn't think—the planners didn't think much would happen, pretty much the same thing, that they would be arrested and taken to jail?

JM: They thought the people sitting—as I understood it at the time, they thought the people sitting in would be arrested right away, and we would just be—the picket line would just be a diversion to give them time to get in, and the police would come down there and arrest them. Well, the Supreme Court had had a ruling the week before that the police could not, of

their own volition, go into a store and make arrests. They had to be invited in by the store manager, the irony being that my name was on one of the cases that had been consolidated for this coming out of Durham. And there were cases from other—I think Glen Echo also was in on this.

JD: Be careful what you ask for, right?

JM: Yes. Well, we got down to Woolworth, and there was a crowd forming. It was sort of getting ugly.

JD: About what time of the day was this?

JM: Sort of noon-ish. The Central High School was just a couple of blocks away, I think, and students were coming up on their lunch hour, because it was exam week.

JD: These were white students?

JM: White students. And I think some of the [1:30:00] segregationist honchos of the Sovereignty Commission, or whatever, were sort of encouraging people to come up and come in the store. Well, Memphis Norman got pulled. There were three students from Tougaloo sitting down: Annie Moody, Memphis Norman, and Perleana Lewis. And they were sitting together, with Memphis in the middle, and he got pulled off the stool and stomped and kicked—and that's a long story well-known—and carted off by the police, along with the guy who was attacking him, who was a former policeman known for his brutality.

That left the two girls alone. They were pulled off their stools, struggled back. Things were getting more and more mob scene-ish.

JD: And the police were nowhere to be seen?

JM: Oh, no, they were outside laughing! Ed King was the spotter—the white chaplain was the spotter there and talking with the police, who, “Oh, we can’t go in!” You know, “The Supreme Court ruling—we have to obey it!”

And I think it was probably Ed who suggested that I sit down with the girls, that it would be safer for me, because I was starting to be sort of spotted. I think I maybe called out to one of the girls that somebody had a knife. And it would be safer for me—you’re always safer if you’ve got a solid barrier on one side of you; that limits how many directions they can come at you—and it would be good moral support for the two girls at the counter.

So, I sat down. And then, we got pulled off the stools again, and I got up to the—but we were able to get loose and get back to the counter, but not back to where Perleana was. And Lois sat with Perleana, so you had a black and white girl here, and Annie and I sat, black and white girl here. And little people with bravado would do this and do that, throw something at us, dump some ketchup maybe. And then, Ed is called back to Medgar’s office. And Medgar wants to come down, but he’s talked out of it, because he’d be killed pretty much on sight. But John comes down.

JD: John Salter.

JM: John Salter, the white professor, comes down, and he makes his way to where Annie and I are sitting. I think Walter Williams, who had been the student body president at Jackson State but expelled for supporting, I think, the Tougaloo Nine sit-in, library sit-in group. Well, things keep going. [Volume increases] And there’s Annie looking like a skunk with the white sugar on her head, and me with all sorts of nice condiments, and John Salter, who really got the brunt of the attack because he was a guy, and brass knuckles mixing blood with the mustard and things—got called “The Mustard Man” by the press.

Now, the guys in sunglasses, as I understand it, were all FBI agents cleverly disguised. But basically it's high school students who were there. The reporter, a local guy, Fred Blackwell, was literally standing on the counter when he took this shot, as I understand it.

JD: I just want to interrupt. That is one of the most iconic photographs of the Civil Rights Movement, probably shown more than any other. And at the Kennedy Library in Massachusetts, it's a huge blowup photo.

JM: Oh, that's worth a trip to Massachusetts.

JD: Oh, yes! It's—more so than the Woolworth's of the Greensboro sit-ins, I mean, this has become the—

JM: This has become it.

JD: Yeah.

JM: I think the Greensboro sit—was nice and orderly. This one you have a definite feel of violence. It's imminent, but there is no actual violence happening at the moment the camera clicked. But it tells the story. And it's an integrated group. So, it's good to use in books for children. [Phone rings] Cut.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JM: All the time.

JD: [Laughing] Well, no, it worked better that way.

JB: Okay, we're all set.

JM: Now, this picture is also the basis for a lot of illustrations for kids' books. But something I've noticed very consistently in the illustrations: The person that would be me is always black.

JD: Really?

JM: Now, I understand they want it to look like a black movement, black students. But why doesn't John Salter ever turn black? Why is [it] always the female? I think there are several answers to this, but—[1:35:00]

JD: I'm curious. What are your thoughts?

