

MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
Oral History Office

MRS. LANE BERK

Interviewed by Ellen Paul

The Governor Theodore McKeldin-Dr. Lillie May Jackson Project  
An inquiry into the Civil Rights activities  
of  
two Maryland leaders  
during  
the mid-twentieth century

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Baltimore, Maryland

McKeldin-Jackson Project  
Interviewee: Mrs. Lane Berk  
Interviewer: Ellen Paul  
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Valley Road  
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Cassette I Side 1:1

I: The first question I have is just about yourself--how long you've been in Baltimore and what got you started in Baltimore civil rights?

A: Well, I've been in Baltimore my whole life off and on. I did leave at the age of sixteen for educational reasons and then worked abroad for a number of years after doing a graduate degree there. So, that, actually, my formative years, perhaps, were not in Baltimore. From sixteen to twenty-five I wasn't here. But before and after I've been a Baltimorean.

I: Was there something that you took part in in school that began your interest in civil rights?

A: No. I think it went back to almost two and three years old. If I can really try to trace it back, I had a dear, dear friend who happened to be preternaturally small, as I was, and had the same interests; and we used to say that we were twins and people would laugh, and we didn't understand their laughter. I wasn't just Caucasian. I don't use the term black and white, really. I think they're states of mind, by the way.....I am black, I think black is a state of mind and attitude towards life. But not only as a Caucasian child but as one so fair and pallid and my friend being almost charcoal black, I suppose drew a laugh when in the early thirties we were saying we were twins. And people would say, "Identical twins?" And we'd say, "Yes," and lots of laughter, and by the time I began to

understand what they were laughing at, I think I grew very angry. So probably it started there.

I: Now, there are some specific incidents that I would like to ask you about that took place in this area in Maryland. Maybe you can just give me your recollections on them. The first of them is the Freedom Rides on Route 40 to open up the restaurants?

A: Well, if I may, I would like to fill in just one moment of my life between what you're discussing and what I just told you about. When I was working abroad, I was working in the De-Nazification Program in Germany just after the war, and I think that that plus an International Law Degree tuned me in to man's oppression of man. Having lived in Germany and seen the aftermath of an inhumane society and then doing work in International Law at Cambridge, I think this is what made me realize that it wasn't enough to react with anger because of one's personal transgressions upon society, perhaps, with my little identical twin. But one had to act with anger against society's transgressions against society, and when I returned home in between two European stints, something called CORE-- and we didn't understand what the words meant at all. It had not really begun. It was just in its infancy. No one knew what the initials meant. I thought it meant the core of a people. I had no idea that it was Congress On Racial Equality.

But they were collecting in Baltimore and we were sitting in at places such--I'd joined this group when I found out what they were doing--we were sitting in at places such as Read's

and Kresge's and opening up the five and ten's. That did come before the Route 40. It ultimately led into such things as the Freedom Rides in the South and Route 40, some of which I was on. But by the time the Route 40 situation came about, I was professionally involved in the civil rights movement, the other having been just a volunteer, almost spontaneous, unknowing kind of experience of sitting in with friends at Kresge's and Read's. But by the time that Route 40 was bursting, I was the arbitrator for the State of Maryland for the then, well it's now the Commission on Human Relations. Perhaps this is the term that we ought to use.

I: Then it was the Commission on Interracial Problems...

A: And Relations. CIPRI. I didn't even know that you could garble it up.

I: I always get it backwards.

A: I think it's interesting to know that when Maryland established such a Commission, it was many, many years ago. They probably established it for the purpose of seeing that as little as possible was done. This was certainly the reason, in my opinion, for the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. Both Commissions were established as study groups, so that if the natives got restless, the government could say, "But, you see, we've got a group taking care of that." When in fact neither group had any teeth in it whatsoever, and could take care of nothing, and the studies were probably a form of pollution. I'm sure many more studies were written than ever read, many more read than ever understood, many more understood than ever cared about, and many more cared about than ever acted on. So, the Commissions

were just that--set up probably to do nothing. But, in '63, Maryland for some extraordinary reason was among the first states that passed a Public Accommodations Law.

I: Do you think it might have anything to do with the Cambridge incident?

A: No, because they really came just after that. Well, the uprisings were starting. I mean, the feelings were being made known, and perhaps from that point of view, but I don't think it was a response to pressures yet, in my opinion. I think, on the contrary, it was still a hypocritical thought that if we pretend to do something, if we put an up-front situation, a kind of front office token situation we can avoid real cataclysm, really doing anything.

