

*Civil Rights History Project*  
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*Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History & Culture*  
*and the Library of Congress, 2015*

Interviewees: Maynard E. Moore

Interview Date: December 14, 2015

Location: Wesley Seminary, Washington, D.C.

Interviewer: David Cline

Videographer: John Bishop

Length: approximately 2 hours, 51 minutes

START OF RECORDING

Female 1: From the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

David Cline: Before I start talking, it's December 14, right?

Male 1: Mm-hmm. We're rolling.

DC: Good morning. Today is December 14, 2015. This is David Cline from the history department at Virginia Tech, and also working with the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. I'm here today on the campus of Wesley Seminary with Maynard Moore. I'll ask you, if you would, to just introduce yourself, and then we'll have a conversation.

Maynard Moore: All right. My name is Maynard Moore. I've been in Washington for the last thirty-five years.

DC: Great. If we could start with just, I'll ask you a little bit about where you were born and raised, and we'll talk a little bit about your childhood.

MM: Well, I was born in Petersburg, Virginia, in 1938, which is fairly important as a context for me personally, because it was my home until I went away to college. I was raised in Petersburg, and this was a Southern town. Still is a Southern town, in many important respects. It had a long history, and was the scene of a decisive battle in the Civil War. It's where the Union troops dug a tunnel under the Confederate works, and ultimately, by an accidental trigger--they were planting dynamite and blew the Confederate works, and it's now a historic site, the crater. People in Petersburg never forgot that, and would place that as a prominent event in the history of the town. It was a commercial center for decades before and after the Civil War, mainly a railhead and switching area for tobacco. The economy had been boosted in the early twentieth century, with the establishment of Fort Lee--Camp Lee, but now Fort Lee--as a quartermaster depot for the army. Lots of money and people float into the area in World War II when I was growing up.

My family was Methodist. We were members of Washington Street United Methodist Church. There were ten Methodist churches in the town. We had a town of thirty-five thousand people, and an equivalent number of Baptist and other churches, so that was very much part of the life of the town, all of which was segregated, of course. My home church has a placard out in front of the church now on the wall that marks a spot that says, "In 1846, this was the site where the Methodist Church South was organized." That was when the Methodist churches in the South broke over the issue of

slavery from the Methodist Church in the North. That placard still stands to mark that occasion.

DC: And this was your home church?

MM: That was my home church. That's where I grew up, and where I felt the call to ministry. I was a member of the youth group, and subsequently participated in the Methodist Student Movement in the district, and then was elected to statewide office in the Methodist Student Movement when I was a senior in high school.

DC: When you were younger-- Yeah. [Recorder is turned off and then back on]

MM: Wish we got privacy.

Male 1: Okay, we're ready to go again.

DC: Maynard, in your childhood, growing up in Petersburg and in this particular church, was the segregation of the time, were racial issues, talked about either at home or in the church?

MM: No. Nobody addressed racial issues, probably by design, unspoken. [5:00] For the most part, during those years, I was asleep. It was not an issue on my radar screen, nor with my family. It was the way of life. We lived on one of the main cross streets in town, and the way the town was organized, as typical of most Southern towns, the cross streets were those that were occupied by the black population. We had black folks in our neighborhood, so to speak, but not on the main streets. They were on the cross streets that were less cared for. But I grew up playing with black kids until it was time to go to junior high school. At that point, my mother explained to me that they

would no longer be welcome in our house, as had previously been the case. I had always invited my black friends to come into the house [to] watch a *Howdy Doody* show, or have cookies and ice cream, or--. And I visited in their houses, but at the point where we went to junior high school, that was no more. No more interaction. Some of my best buddies among those black kids, I never saw again. A couple of them, I did, but for the most part, no. That's the way the life was. My family was not overtly racist in the sense of participating in any abusive activities, but in other respects was unreconstructed, and association was just not part of the equation. There was a black high school in town, and all of my former black friends went to Peabody High School and graduated there. A couple of them that I know about subsequently got government jobs, and retired comfortably, fifteen years before I have managed to do that.

But it was only in the Methodist Student Movement that there was any kind of interaction, and that was due to the person who was the adult leader of the Methodist Foundation in Charlottesville. He was a teacher at Lane High School, and he was a former Methodist missionary in the Far East. He made certain that those of us in the Methodist Student Movement in Virginia were aware of the issues. On several occasions, we had visits with the Methodist students at Virginia Union, for example, in Richmond. On several occasions, on weekend retreats, several black students would participate. We had contact and we were beginning to perceive that there were some larger issues. But this was before the Supreme Court decision in 1954, and so, essentially, there was no interaction.

DC: Where did you go for college, and when did you start?

MM: This is another interesting aspect. Petersburg, at the time, as did many of the school systems in the state of Virginia, only had eleven grades. I was born in the fall, and [10:00] so when I went to college, I was sixteen years old. I had only finished--I had graduated after eleven grades. I went to Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Virginia, which is a historically Methodist college. I was preparing for ministry at the time, and I had a half-ministerial scholarship and a half-basketball scholarship. Actually, it was the only college I was interested in attending. I never regretted it, because I learned to read and write and think there, in a way that probably would not have happened at a larger school. At the time, it was six hundred men, and as I recall, six hundred dollars tuition for the first year. Now, of course, it's like all the other major private schools across the country, with an excessively high tuition, and coed student body, and excellent science buildings and programs, and excellent faculty, and competitive basketball teams, and that--keep it on the map. It is much more progressive in all aspects than it was when I was there.

DC: So how was it when you were there, and is that where you really began to get involved in the Methodist Student Movement?

MM: Well, that's where horizons expanded. There's no question about that. The first summer, as a summer vacation project, I actually went on a Methodist work camp to Mexico. That opened my eyes, of course, to the larger world. My parents were not happy about that, but my father convinced my mother to let me go to, quote, "get it out of my system." My church bought me a plane ticket to get there. The first time I was on an airplane, before things were pressurized properly. But I didn't have any money to

get back, except bus fare. So actually, I rode a bus out of Mexico City to Galveston, and to Houston. It was so hot. That's what I remember about that time. I told my father that, when I was in Houston, the only way to get a breeze was to stand in the exhaust of a bus. In Mexico, we were up in the--elevated in the mountains, in a little town called San Felipe Teotlalcingo. Actually, one weekend, we hiked up Iztaccihuatl, which was one of the volcanoes in the Mexico City Valley.

Coming back, I had enough to get to Houston, but I hitchhiked the rest of the way. Then, the second summer, I worked at a Presbyterian summer retreat camp in Virginia. The third summer, I was assistant basketball coach at a Jewish boys camp in New Hampshire, Camp Winnepesaukee. That was, again, a terrific experience, because I was exposed to a totally different culture. Then, the fourth year, I graduated. [15:00]

Male 1: Excuse me. That wasn't the Grolnick camp, was it?

MM: I'm sorry?

Male 1: That wasn't run by the Grolnick family, was it? I'm just curious.

MM: It was a Jewish family who owned and ran the camp. It was on Lake Winnepesaukee. I don't know the name of the Jewish family in New York who owned that camp. I think they owned a girls camp, which was nice, five miles away, around the other side of the lake. We kept the road hot between those two camps.

DC: After graduation, what was next for you?

MM: I had applied to Perkins School of Theology to actually get my divinity degree. It was part of Southern Methodist University. That summer after graduation, since I was headed to Texas, I applied and was accepted to the Christian Ministry in the

National Parks, which is run out of the National Council of Churches in New York, and asked to be assigned to one of the California teams. I left, after graduation in May, to head west, and subsequently spent the summer in the migrant camps in California. This was a time when the United States had a program that permitted Mexican laborers to come across the border for migrant work for six months, and then they had to return. For the most part, everybody did. It was a great program, because they took a lot of money back to Mexico to their families. But the migrant work, at the time, was unregulated. Subsequently, Cesar Chavez and his cohorts made huge strides in reforming those camps.

The first two months, I, with a team of five, were on a cantaloupe ranch near Mendota, in the California Valley, San Joaquin Valley. The migrants there lived in some tents, some shacks, on the ranch. Only a well for water. We worked mostly with the kids, and some of the women who stayed in the camps took care of the kids. The men were--and many of the women--were out in the fields twelve hours a day. We worked with them at night, told them Bible stories and showed them cartoons and movies, and tried to work with them as best we could. Some of us were a little bit conversant in Spanish, in terms of thinking about some of the larger issues that they could possibly better themselves with.

DC: What did you take away from that experience?

MM: It was a tremendous learning experience. Those of us on the team were young. Even our team leader was a woman, who happened to be from Virginia. Her name was Joanne Osterhouse [?]. She married Bob Osterhouse. He was a Baptist minister in Fresno, [20:00] I think. Joanne was only--she was probably under thirty

herself. She was maybe twenty-five. She was a Mennonite, and committed to peace. It was a time of intensive discussion on our part that opened my mind and some of the others. There were several others on the team from the South. It was a time of expanding horizons. It cemented, in my own mind, my commitment to work with those on the margins of society, in one way or another. But I knew I had lots of decisions to make. We benefitted from that whole experience as much as the people that we were working with, if not more. They were locked into a situation that they couldn't change very much.