JM: One, the main thought I have—well, aside from they want it to look like a black movement, but why always me rather than John is it has to do with the old thing about protecting white women from the black men.

JD: Hmm.

JM: And I may be reading too much into it.

JD: Yeah.

JM: It may be coincidental. But I just sort of wonder about what this says about our lingering racial attitudes.

JD: Yeah. That's very interesting. It should be pointed out that the photograph there is a cover of a book that features the Woolworth sit-in and the Jackson movement, *We Shall Not Be Moved*, by Michael O'Brien, wonderful book.

JM: And here we've got not only the lunch counter one, but at the beginning, with Memphis sitting with the two girls, and Memphis being stomped. He was bleeding out of every opening in his head.

JD: Yeah, that's the photograph you don't see much of.

JM: No.

JD: And that's where you really get the full effect of the violence.

JM: It's much better for kids' books to show this one.

JD: Yes.

JM: But I've talked to several reporters, probably all the reporters that were behind the counter and the cameramen, or their descendants, and across the board, this is the most frightening experience at a demonstration they had in the Civil Rights Movement. Now, granted, none of them were in Birmingham for the bus burning or the riots. But just for Mississippi, and they got around.

JD: What was so particularly horrifying to me—I mean, how long did this go on?

JM: I lost track of time. I think it's supposed to have been about three hours or something.

JD: Three hours! If you can imagine what it was like to be there for that amount of time, with the crowd apparently not under control.

JM: Completely out of control, and the police laughing.

JD: You had been—you were a veteran of sit-ins. This was something new for you. What were your thoughts? What were your feelings when your back was to these people and you didn't know what was coming?

JM: Of course, you were safer with the back and you—I think we may have had a bit of a mirror at the lunch counter, where you could sort of see some of it.

JD: Oh, okay.

JM: But our conversation, we kept it light, joking—"Professor Salter gave us much too hard of exams"—but it was a deliberate attempt to keep our spirits up.

JD: Um-hmm.

JM: And, for me, it was sort of like an out-of-body experience at some point. I've heard this happens, you know, on the battlefield, like the real me had left and was sort of like up there

like a guardian angel, keeping an eye on things, looking out for me, and this was just a shell that was sitting at the counter.

JD: So—

JM: It was protective.

JD: Yeah. Anything else that stands out in your mind about that particular demonstration?

JM: Well, our college president, when he heard about it, came down and worked it out, negotiating that the police would give us safe passage once the store was closed, that cars could be brought up to pick us up. The manager didn't want to close the store, but apparently his regional district man said to. But our college president did come down and get things worked out and actually sat at the counter, albeit down a bit, talking to the reporters. But he's the only college president who sat at a lunch counter where his students were.

JD: Um-hmm.

JM: Got to give him credit there.

JD: I don't kind of understand why the manager didn't close the store. I mean, they were tearing it apart.

JM: Well, I think it was when they were *seriously* tearing it apart—

JD: Yeah.

JM: Because they had used up all the stuff that was real handy and were going further and further into the store.

JD: Were there ashtrays and things like that that were—?

JM: Had to have been.

JD: Um-hmm, yeah.

JM: I mainly remember the condiments coming at us, spray paint and stuff.

JD: Yeah. Were you hit at all? You said you were pulled off the chair.

JM: I don't think I was. I wasn't like slugged.

JD: Yeah.

JM: You know, pushed around, yes, and sort of carried by the waist, virtually, to the store exit, where the guy actually got arrested.

JD: Yeah.

JM: But I think—

JD: And then you went back. [Laughs]

JM: Oh, of course! Where else was I going to go, into the mob? [Laughter] That was the point, number one, that you stay at the counter, you try to shield each other. But, literally, if I went out of the store—the mob was forming outside. [1:40:00]

JD: Um-hmm.

JM: I could have been—that would have been more dangerous than returning to the counter. And the press was there.

JD: Yeah. So, what happens? You are—finally the store is cleared. You are led out to a waiting car. What next?

JM: Cars pull up, and they take us back to the black community down near Medgar's office. And the ladies were taken over to the beauty parlor across the street, and that's Womanpower Unlimited type thing. We got all cleaned up over there.

JD: Um-hmm. Was there a mass meeting that night?

JM: A mass meeting that night and, man, it was packed!

JD: This was the Chapel at Tougaloo?

JM: No, this was—

JD: One of the churches downtown?

JM: The church, one of—yeah, I forget the name of the church, but whatever the main meeting church was in the black community. And, of course, on campus there's always a to-do, too, but mainly that evening when we all got introduced, and we were cleaned up by then.