I: So it's giving a little bit to prevent further backlash?

A: I think so, and I'll tell you why I think that. When they passed the first Public Accommodations Law, they gave no appropriations to fund it, no position funded to enforce it, and when I found out about this I went and applied for the job and they said, "But uh, uh..hum," and when I finally tried to find out why all the throat clearing, they had to tell me that there was just no appropriation to fund it. And I said, "But, since I've been doing it free for years anyway, this would give me a portfolio and credentials, and the money obviously hasn't been my motivation." And there was very little they could do to turn me down. There was no way they could say it had a competitive exam or that you might not be the right person. I mean, even if they felt that I would be so activist as to be dangerous, there was nothing they could say, because nobody else in his right mind was going to apply for an unfunded position.

And this meant driving to places like Cumberland and Crisfield, and often I would be on the road ten hours a day, then do two or three hours' work, so the days were never shorter than thirteen hours. I would say that I put in generally about twelve, thirteen, for the shortest days, to about sixteen hours.

I: This is for the Commission?

A: Yes, and the only member of the Commission Staff was Parran Mitchell who had a secretary. He had come in three days or so before me, and, in fact, I left three days or so after Parran Mitchell left. So we were....

I: You were just about equal?

A: Well. Some people are more equal than others! I'm not sure how you mean that, but certainly at that point I was equal in time but not in Table of Organization. He was the Executive Director.

I: How did he come to be Executive Director?

A: Probably best to ask him, because he was chosen at that time. There had been some eminent people before him, but being a man really so committed to doing instead of speaking, one would have to ask him why he took on such a almost a non sequitur, as it were. He's so articulate I would rather leave that to him.

I: O.K. Then let's go back a little bit to the Route 40 Freedom as you were mentioning that you personally helped out with the Kresge Sit In's and at Read's, and in downtown activities. Did you go on those Freedom Rides on Route 40?

A: Yes, I did. But later, as they progressed, I went in actually then not as a volunteer partisan, but as things began to loosen on Route 40 and the law was that public accommodations had to be opened, I went in actually as a law enforcement officer. And that was kind of funny because the law was new. The police generally didn't know about it. Many of the Freedom Riders didn't know about it yet. Certainly the accommodations owners not only didn't know about it, but didn't believe when they found out anyway. They would get a letter saying that a law enforcement officer was coming about a law which they hardly trusted. When I would get there and present credentials, it didn't dawn on them yet. So they'd say to me, "When are they coming?" And I would say, "They are here." But in my case, having a tinier frame and a less authoritative look, I think that they just couldn't believe. I think Bella could carry a certain amount of visual weight and importance that they didn't believe I had.

I: When people were arrested on these Freedom Rides, did the NAACP come and help out, bail them out and provide legal assistance?

A: Well, the NAACP was great at that time. CORE was very new and really just forming. NAACP was already august and known, and they probably were, at that time, the bulwark of the civil rights movement and really almost the only security we had.

I: It must have been very frustrating for you as a member of this Commission to have to constantly go out one time after

another and after another in this same type of problem where people just refused to open up.

A: Well, I think the frustrations were greater than that. To begin with, after I realized I was putting in so many sixteen hour days and had children, and wanted to have some family life, I ultimately ended up with a small plane and would fly to the distant parts. There were no airports in most of them and when the firemen would realize what was coming, they would refuse to let us land. Or they would meet us with sticks and clubs.

So it was more than frustration. And then, I suppose, from the physical concern, it fit everybody in the civil rights movement from the late forties and through fifties and sixties. I think after the actual physical threat, the next thing that I found most thwarting was the ignorance, because often I would be placed in jail and spend the day in jail since they didn't believe that I was a law enforcement officer, until Parren Mitchell would kind of send the word down. And I guess after the physical threats and the jail experiences, the next thing perhaps most thwarting was the realization that many, many people who were hostile to the civil rights movement were hostile out of ignorance and fear as much as out of hostility, or more so. If you could get beyond the ignorance and the fear, you could actually reach some fairly human beings--human human beings.

I: Was it easier to deal with women on questions like this than to deal with men?



