

H: It is July 11, 2004, and I am here with Mr. Jack Gunter, formerly of the *Nashville Banner*, who was kind enough to agree to meet, and he has already shown me some pictures from his career at the *Banner* when he was a photographer. I thank you very much for your time, Mr. Gunter.

G: Yes, sir. Glad to do it.

H: Why don't we start off with when and where you were born?

G: I was born in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1929. I was raised in East Nashville, I went to East High School where George Barrett [Nashville labor and civil rights attorney], who you know, went. So, basically my life's been right around here, except I got drafted into the Army and I had to leave for that. I was a combat photographer from the Forty-Fifth Infantry division in Korea and then I came back here and all these things were going on, civil rights movement and things, and I thought, my God, the fighting never stops. But it's been very nice.

H: What did your parents do?

G: My father was an asbestos worker and covered steam plants on ships during the war and he moved around, and [because of that] I moved a lot. The family followed jobs. I lived in New Orleans; I lived in Tampa, Florida; Pascagoula, Mississippi, and after that job was finished, we headed back to Nashville. I don't know why we kept coming back, but we did. But things were like that. That's the kind of life I led. Living from one place to another. My father bought a house after I was grown, [he hadn't before] because we moved so much. So other than that, that's basically the way I traveled along.

H: How would you describe Nashville of the 1940s and the 1950s to someone like me, who is an outsider both to the city and to the time period?

G: It was a working city. Everybody mostly worked for a living, were very proud of it along about that time. In the 1940s, people rented a lot, but all the families I knew were from working families. There wasn't any of this not working and goofing-off kind of stuff. They all worked and were very hard workers.

H: Would you consider it a conservative town or a liberal town?

G: I would call it very conservative. If you don't work, you were not the right kind of person. That's the way they operated.

H: Talk a little bit about what it was like growing up in the segregated South to someone my age, who has never really experienced that sort of era of segregation.

G: Well, it was a very nice life to grow up [in], and we didn't know that much about segregation. As a kid, there just wasn't that much difference. Of course, there was a difference, don't get me wrong, but we didn't know about it. We didn't

understand that; at least I don't think I understood anything was going on, until later in life. But, as a kid growing up, you didn't see that much. Now one thing that I do remember is that school buses would pass us with blacks going to black schools. I never really accepted that. I always kind of felt sorry for them. But, basically, that was kind of it. You know, [there were] mixed ball teams and all that kind of things and whatnot. I think that most people did not understand. Kids growing up didn't understand segregation. There was never any talk to me in my home, it was never mentioned, no black persons in my home, I just never heard that.

H: So it was almost unconscious, the way that this society worked.

G: Yeah, I think that would be a good way to describe it.

H: Describe, if you will, how you feel like race relations were in Nashville in the [19]40s and [19]50s before the civil rights movement really came to a head.

G: Looking back at it, it was kind of a pitiful thing. It was kind of a sad situation. I have many, many black friends now that I didn't have growing up as a kid, because I wasn't near them or close to them. But I never had any problems, myself, making black friends. I have a lot of black friends at the Metro Courthouse that I could call right now. But it is kind of hard to describe something about back in those years when you didn't know that much about it. But, looking back, it is sad that it happened.

H: Talk a little bit about how you started working for the *Banner* and how your career as a journalist came to fruition.

G: Well, I had a brother that was fifteen years older than I was that worked there and he went off to World War II. Then in 1947, [I was] out of high-school on a summer job, [and] I went down there and got an office boy's job and that's how I started; and I loved it. I just thought, this is the greatest place in the world to work. From there, after I got out of high-school, we couldn't afford to send me to college in my family, so I went to work at the newspaper and I was taught photography by some of the older photographers. One of them, John Morgan, who was very nice to me, was my brother's age. He showed me all about it and then my brother died in 1949; I continued to work there. While I was working there, I got drafted into the Army, [and] that was the big deal back then. [There were] a lot of people running off to join the Coast Guard or the Reserves or the National Guard or whatever, but the crowd of guys I was raised with, the attitude was, whatever happens is going to happen. We're going to do it, because this is America and we want to do our part. So we were drafted and sent off and spent two years in the infantry. Then I came back to my job and continued. Back then they counted the years that I was gone in the Army. It is important there to newspapers to count [years of military service].

H: Talk a little bit about Jimmy Stahlman [editor of the *Nashville Banner*].

G: I thought Jimmy Stahlman is probably the greatest American I have ever known. A lot of people want to call him a racist. He was not a racist. He did not do things that he is accused of doing and I've seen him make speeches about America and start crying. He served as a captain in the Navy during World War II. He was very respectful to the employees and extremely nice to them. In fact, I had the pleasure of being an honorary pall-bearer in his funeral. So was John Morgan, that one that taught me [photography]. But I thought that he was probably one of the greatest Americans I have ever known. Yet, when I would see people abuse him and accuse him of being a racist, it would hurt my feelings, because they didn't know what they were talking about.