We did talk to the rancher, who--this was on the Coit cantaloupe ranch, and hundreds of thousands of cantaloupes were being harvested and shipped all over the world. He wasn't the owner. Some big company or landowners, you know--. He could only do so much, because he had a budget to make. He committed to upgrade the facilities, and he did some things that eased the situation as much as--he was not oblivious to the conditions, but he was part of that whole system. All of the other ranches were in the same situation. The last month of that three-month period I spent--.

DC: Which summer? What year is this now?

MM: This would have been 1959. The last month I spent up north of San Francisco, in Lake County, in the pear orchards, working with the migrants there. We picked pears with them. It was hard work. We had to, for the most part, climb those ladders and fill up those bags and boxes of pears, ship them to Sebastopol and other places where they were packaged and processed, and again, shipped all over the world. Then we worked with the people during the night times to do the same kind of thing, try



to improve their lot a little bit.

Male 1: Let me pause for a second. [Recorder is turned off and then back on] We're back. Sorry about the interruption.

MM: No, that's all right. Interruptions are welcome.

DC: I do think it's interesting to hear the way that you're talking about working in the fields as part of the migrant ministry. In some ways, mirrors some of the tactics in the Deep South, later in the Civil Rights Movement, such as in Southwest Georgia, the idea of working alongside people first, and then organizing, or at the same time, as a tactic.

MM: We did as much as was feasible. There were two guys on the team, and three girls. I and the other fellow were somewhat equipped to do some manual labor, but the girls weren't. It was limits to what we could do. We weren't prepared to do that.

DC: Hard work, yeah.

MM: These Mexican abrazos were field hands all their lives. It was backbreaking work. I'm not minimizing it for them, but they were used to it and prepared for it and expecting it. Basically, we did a morning shift, and that was [25:00] about all we could do. I didn't pick cantaloupes at all. The pear orchards, that was different.

DC: So then you went on to Perkins after that?

MM: Yeah. As part of my graduation from college, actually, I had purchased, with my dad's help, a little English Ford. This was the first small car that had been introduced in the United States. I drove it across country, through Texas, to California. I

got to California, but the motor burned out just inside the California border. I had to leave it, because the motor had to be replaced. It was under warranty, but--. So I hitchhiked onto Los Angeles and met up with the ministry orientation group. I had to recover my car in order to get back to Texas, which I did, three months later. The guy had the motor installed. I drove back to Texas and enrolled in Perkins.

The seminary, at the time, had three black students. Those were the only black students at Southern Methodist University. The university itself had never had any kind of integration. The sit-ins started in 1960, in the spring, in Greensboro, or in several places in North Carolina. We were aware that our three black colleagues at Perkins could not eat at the restaurants along the strip by the Southern Methodist campus, and could not do a lot of things that we were taking for granted. And so when the sit-ins started in North Carolina, we began to think about that seriously. But it was late spring. We had our exams, and many of the guys had churches that they were serving.

But when we came back in the fall, the movement in North Carolina and some of the other places had begun to spread, and so we engaged, in that whole year, in a series of actions along the campus, edge of the campus. There was a little mom-and-pop drugstore across the campus that had--it was a typical drugstore in the South in those days. They had a soda fountain and lots of other sundries that you could also purchase, and it was frequented by the students on the campus. Earl Allen[?] was one of those students, and Dick Stewart[?] was one of those students, and I and five others, five of us, sat in at that lunch counter, so to speak. We did our own little sit-in. We were in conversation with several of our professors. Our intention was to be served and leave within an hour. We

weren't served, but we did leave within an hour. Next day, went back and stayed another hour. Next day, we went back again, and by this time, there was more attention being paid by students on the campus and others around.

This time, the owner--I don't remember his name--took exception [30:00] to what we were doing, and told his employees to leave. On this particular occasion, one of our professors, Dr. Franklin Littell, who was a well-respected scholar of the beginnings of Protestantism in Germany, and a veteran of World War II in Germany, and a member of the commission in Germany that subsequently set up the transitions after the war, he was with us. He was sitting on the end, and as one of the persons who was leaving the store at the time had a stick or a club of some kind, and was ready to strike Earl on the head as he left, Dr. Littell put up his arm and took the blow, so that Earl was not--certainly concussed. He would have been injured. But the store was cleared. The owner took out these disinfectant bombs that vaporize, that had disinfectant vapors spewing across the-- he had three or four of those things. Put them behind the counter and behind us, along the way, and said he wanted everybody to leave, because he had to disinfect the store. We had prepared to sit there that day. We were not prepared to leave. So we didn't leave. Finally, the police came and made him open the door, and made us leave. We were choking in our handkerchiefs, pretty much, by that time. It was grim.

DC: He had locked you in there with the chemicals?

MM: Yeah. We were escorted out of the store, and the police took our names, but we weren't arrested. This was characteristic in Dallas. SMU is part of Highland Park, which is a separate city right in the midst of Dallas. It's a separate jurisdiction. So

the campus of the university and the--I guess they had a police force as well--but the Highland Park police simply took our names and did not arrest any of us, because the city fathers who ran the city of Dallas mandated that there would be no arrests. They wanted to keep the name of Dallas clean. That was an interesting effort on their part, given what subsequently happened two years later in Dallas.

That was an incident that committed us to widening our efforts. From that point, we began to focus downtown. The rest of that spring, for the most part, we were sitting in the stores downtown. Again, no arrests. The police would escort us out. By this time, the FBI was also--FBI had a major district office in Dallas. They were watching and filming. We subsequently met with seven members [35:00] of this business leaders group that ran Dallas--people in Dallas, they always thought they elected their mayor, but it was this group that decided who ran for mayor and who would get elected. They controlled the city in many ways. We met with them, and we agreed to let them know ahead of time where we were going to be demonstrating. They committed the police to handle things with care. I mean, it was bizarre in many ways, but there were never any incidents to besmirch the name of Dallas.

That spring also was interesting, because over in East Texas, which was Deep South, my colleague--our colleague--Dick Stewart, had graduated from Wiley College, which is a Methodist college in Marshall, Texas. It was also the home of Bishop College, which was an independent, I think probably Baptist school. Those students, of course, had picked up on Greensboro, and so they were doing their thing. As an alum of Wiley, Dick was in touch with some of his friends there. On one occasion, when they were

planning a major march through the city of Marshall, a carload of us from Perkins went over with Dick and joined in that demonstration. Again, we were--everybody was rounded up and arrested. There were no serious incidents of any kind, but the police, sheriff, everybody, made sure that the students were just going to be detained and then go back to their dorms. We--.

DC: Can you tell me about the tactic of nonviolence I assume that you were using at that point, and did you talk about this as a group, or train?

MM: Oh, yeah. We had no access to training. We did bring Jim Lawson, from Nashville, on one occasion to Dallas, to talk with us. Jim was one of the major figures in the--I'm sorry, it wasn't Nashville. It was Memphis, the Memphis movement.

DC: No, he was in Nashville. Yeah, Nashville.

MM: He came to visit with us one day and spent some time. We were committed to nonviolence. There was no question about that. We were prepared to take what was dished out. From the very beginning, that was part of the modus. It was clear from what Dr. King had done in Montgomery that this was the only tactic that was going to bring the two races together. At Perkins, we were an integrated group from the beginning, because there were--the third guy who was a student was a student pastor. I don't even remember his name. He pretty much was commuting. I don't think he lived on campus, because he was serving a church and had a family, and so he was not involved, but it was Earl Allen and Dick Stewart, and that was it as far as the black representation in our little group. So we were an integrated group from the beginning. Our goal was reconciliation and opening up the facilities, the public facilities, that

theoretically were open to everybody, but in fact, de facto, were not. [40:00]

DC: So what happened in those negotiations with the civic leaders of Dallas?

MM: Nothing of substance. We just agreed that we would continue--they wanted to dissuade us, but we said we were going to continue. They said--we agreed to tell them where we were going to go ahead of time, so that police could be there and keep a lid on. The newspapers were--they were being reported in the newspapers, but it wasn't newsworthy, because things weren't happening. Not much was going to change. I don't think much changed immediately, but gradually, the city fathers understood that if they were going to keep the lid on, they needed to make some changes, and so the pressure was on--they made the decisions as to how people would be served, and how black folks in the community would be admitted to dressing rooms when they were shopping for clothes, and things like that. Things improved, but quietly. [Recorder is turned off and then back on]

Male 1: Okay, we're back.

DC: Okay. Can you take us through the next series of events?

MM: I finished the three years at the school of theology. I was able to go to South America on a short-term mission trip to work in Bolivia for four months. The Methodist Church was very strong in Bolivia, and we had a number of missionaries there. Five of us--I was, at the time, when I went to Perkins, planning to do missionary work overseas, and so this was an opportunity that several of us kind of created in dialogue with the Methodist Mission Board of New York, to allow us to actually go to Bolivia and spend some time there. Again, that was a hugely formative experience for me. That was

before my senior year.

One of the students who was in our group--there were five of us--was named Bob Kotitsky [?]. He had been born and grew up in Mississippi, and was a member of the big Methodist church in Jackson, and had been part of an effort in Mississippi to open up some dialogue across racial lines. Not very successfully, but none of that was very successful in Mississippi at the time. That's when SNCC was being formed and was beginning to do work in Alabama and Mississippi. I went with Bob, on a couple of occasions, to Mississippi, to Jackson and to Philadelphia. Philadelphia was where Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner were subsequently murdered in 1963. There was another young guy, Marvin--I don't remember Marvin's last name--from Mississippi that also was part of our group and went with us.