A: No. I found the women, perhaps because I am female, was young and tiny and unthreatening looking, and took great care to work with some respect for the person with whom I was working, perhaps I found it easier with men. I think the women were more suspicious of me. The only physical abuse that I suffered was being beaten with a pipe by a woman in Calvert County and having my clothes torn by other women. So that I think that the women, from my experience, were considerably more aggressive. But that possibly was because I'm another female. Also, of course, at times I would go places with Parran Mitchell, and I think I became known as someone far worse than being white or black, but a "Nigger Lover."

I: I have some questions about Lillie May Jackson and Theodore McKeldin when I get to them eventually. O.K.? I'd like to know, did you know Lillie May Jackson?

A: Well, I knew her as many know her, not intimately, but with a great deal of awe and appreciation and respect, because she came at a time when one wasn't a leader. One was a "kook" to take her position. One was excessive and exaggerated. I think now when it's very fashionable to be for minorities and women, one can enjoy the gratification of being a hero. But in those days one couldn't. I think that I had the greatest respect for because she was pleading a dangerous cause, an unpopular cause, and in many instances a disrespected cause, and still had the courage to proceed with her cause.

I: How did Lillie May Jackson work with white people?

A: Well, she worked, in my opinion--now this is only an opinion and I can't generalize with white people. Certainly my

contact with her was always extremely enriching. First of all, since she respected herself and had a complete zealot's commitment to her cause, she was very \_\_\_\_\_ and could work with anybody, in my opinion. I think the people who don't work well with other people are more concerned with the interpersonal relationships than with the issues that ought to set the scene for the interpersonal relationships.

I: Would you say she was conscious of the difference between the white leaders and the black leaders who were on her side?

A: Well, that's going to be difficult for me. As I told you, I think black is a state of mind, and since it has always been a state of mind, I can't indicate that I could tell the difference. I didn't feel separate from her nor have I felt separate from any human being who's really fighting for the causes in which I believe. So, perhaps I'm the wrong person to answer that question.

I: Do you think that in her early days when she was first beginning her work, she accepted the concept of separate but equal so long as the equal really was equal?

A: I think inherent in her philosophy she was an extraordinarily sophisticated thinker, as is her whole family. Each member of her family, in my opinion, is a sophisticated thinker. They are no simplistic thinkers that I know of, and I think inherent was the projection that separate is not equal. She didn't articulate it, perhaps. Maybe Brown vs. Topeka in '54 had to do that for all of us, but I think everyone knew that separate can't be equal.

I: What kind of personality did she have?

A: Forceful. Full of humor. Perhaps great leaders,

particularly in heavy and ugly experiences, need humor, a lot of humor. Maybe not everyone would say that of her. I felt that way.

I: We haven't gotten that from too many people.

A: I found humor. Or maybe I just laughed at it and she laughed with me. I'm not sure. But humor and fire, and absolutely unswerving goal direction, and therefore, very tough.

I: Now, did you actually go to NAACP meetings and participate in leadership or was that primarily ...

A: Well, no. Keep in mind purely that if one pin-points the years--I was in college until I left the country, and I was in a rather cloistered situation at Bryn Mawr. Although the civil rights battles were going on in Philadelphia, I was very involved in the academic world and felt it was my time to take in and to learn. Student attitudes have changed now. I didn't feel that it was my time to be a part of working society. I felt that it was my time to be honing up the tools to achieve something in society. And then immediately after that I left for overseas, and didn't come back for a number of years. So these years would have been probably the time, just post college years in those days that I would have been very involved as an active and participating member. And perhaps not so much with NAACP yet, perhaps more with Urban League. At that time the white friends that I had who were organizationally involved in the civil rights movement were either doing things with the newer groups, the more irascible groups, perhaps, like CORE, or the more staid groups like the Urban League. NAACP, it seemed to me, was an in-between. It was certainly an activist group, and yet far more tied together by its own regulations than a

new group such as CORE.

My membership in NAACP was not as a part of a cell, so to speak, but as someone who cheered on and said, "I have to be counted among you. I have to put my name there." But, my actual work was, on coming back to this country, far more involved with the professional job of Arbitrator and then ultimately, of course, it's the same Commission on which I now serve as a Commissioner.

I: As a member of these other groups, Urban League and CORE, could you tell me how the NAACP, and specifically Lillie May Jackson, worked with these other groups? Did she pay much attention to them?