JD: Um-hmm. Well, things start to happen rapidly in Jackson after that. The national NAACP, which had been sort of on the sidelines, realizes that this is big news. The national office comes to town. Roy Wilkins gets himself arrested. And yet, at the same time, there is an effort on the part of the Kennedy administration—we know this from the records—to get people out of the streets, to arrange some sort of a compromise. Birmingham had exploded already. The Kennedys did not want to see anything like this happen in Jackson. How much of this were you aware of on campus, that things that had been at white heat were now sort of tampering back?

JM: Well, you see, this was right at the end of the school year. And I left within a day or two and came back to Washington and worked in the March on Washington office all summer. So, I was mainly getting just whatever was in the *Washington Post*, I think.

JD: So, you weren't there for the final days?

JM: I wasn't there. John Doar was amazing, another hero.

JD: Yeah.

JM: Medgar's body was at a funeral home up here, and the lines were around the block to go in and see him.

JD: That's right, because he was buried at Arlington.

JM: He was buried at Arlington. I still have the black crepe ribbon that they gave us to pin on our clothes or armbands, or whatever.

JD: We should probably mention that at the height of all this, Medgar Evers was assassinated by a member of the White Citizens Council, Byron De La Beckwith, and at the funeral there were demonstrations, and that John Doar of the Justice Department was able to keep things from exploding into a full riot. By this time, you were back in Washington, working on the March on Washington. Do you want to—anything more you want to say about the Jackson movement, or should we move on to Washington?

JM: I can't really speak to the Jackson movement right then, because I wasn't there.

JD: Yeah.

JM: I was here, basically working in the press section at the March on Washington headquarters. And we certainly didn't assume that the March was going to come off or smoothly. The newspapers were full of stories of worries about riots. Merchants were boarding up their windows downtown.

JD: Yeah. People don't realize that now.

JM: The American Nazi Party was right across the river. There was a real fear of violence in the city. Plus, at the March office, we figured that it was also quite likely that the federal government would intervene and literally prevent the busses from rolling into Washington. So, the fact that that took place was wonderful.

JD: Yeah.

JM: I was working in the press tent up on the monument grounds and did not literally march, though we got sort of bussed up closer. But it had been an awful year. I mean, not only did King write his—well, he didn't write it, but have his "Dream" speech, but he had written the "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" that spring. There had been the whole Birmingham scene.

There had been the whole Jackson scene. It was awful. And there were a few other things. I mean, that's just the ones that—

JD: Yeah, there were more demonstrations that summer than in any other year.

JM: Danville, yeah. And then, to have the March come off gloriously, in spite of John Lewis being censored.

JD: Yeah.

JM: And then, just over two weeks later, the church in Birmingham was bombed and those girls killed.

JD: Um-hmm. You came back, didn't you, from the March on Washington, with Ed King and a group?

JM: Yeah. Ed and [1:45:00] Annie and I came back with the Kings.

JD: This, by the way, is Anne Moody, who wrote the book *Coming of Age in Mississippi*.

JM: Yes. And we camped in a national park, I think, along the Blue Ridge, or Shenandoah National Park. And when we came out of the shower room together, we got quite the looking over. [Laughter] But we got back and went to school.

And then, there was the church bombing. So, a van-load of us went over to the funerals for three of the girls. And there was still glass in the gutters, which we were picking up, and shotgun shells where the police had fired over the heads of the people coming out over the bombed church. And, to me, that was the absolute worst day in the Movement. There were sharpshooters on the roofs of buildings, with their guns pointed down at the crowds at the street, which sort of makes you wonder.

JD: Did you—then coming back, was it more difficult to get involved in Movement activity, or were you more determined?

JM: Oh, we were right back—well, I was still a student at Tougaloo. We were right back into it. We were, by then, having the church visits.

JD: Talk about that.

JM: The church visits had started that summer, I think maybe just before Medgar was killed, but while the cattle barns were being filled up with demonstrators in Jackson, and to try to speak to the conscience of the people going to church, you know, you're welcome, Jesus. And integrated groups would go to the churches, and sometimes the police would move in and arrest them. Sometimes they would be turned away and leave. If the police arrested them, it was before they had a chance to leave. And, of course, there would be spotters. And by fall, when I got back, it was—ministers would sometimes come down from the North and try to visit their denomination with students, or it would be a black and white group of ministers and what-have-you. And every once in a while, you'd get in church.

JD: Can you remember those occasions?