It was mainly just dialogue and getting to know people at that time, because after I finished at Perkins, I took an internship, a Danforth internship, and was assigned to San Diego, to San Diego State University. It was a [45:00] small state school of twenty thousand at the time. I was assigned to the YMYWCA at San Diego State, with my supervisor being a guy named Dave Neptune [?]. Dave was one of the most influential people, it turned out, in my life. He was a Quaker. He and his family were members of the Society of Friends, that was very strong in San Diego. When I accompanied them to Sunday services that was my first experience with Quakers. They were deeply committed to peace and social justice. Our headquarters was right in the middle of campus. The YMYWCA occupied a small building called Scripps Cottage on the campus. Subsequently has been replaced, but--.

There was a lot going on in San Diego, mainly in the fledgling peace movement, protesting nuclear arms, but there was a fairly sizable black community in San Diego that was agitating for better schools as well. Throughout that year, I was pretty active in that unorganized—well, I mean, some of the things were organized. Marches were organized, and demonstrations were organized, but I wasn't part of that decision-making group. I was mostly focused on the campus, and the students at the campus were--some of them were sensitive and participated in some of those activities, but--yeah.

It was also a year in which I met my first wife. She was a Filipino, and was at Minnesota, at Carleton College in Minnesota. She was teaching there. She had received her degree in the Philippines and was doing some graduate work in University of Minnesota while she was teaching at Carleton. We subsequently married in the summer of 1963. As part of my Danforth fellowship, I was committed to go back to Perkins for a year's master's work. So after being married, she and I were scrambling to move from Minnesota back to Dallas. So I did not come to Washington for the [19]63 big march, and was not there at the Lincoln Memorial when Dr. King made his "I Have a Dream" speech, because we were, that very week, trying to get situated in Dallas for my last year at seminary.

During that year, things began to heat up all across the South, of course, and so we had--there were a few things going on in Dallas that I participated in, but mostly I was focused in the churches and trying to get dialogue going with several other congregations in the city. Zan Holmes was a black minister, graduate of Perkins, and an emerging leader. He subsequently ran, and I think was elected on several occasions to the Dallas



City Council. [50:00] Became a real effective leader. I wasn't part of any kind of organizing during that time, but just simply joined in where possible. Again, there were no arrests, but things were getting ugly in Dallas. This retired general, Edwin Walker, was spewing hate, and even shot--I think the shots were confirmed that came from him, in the spring of [19]63--[19]64--[19]63--maybe the fall of [19]63, whenever. But anyway, there was a lot of hate being spewed, and lots of confrontations around the peace movement, for the most part.

DC: I was going to ask you if you could reflect a little bit on the role of the campus minister, because you referred to—at San Diego State, but I just know--and then we'll talk about Joe Matthews later, who was a very effective campus minister, but--.

MM: At San Diego State, we had any number of really intense discussions, but it was mostly around the peace movement. It was the time when Khrushchev put the missiles into Cuba. I remember that spring of [19]63, when the world was on the brink. We had a discussion group in Scripps Cottage and were watching the television, like everybody else in the country, as to when those Russian ships turned around and went back. It was a very intense period. The campus ministry was there. There were several chaplains from the major Protestant groups as well, who were all involved and advocating, in different ways, for peace and for nonproliferation of the nuclear--the Test Ban Treaty had been signed, and so--.

At SMU, the campus minister, the Methodist campus minister, was named Paul Blanton[?]. Paul was, again, on the cutting edge. Since I had been involved in the Methodist Student Movement, there weren't too many seminary students who got active

in the MSM at SMU, but I did, and was part of a group that Paul, every year, took some students down to Austin. Joe Matthews had been part of the faculty at Perkins for three or four years, but had declined to finish his doctorate at Yale, and so was becoming more concerned about lay education in the Methodist Church than committed to seminary education, and had subsequently left the Perkins faculty the year before I matriculated to Perkins and had gone to Austin to join Jack [55:00]--can't remember his last name now-- who had started the Faith and Life Community near the University of Texas campus. They were beginning to put together their curriculum for laypeople in the churches. Paul Blanton took carloads of us down on different occasions for the weekend seminars that they would put on.

So that was--I had been at Lake Junaluska as a high school student, back in the early '50s, at a regional youth week. That was routine in those days, that young people in the Methodist Youth Fellowship would go to these kind of things. The speaker on one occasion when I was there was Joe Matthews. I didn't know it at the time. I didn't know who he was, but he made a huge impression on all of us who were fourteen, fifteen years old. But, I got acquainted with Joe, and Joe Pearson[?], and the others.

DC: Through the Faith and Life movement?

MM: At the Faith and Life Community.

DC: Yeah, Faith and Life Community, and--.

MM: In Austin.

DC: Tom Hayden and Casey Hayden went through there, too, right? And lots of other folks who are influential in both the Civil Rights Movement and the student

movement were influenced. What about your involvement in other groups? So you're still involved in the Methodist Student Movement, but what about other movement groups at that time?

MM: Yeah, I got involved--this was the time, during this era, where there was a lot of interaction between campuses and different movements. The Methodist Student Movement was very strong nationally, and had lots of support from the Methodist Board of Education. There was also the Interseminary Movement. I was elected president of the Interseminary Movement of the Southwest. We even published a journal. We even published a quarterly journal of the Interseminary Movement. There were six seminaries as part of the Interseminary Movement of the Southwest. Episcopal Seminary in Austin was a strong member. Perkins was a member. Brite Seminary, over in Fort Worth at TCU, was a member. Enid, up in Oklahoma, was a member. The black seminary down in Houston that was part of--Texas Southern? I forget. We had good interaction. And we had quarterly conferences, where seminary students would get together, talk about issues, talk about theology, and--.

DC: Were social issues high on the agenda?

MM: Social issues, yeah, always. Inevitable inevitable during those years. Sharing perspectives. We didn't do anything earth-shaking, but again, it was interaction that got us beyond our own campus to see and learn what was going on elsewhere, which is very important. The Interseminary Movement had a national.... structure. Tom Oden, who was at Oklahoma, was a key figure, and Tom Ogletree, who was subsequently at Yale and Drew, was a key member, and Garrett Seminary in Chicago. I forget the

professor there who was so influential. We were in dialogue with each other. I was on the national board of the Interseminary Movement. Participated in the various conferences, the National Christian [1:00:00] Student Federation that had its meetings in Athens, Ohio, and Purdue University, during the summers.

DC: Can I ask you for a general comment or overview of the role of the student Christian movements in the Civil Rights Movement? You've talked about a number. Everything from the Methodist Student Movement, and your involvement early on, but how influential were these groups that, in some ways, are a little bit under the radar, I think, in the Civil Rights Movement history?

MM: It's interesting. The big movement, the big meeting, it turned out, was in Cleveland. What was that year? I don't remember. It was sometime in the early '60s. I didn't go to that meeting. I was at the one in Athens that actually had Dr. King as a featured speaker. That was my first encounter with Dr. King. It was not a personal encounter, because I was one of three thousand students that he addressed, but I was close to the stage and was able to appropriate what he was saying in a way that was formative. He spoke at several of those conferences, because he was--the bus boycott in Montgomery had projected him onto a national stage that he grew into, literally. And ...so he was frequently asked and occasionally spoke at those meetings.

Now, it's interesting that it was actually--as far as I can tell, Al Lowenstein, who was a graduate student himself at the time, and had participated in some of those meetings, as a Jewish student, he was not part of the National Student Christian Federation, but all of these student groups were in touch with each other. Al Lowenstein

later you know organized the whole Dump Johnson movement in [19]67, [19]68, political activities. But he was a key figure in recruiting students all over the North to go to Freedom Summer in Mississippi in 1964. I don't know how he did that, except by bringing in a lot of other student leaders into that recruiting effort, because that was a--the Freedom Summer [19]64 was when so many college students across the country were-- we would call it, today, radicalized. That is, we were they woke up from their sleep and began to see that students could play a significant role in what was happening all across-- mostly in the South at the time. There wasn't much going on in the North that was going to change the de facto mostly housing segregation and school issues. There were some. But it was going South that summer that so many students, even before social media, turned a lot of their colleagues into sensitive, participating advocates for change.

And so the student movements that had all been flourishing in the late '50s and early '60s were very important in getting [1:05:00] college students aware of what was going on in other campuses, that, without social media, it's hard to imagine how it would have happened otherwise. At these movements, you met friends, and girlfriends, and boyfriends. You kept up long-distance relationships in various ways that later came to bear fruit when you would join together. Everybody knows about spring break, where everybody goes to Florida and has a bash, but there were plenty of other occasions when students would get together to do small social action projects, all across the country. And mainly...

DC: So these networks existed, then, basically, and then fed into the movement.

MM: Yeah, for sure. Now, at seminaries, Union Seminary in particular, they

were way out in front of the rest of us. Who's to say why? George Webber at the East Harlem Protestant Parish had done groundbreaking work, and students at Union were involved in that. For years, students at Union had been involved in that. In the '30s, Bonhoeffer, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, during his years at Union, had been involved in East Harlem. Turned his mind around. We know what happened subsequently. But Union, at course, had been integrated for years. That's where the Student Interracial Ministry was born. And, it was easily supported, because the National Council of Churches was right across the street at 475 Riverside. So the students at Union were involved in these trips to the South and actions in the South. Charlie Sherrod first went to Albany in 1960. Lots of those students were involved. Then when they started bringing some people from Southwest Georgia back to Union, even on short visits, to talk about what it was like in the South, more students joined up. A few students from other seminaries started joining those efforts, and--.