A: It seems to me in the beginning nobody paid attention to CORE, and Temp, Furman Templeton who was very involved with Urban League and Dave Glenn at the time, during the years that I remember best, were such powerful leaders in their own rights. Now this may be faulty memory, but I would have to say that my mind tells me that there was not a tremendous amount of interaction and working together. Maybe I could even fault the civil rights movement in that way, because I think still today we could do with a great deal more working together. I think that black hope and those among us who are Caucasian black folk, but who have fought the battle, spend too much time being sensitive to the differences among us than to consolidating the similarities. I think this is a criticism that certainly, historically, I'd launch against the civil rights movement.

Now that may be, as I say, lack of memory on my part. Perhaps Lillie May Jackson herself worked more closely than I'm articulating, but I don't recall a lot of interaction among any

of the groups.

I: Was there some sort of automatic kinship among the black leaders in the community?

A: Well, first of all, I think there's kinship among folk who identify, so ultimately--you asked me a question before about the separate but equal, and there are many subliminal or unconscious feelings that we have. By the same token that I know that inherent in Lillie May Jackson's feelings must have been that there is no equality with enforced separation--with enforced separation, mind you. I'm sure that also inherent and subliminally and unconsciously there's always kinship among people who know that if the bottom line were ever reached, where their side would be.

And I want to tell you something very strange, and maybe you won't want to use this, and maybe I won't want it used, but the kind of thinking that I've always done--maybe from years in Germany where life and death were even more exaggerated in their reality than within the civil rights movement here, though there's been plenty of deaths as a result of it. But when life and death there was even more imminent and touching each life even more regularly, I felt that I had to make certain decisions, such as, if a shooting war breaks out under such and such circumstance, what side?

I knew all along with the civil rights movement that I would have to take up arms if necessary with black folks, but I also knew that (maybe I'll be permitted to say this) some dumb Nigger would say, "She's white. Shoot me." And the only thing I could say as I lay dying was, "You had a right to do it and I

understand. But if you ever find out who I really am inside, and was, and that I'm a sister, I hope you'll take time to be sorry." It was the only redemptive aspect that I think I needed to feel that someone would be sorry for having done me in. But I felt committed enough to know where I was going to stand and know what the ultimate risks could be if it ever came to that. Being a bit of a Pollyanna and believing in the long term in humanity, I never thought it would come to that.

I: So far it hasn't.

A: Well, it hasn't here. In South Africa, of course, it's happening every day and I'm very mindful of the parts of the world where it is happening.

I: Would you ever have considered Lillie Jackson to have been too strong a leader in the NAACP?

A: Now, too strong to me are two words that can't fit. If you're too harsh, too exaggerated, too premature, too tough, too demanding--if you say those things, I can deal with it, but I don't think a human being can be too strong. And you see, I think that what she was, and is, because I think her spirit and her legacy are very much alive, I think she was and is strong. The only people who can be too anything are the people who pose as such, for instance, people who are hard and brittle but not strong. Lillie May Jackson had, I think, flexibility, had bounce-back power, had resilience, and that's what I mean by strength. If she had been just tough and hard and insensitive and one-directional, I'd say perhaps she could have been too any of those.

I: Now, how about too powerful?

A: Well, I think...

I: She was elected for thirty-five years.

A: But I think nature abhors a vacuum, and I think wherever a vacuum is some force moves in. I think if there had been other people as committed and as forceful who came forth and grabbed their scepter and started to march with it, she would have been forced to march along or march behind occasionally. I think she filled the role of leader. You might want to call it tyrant if you equate too many years of leadership with tyranny, that she filled that role because nobody dismantled her. Nobody took the mantle from her.

I: But you don't think there was ever any power play?

A: Oh, sure. Oh, sure. First of all, she was from a sophisticated family. She was a sophisticated woman, and in leadership, there is endemic to leadership--there is power and endemic to life there is play, and so, of course, there's plenty of power play. Obviously she wanted the mantle, and obviously not only her ego, her whole identity for survival was tied up with it. I mean I think she saw herself and could not possibly separate herself out from this movement. If you had taken away this cause, you'd have no Lillie Jackson, in my opinion.