H: What are these things that he was accused of doing that he never actually did, that you referenced earlier?

G: Just being racist, which was not true. That got around that the *Banner* was not a popular newspaper with blacks. I never really understood that, because we tried to do what we could, and I went to Fisk as a photographer, and Tennessee A & I [now Tennessee State University] as a photographer, and took pictures. We ran stories of blacks, we did not throw black pictures out. I got into an argument not long ago with a lawyer who wrote an article saying that the *Banner* did not run segregation pictures, and I called him a liar. Because he was a liar. It is not true. What the *Banner* tried to do, what Stahlman tried to do, was to stop publishing photographs and stories on the civil rights demonstrations, and tried to get to the *Tennessean* to stop, before somebody got killed. That was his plan. The *Tennessean* would not cooperate or go along with it, so we stopped for two days and he said, well, let's go back to covering it, because the [*Tennessean*] would not be a part of it. I remember one thing. Mr. Stahlman called a meeting of the business people downtown that owned restaurants and things, to come to his office one Sunday. I picked up people and brought them down there to the meeting. [I] dropped them off and carried them back to their business. In that meeting, his word was, let them in the restaurants, let them eat, let's [end the demonstrations]. Stop it. He never got credit for that. I am an eyewitness to knowing what happened. It was a shame; but that's when they started letting them in places to eat, because of that meeting he had. But I thought he was a fantastic person.

H: This meeting that you were referring to, it was during your original 1960s sit-ins, then?

G: Yeah, it was early [19]60s, it was towards the end. That's really what broke it up. Even though people at the *Tennessean* and John Seigenthaler [former editor of the *Tennessean*] wouldn't admit that. But that's the truth.

H: Talk a little bit about the rivalry between the *Banner* and the *Tennessean*. How were the newspapers different, and what was the interaction between the two?

G: Well, the truth of the matter is that we dedicated ourselves on the *Banner* to beat the *Tennessean* on every story. I'm not talking about that racial [coverage], just anything, and we outfoxed them, day and night. The only thing that hurt the *Banner*, in later years, is that it was an afternoon newspaper, and that's when television moved up, and things like that. But we beat them, and today the *Tennessean* is not worth printing. It's a disgrace.

H: Because of the Gannett takeover and whatnot?

G: Yeah, Gannett took it over and it was, I thought, a total disgrace, today. People tell me that every day. They know that I worked at the *Banner*. They say, isn't that thing awful? And it is, if you've looked at it. I called them one day and asked them if they watch television. I asked, what are you all doing? Getting your stories off the TV? Then somebody told me, that most of the reporters now work out of their home. What kind of deal is that? Work on it on the computer, send it down? We had great challenge in wanting to beat the *Tennessean*, and we did, we beat them regularly. If they were to beat us on a story, they were so proud, and they should be.

H: So how would you have characterized the philosophical differences between the newspaper, in terms of the editorial boards?

G: We were Republican, and they were Democrat, and that's basically all there was. Other than that, the *Tennessean* hated Frank Clement [Governor of Tennessee, 1953-1959, 1963-1967], the governor, and they would have cartoons; the drawing would show a bottle in his hip pocket. The *Banner* supported Clement, and whoever we supported, they were against. It was just that way. I guess it got down to the fact that it was Republican and Democrat.

H: Now, as I understand correctly, there was politics making strange bedfellows, in the sense that the *Banner* was the supporter of Ben West [mayor of Nashville, 1951-1963] even though Mayor Ben West was pro-civil rights in a way that the *Banner* might not have been. Can you talk a little bit about how that worked and how that functioned?

G: Well, where did that come from that we were not for civil rights?

H: Well, that's the conventional wisdom. Which is part of the reason why I am interviewing you.

G: Well, that's not exactly true. That's a created thing.

[tape interrupted.]

G: This right here was published for the *Nashville Bar Journal*, and it has a bunch of these pictures I showed you. I want to show you something else. Read that article right there. By Henry Walker and John Seigenthaler.

H: This article is talking about Seigenthaler and his involvement with the Freedom Rides. They don't talk about the *Banner* much in here, do they?

G: Well, go right ahead and read that, and I will show you. Did you see the point where he made the remark about the newspaper, the *Banner*? Now read that letter to the editor.

H: Very good. So, you sort of make it a point to try to correct this perception that the *Tennessean* was the only one out there?

G: Absolutely. That's bull.

H: Good. So go ahead, then, please, by all means, set the historical record straight about the *Banner* and the reality of its coverage of race relations, and especially how it configured into politics and the like.