DC: Just for the record, the Student Interracial Ministry was created by seminarians from Union and from ( )--.

MM: Yeah, Union Seminary was the place where the Student Interracial Ministry was organized. It was in 1960, [19]61, and it was organized only as a project at Union, internally, and functioned that way for twelve to eighteen months before, I think, some other students started coming in, but was still headquartered there. Its focus, during those initial years, was simply--we say simply, but it was so important--to place white seminary students into black congregations as interns, and black students into white congregations as interns, to engage the people in the churches in this kind of dialogue and

joint action, where it was--joint projects, we should say--even when it was just doing some things about getting food into the black communities, and what we call today just simple service projects.

DC: As you say, simple, and yet not simple at all, right? Say a little bit [1:10:00] more about that. In 1960, in some places, this is taking your life in your hands, right?

MM: Sixty-one, particularly. The white congregations in the South, many of them wanted nothing to do with us. It was not easy to find congregations that would host a black student just for the summer as an intern. But those that did, did so successfully, for the most part, so that the next summer, they would take another student, and on some occasions, there would be another congregation nearby who would do the same thing. The black congregations were always more open, but even in those situations, having a white student come into your congregation and live in the community during the summer, even just to preach and teach, meant something was going to change. Who could say what was going to change? Those of us who were engaged in the South in those years--at least I was, and I know some of my colleagues were--we were always conscious of the fact that, as a white student, at the end of this project, this summer, whatever, I was going to go home and back to my routine, whether it was studying theology or whatever. The people those that we were working with, they were going to have to live there. If there was any kind of reaction or trouble as a consequence of my being present in that community, they were going to have to live with it. And so, for the most part, we always tried to stay in the background. We didn't assume leadership roles, as we normally come

to think of that term. We tried to not so much blend in, because we couldn't blend in, but we were aware of that. We couldn't start something that we couldn't finish, because it was the people who were living there that were going to have to pay the consequences. So this was not radical, groundbreaking work, as the newspapers like to portray these things. This was very quiet, behind the scenes, but was unprecedented work.

DC: Can you explain just a little on that? Because as you say, we're so used to thinking of the movement as the big marches, and yet much of the work that creates change is everyday work and is gradual. Can you talk a little bit more about--.

MM: Yeah. The sit-ins, [19]61, led to the Freedom Rides. Of course, that was a big turning point, particularly when the bus got burned in Anniston, and Congressman John Lewis, who was the leader of SNCC at the time, got his head busted, and other students, some students were seriously injured. The nation began to take note of that. The ICC, the Interstate Commerce Commission, finally changed regulations, and the buses opened up, although patterns of participation were slow to follow, and many black folks didn't risk sitting in the front of the buses, even though, legally, they had the right to do that. You can imagine what they had to put up with. Charlie Sherrod, who was a Union student, and a couple of his colleagues--I think it was in 1960 where they actually took a bus from Atlanta to Albany, Georgia. [1:15:00] They were active in Albany, Southwest Georgia, for years, and Charlie's still down there, of course. Interestingly, Charlie Sherrod was born and raised in Petersburg. I didn't--we never crossed paths, as far as I know, because I was on the white side of the racial divide of a totally segregated city. He graduated from the black high school.



DC: Interesting that Petersburg actually produced a number of civil rights leaders. Dorothy Cotton, Wyatt Tee Walker.

MM: As far as I know, unexplained. Wyatt Tee Walker was a pastor of a black church there. He was not born in Petersburg. He didn't grow up there, but he was pastor of a black church there, and later became Dr. King's executive director of the SCLC. I mean, I don't think they had titles in those days, but effectively Wyatt ran the movement, SCLC, for two, three years. I think he finally went back to Harlem to work with Adam Clayton Powell. I'm not sure what Wyatt actually did when he left SCLC. But yeah, Petersburg was the home of--well, Ettrick was right across the Appomattox River, and Ettrick was where Virginia State University was located, an all-black state school, of course, teachers college. But didn't have much interaction in the town, except through the churches, where some of the professors were members of some of the black churches. But there wasn't any interaction with the white churches at all. It was a segregated city.

Charlie Sherrod was early on in Albany, and Albany was the location of a lot of the earliest action. I think it was probably where Dr. King first got active outside of Montgomery. He stayed in Montgomery for several years, of course, after the bus boycott, before he went to Atlanta, and organized SCLC, and SCLC was headquartered in Atlanta. I think it was Albany where he and Ralph Abernathy first got involved in a local action. I know it is where Dr. King was arrested and was--he was in Sheriff Pritchett's jail until Sheriff Pritchett transferred him, in the middle of the night, to--I don't remember where--Sumter County, I think, or Terrell County. Terrible Terrell. Or it may have been Baker County. I don't know, but it was the middle of the night. Dr. King thought for

sure he was going to die. He was alone, and Coretta didn't know where he was. The other colleagues finally found where Sheriff Pritchett had transferred him the next day, but Dr. King was traumatized by that, and from that moment, every time after that, they were always arrested and jailed in groups. Dr. King was never in jail by himself again. In Birmingham Jail, he was alone in a cell, but there was a whole bunch of people in Birmingham, where he wrote his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*. He was not alone in the sense of being isolated.

That was... [1:20:00] early. That was probably [19]62. It was not easy. It was not fun. Those folks in Albany were on the front lines. Albany was a peanut processing center. It was a hard town for blacks to live in. They made headway. It was interesting. It would be interesting to see know how many movement songs got birthed in Albany. Albany was a singing movement. Bernice Williams, who later founded--was one of the organizers of Sweet Honey in the Rock was one of those students, and had a great voice. They made up a lot of those movement songs. They sang the movement songs. They recorded those movement songs. Albany was a place where a lot of tactics got developed for the later movement in the South. Things were unorganized there. The young people were marching and demonstrating and getting arrested, and without any kind of long-term plans. Dr. King got involved reluctantly. They made a movement out of it, and the Albany movement existed for years and brought a lot of changes. Charlie Sherrod got elected to the city council on several occasions. Albany is a different place now, but those were the earliest kinds of activities.

It was important, because Dr. King and Andy Young and Ralph Abernathy and the

others learned from Albany how not to change a city, and how to build a movement, because the next year of [19]63, when Fred Shuttlesworth in Birmingham asked them to come to Birmingham, they did it right. We all know Birmingham was off the charts in terms of its viciousness. Bull Connor, who had grown up in Selma, of all places, and in many ways ran the city--called the shots in the city anyway. Fred Shuttlesworth was--he had not been part of SCLC at the time, I don't think, but had initiated a lot of actions in Birmingham, and had been arrested a number of occasions, and called on Dr. King to come. Well, I don't have to rehearse Birmingham. Everybody knows about the dogs and the fire hoses.

DC: Take a--. [Recorder is turned off and then back on]

Male 1: We're back.

DC: Just to connect the dots here, that Charles Sherrod was down in the Albany movement, took a--as he, in his own words, called it a "movement sabbatical." He had been working hard under very difficult circumstances for years. In [19]64, he had enrolled at Union Seminary, and at Union Seminary, as we talked about before, this organization called the Student Interracial Ministry is still in operation, and Sherrod and the Student Interracial Ministry Movement sort of meet each other, and he starts to recruit students to come down to Southwest Georgia. But how did you get involved in the Student Interracial Ministry? Because we had left you last at Perkins, but can you pick up where you are, and then how you got involved?

MM: I had not been active during [19]63, early [19]64, in any of the actions in the South, because I was finishing my master's at Perkins, [1:25:00] newly married, but

had, for various reasons--.

Male 1: Can we pause? [Recorder is turned off and then back on] Okay, you're going again.

MM: So 1964, '64, I had not been involved in any of the actions in the South, because I was newly married, at Perkins, finishing my master's degree. November 22, 1963, I was on the SMU campus, and walked over Yale Boulevard to the overpass at Central Expressway when Jack Kennedy and the motorcade was headed to downtown Dallas, and saw the president and Jackie Kennedy on the motorcade going downtown. I went back to the library and learned at that time that the president had been shot. Dallas was divided in serious ways. There were schools in Dallas that cheered when the news came that the president had been shot. Schoolchildren. Many, many people in Dallas were traumatized by that, of course. Dr. Bill Holmes was at Northaven Methodist Church, where I was doing some Sunday school teaching, and spoke out about that climate in Dallas, and was subsequently threatened. The FBI had to move them out of their house for a week. Dallas was, in many ways, a hateful place for people to live. The black folks in Dallas tried to keep a low profile for a while. I finished my master's. By that time, we had decided that we would withdraw our application with the Methodist Mission Board to go overseas, and I applied and was accepted to the University of Chicago Divinity School to do doctoral work.