I had an interesting experience recently which I'm not going to labor, but I was in the hospital for a reason of having lost a portion of my body, and I had to stop and think about what it is to lose a critical portion of one's body. It can be one's legs if one's a dancer; one's arms if one's a weight lifter; one's eyes if one's a painter; one's hearing, like Beethoven's one thing. But if one loses something central and

perhaps can't the very thing that gave himself identity, what happens? And I think if you had wanted to dismember Lillie May Jackson, you would have had to cut out her Negro<sup>o</sup>tude, which you couldn't do, you see. You would have had to displace her in the movement, perhaps. O.K. Which is as close as you could come, and you'd cut out her identity. So that if she were in South Africa and forced not to be a black leader--and I'm sure there are plenty who in black Africa are somehow forced into that (South Africa). I didn't mean black Africa at all. White Africa. South Africa. But if she were forced to give up the battle, then I think she would have been utterly dismembered, and she had to my mind that identity.

So I can't say, in answer to your question, that she was too strong.

I: What other leaders would you consider to be of equal importance to Lillie Jackson in the area?

A: In the area? What a powerful question!

I: Well, you know this Project has singled out Jackson and McKeldin as the two.

A: I can't link the two. I think I disagree with that. I think that McKeldin's leadership is a magnificent tribute to the fact human beings can identify beyond their own genetics and can be fully human. So I don't rob McKeldin for one moment. But I think McKeldin began and ended with a Brotherhood Week mentality, and I think civil rights goes much, much deeper than that. I think that the concept of brotherhood in terms of liking a person or being nice to a person is one thing, but that's something that I bestow on you. I give you pleasantness, decency,



but I think that the black movement is what you are and, therefore, what you have a right to demand of me, and it isn't my gift to give you. So that I think that a white leader that sees this as a gift bestowed, in fact, McKeldin, though I admire him enormously, used to make me angry. And I thought if I ever heard him tell me again that he had just had breakfast with a black leader. I began to wonder whether he ate them! So I have to confess to a little bit of annoyance. I think that-- well, I'm trying to think of people who have the kind of impact. Since Angola ended, when you say a great leader, I have to talk about people who had impact, not who meant to be great, not whose heads were in the right direction, not who cared deeply-- I don't know anybody that had that kind of impact because of the particular era.

Now, if Lillie May Jackson were living today, we probably couldn't say that. But when she came forward, you had to hook her up with the Douglasses and the Banneker's and the few greats in the world or in the country. Certainly, Martin Luther King you can talk about, and Malcolm X. You can talk about individuals any place in America or perhaps in other parts of the world. But they're singular. Try to find two of a kind in one given area. It's asking an awful lot. I think we were incredibly rich to have one.

How did you select Lillie May Jackson, by the way?

I: Well, I came to the Project after it was begun, but I think that it was just perception on the part of people who lived in Baltimore, and particularly Charles Wagandt who felt that she was of primary importance to the civil rights story.

[Handwritten note: ... has to be from ...]

A: You see, the chronology is the important thing. Ten years later, had she started her commitment ten years later...

I: She would never have been Lillie Jackson.

A: No.

I: And yet, to what do you attribute the fact that she never reached national prominence?

A: Oh, because she was well before her time. When you think of the great creative artists in the world, the people who achieve before the achievement is recognizable, who project before the concepts are understood, only death or years can give them the position that they actually hold. And philosophically--there is a philosopher by the name of Alfred North Whitehead that has the view that the future changes the past just as the past affects and molds the future, and I believe in that. I believe in looking back...

I: The past is prologue.

A: That she changed the past. In other words, the memory of her changes the past, really re-structures the reality of that past. Now that wouldn't happen if she had been in her own time, if she had ripened when the tree was ready to drop the apple. But she ripened well before. It's as though Eve had been born too soon, before ribs were created.

I: But she also preferred to stay in Baltimore and not expand...

A: Well, she had a power base here and she would have had to start a process elsewhere. Here she had the process going, and I think perhaps either consciously or unconsciously knew

that she could reap achievement here. She might have had to start the process elsewhere and let someone else reap the achievement. In other words, many people are unknown because they only served in the prologue, never even in the dialogue or the post-logue, as it were.

I: How did she and McKeldin get along?

A: Well, you have to understand that I don't think McKeldin would have gotten along disagreeably with a black person even if he had disliked or disrespected the black person. I found him a bit indiscriminate, too indiscriminate...

I: We were talking about the relationship between McKeldin and Jackson, and you mentioned that he was a little bit indiscriminate in who he chose to get along with.