G: One thing is that John Seigenthaler always likes to refer to how much he knows about it, well, he wasn't even here. He was off with Bobby Kennedy [Robert "Bobby" Francis Kennedy – U.S. Senator from New York, 1965-1968; U.S. Attorney General, 1961-1964]. He claims in the story, or was quoted in a story, how he was knocked out down there where he was [Seigenthaler was attacked by a white mob in Montgomery, Alabama, while representing the Kennedy Administration during the Freedom Rides]. That's not true, at all. He wasn't knocked out. He was pushed around and cursed and shoved, but he wasn't knocked out unconscious. And I don't understand why people do things like that.

H: How do you know this, that he wasn't knocked out?

G: Everybody knew what happened down there. That was a [story] that John got pushed around, there were stories about it, but there was not a story or any information about him being knocked out—knocked unconscious. That's bull. In fact, after that came out in the papers, there was a bunch of people laughing about it.

H: So do you think that, for example, in the case of Ben West and the *Banner*, do you think there was agreement on how race relations should be managed and taken care of?

G: I don't think that Mr. Stahlman would sit down with anybody and have an agreement about how things were going to go. Back then, [it was believed that] politics ought to work their way around without publicly discussing what they are going to do. You do this, we'll cover you, or you do that, and we'll take care of

you. That was not that much. Now if we were after you, politically and editorially, then we went after you. But if we protected you, then we tried to show what the other side was doing. But the media today is not friends with like George Bush. They're not fair with George Bush. They don't give the true stories on the three big networks, and it's a shame. Because I think the United States public deserves to know. And I saw a thing on Channel 8 the other night where over a hundred journalists have been killed in Russia. Did you see that?

H: No, I didn't.

G: Over a hundred have been killed. And what they were doing was writing about the gangs and the mafia and the government, and if you write about the government or the mafia in Russia, you get killed. I saw on television the other night where an American journalist was killed over there three days ago while writing something. And what have we done about that? Nothing. So, I think it is about time that this government stood up and—you don't have to go start a war—but at least, make some kind of a statement about it. I didn't hear anything from the Democrats or the Republicans about it. Freedom of the press really is what made this country. I think that this country would not be here in the shape that it's in if it weren't for the media. Am I right or am I wrong?

H: I suspect you are probably right. It is a big part. In terms of Jimmy Stahlman, can you talk a little bit about his involvement with Jim Lawson's expulsion from Vanderbilt?

G: I don't know that much about it. I'm sorry, I can't remember any details about that. We are talking about what, fifty years ago? [laughing] It's hard to remember something like that.

H: You were talking just now about how politics worked in Nashville and how it was mutual groups working towards mutual ends, but very subtly, without interaction. Can you talk a little bit about where the power was in Nashville and your experience as a journalist—who really ran the city?

G: I would say that who really ran the city was the publishers of the newspaper—both of them. The politics were more or less what people like that had to say. I'll tell you somebody who would be a great person for you to interview is Eddie Jones [Edward F. "Eddie" Jones-former Nashville Chamber of Commerce official].

H: I have interviewed him, actually.

G: Oh yeah? Eddie Jones knows as much about it as anybody. He's spent a lifetime involved with it. Did you get a good interview out of Eddie?

H: He had some really interesting anecdotes which were valuable, I think.

G: I think that Eddie would probably know as much. See, what's happened is, over the time, so many people have died, bless their poor hearts. But they've remembered so much. I remember society was not what it is today.

H: How is that?

G: Back then, well, they'd just have parties and you'd pay to go to fund-raisers. Back in those days [it was all about] high society. We had a thing in the *Banner* called the "Betty Banner," it was a fictitious name of a person who went to all of these big parties. You had to be a big blue-blood to get invited to the parties. Now, we get these little handout newspapers and everything, now I'm not saying that was a good thing, I'm just saying that's what went on then. Belle Meade Country Club was *the* place to be, then the next was Richland [Country Club], and then after that they founded Hillwood [Country Club], which was right across the street. Other than that, I don't know, give me another inquiry.

H: Do you think these—you were referring to these blue-bloods at Belle Meade—did they have a lot of influence on how the city was run?

G: Not particularly that. It wasn't that much, it was just all in the society of their own. I'm just over here, and you know, and I'm big time, and I'm rich, and all that. Which I didn't dislike people for that, it was just some of the attitude. That's the way it was. Blacks were not allowed in Belle Meade Country Club at that time. They are now, I'm sure. Nashville had been a great place to grow up, and it has progressed a lot. Nashville has really progressed.

H: Thinking about when you said that the *Banner* was basically Republican and that the *Tennessean* was basically Democrat, were you in fact raised Republican?