September--late August--September 1964, my wife and I matriculated to the University of Chicago, right at the height of the Goldwater campaign. Many people will remember that Johnson had upped the ante in Vietnam by that time, and Goldwater was

shooting from the hip. It was a pretty nasty debate going on nationally, politically. But as it turned out, at the same time that I enrolled at the University of Chicago Divinity School, Jesse Jackson enrolled at Chicago Theological Seminary, right across the street, to do his bachelor of divinity degree. Now, Jesse had come out of the Greensboro movement, and had been a football star at North Carolina A&T, and had had an experience at the University of Illinois as a freshman, as a football player, where he felt he didn't get as much attention as he needed, and as much playing time, so he transferred back to North Carolina A&T and finished his work, but came back to Chicago, to seminary. At the time, students at CTS could cross-register for courses at the Divinity School, vice versa. In fact, I took a course at CTS with Dr. Littell, Frank Littell, who had also gone from Perkins to Chicago to CTS, to the faculty there, by that time. Jesse took some courses at Divinity School, and came to the attention of Alvin Pitcher. I was in social ethics, studying with Dr. Gibson Winter [1:30:00] and Alvin Pitcher. Al Pitcher was committed to the goals of the fledgling movement in Chicago at the time, and recognized Jesse's charisma right away, and Jesse got involved in the movement in Chicago.

Now, the movement in Chicago was headed by Al Raby, who was a schoolteacher, and was serving as president of the CCCO, the Community Council of Community Organizations. Bill Berry was head of Chicago Urban League. National figure, and a true leader in the movement. Bill Berry and Al Raby had--the CCCO was a coalition of like sixty or seventy local community organizations. Chicago is a patchwork of communities, many of them ethnic, exclusively ethnic. CCCO was leading the fight to

replace school superintendent Benjamin Willis, who many would call a racist. He was an advocate for the status quo, which had the black schools at a severe disadvantage. There were no test scores in those days, but the black students in the schools in Chicago were severely disadvantaged, all segregated by de facto housing, of course.

In the overcrowding situation, these temporary classrooms, trailers, were placed on school grounds, and that was the solution. That was Willis's solution to the overcrowding. Rather than integrating schools or building adequate facilities in the black communities, you'd just put these mobile classrooms in, and they--so they got dubbed "Willis wagons." The whole movement in Chicago was to get the Willis wagons out of the black communities and do something about the schools, and ultimately, of course, was to replace Benjamin Willis as the school superintendent. Well, nobody was going to do anything in Chicago without Richard Daley's initiating that kind of change. Willis ultimately did, I think, resign. It would have to have been under pressure, but he was ultimately replaced, but it took years. It took--it was not until--I think when Martin came to Chicago in 1966, Willis, I'm sure, was still superintendent.

We also got involved in demonstrating downtown, mainly to try to get the unions to hire black workers, was the way it all started. I think that was the main focus, because I remember demonstrating at many of the construction sites, and there were arrests. There was not too much violence, although, on one occasion, the assistant district attorney, Richard--I don't remember his name. They were always present at the demonstrations, if not the FBI, then the police and the others, and on one occasion, there was some kind of violence that a young black person threw some rocks or--I don't know

what it was, but ended up [1:35:00] dashing off, and Richard--the assistant district attorney--was chasing him, and either tripped or dived for him or something, and ruptured his spine and was paralyzed. There were some police--I don't want to call it violence, because that would be an appropriate term to describe 1968, but there were police--there were occasions when police had to drag demonstrators out of intersections and so forth. That was mainly [19]64, '65.

By 1965, the activities in Selma that had been initiated by SNCC was coming to a head. They were doing--and of course the summer of [19]64, the whole effort of Freedom Summer was to do voter registration in Mississippi. There had been some controversy as to whether or not the students would enroll black folks to vote in the regular Democratic primaries, or form a different party. Of course, the decision had been made, in [19]64, to form the Freedom Democratic Party. Fannie Lou Hamer and Dr. Aaron Henry were all prominent in that. It was not without a lot of angst, because many of the black folks in Mississippi felt like they should be voting in the main Democratic Party, in the primary, but it was not going to work. So we know what happened in the [19]64 convention in Atlantic City. The Freedom Democratic Party did get two seats, and some satisfaction, but there was a lot of dissatisfaction on the part of SNCC, who felt like that was a whole sellout.

In Mississippi, SNCC was very strong and continued its voter registration efforts. Bernard Lafayette and a couple of others were in Selma. I think Jim Bevel and Diane were also in Selma. I'm not sure about that. I know Bernard was. They were organizing voter registration efforts and other kinds of actions to get black folks in Selma their due

rights. It was stalled. Sheriff Jim Clark was adamant. Al Lingo, who was head of the Mississippi--I'm not sure what it was called, but it wasn't the county sheriffs, but it was the Mississippi law enforcement--I'm sorry, Alabama law enforcement group. They were rough people to deal with, because they were committed that there were not going to be any changes at all. The pastor at Brown Chapel had been arrested and beaten, and other people had been arrested and beaten in Selma. The movement there, led by SNCC, was in dire [1:40:00] straits. They had done about all they could, and they were--but they were pressing on. Jimmie Lee Jackson was shot. It was Jim Bevel's idea to march to Montgomery. So he had to have been in Selma. Jim Bevel was--Dr. King called him crazy. He was, Jim Bevel was crazy in the sense that he was always willing to--he was so ideologically committed to nonviolence that he was impractical at times. Jim Bevel was the first who came up with the idea, after Jimmie Lee Jackson was shot, I think, to take that Selma movement to Montgomery and demand that black people be protected. And--.

DC: Are you in Chicago at--.

MM: I was in Chicago. This was, what, right at the beginning of March 1965, because March 7 was Bloody Sunday. This had to have been on March 5. Two days later, they started out on Sunday from Brown Chapel to walk to Montgomery, totally unprepared. Dr. King was preaching in Atlanta. Ralph Abernathy was at his church up in ( ) Atlanta. SNCC was always ready to march and was never going to back down. They were totally committed to keeping the movement right on the front burner, not letting the black, white establishment get away with anything. They had a whole bunch of young people. And, well, again, we know what happened on Bloody Sunday when



they marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. They were beaten mercilessly by Jim Clark's deputies. A bunch of the deputies on the other side of the bridge stayed on the other side of the bridge, and so when everybody tried to get back to Brown Chapel, they were beaten again. John Lewis was beaten on both sides.

SNCC had decided, officially, not to go through with the march, but had permitted its leaders, or anybody who wanted to march, to go, and John Lewis decided to march, among others. They tried to get back to Brown Chapel, but immediately called Dr. King in Atlanta, and he had advised them not to do it, because they weren't prepared. Nobody was prepared to march fifty-four miles to Montgomery anyway, but--. Dr. King then put out the call, nationwide, for all people of goodwill to come to Selma, to stand together with the brothers, and to march to Montgomery. Well, by Tuesday the 7<sup>th</sup>, he and Ralph and all the others were there, ready to march. The Methodist bishop here, John Wesley Lord, went. Several of my colleagues in the Baltimore-Washington Conference, Harry [Cauley?] and some others, went to Selma to stand together. Many of us did, across the country.

Dr. King was waiting for Judge Johnson in Atlanta to issue an injunction that was supposed to keep the peace. Dr. King had already, on several occasions, committed his movement, SCLC, not to [1:45:00] defy any federal injunction. So this would have been a huge dilemma had Judge Johnson issued that injunction, but he didn't. Martin and Ralph and the others marched across the Pettus Bridge, and then knelt to pray, and then walked back, using this as a symbolic gesture, waiting for the feds to act. Many people felt betrayed, of course, because the people who had come, and the people in Selma, had

thought they were going to march to Montgomery, because that was the announced intent after Bloody Sunday. Again, things weren't prepared--couldn't be prepared, two days' worth. So this was meant as a symbolic gesture only, but it had not been communicated to everybody.

I did not go to Selma, because this was the first week in March--second week in March--right when our quarterly exams were scheduled. I could not miss my exams. None of us at the university could. But when the march was delayed two weeks, my exams were over, and so when the march did start, with the injunction that had been worked out by Attorney General Katzenbach--and Judge Johnson had specified that, on the four-lane highway, as many people could march as they wanted to, but using one side of the road on Route 80. But when Route 80 got to two lanes in Lowndes County, which was a wasteland, swamps and nothing but pine forest--Lowndes County was bad--only three hundred could march. That was okay. Dr. King started out and had other commitments, and he had to leave. A lot of the people who came the first few days--there were twenty thousand, maybe ten--who knows--ten thousand who started out, but many people only marched those first initial days, and knew they couldn't go--were not among the three hundred. Young people who had been identified and had volunteered to be among the three hundred were wearing the orange traffic vests so that they could be identified.

Hosea Williams was the one who organized that whole march. Hosea was a great organizer. He had come out of Savannah. He had organized--well, Savannah was an unorganized whole movement of its own, but Hosea learned a lot out of Savannah. Had

joined the SCLC staff by that time. He pretty much organized the whole march, with campsites along the way, every seven or so miles, seven to ten miles. People camped out at night. There was a company--I think it was a white-owned company--who supplied the tents for people. Hosea had identified black farmers, black landowners, along the way who agreed to let the marchers stay on their land. So for the most part, it came off very well.

I and two colleagues, Henry and Richard, graduate students at the university, had--by that time, our exams were over, so we were committed to go. We didn't have any money, so we found a drive-away car. In those days, companies provided ways for people who needed to get their cars from one side of the country to the other, to [1:50:00] engage college students, for the most part, but other people, to drive those cars to wherever the destination was. In Chicago, we found--there were several drive-away companies. We found a car that needed to go to Memphis. So we signed the insurance papers and got this Ford Fairlane. It was due in Memphis the following Monday. That gave us time to drive through Memphis, down toward Montgomery. So we did that. We joined up with the march the last day, as did thousands of others who came by bus directly to Montgomery. Richard drove the car into Montgomery, and Henry and I joined the marchers at a little intersection on Route 80, and marched the last six or seven miles, however long that was, the last day, into Montgomery. It started to rain. It was a downpour. It was, it drenched everybody. But everybody was happy and singing. That was the last leg, and so everybody was--there were several thousand people by that time, and everybody went to the City of St. Jude.