A: Yes. What I'm really saying by that is I think that he would never want to be caught with any bias showing and so afraid that any negative feelings might somehow be painful to the next person himself. He probably would have gotten along with any black person, and I think that that's an unconscious throwback, perhaps, to at its best, a super-compassion in a sense of wanting to be on the credit side of life and pay back some of what has been taken. Or on the other side, perhaps an unhealthy guilt response. I think it's perfectly permissible to dislike a black person or a white person, or any person, and I think we do have negative feelings. And I think we ought to be, perhaps, loving enough of ourselves to accept our negative feelings, understand them, maybe cast them off when they are found inappropriate, but to recognize that we do have some. So I'm not afraid to have some black folk I don't like or white folk or anybody else. I have my preferences. On the other hand, I think I'd be afraid to have any group that I disliked, and I think that with Governor McKeldin, Mayor McKeldin, and probably young man McKeldin, there was a need not only to love and be loved, which I think was a very intense need in his personality. So that he was, in that sense somewhat, non-discriminating about people that he truly loved and felt loved by.

I: But, his appointment of black people, was that political or do you think that that was a genuine...

A: Oh, no. I think it was genuine. I think it was genuine. No. No. I think that we often interpret where our political good fortunes will lie by some much deeper motivations. When people say, "Is that political?" It interests me as I watched bigotry. And I'll go back again to Germany where bigotry manifested itself in the ultimate, in mammoth genocide. I found there, and I found when I've scratched close to the core of humanity, we tend to find our best route in that direction not which we psyche out as as being appropriate but what we feel comfortable with. And so, when people do politically act as though they ought to appoint black folk, somewhere there they probably have a desire to do it anyway, or they would interpret their political gains and their political directions, perhaps, differently, and not feel that need.

I: Now, you mentioned David Glenn earlier. I assume that you know the gentleman.

A: Oh. Yes.

I: How did McKeldin come to choose him?

A: Well, I think those of us who knew him well knew that he was under the shade of the great oak when he worked with Furman Templeton. There was just no one like Temp--such a broad oak and such a powerful man, and such a remarkable man, that to work under him was always to be in his shadow. And I think many of us in those days realized that Dave had greatness in him, too, and it never could have been realized in that position. And perhaps he was brought out of that position to have his own spot in the sun.

I: Let's get back to McKeldin just a little bit. What would

you consider his single greatest contribution or general greatest contribution to the area of civil rights?

A: Well, I am going to seem to be making a statement that's almost contradictory to what I was saying before, because before I was somewhat castigating in my appraisal of his loving black folk simply because they're black, and being indiscriminate, and his approach to civil rights as Brotherhood Week which I bestow upon you.

Now I want to talk about the other side of that coin. The very fact that he never deviated from that attitude, that he was so consistent and persistent in that attitude gave a certain habit and respectability, and unavoidability, to being human and addressing black people because they are people. And therefore, I think many, many whites in his day couldn't have escaped the fact that here is a man who's up front, who can't fail to be noticed because his position is such that he is noticeable, and who will never deviate from his good will. Therefore, the kind of standards that he set and example that he set, that could not be ignored, could not be missed, was incredibly important.

T: Can you think of any specific incident that would indicate to you--or that did indicate to you--how sincere he was?

A: How sincere our accounting was...

I: Or it's just a feeling you have...

A: You're really going to dislike what I tell you. Another sacred cow, vis-a-vis Mayor McKeldin, in addition to his kindness and his supportiveness of the black movement and black

individuals was his great oratorical skill. Maybe here, for the sake of people that are close to him and love him, and feel intimate with him, I will ask you to take this out eventually. I don't know. I didn't think he had much oratorical skill. It came across to me as bombastic, as a mask--not hypocritical now, not untrue--but such a put-on, such a false face in the sense of an extra tool that one uses, a technique. A style.

I: Not natural. Well, it was learned. It was acquired.

A: Well, but we can acquire things and make them seem absolutely to us. I always felt as though he was going to take off his voice and his face and say, "I was only kidding." I also felt--I feel that, of course, toward zebras. I am sure that when they take off their skin and show themselves to be normal horses, they look so ridiculous. And I always found him a bit ridiculous.