G: Mr. Stahlman did not push you to be anything. But what happened was that, being in the news business, and you were around each party so much covering it, that you decided for yourself which person you liked. Mr. Stahlman, if you asked him, would really like to tell you that he was an independent and a Republican. I think that he left the choices to the employees. I was never told who to vote for and [I] made up my own mind, and my family makes up their own mind. My father was a tremendous Democrat, he was a union organizer when he worked in the job that he had. Growing up into an atmosphere of a Republican or a Democrat, I don't remember the *Tennessean* pushing their employees to do this. I think that after you were out covering these things, it gave you sense enough to make up your own mind. I think that employees on both papers—we'll give them the credit—will be smart enough to figure out who is the best.

H: If it is all right with you, I would like to lead you through some of the racial events that happened during the civil rights movement and ask you to provide whatever

memories you recall of covering them, or how you experience them just as a citizen of Nashville; whatever sort of jobs you remember, I'd love to hear about that. I know that they probably all get jumbled together after all these years. Why don't we start with school integration? What do you remember about the process of Nashville integrating its schools?

G: The process—I don't understand what you are asking. Are you asking me what my opinion was?

H: That, or what you remember about the process by which Nashville went about integrating its own schools as a city.

G: Well, [to] take a major issue like that, I thought it worked out well. It took time, and now I think that Nashville probably is well-off. I see a lot of black kids and white kids running together now. I would think that the progress of the school integration worked about it well as it could have. Probably, truth be known, we set the pace.

H: Do you remember anything about when John Kasper [Nashville segregationist charged with inciting to riot when the first grades of city schools were desegregated in 1957] was in town? All that hullabaloo?

G: Do I ever. I remember all about it.

H: What do you remember about it?

G: I just remember going out there to cover him speaking. I had on my car windshield, which I never put anything like that on my [car], Nashville Press Photographer's Association—NPAA—and they thought it was NAACP.

H: Uh oh.

G: They tried to turn my car over. I floor-boarded it and dragged half of them down the road on it, and they let go of my car. They said, hey, he's a nigger lover. After[wards], I got back into the office to tell them about it, everybody thought it was funny that they were so stupid, that they thought NPPA had something to do with NAACP. That's the thing I remember most about John Kasper. I remember that he was in town and that there was a lot of fighting and all that, which you saw along with the pictures of that time.

H: Do you remember a group called the Tennessee Federation for Constitutional Government, which was led by Professor Donald Davidson?

G: No. I don't know [about] that.

H: What about the bombing of the Hattie Cotton School during 1957?

G: I got called at home, [and] went over there. It was toward dark, I'd just been uptown at the demonstration. I thought I was off for the night, [and] was trying to have dinner with my family; the phone rings, and I gotta to go Hattie Cotton. They had blown the hell out of it. I'm trying to think who was accused of that. You got the name?

H: I didn't know that they ever caught anybody for that.

G: They accused some people, but they never put the finger on them. I can't remember the name.

H: I think I might have newspaper clippings of that [accusation].

G: I don't remember it well.

H: How do you recall the city of Nashville reacting to that?

G: There was a lot of bitterness over it, which should have been. There was a lot of people upset. A lot of white people never wanted anybody to think that they were connected with that, or had anything to do with that, which it was a horrible thing, that somebody would do that. As I look back on it today, it's hard to believe that it happened. But those were bad days then.

H: What about the bombing of the Jewish Community Center?

G: I was there too. I was right in the middle of it.

H: What do you remember about that?

G: Just that there was a big crowd there, they blew it up. One of the funniest things about it is, one of my wife's doctors was out there on top of a paddywagon and he hollered and I asked, what are you doing up on that paddywagon? He said, man, I can see everything! Basically, I thought that it was another ridiculous thing to happen. It didn't make sense to do that.

H: It does seem that, considering that Nashville is praised as this city of non-violence, there was a fair amount of bombings and certainly you saw first-hand a lot of bloody one-on-one encounters between...

G: Let me say that, what happened, I've always thought that it could have been a hell of a lot worse. It got calmed down before, I don't know how many months it went on, but it got stopped. I think Mr. Stahlman had *a lot* to do with that. I think his attitude of not publishing it in the paper would have been a great thing too. If both papers had ignored it, it probably would have went away in a week. But the *Tennessean* chose not to do it, so we had to go back and compete with them. Looking at it, all in all, I think that it could have been a hell of a lot worse.

H: How do you think that Stahlman played a role in having that violence stopped?

G: Well, like I told you earlier, having that meeting down there on a Sunday and telling the business people that it was his opinion [that they should], knock it off. Let them come in and eat. Stop all of this. They got around to doing that, and before you know it, everything went back going smooth.