That has its own interesting history. It's on the west side of Montgomery. It's a Catholic establishment. It was a secondary school, organized by priests in probably 1910, 1920. It had been a haven for black folks on the west side of Montgomery for years. Many of the leaders had gone through the school. Of course, there's a big church on the grounds. That was the site of the final night before the march into Montgomery the next day, March 22<sup>nd</sup>. That was the--.

DC: So did you sleep there that night--.

MM: Yeah.

DC: --at the City of St. Jude?

MM: The big field, the baseball field, the athletic field of the school, was a quagmire because of the rain. People were drenched. Some people had tents. The marchers had brought as many tents as they could. Those of us who had not been on the march, the community had been alerted--the black community had been alerted. Everybody knew that this was happening, of course, and they had been asked to open up their homes to people who had come in and did not have any places to stay. People who came on buses simply slept in the buses. A lot of people slept out on the grounds. I and my two colleagues went into the community and just asked until we found places to stay. I slept on a porch of a dilapidated clapboard house that had a family of six. I slept on a-- what would you call it--a chaise lounge that night, with a blanket over me. I didn't get much sleep, but it was enough. They gave us some biscuits and grits in the morning. We went back to the--this was only a couple blocks from the school, from the grounds. In fact, this last March, when I went back to Montgomery for the fiftieth anniversary of the

march, I walked into the community and I found that house that I had slept in. That was still in unbelievable condition. I took a picture of it. Hard to believe, but in fact that whole community had not changed that much over fifty years. Some of the houses had been torn down and had been rebuilt nicely, but [1:55:00] very few. Most of them were still--you would recognize them as a Southern black ghetto.

In any case, we did march the next morning into town. Dr. King was marching at the head of the line, even though he had been threatened. There had been talk of a sharpshooter. None of us knew this at the time. Some of the SNCC leaders--I don't know, Andy Young, Hosea, some of the others--had gotten all the black ministers to wear the same suit and tie, so that anybody looking--a sharpshooter or anybody who was looking to do Dr. King harm--there was twelve or fifteen black ministers all walking, arm to arm. It would be very hard to pick out a single person, a particular person. So they marched most of the way like that, particularly when getting into the white section. There was a lot of hostility along the route.

DC: How about within the group of marchers? What was the mood?

MM: It was joyful. It was joyful. There were lots of dignitaries. Harry Belafonte, who had become a great benefactor of the movement, and Sammy Davis, Jr., had organized the entertainment that night at the City of St. Jude. There was a makeshift stage that had been just temporarily built, and some sound equipment and lights that, because of the rain, had been short-circuited. All the entertainment was supposed to start about six, and it started about nine, but nobody cared much. Dakota Statton, Peter, Paul and Mary, I think Tony Bennett. Floyd Patterson was one of my heroes at the time, the

heavyweight champion--ex-heavyweight champion. He was there, and I got to shake his hand. It was a wonderful show. The next morning, everybody was in good spirits.

The National Guard had been mobilized, had been federalized, and so they were lining the route. For the most part, they were facing the streets in which we were marching, with their backs to the houses in the community. On a number of occasions in the white community, people were throwing things over the head of a National Guard. The National Guard had their backs turned to them. There were some bricks and all kind--other thing--a little of it. It wasn't a whole lot, but it did happen. I marched hand-in-hand with Odetta part of the way, who had been discovered by Harry Belafonte in South Africa, and was marching with us. I walked in front of Peter, Paul and Mary for part of the time. Peter Yarrow was here in Washington--has been here in Washington for years, at Dumbarton Methodist Church occasionally.

It was good spirits. Dr. King made that famous speech in front of the state house. When we walked--when we turned the corner on Dexter Avenue to walk that last mile down Dexter Avenue toward the state house, people were joyous. It was--we passed Dexter Avenue Church, where Dr. King had been preaching in Montgomery at the time of the boycott. We passed the...the hotel. Dexter Avenue was where [2:00:00] Jefferson Davis had been--where the inaugural parade at the beginning of the Civil War had--and where he was sworn in as--in front of the state house there. We passed the--I can't remember the name of the hotel. On the march, we passed the name of the hotel where the slave quarters--where the slave market had been. A hundred years before, 1865, they were still selling slaves there. That made an impression, let me tell you. There's a big

Confederate flag up on the front of the hotel there, above the old slave market.

So Joseph Lowery of SCLC, the president--I think he was president at the time-- had been elected president--was supposed to give the demands to George Wallace, but Wallace was--if he was in his office, he didn't appear. Some said he was spotted peeking out between the blinds from his office, but who knows? Joseph Lowery went up to the steps, but Wallace sent out an assistant. Dr. Lowery did not give the petition to the assistant, but they did deliver that petition a month or so later, when Wallace gave a private audience.

They had two flatbed trucks there, and that was from the platform where Dr. King gave his speech. I managed to get pretty close. That was, again, a powerful speech. Didn't get as much as the Lincoln Memorial speech in [19]63 press attention, but it was a classic speech. He used the rhetoric, at the time, "How long?" He would say things like, "Segregated schools across the South. How long?" We would all answer, "Not long." And, "Segregated facilities and denial of voting rights. How long?" We'd all say, "Not long." It was a great speech, and a great time. Big celebration. There was a lot of celebration at the time, because the accomplishment of marching had been achieved. But again, what had changed? The National Guard was ringing the square in front of the state house, and thousands of people were there, twenty thousand people maybe. A lot of them had stayed for the speech, and a lot of them had begun to go, but nobody had made many--had thought much about what happens next.

St. Jude had buses to get people back to St. Jude, but Richard had driven our drive-away car down two or three blocks from the state house, so that our car was

accessible. Once we left the ring of protected area where the National Guard was, there wasn't any protection. So we got to our car. It had Illinois license plates, and it was undamaged, and so we were thankful and got into the car to head back to Memphis. It was six o'clock or something by that time, and beginning to get dark. Richard was driving, but we stopped to get some sandwiches or something, to get a bite to eat, at a mom-and-pop gas station. We came back, and I got behind--it was my turn to drive. We pulled out [2:05:00] to get back on Highway 82, going up to Memphis, and a pickup truck with a gun rack on the back had noticed our Illinois plates, I think, and pulled behind us. As we got out of town, the truck was ramming our back bumper. We were driving--I was driving the speed limit, forty-five, something like that, but he was bump--he was hitting our back bumper. We didn't know if they had--there was a gun rack. I don't know if they had guns or not.

I sped up, sped out of town, up Highway 82, as fast as I could go. I was driving seventy-five, eighty miles an hour to try to get away, and went around a curve in the road. We had, he had as much power and speed as we did, but we had the traction. I went around the curve about eighty miles an hour, and he didn't make it. He ended up in the ditch. And so we got away, got back to Memphis. We didn't know it at the time, but on Highway 80, going back to Selma, was when Viola Liuzzo was shot. There were people all along 80 taking shots at anybody in cars with mixed black and white passengers and with out-of-state plates. Viola Liuzzo from Detroit, who had come like the rest of us for that march, was shot and killed. Others, I'm sure, were shot that day, but I don't know--the headlines was--we learned about that when we got back. But we were on a smaller



road, Highway 82, going back to Memphis. We got back, and we delivered our car. We had signed insurance, so the insurance paid for the damage, I think, on the back of the car. So we had to go back to Chicago. Dick and Henry--Illinois Central Railroad runs from New Orleans to Chicago, through Memphis. They had enough money to buy a train ticket. I didn't have any money, so I hitchhiked. I got back before they did.

DC: You used your thumb all through the movement.

MM: Yeah.

DC: You want to pause or some--. [Recorder is turned off and then back on]

Male 1: Getting back to the thumb.

DC: Yeah, just a casual aside about the importance of the thumb to the Civil Rights Movement. [Laughs]

MM: Yeah, those were different days. There were no interstates. One could hitchhike pretty easily. Most people that picked me up in those days thought I was a returning veteran from Korea, or was a veteran from Vietnam or something. Blacks and whites would pick me up. I had some real experiences. One time when I was hitchhiking back from Mississippi, through Alabama, I got a ride with a white guy, who, interestingly enough, made advances to me. I had only a little knapsack in the backseat of his car, and so I put him off and reached back and got my knapsack to get a candy bar, and had the knapsack in my lap. So when he came to a stop sign, I jumped out of the car. Well, it was probably ten, eleven o'clock at night, in Alabama, out in the pine forest, and it was dark. It was so dark, you couldn't see across the road. He went on, but there I was. It was a stop sign at a crossroads. I just had to wait until--I felt like I was there the rest of

the night. I was just going to have to sleep on the side of the road. I was prepared to do that. [2:10:00] Several cars came by on the crossroad going different directions. I was trying to get to Birmingham.