JM: I think Fondren Presbyterian I got into, our group got into.

JD: Um-hmm. St. Andrews Episcopal, was that—?

JM: I don't remember. I honestly don't remember.

JD: Yeah.

JM: But we always knew that the Catholic church and chancery were a sanctuary, if we were downtown. We'd known that for years, that if you're trapped downtown, if you can make it to the Catholics, you're home safe.

JD: Um-hmm. Interesting.

JB: Was that based on the medieval concept of sanctuary in the Catholic church, or was this a local—?

JM: I think this was the local priest. But the Catholics had been more, you know, open to everyone. “Come unto me, all ye who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”

JD: Galloway Methodist was a major target, wasn't it?

JM: Yes.

JD: I saw pictures of the deacons out on the steps, turning you away.

JM: Yeah. It was the downtown churches were big. And Joyce Ladner, who was my roommate, ended up married to this gentleman who was an ambassador somewhere in Africa. And a group of Methodist ministers were coming to visit, and she was being the lovely ambassador's wife, serving tea. And, “Oh, where are you from?” “Oh, and what church?” “Oh, Galloway.” “Oh! I was arrested on the steps of your church!” [Laughter] Go Joyce! That must have been an interesting conversation.

JD: Ah, yes.

JM: But, I mean, things go around a lot. And—

JD: Well, it had an impact. I mean, Reverend Selah, the Galloway minister, resigned—

JM: Um-hmm, yes.

JD: When his church would not allow an integrated service.

JM: Yeah. And there's been a radical change. But I've met people in recent years in Mississippi who, by way of introduction and explaining who they were, “my father was one of the signers of the Statement of Conscience” that the what, 28 or 30 or whatever ministers came up with. And most—Methodists and most were forced from their churches in Mississippi.

JD: Yeah.

JM: But still, that's a way of identifying themselves.

JD: It's extremely difficult to be white in Mississippi and to do anything except be quiet or support the Citizens Council, or risk, as Ed King did, being ostracized throughout the community.

JM: Yeah. And it's understandable those [1:50:00] that didn't make a loud noise. But a lot—an awful lot of people did things quietly and, you know, somewhat behind the scenes. So, I can understand the current Pope may well have opposed the dictators in Argentina.

JD: Yeah.

JM: Yeah, I can believe every word that he was working behind the scenes.

JD: Yeah. Spring of '64, Graduation Day. That's something people look forward to. Anne Moody writes about it in her book. What were your thoughts? And had you decided then what you were going to do after graduation?

JM: Well, contrary to what Anne says, I was not planning to come back for Freedom Summer. I had already decided that I had come to Mississippi to be a student. And it just felt natural to leave when I was no longer—once I got my degree. And so, the obvious place to go back to was Washington, D.C.

JD: The summer project, later known as Freedom Summer, plans were underway. Were you actively involved in any of those activities before?

JM: I could type, man, I could type!

JD: [Laughs] Yeah.

JM: And I remember, with Bob Moses at the Freedom House on Rose Street, we were talking about it, and how he—just agonizing over, “Do we have the right to encourage students to come down for the summer, *knowing* that someone will be killed?”

JD: Oh. That's interesting, because that was a question throughout in the Movement.

JM: Yeah. You know, we can *tell* them that someone's going to be, but they really won't understand.

JD: Um-hmm.

JM: Now, actually, I was almost killed to stop Freedom Summer on the road back from Canton.

JD: Talk about that.

JM: Canton had been completely off-limits to whites in the Movement. It was such a rough town. And it was under curfew. The school year was over. Freedom Summer was looming. Over at Ed King's, we decided to take a carload of everyone white in the car to the mass meeting that night. It was Ed's car, but we decided it would be better to let Hamid Kisselbash from Pakistan drive, swarthy white. And the meeting was over before the curfew, so people could get home.

We noticed we weren't being followed when we left campus and heading into Canton. And we weren't being followed by the police—there were no police around when we left. But we realized that we were being followed. And the interstate had just opened, and we were in that sort of little no-man's-land between the old road and the new road, I mean, and the interstate. We were being followed and we got boxed off out in that little stretch, and guys with crowbars coming out.

Now, a couple of days before, or the day before, the leader of the opposition party in the legislature or parliament in India had been arrested in Jackson, going Gandhian-style in sympathy with us, to a restaurant. And this had upset the embassy in Washington, which passed the word to the State Department, which passed it down to the state of Mississippi, who obviously passed it on to local law enforcement officials.