H: And what was his argument for not covering it? How did he rationalize that?

G: Well, like I said awhile ago, he thought that somebody was going to get killed. He thought it was ridiculous to keep covering it and stirring it up, which coverage does, because everybody likes to get their picture in the paper, fighting, pushing, marching, carrying on, and [with the attitude of] look-what-we're-doing. He was afraid that there was going to be more violence and death involved in it if it wasn't stopped. And that's what pushed him to having that meeting that Sunday.

H: This is interesting to me, because you were talking about earlier – it is clear how deeply you believe in the freedom of the press. And here there's this argument that the press should not cover this news. Can you reconcile that for me?

G: Do you think that if I started something or had a newspaper and I kept publishing something that was going to get a bunch of people killed, wouldn't I be wrong? Publishing it and getting a bunch of people killed, or hold back and not publishing it? I mean, freedom of the press is one thing, but responsibility is another. I think that the responsibility of being a good nation, even though you had the right to write anything you want to, when are you going to stop to oppose violence and death? So I think that's the responsibility of the owner and publisher of the newspaper to decide. And I think they do that now. I think a lot of that probably is happening on the Iraq war. It's a shame that the journalist got killed in Russia the other day because he was an American, but who sent him over there to write that stuff? Did they say, go on over and if you get killed, well, we made a point...? I don't know. Maybe if I had been publisher, I might have called you in and asked you, would you be willing to go over to Russia and write some stuff? And give you an option. Or [ask] should we do it? What's your opinion, Ben? And you would give me your opinion. What would your opinion be then?

H: So there would be a dialogue about whether the person is willing to do this?

G: I think that, before you send somebody in where over a hundred journalists have been killed writing stories of the truth, would you want to send another one in?

H: No. That makes sense. Talk a little bit about the sit-ins and how Nashville reacted to the sit-ins.

G: Well, I think you saw all that in the pictures. Now, this is just a bunch of thugs

that wanted to go up and fight, in most of the pictures if you notice it, it's the same guys in the same pictures, the white ones. I think that, out in responsible neighborhoods, there wasn't that much bitterness, against blacks, that I saw. I thought there's a bunch of punks in there walking around, causing a lot of problems.

H: And where did these punks come from?

G: Well, I don't know, did you own them? Were they working for you? I'm just kidding. I think it has a lot to do with the way you were raised, I think that your mother and father probably raised you with the idea that everybody's equal and a have a fair chance in life. I just don't remember that much bitterness in neighborhoods. I don't remember. It was all downtown. And you didn't see responsible owners of businesses out there fighting. What you saw was a bunch of white punks blocking the doors, and a bunch of black people wanting to make their point. Basically, I didn't see that much of it in Nashville.

H: Talk about your personal impressions about when you saw these African Americans conducting these sit-ins. Do you remember what you personally felt just watching that?

G: Well, it's hard to say when you are busy doing your job. I almost got whipped three or four times. So, I remember the night that Martin Luther King got shot, the papers sent me out to Fisk and A & I to see what's going on. I left one assignment, headed out that way, and I get out there, and they were going to pull me out of the car and beat me up, or I had gotten out of the car. The black truck driver who worked at the paper saved me. He lived in that area and he was out there watching what was going on. He saved me from getting whipped pretty good. He knows how bad it could've been. But there were other cases when [they would say], here comes whitey, and all that kind of stuff, and I walked on. We had a reporter that was out at Fisk and the boss called me one day and said, you gotta get out there and get—I'm not going to call his name—go get him, and he was a black reporter. I went in, saw where he was sitting then, on the bench, and went down there and said to him, now let me tell you something. We are going to get up, and we are going to walk out of here. They are threatening to kill him. Called him an Uncle Tom. And so I said, stay right with me, and we walked out there.

H: I'm going to pause the tape for just a second.

[Break in Tape]

H: Talk about something that you mentioned that there were more than a couple times where you were in danger of scrapes in terms of being caught in the middle.

G: That all comes with being at the wrong place at the wrong time, photographing. I was white, they were black, I was outnumbered, and I just happened to be somebody that looked good to them to whip.

H: In retrospect, did you have more problems with the, as you called them, "white punks" during the demonstrations?

G: No, the main trouble I had was with blacks. That was because they thought maybe if they were in the papers it would – I don't know why. Maybe they didn't want to be seen in the papers. You know, a lot of them left school, and they didn't want to get kicked out of school. Maybe that was the reason. But the night that Martin Luther King got killed, I think had to do with, I was just white. It was the very beginning of it. I think maybe I was the first white person they saw out there that night, and they were going to get me. And the black truck driver stepped in and told them no.