After an hour--I don't know how long it was. It was a long time. I saw a car coming in the direction that I had come from. It was going the right direction, and took a long time to get to me. It turns out it was a rickety old truck with a black guy who was driving, and he looked like he was about fifty, but he was about thirty. Asked me where I was going, and I told him I was trying to get to Birmingham. He said, "Boy, you ain't going to get nowhere tonight. Why don't you come with me, and you can sleep at my place, and in the morning, when it's light, I'll take you back to the highway." Well, that's the best offer I'd had all night, so I got in the truck. We were talking. He had been down in Mississippi, selling meat. I thought... He explained how he would butcher meat, and he would take it to the meat market, and that's how he made his living. Well, I just assumed he was a black farmer with a small farm, and would occasionally butcher hogs. We turned off the road, on a dirt road, and it was black to begin with, but this was even blacker. This was even darker. This was deep forest, and you could barely see the rutted road. But, he drove for maybe a quarter of a mile--I don't know how long--up this rutted, one-lane road, to his little farm, to his little cottage--cabin. It was a cabin. We had talked some, but he told me he had two kids, and his wife would put me up. We went in. I hadn't--you couldn't see anything. I went in and slept on the--the kids had mattresses on the floor. There were only two rooms in the place, and he took the kids to one side of the room. He and his wife slept on the bed in the other room and put a mattress on the floor

by the wood stove for me to sleep.

Next morning, I wake up, and she fixed some fatback and some biscuits. He took me out to the truck to take me back to the road and showed me around, and it was a big clearing, fenced off, with a lot of chickens in the yard, but fenced off, and there was a swamp. We had come through a swamp the night before. He made his living by catching alligators. We were in an alligator swamp. He would catch alligators and sell the alligator meat down in Mississippi, which was great. In New Orleans--all the times I would go to New Orleans, always loved to get alligator po' boys. Alligator meat was the way he made his living. That blew my mind at the time. That was--I didn't think I would ever sleep in the middle of an alligator farm. He took one of these chickens and went out to the fence where he--and threw it over there in the swamp, and alligators came up and grabbed that chicken. But that's how he made his living. So he took me back to the highway, and I managed to get a ride and thumb my way back to Virginia at the time.

DC: Incredible experiences.

MM: That was the most unusual experience. Hitchhiking. But when I was with the group in Chicago, we were demonstrating most of [19]65, [19]66 in downtown Chicago, and the beginnings--SCLC had started what they called Operation Breadbasket in Atlanta. Well, actually, [2:15:00] there were several of these kinds of enterprises around the country, most notably in Philadelphia, when Leon Sullivan began to organize to get jobs and food for people. SCLC had established a project--you could even call it an arm of SCLC. It was Operation Breadbasket. Jesse Jackson had become affiliated with SCLC at the time. It's interesting. He went to Selma. He had been arrested many

times in North Carolina and Chicago, and was a veteran of the movement, as it were. In Selma, when they were trying to organize thousands of people outside of Brown Chapel, there was a section, on occasion, when people needed to be organized, and Jesse stepped up and organized them and got them into places for the march, and got--Hosea Williams noticed it, and then recommended to Martin King, later, that Jesse would be a good person to bring into the movement, and so they did. Jesse--.

DC: He was already established in Chicago.

MM: He was established, but just head of our little movement. Al Raby at CCCO, and Bill Berry at the Urban League, were still the ones who were calling the shots. Now, Jesse never really integrated himself into that action. He was part of that action for the Willis wagons getting--the school movement, but was part of the effort to get the unions integrated. But after [19]65, when he was recognized by Dr. King and others, Al Raby was trying to get Dr. King to come north to Chicago. There was talk--there was a lot of talk--about SCLC and the movement being effective in the South, but nobody could do anything about the Northern cities. We saw what happened when the [19]54 Supreme Court decision was made. There was wide resistance in the South with the formation of private white high schools and elementary schools, and so many of the Southern states remained segregated. We know what happened at Little Rock when Faubus stood in the door and Eisenhower had to send in the troops. But we sometimes forget what happened in Boston and some of the other major Northern cities that began busing and started--and so the schools remain segregated in many places in the North. There was a lot of talk about how the movement was effective in the South, but in the

North, it wouldn't work. Nothing would work.

Dr. King, by this time, knew that if this movement was going to make any more progress in the South and in the major cities across the country, they had to engage. Now, Watts blew up in [19]65, and a lot of cities burned that summer. Chicago burned--the West Side of Chicago burned in [19]65, [19]66, the fall. [2:20:00] It must have been the fall of [19]65. I was involved in the West Side organization that took a lot of seminary students as interns. There were some ministers on the West Side who were very active on the housing front, and jobs. One good friend of mine, his church burned, and his apartment where he and his wife lived were in a block that just escaped being burned. But they finally--he called me and came to stay with us in our apartment on the South Side that night. They had decided they had had it. So they went back to their apartment, they got a trailer behind their car, loaded everything up, came back to stay with us another night, and then started driving west. That was Ulysses Doss and his wife. He was a Methodist minister--still is a Methodist minister, but he--so he stopped to see some friends in Wisconsin and Minnesota, and then drove on. Got as far as Montana, and liked it, so they stayed. They stayed in Missoula. He was preaching and organizing, and subsequently he organized the Black Studies program at the University of Montana. That was the rest of his career. Chicago had burned.

Al Raby had invited Martin to come to Chicago. There's a lot of argument against it. Andy Young was reticent. Of course, Andy was in the position--by this time, he had replaced Wyatt as executive director of SCLC, and so his job was always to be the naysayer. That is, to Jim Bevel and Hosea. Hosea was always willing to march, ready to

demonstrate. Jim Bevel would come up with these ideas for direct action, with no perception, no thought about how are we going to get out of it. Well, Andy always had to think about consequences, and who was going to pay for it, and what was going to happen afterwards. Hosea Williams and Jim Bevel got--they were always in arguments, and mainly vying for priority with Dr. King and some others. Their personalities were just totally different, and Andy was always in the middle, and trying to keep things going.

He reluctantly--finally, Dr. King came to Chicago. I think Andy, for the most part, took the lead in getting things established. Found an apartment, 16<sup>th</sup> and Hamlin, where Dr. King was supposed to live, as a--living with the people, in the ghetto, in poor housing. Well, the landlords got wind that this apartment was going to be for Dr. King, so they fixed up the place. But even so, it was cold, and it was not the kind of apartment--I was there only once. It was not the kind of place that you would recommend to anybody. In fact, when Andy Young and the others--it was mostly others living there, even though Martin stayed there some when he was in Chicago. But that was in January of [19]66, and it was cold. People learned that, ah, there are these celebrities staying in this apartment, so they started bringing all their complaints about not having any heat and not having any water and stuff. [2:25:00] Andy Young and Al Raby and the others were able to get landlords to fix things up. The more they got things fixed up in the neighborhood, the more people started bringing their complaints. They actually started some corporations to buy property and fix them up for people to own some apartments, instead of living in these apartments, as co-ops. Chicago had provision for co-ops, and I think probably still does. Mainly co-ops on the North Side, but the law applied to

everybody. I lived in a co-op in Chicago those years.

DC: But that's tenant union kind of stuff?

MM: Yeah, it's a union--yeah. It's a homeowner's association that owns the place. [Recorder is turned off and then back on] I'll finish up pretty quickly.

Male 1: Okay, we're going again.

MM: In Chicago, the places that were the focus of the movement were housing, and how to do something about the segregated housing. There were also movements to get Mayor Daley to change some of the laws, and one of those was a big rally at Soldier Field in spring--summer--July 10. It was right after Independence Day, [19]66. It was hot. It was as hot as I'd ever been. Big rally at Soldier Field, with some entertainment. Dick Gregory spoke, and Dr. King was supposed to lead a march to City Hall to nail ninety-six theses on the door of City Hall à la Martin Luther. Well, we marched. I think Dr. King might even have passed out, I don't know, but he was brought back in time to be at City Hall and duck-tape, I think, the ninety-six theses to the wall--to the door--so that Mayor Daley would have to respond. A week later, Daley did meet privately, I think, with Martin and some of the other leaders.

But at the time, Jesse was head of Operation Breadbasket in Chicago, and was always making statements to the press. The press knew how to find Jesse at the time, and he never shied away from a camera. He is the one who said, "Next week, we're going to march into the Southwest Side." Dr. King didn't know anything about that. Again, it was the kind of thing that, once it's said and there's some organization, you either have to do it or come up with something better. Against the best thoughts of some, we marched

through Gage Park. Now, I had been in a lot of demonstrations in the South, but that was middle of August, maybe. I was more scared that day in Chicago than I've ever been in any demonstration in the South, in any circumstance. This was a white ethnic community that was blue-collar, and they didn't want anybody changing anything. Dr. King was hit by a rock in the head. Cars were burned. We all had to stop, turn around, and disperse. Buses were there for some people, but everybody couldn't get on the buses.

DC: Didn't Dr. King say something about the hatred that he saw in Chicago was even worse than--.

MM: Yeah, he said the hatred that he saw that day was worse than anything he had ever seen. Subsequently, there was another march into Cicero that didn't fare any better. It was a lot of hostility. Cicero was outside the Chicago city limits. Gage Park was one of those communities in Chicago. [2:30:00]

DC: Were you prepared? Did you know that there would be that level of animosity?

MM: No, nobody did. Nobody. We feared for it. I wasn't part of the planning. I just was a foot soldier. I just was--they would schedule marches, and I would show up. A lot of other colleagues did. As a matter of fact, I didn't know it at the time, but Felton Edwin May, who was a graduate student, young minister, in Chicago at the time, was in those same marches. He was subsequently elected bishop, and was our bishop here in Baltimore-Washington Conference for eight years.