I was in the backseat. Ed was in the front with Hamid. And long story, but they got the door open, were beating on Hamid, and Ed telling them, “Don’t hit him! He’s a foreigner! He’s not part of—you know, we’re whites. We’re local. He’s a foreigner. He’s from *India!* He’s from India! Don’t hit him! He’s from *India!*” And Hamid is dazed and bleeding, “I’m from Pakistan!” [Laughter] “What’s that?” “That’s his *city* in *India!*” [Laughter] And the guy who Ed was making eye contact with the most, who seemed to be the leader, gradually pulled the others off, suggesting that he had gotten the word and had law enforcement connections.

JD: Yeah.

JM: And we got out of there. And the governor had said that there would be no violence, there was no violence, and if there was, he wanted to be the first to know. So, we went to the governor’s mansion, dripping blood up the steps, Ed and Hamid. And once they realized who they were, the governor wasn’t—you know, they couldn’t get in and went to the hospital. Oh, we stopped at the state highway patrol on the way, and they said if you have a problem, you have to go back to Canton [1:55:00] and tell them. Well, you know, that was not a pretty picture.

JD: Yeah, yeah.

JM: So, then the governor’s mansion, then the hospital. And my understanding is that we were supposed to have been killed that night to stop Freedom Summer. This comes—Ed said a Klan informer, well, undercover, got this word to them. And the fact that we didn’t die that night meant that three other guys did. Two of them were our friends.

JD: Yeah.

JM: Chaney and Schwerner were on campus a lot. We knew them.

JD: Yeah. So, that was sort of your last—not your last memory of Mississippi, but the last confrontation?

JM: My last confrontation was almost being offered up for Freedom Summer.

JD: Yeah. And then, you were back home and you were reading about the deaths of the civil rights workers and everything

JM: Um-hmm.

JD: What were your feelings then? Did you second-guess yourself? Did you wish you were back in it?

JM: No. But, you know, you knew they were dead. I was working at the Smithsonian. And I guess I got on with a few of the black workers well enough that they knew I—felt I was of them. There was always a question with who's—who was I one of? This bit on campus with the visiting white ministers who thought I was one of them, as opposed to the students who thought I was one of them, led to some weird moments.

But one of the black workers told me that they had brought in Chaney's body on the weekend after dark to be examined by the forensic people there, and there was not a bone in his body that was not broken. Now, this—never saw anything in the press. This was just word in the hallways, which I tend to believe.

JD: Well, it did. It did get into the press, because a Dr. Spain from the Medical Committee for Human Rights examined him. And it was that famous comment that went all over the world, saying, "The only time I've seen a body so beaten up was in an airplane crash." So, that word did get out. But before, in the original, with the Mississippi examiners, nothing was said of that.

JM: Um-hmm. Now, I've seen references to it, you know, "badly beaten," "every bone," you know, all this. But I didn't hear it in the Smithsonian, but I could have missed that.

JD: Um-hmm, yeah. Well, I mean, that was the original story that went out. And that was why Dr. Spain's examination, which he made at the request of Mrs. Chaney, which also took a lot of guts on her part, that—then that it was just a cover-up.

JM: Yeah.

JD: And we don't know exactly what went on, but the best evidence we have from informers is that both Goodman and Schwerner were shot and that Chaney tried to run away, and they literally beat him before they shot him. But it was the kind of thing that—part of Freedom Summer was to get the attention of the world. In a sad way, that did, and things started to change after that.

JM: But this whole thing of being brought in in a body bag after dark on the weekend—

JD: Yeah.

JM: It was just being whispered around the halls of the Smithsonian at that point.

JD: Yeah, yeah. So, you said you came back for the Meredith March. Was that your first time in Mississippi back from after you left, or had you gone down before?

JM: Well, the Meredith March was—?

JD: 1966.

JM: '66. I don't think I'd been back, though I might have. I've been in and out of Mississippi regularly over the years.

JD: Yeah, um-hmm.

JM: The Meredith March, I went back for that.

JD: Where did you pick up the Meredith March?

JM: At Tougaloo.

JD: At Tougaloo.

JM: You know, I had friends. I mean, that was the idea. Some of us went from Washington straight to Tougaloo, two couples. And somebody had to have given me some papers that I folded and slipped into my *New Testament* that I always carried on demonstrations. I mean, you're having a sit-in or, you know, a tense moment, reading the *Bible* was the thing to do. And they must have been the very first references to Black Power and—on a flyer.

JD: Yeah.