H: Did you ever get the sense when you were covering the sit-ins, or later the demonstrations and the riots, did you ever get a sense that the crowd reacted to you in a certain way because you were a pressman or a photographer?

G: Sure.

H: How's that?

G: Well, like you just said, they didn't like me being there because I was a pressman or coverage, or whatever. Things like that happen just because they happen. I think that the whole thing was—it's just the way we're going to win. I think the Martin Luther King thing, the night he was killed, I understand how that created a lot of bitterness.

H: Did you cover any of the times when Martin Luther King came to Nashville to speak?

G: Yes, many, many times. In fact, he knew my name, [we were on a] first name basis. I saved him from getting beat up one night.

H: Would you like to tell that story?

G: Well, he was over at Fisk...

[Break in Tape]

G: ...and they had a stage set up in the middle of the gym, and the crowd was in there and a police officer came in there and said, you've got to vacate the building. Martin Luther King said, we're not going to vacate the building. He said, there's been a bomb scare. [King] said, we're not afraid of bombs. And [the

police officer] said, I done told your goddamn ass, get out of here. I interrupted and said—and I'm not going to call the policeman by name, because I don't want to embarrass his family—don't run them out of here, they're ok. He turned around and said, I'm going to whip your goddamn ass too, Jack. Martin Luther King, who knew me on a first-name basis, said, Jack, we'll do what he says. So he got up on the stage and said, everybody needs to vacate the building, there's been a bomb scare. They all got up and walked outside. But every time I saw him, he knew my name. I saw him a lot.

H: What are your impressions of him?

G: I thought that he was unbelievable, fantastic. I was super-impressed with him.

H: What about him impressed you?

G: Well, I think the most thing [was] I could hear his voice in a [speech]. I think his attitude of doing the right thing was great.

H: I came across the story where you talked a little bit about seeing somebody being dangled over a second floor railing once during sit ins. Do you recall that?

G: It was at the Arcade [partially open mall in downtown Nashville], and there was a window, there was a beauty shop on Fifth Avenue, the Arcade, you see, comes out on Fifth Avenue. Up over it was a beauty shop, and there was a black boy who worked up there. He's hollering out the window and a bunch of white boys — he ought to have kept his mouth [shut] — a bunch of whites went up there, and had to go up [to] this next level on the arcade, right under the beauty shop, and they grabbed him, and was going to throw him out the window, had him dangling out of the window. I took off up there and a whole bunch of people did, and the police got there and pulled him back in.

H: Scary stuff, I guess?

G: Only in America.

H: I guess I asked you this earlier, I really am struck with how violence was really an everyday presence with the threat of violence, even in Nashville.

G: The violence was an everyday deal, but it kind of blew over. I have not seen any racist stuff since then. Now there was a shooting the other night, or two or three nights ago, a fifteen-year-old kid shot this boy over money. But I'm not sure that's racist, I think that was money stuff.

H: I know that you've showed me a lot of pictures that you were covering when Stokely Carmichael came to town. Do you remember his speech at Vanderbilt, and the resultant furor and the riots on Jefferson Street?

- G: It's hard to remember what to say to what somebody said that far back.
- H: What are your impressions of Stokely Carmichael, from covering him?
- G: I kind of felt like maybe he'd been an agitator. I thought that he could have handled himself a lot different. I thought he agitated more than he did good. Have you heard anything different from that?
- H: No, I think a lot of people probably agree with you, in some ways.
- G: I think that he may have caused a lot of trouble.
- H: This is a side-note, but I would like to name some people and just have you share your impressions of them, what they were like. I just read about these people in books, but I don't really know about them as people, just various leaders from around Nashville. If you could just share your impressions.
- G: I could not do that without being told—look, what have you got in mind? In my mind, it would be hard for me to think back that many years and come up with a bunch of names.
- H: I'm going to give you the names, just what you think about them. Well, Z. Alexander Looby, for starters.
- G: Z. Alexander Looby [Nashville city councilman and attorney for the NAACP] was a right-handed person committed to do the right thing, I think he had a house over here on whatever street, and it got blown up. I thought he was trying to do the right thing, I remember.
- H: Ben West.
- G: I thought Ben West was a nice, nice person, had a lot on him, tried to get things taken care of.
- H: Beverly Briley [First mayor of the Metropolitan government of Nashville and Davidson County, 1963-1975]?
- G: He was a good mayor, about half a day, he did a nice job.
- H: What do you recall about him as person, how he interacted with people, how he ran the city, or Ben West, for that matter?
- G: I thought that they both did a good job. Briley has a grandson or something up there now. Yeah, I thought they did a nice job.
- H: Bob Lillard?

G: Bob Lillard, let's see, I'm trying to think. Bob Lillard was a...

H: He was on the City Council, I believe.