Now, when he was off the pulpit, because he was never on a platform, on a rostrum, he was always on a pulpit. When he was off Olympus and he was simply talking with two or three people around and his voice would get normal, and human, and not pompous and not oratorical, and maybe even a little bit unnoticeable--not very important. It was then that, with the mask off, with the clothes off, I would enjoy him most, and it was then when he would talk about things that he had done, not only in the black movement but generally in life, and his dreams and his attitudes, that some of the specific, some of the person that is just he would creep in. And at these times I really loved him, and had many of such moments with him.

But many too many of the bombastic, the oratorical delivery, the dance mask, which is great in ceremony.

I: Who did he choose for his personal friend?

A: That would be hard for me to tell you, because I'm not sure he took the liberty or the luxury. In my experience I could not tell you that he took the liberty or luxury of personal friends. When I saw McKeldin even relax even with just two or three, these were always the people with whom he was dealing publicly, politically, casually; and I think there are some of us who take too few hours for personal friendship that isn't hooked into a cause, maybe because we're so terribly committed to using the short time we have on the earth to change it, to bring ourselves a touch closer to the dream that we don't allow ourselves enough of that luxury, and perhaps if we lived to be a hundred and ten we can put that off for the days when it's just a casual, personal--I don't mean casual in the sense of casually involved, but a personal friend that is a cause committed, cause related. But when he had friends who were other than friends in the great movement, I wasn't there. So I couldn't tell you. Perhaps he did have many moments. But I never saw them.

I: People like Judge Sobeloff and Bill Adelson?

A: Now, Judge Sobeloff I knew well because our families were very close, and still today the families are extremely close, such that I suppose if my sister had to speak of her one dearest sister in the world, it would be Ruth Sobeloff Mayer. And this was historically true. My parents were close to the Sobeloff's and my two sisters were very, very close to Evelyn



. So I saw a good bit of them. I was raised, really, with them. And I did see often Judge Sobeloff and Mayor McKeldin together, and it would be at, perhaps, Judge Sobeloff's home. But even there, as I recall, the discussions were pretty high powered, pretty well cause oriented. And I can remember this from early. Now what they did in their very private moments, I just can't tell you, but I don't know how private it would have to be. Here again it might have been just two or three families.

I: Well, McKeldin was in the public spotlight for a period of about twenty years on and off as Mayor, and then Governor, and Mayor again. Let me ask you if, in your opinion, you think that--well, what would you say he was more effective--on the Governor's level, state level, or local Mayor's level?

A: I'd have to say Mayor, and that's not politically. That's going back to my view that the statement he made as a human being in a city that had a large proportion of blacks. Of course, in his day we didn't have the--what is it? 54% now? Or something close thereto. That wasn't the percentage then. I don't think it was the majority percentage then. I'm sure it was not, although I'm bad at numbers. I could be wrong. But still, I think to make the statement close to the hub like that--to make a statement that "I am the Mayor of people, every human being, and my city is a city of people, and I am black."

I think he had that feeling that black is a state of mind in that sense, that he certainly was a representative of every human being in Baltimore. That was as close and intimate a statement of beliefs as one could make, and I don't think the further one gets from the hub and from the nucleus of human

feelings--the further one gets the more diffused, the more watered down that statement is. It's true that it will gain importance, certainly, for the Governor or the President to make a statement. There's more power related to that statement. But in terms of ritual, power that isn't wielded but that is somehow absorbed spasmodically by other people, I think that power was there closest to the people and closest--  
Maryland, is not a black state.

I: Could you give me a little bit of background on what McKeldin's other achievements outside the area of civil rights were that you would consider to be of importance here?

A: Well, I think he carried this humanism through government. He was certainly awfully approachable, as Mayor and Governor. I think that white people felt that they could come over to him and reach him. He was a personable person. And I think that that's very important.

I think since Government is often quite removed, quite walled off from people, although we're supposedly a representative form of government, and supposedly there is an imposit relationship between the elected official and the person, generally I don't think that is really true. We try to make it true by saying, "I like Ike," and, "Give 'em hell, Harry," and using first names and creating that sense of personal involvement. But, really, leaders are pretty walled off, very often. I think he was not. I'm not looking in retrospect at McKeldin's legislation passed or office administration run, so much as I am at the touch of humanism that is the legacy from him. All the other things I think were not singularly his.

I: Would you consider him to have been slightly outdated by the time he reached his second term as Mayor?