JM: One was, from reading it, was issued the night that they were [2:00:00] tear gassed in Canton, and the other was the next morning. One was just a half of a legal sheet, and the morning one was an explanation of why we're calling for a boycott. I keep wondering if that really is the first printed reference, but—

JD: It may be, because—

JM: The cry "Black Power" came up the week before in Greenwood.

JD: In Greenwood, yes, Stokely.

JM: Then this was a week later in Canton.

JD: Um-hmm.

JM: And a week later, the *Washington Post* political cartoon has Black Power, something like SNCC, and Gray Power, or something, NAACP, in the political cartoon in the *Post*, which at that point was a very prominent—

JD: It was Herblock. [Laughs]

JM: Yeah. I don't think this was Herblock's.

JD: Oh,

JM: But if you had something in the *Post*, that was, you know, second only to the *New York Times*.

JD: Yes.

JM: Newspapers meant something.

JD: Yes. No, that was the march where Black Power was born.

JM: Um-hmm.

JD: And the Movement began to go in a different direction. And, although blacks had been talking about power for a long time before—

JM: But, now, Stokely, for all that Black Power, we went back to his pontificating days and the demonstrations with NAG and the Freedom Ride. And in the mid-seventies, he was speaking at the Smithsonian, probably one of Bernice Reagon's King Day programs, and I had taken down my youngest two, who at most were four. And Stokely was the speaker and probably the most feared man in white America.

JD: Yeah.

JM: And there was a break, and people could, you know, mill about, restrooms, whatever. And I said to my friends I was sitting with, black and particularly white, I remember, "I'm going to take the kids out," I must have just had the two, "to meet Stokely." "Oh, Joan, don't! Something will happen, and it will be upsetting, and they won't understand." "No, I'm going to do it." So, I take the twins out, these little freckle-faced, blond, Irish-looking kids, St. Patrick's Day, to meet Stokely.

Now, between Stokely and the lobby and the entrance from Constitution Avenue is a semicircle of bodyguards from The Nation, looking very intimidating. Stokely's talking to some officials. I catch his eye. Cuts off the conversation with the bigwigs, motions me over. "Stokely, I'd like you—I'd like my kids to meet you." Now, Stokely was what, 6'2", 6'3"? This towering fearful figure *knelt on the floor* to talk eyeball-to-eyeball to them, shake their hands, and,

“What’s your name?” And, “How old are you?” And all this little stuff. I mean, we were old friends, and that counted more than the raised fist.

JD: There was a side to him people didn’t see.

JM: And I’ve heard other white folks who knew him from back in the day with similar stories of him going out of his way to acknowledge their presence and interact with them.

JD: I had one white from Duke who said that he was at a speech that Stokely gave, you know, one of the fire-and-brimstone speeches, and that afterwards, why, they went back to this guy’s house and drank wine and listened to classical music. [Laughs]

JM: You know Joan Browning?

JD: Yes.

JM: She has a story of Stokely going out of his way to come over and interact.

JD: Yeah. It’s too bad that that image is the only one that most people will have. Tell us—this is—we thank you so much, but we want to know something about [laughing] your life in the last 50 years. Could you tell us what you’ve been doing?

JM: Well, I came back, worked a number of menial jobs, because—don’t hire women, they just get married and have babies and quit. So, I got married and had babies and quit, [laughter] five of them, boys! Involved in the community things and the schools and PTAs and speaking for the school board a number of times on issues that you could trace back to the Civil Rights Movement perspective, and in the classroom as a teaching assistant for, oh, close to 30 years, and brought a lot of perspectives in just thinking outside the box, and appreciation of understanding of cultural issues to the classroom. [2:05:00] And now that I’m retired from that, I’m still speaking!

JD: Still agitating. [Laughs]

JM: Still—anybody who’s writing a book or making a movie or wants to do an oral history and wants a speaker for an event or at their community college classroom, I’m happy to go.

JD: Well, with that in mind, I would like first-off—

JM: Particularly if they feed me. [Laughter]

JD: To thank you. This has been an enlightening interview. But before we go, I want to add that one of Joan Trumpauer Mulholland’s sons, Loki Mulholland, has a video documentary about his mother’s life, titled *An Ordinary Hero: The True Story of Joan Mulholland*. We’ll get a zero in on that right away. And what a fitting tribute, and from your son!

JM: Amazing!

JD: It had to make you very proud.

JM: I had to do something right raising him! [Laughter]

JD: Thanks again!

JM: Thank you.

JB: Oh, that was great.

JD: That was terrific.

[Recording ends at 2:06:04]

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Sally C. Council