G: Council! Nice guy, I don't remember anything. See, we are talking about long time ago. I thought he did a lot for the black people on the council.

H: I would like to ask you some broader questions and just however you want to respond to it is fine. At this time, Nashville, I think, prided itself on being a "moderate" city, and the city sort of embodying this moderation in terms of race relations, and I would like to get your thoughts on what that word meant at the time.

G: Well, that's a difficult question to answer, because like you said, that word could mean a lot of different things. I thought that Nashville was a good city, a good supportive city of blacks, a good responsible city, and as bad as that thing was, I think that it turned out well for the distance they have had to travel. I think that it could have gotten a hell of a lot worse.

H: What sort of reception do you think people like Kasper and his cohort got in Nashville – because he had some supporters—how do you think Nashville as a whole reacted to them?

G: To John Kasper? Well, there was a certain group of Nashville punks – whites – uptown stirring it up, blacks, stirring it up. And I think that most of the city did not sit down and try to translate what was going on. I think they wanted to get it over with, and they didn't want a lot of violence in their neighborhood. I think that it worked itself out. A lot of people thought that there's going to be a shooting in the [demonstrations], and that didn't go on. If somebody shot at his house, then somebody didn't like somebody maybe, but I don't remember that kind of violence. It was all downtown. And everybody that showed up downtown was looking for fun, trouble, fighting, whatever. But out here in the neighborhood, you didn't see these nice neighborhood people down there. Nashville's full of great neighborhoods. You didn't see those people down there.

H: How do you think black politicians in Nashville have changed? Nashville has this tradition starting with Z. Alexander Looby and then increasingly through the sixties.

G: I'll tell you a good example. Howard Gentry [associate vice president for Technology and Administrative Services, Tennessee State University]. He's seen these pictures. He knows a lot the people in the pictures. I was on the board of TSU [Tennessee State University] Foundation with him. He's a great guy. I think Howard Gentry tries to do a lot for the city. George Thompson, who is on the school board, is a tremendous asset to the black community. Let's see, who else. Ludye Wallace [Nashville Metro Council], is trying to do the right thing.

I know of some blacks that worked in the courthouse that were tremendous people.

H: Do you get a sense of how black politics changed as the civil rights movement went along in the 1960s and the 1970s You had a lot of controversy over I-40 and urban renewal.

G: Well, I understand that I-40 [situation]. They were going to run it right through and split the neighborhood, and no way to get across. And the blacks were right. I think I was on their side with that. I didn't understand why the interstate was going to divide the city. It was stupid. They raised Cain about that. I can show you some things right now that wouldn't have been possible.

H: What do you mean?

G: Well, in terms of getting from one side of the town to the other. I mean whoever would lay that plan out was either racist and stupid.

H: Why do you think that their attempt to preserve that was unsuccessful?

G: I think that it was unsuccessful because the blacks stood up and said, what are you doing to us? And the white people got involved.

H: Well, the interstate still was built through the neighborhood, so . . .

G: Can you imagine that, if it didn't have any underpasses and things going across town? See, that's what they were going to do. They were going to build it where right now I couldn't get in my car to drive over in North Nashville. I don't know how I would've got there, go out somewhere and get on the interstate and take a exit at another part and cross the other side. I had no idea what I was going to do. I mean what they planned for people to interchange, but they stopped it, and I think the whole city was involved in that, the way I remember it. But I remember it being about the stupidest thing you could do. It didn't make sense. And then, like you go to the University of Florida, and then running that interstate through the middle of the campus, and you're not allowed to get on the other side.

H: So you think that it is a measure of black political success that they were able to force these--

G: I think it's everybody's success. I think that blacks were bringing it up, I thought the whites joined in, I think that both sides saw that it was a dumb thing.

H: When you look back at the civil rights movement, you think about school integration, you think about sit-ins, and that process of integration. How do you think, in Nashville, integration has occurred on a more daily level, in people's everyday lives. How do you think that process has evolved?

G: I think that everybody got to know everybody. I know that the blacks I know have become just as friendly as they can, and I know that the white people have become just as friendly as they could with them. I know a tremendous black person who works at the courthouse, a woman up there, who is extremely friendly. And she went through a lot, she's not a spring chicken, and yet I think she looks at it as, this is our life, and we're entitled to be here just as much as you are. I think that the blacks, the way I look at it, brought all this on themselves by their grandparents or something selling them in Africa. That's where it all [began], you know. And sending them over here as slaves, putting money in that, and all that began to backfire. But I can't imagine me, if you're my son, in sending you to somebody, but those things are gone, and thank God.

H: Do you have, in terms of hiring black reporters and black staff on the *Banner*, what was that process like?