DC: Just an aside, had you been ordained by then?

MM: Yeah. I had been ordained in Minnesota in 1964. My clergy credentials



were still in--.

DC: When you marched, were you in street clothes, or was there any way of identifying you as a minister?

MM: Some people wore collars. I never did. On some occasions, I would wore a stole. A lot of the times, it was the ministers in demonstrations who were supposed to be the ones arrested, because theoretically, laypeople had jobs and could get fired and things like that. There were occasions when we would wear a stole. Anyway, that was the movement in Chicago. We continued to do things. Operation Breadbasket split off in Chicago from SCLC in Atlanta, because Jesse took it independently and then organized the PUSH, Rainbow Coalition--Operation PUSH first, and then the Rainbow Coalition. Subsequently, in the '80s, of course, ran for president, with a huge result. More millions of votes than any black person had ever received before. But in [19]68, when Dr. King was shot, and then Bobby Kennedy was shot, by that time, Al Lowenstein was organizing the Dump Johnson movement. A lot of us moved that direction. That's when I burned my draft card, and lots of others were doing that kind of thing. The whole--by the '60s, everything--late '60s--everything had changed. That's the story, except for details about SIM. We'll have to think about doing another ( ) I guess.

DC: Can we do just a few minutes to talk about that time when you were the national coordinator for--if I got the title right--for the Student Interracial Ministry? Then if you could take us back to Chicago, maybe we could leave with the Ecumenical Institute, because I think what that does is it connects back to the urban needs.

MM: The Student Interracial Ministry had taken shape really in [19]64, [19]65,

on a broader scale. That's when Sherrod had gone back to Union as a student and met others there--George Walters, Ed [Fever?], others who wanted to expand it--and began to think about ways to get other seminaries involved. The National Council of Churches had provided some fiscal management for SIM, and so they put out a call--I'm not sure where the notice--I noticed it, it had to have been at the Divinity School--looking for a national coordinator. George had done that for a year, [19]64, I think, [19]65. So I responded, was interviewed. I had been involved in the movement in these various ways, and so I guess they thought it was a good match. But we had to recruit seminaries. The main thing was they wanted to begin to move into the urban situation, not just put black students in white congregations and white students as interns in black congregations, [2:35:00] but to do urban ministry in a new way. That's where apparently I had some gifts, and so they hired me. It was a pittance of salary. It was simply a stipend, and some expenses.

We organized the orientation that summer, [19]66, with the leadership from the Ecumenical Institute in Chicago, although we did it at a seminary in St. Louis--outside of St. Louis. It worked in a bit, but a lot of the--some of the students rebelled from the method that was being utilized. But nevertheless, we got students prepared, for the most part, and sent them off to their respective assignments all over the country. Chicago, on the Near North Side, had three students. Milwaukee had an urban project. Minneapolis had an urban project that had four students, I think. We had students in Oakland, California and Richmond, California, and Watts--we had students assigned to Watts, to work with Reverend [Speed Lees?]. He's the only white man I ever met who could walk

down Central Avenue in Watts and have everybody recognize him by name and call out. Had great rapport with the black community. But it was a tough time, because Watts had burned.

We had students in a number of places in the South. A student in New Orleans. I visited New Orleans, and I stayed with Andy Young's family in that--. His father was a dentist and a leader in the New Orleans black community. We had students in Mississippi, in the Delta, mostly out in Greenville and Yazoo City and some other places up there, working with Leon Howell. We had students in Montgomery. We had students in Mobile, I think. A number of places in Georgia. Albany movement, Southwest Georgia. I spent a good bit of that year in Southwest Georgia. Voter registration. Students in Atlanta. I worked for Julian Bond when he was being reelected to where he had been kicked out of the Georgia House of Representatives for his being a Communist, and being sympathetic to the Viet Cong, being in the--. Well, anyway. We had students in South Carolina, out on Johns Island. Boy, that was an experience, because the people there, you couldn't even understand their English. Raleigh, with Oscar McCloud. Richmond. Baltimore. Here in Washington, and then Baltimore. Students in Fells Point, Philadelphia, New York. We had students in urban situations all over. They were breaking new ground. The churches were still, in that time, abandoning the inner city, and so they were doing basic community organizing.

We had very few foundation grants. We had a foundation grant that we used up pretty quickly, and then we couldn't get other foundations to--. The whole country was in flux in [19]67, [19]68, politically, [2:40:00] with the Vietnam War. If you didn't have a

mission that connected with a foundation's mission and what they were trying to do, with a strategy that promised some kind of result that could easily be identified, you just couldn't get foundation grants.

DC: Some of the progressive foundations that had really supported civil rights work started to pull back.

MM: Started to pull back. The Student Interracial Ministry hung on. Ed [Ruin?], who had been assigned to New York at that time, I think--first in Milwaukee, and then in New York--. I went back in [19]67, [19]68 to finish my graduate program at the Divinity School, and Ed took over the national coordinator job. Basically, it was just to tie things up, because we had no money left. We spent everything that we had with the interns, giving them as much of their stipend as we had promised, as we could, until the money ran out. National Council of Churches was moving in a different direction, and Student Interracial Ministry finally had to close its doors, because the situation left it behind. Ideologically, it was no longer in tune with what was happening, and financially it was...we were broke. It was not the only--. The Student Interracial Ministry closed its doors. The Interseminary-Movement evaporated. The Student Christian Movement evaporated, for different reasons. Everything seemed to change, [19]68, [19]69, after Kent State, after Martin was killed, after Bobby Kennedy was killed. Hope had to be reformulated, and everything had to--. The Vietnam War was the overarching framework for everything to take a different direction.

DC: Let's just end, if you could, in a just a minute or so, tell us about your, then, work in Chicago, focusing on the urban situation there.

MM: I stayed in the urban situation. I worked for a guy named James Burns, who headed the Chicago Commission on Human Rights, which was founded in answer to the city council, and not Mayor Daley. Jim Burns was an independent. We were supposed to be a presence on the streets to make sure that racial justice was recognized and police couldn't-- So we were on the streets during the [19]68 convention, and, oh, what an experience that was.

DC: Can you describe that in thirty-- [Laughs]

MM: In thirty seconds? Well, it was a police riot. When people in Grant Park began to throw teargas canisters back to--and threw other things at the police, just because that's the way things happen. The police were Mayor Daley's private army, essentially, and they just waded into the demonstrators. Same in Lincoln Park up on the North Side.

DC: And you were in the middle of all that, trying to keep the peace?

MM: Yeah, we were watching it, and we were trying to-- Everybody got teargas who didn't-- The police had masks on, gas masks on. It was chaotic. Finally, things calmed down a bit. I worked the rest of that year for the Chicago Commission on Human Relations, and then went to the YMCA College. We were a downtown college, four thousand students, four elevators. We would take students right off the block on the South and West Side to try to get them in college. Transferred a lot of our students who were intellectually capable to Ivy League colleges. But there were forty [2:45:00] YMCA centers in Chicago. Chicago was the largest YMCA center in the country, as an association, all through the West and South Sides. So we worked with the Blackstone

Rangers and Devil's Disciples in Lawndale. John [Frye?] at the Second Presbyterian Church in Woodlawn, in Chicago, had a ministry that included the Rangers. That was an incredible time, because the black Muslims were strong and out on the streets, keeping the peace. Muhammad Ali was living in the next block from where I was living, and participated with some of the gangs to try to get them to calm down.

My wife, at the time, moved to Washington to accept a job with a National Council on Humanities, and so we relocated to Washington in 1980, and I transferred my ministerial credentials into the Baltimore-Washington Conference. I've been, the past thirty-five years, until retirement, active in the Baltimore-Washington Conference. Served on the conference program staff for a while, with a racial justice portfolio. I've been arrested in Chicago. I've been arrested in Washington. I was arrested in front of the South African embassy here when we were demonstrating against Apartheid. Every day, different churches and ministers were assigned to that day. When I was arrested, I was handcuffed to my bishop, and we rode in the paddy wagon, handcuffed together, to the second district, where we were booked. Of course, apartheid didn't last the '80s. Other demonstrations for homeless here, with many people involved.

DC: So the struggle continued into a variety of different--.

MM: Oh, yeah. Different ways and--. Now, Black Lives Matter. There's a lot of homicides, black-on-black crime, but there's now significant blue-on-black crime. People don't call it crime, but it's blue-on-black killing. Police are changing their ways, and we hope for the better, but every day, every week, we hear of another black person, usually a black man, but innocent bystanders being killed by police and by other

instances, crossfire and other ways. There's still a lot of work to be done, and the churches are engaging as best they know how, but it's always a question of resources and how much you can do, where, each time. We were fortunate all during those years of having lawyers who donated their time, for the most part, to get us out of jail and get indictments quashed or dismissed. Very few of those incidents turned into actual court cases. Celebrated ones, of course--Martin and Ralph Abernathy paid their dues in jails, and many others did, too. The movement isn't even identifiable now in the same terms that it existed then. What came out of Ferguson, of course, is still alive. There are many people in many parts of the country that are still putting their lives on the line. One hopes that change will continue.

DC: Great. Let's probably end right there, [2:50:00] and just let me thank you very much for your time and sharing those incredible stories with us.

MM: All right. So--.

Female 1: This has been a presentation of the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

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