G: Well, the first black reporter hired in the South was on the *Nashville Banner*, Robert Churchwell, who's a great guy. He now has two sons, or I don't know how many, that are doctors at Vanderbilt. Robert was a great person, fantastic. He was the first black reporter hired in the South. And who hired him? An accused racist newspaper. I don't see the *Tennessean* hiring one at that time. Or any other media. Now they're in the news. There's just as many black co-anchors and things on television, and black writers. But there's Mr. Stahlman, who was accused of being a racist, was the first one to hire one.

H: And how did you get along with Mr. Churchwell, was that a good working relationship?

G: Fine.

H: And when you were—

G: Turn it off.

[break in tape]

H: In terms of throughout the sixties and the seventies, as you were rising up the ladder at the *Banner*, was there a concerted effort to hire minorities?

G: Well, we had a lot. We had one who worked for the government and she worked there a long time. We had—I can't remember everybody's name—but we hired blacks. I think that Rob [Robert Churchwell] had set the pace for the South, and for the *Tennessean* and for television. TV was just starting. The *Banner* was not what some people spent their life trying to portray because they hated that we did such a good job. So what else?

H: Well, let me ask you if there's anything or any particular memories that you want

to share, anything that I should have asked you that I neglected to?

[break in tape.]

H: I wanted to get your thoughts on how the city of Nashville reacted to the busing situation in the 1970s.

G: The busing? I thought that it went over well. I remember that it started for years sitting at the back of the bus, and then they started sitting where they wanted to. I always felt kind of bad about the blacks having to move to the back of the bus, and I think that everybody else did. I'm not sure that there was any bitterness when they started sitting up in the front part of the bus or streetcars or whatever.

H: But in terms of busing, as in 1971, in terms of school integration, when the busing plan came into effect? How did the city react to that? Casey Jenkins and all that furor?

G: It's really hard for me to remember in detail.

H: The other think I wanted to ask you is if you've ever read David Halberstam's book [*The Children*, 1999] on the sit-ins.

G: Yes.

H: What do you think of it?

G: Well, I'm quoted in there. I thought it was fine, great. David Halberstam was employed at the *Tennessean* and he moved to wherever and sort of became a well-known name, I thought he did good.

H: What do you think of his portrayal of the *Tennessean* and the *Banner*?

G: I can't remember what that is, now.

H: Well, I think that in some ways he maybe contributes to this attitude that the *Banner* was just sort of on the sidelines while this civil rights stuff was going on.

G: That's bullshit.

H: Can I quote you on that?

G: Yes, put it down.

H: Okay, I will.

G: He's been to this house. You read that article and all that?

H: That sums it up pretty well.

G: I think that a lot of that bitterness from the *Tennessean* was because we made them a newspaper. They weren't much, and we made them what they are. How did your interview with Eddie Jones go?

H: Very well, very informative.

G: What kind of stuff did he give?

H: He was talking a little bit about working with Frank Clement especially and talking about how the city has changed in terms of how it used to be headquartered, down in the center of city, and that's where the real lifeblood of the city was and now it's sort of expanding out into the suburbs.

G: Of course that's where business was done, downtown, that's pretty accurate.

H: Unfortunately, I interviewed him last year when I was just starting on the project, and I think if I were to interview him now, I would probably be better equipped with different questions. I might do a follow-up, but I'm willing to take any other suggestions on who I should interview.

G: You've interviewed John Seigenthaler?

H: Yes I have.

G: And what did he tell you? Opposite of what I've been telling you?

H: Not in so many words, I did him last summer, too.

G: Not in so many words?

H: He didn't talk about the *Banner* so much, he talked about Stahlman.

G: What did he say about him?

H: He said he was always unfailingly courteous to him, and used to see him in the elevator and put his arm around him. They disagreed philosophically, but that he always felt like they had a competitive but pleasant working relationship.

G: Well, that's good. I'm surprised, knowing John, that it wasn't a lot worse.

H: What I was going to ask you earlier was whether there is anything that I should have asked you that I didn't, or anything particular memories or anecdotes about the civil rights movement in Nashville that you'd like to share. There's so much in that story, I'm sure.

G: Well, I'm trying to think if there is anything that I've left out. You know, when you look back at the years, and then your memory starts catching up with you, I might remember something next week. I think you've asked some pretty good questions.

H: Think I've wrung you pretty dry, here?

G: Yeah. I can't think of anything. But I have nothing to hide. If you know something and want to ask me my opinion of it, I would be glad to tell you.

H: Well, I'm just trying to lead you through all of the events at the time, and get your impressions on that, so I don't really have any other agenda. I'm just getting your perspective on things. All right, well with that, I think that we will conclude this interview and I thank you again for your time, I am very grateful.

[End of Interview.]