A: Well, in one way, yes; and in one way, no. I think he was outdated at birth probably. The very need to pontificate on every subject was probably outdated with Ben Hur. I mean Charlton Heston does it well. Right? But it's usually set aside for a movie or a special event. But I think there are certain basic things such as the basic personableness and the basic humanity that he did display that is never outdated. It might come across with that manner that's outdated, as I mentioned before, but I think the quality itself is not out-datable.

I: How about his approach to blacks and to civil rights? .....Was that in the sixties?

A: O.K. That's good. You see, I don't think he thought his way through the black movement. I wouldn't say, for instance, what I said of Lillie May Jackson, that inherent in his thinking was the knowledge, the future tripping that separate is never equal. I don't think he intellectualized the movement, and so perhaps one could say he'd never be outdated because his feelings were gut feelings. They were feelings and feelings are never outdated.

Now, intellectually, if you would ask him to plot the movement, it might have been a fiasco. We might still be back in Brotherhood Week or we might still be back even a little further along than that where discrimination has to be intentioned or the causes have to be there rather than the results. And we now know that it's the impact. It's the results. It's discrimination, conscious or unconscious that has to be dealt with.

I don't think he ever could have made it to that scene, as it were, unless he were carried along by others.

I: O.K. Let's move a little bit into '67. Talk about the reaction of leaders such as McKeldin and Jackson to the militant years. How did they handle that situation?

A: If you are a person that says, "All right, children, don't fight," and think that everything has to be and, in fact, can be peaceful, you'll take the paternal attitude that I think McKeldin took. McKeldin in a fire-line situation, I think, would be seriously under-weaponed. I just don't think he could handle that. So I don't think McKeldin really ever emotionally came into the militant years. Even emotionally.

I: O.K. How did he prevent the riots from occurring in '66? Well, not he, but how were those riots prevented. What sort of part did he play in that prevention?

A: I hope I'm not being wrong. I'm not sure that one could say he, or even his attitude prevented riots. It wasn't like General Gelston on the firing line who did prevent a great deal. I was there in Cambridge and saw General Gelston, Buck Harris-- these people who could somehow turn a crowd, change a crowd. I don't think that was what one could say of McKeldin. I think he would have been tanked over, bulldozed over, in terms of the firing line. So I don't think he prevented the riots, but I think that what his statement of humanity did do is not contribute to that super hostility that would have exacerbated and in-fired the riots. I think he gave a set of conditions.

I: It was more an absence of effect? He did not do something wrong?

A: Yes. I think the thing that he didn't do was what Agnew did when he called in the leaders and was so insulting, so incredibly patronizing and infuriating. This is what McKeldin didn't do.

I: We were talking before about your Commission. I was wondering if you could tell me about the situation in 1969 when McKeldin was offered the position of Director of the Commission?

A: Well, now I think of Chairman of the Commission. You don't mean Executive Director, do you? Fill me in, because...

I: Didn't Mandel think of appointing McKeldin, and then...

A: As Chairman of the Commission, but...

I: Changed, and instead he appointed, see, at that time-- he was Mr. Nix and Mr.

A: Well, then you are talking about the Executive Director and my mind just played a trick on me. Do you know, I hadn't remembered that it was Executive Directorship rather than Commission Chairmanship. That would have, in my opinion, been an utter fiasco. An utter fiasco. Because in that exact position one has to have something very, very different to offer. I think that one has to have the weaponry rather than the will, the sharpness of personality, the exquisite instrument, the cutting edge. This is what McKeldin didn't have, and I can't imagine him functioning well in that position. I think it would have been a personal tragedy for him that he never would have recovered from.

I: Were the members on the Commission ever consulted as to the choice of Director? Or was this something that the Governor did by himself?

A: Now, let me see. This is my seventh year. So this must have happened--run this by me again. It wasn't in place --are you telling me it was in place of ?

Because was found by my action on a national and international talent search, and I don't recall at the time coming in. It was certainly not then. Now, you are talking about '69.

after all, has only been here a few years. Can you give me the date in '69?

I: Let me see if I have the reference to the article.

A: I think I came on the Commission as a Commissioner on July 1, '69.

I: That's what I have. July 1, 1969. Mandel proposed to nominate McKeldin for the position of leadership after Mr. Nix resigned.

A: After Roscoe Nix. Right. And before Treadwell Phillips. Well, when we came aboard there was no Director for quite awhile and because Treadwell Phillips had not come aboard yet. So, the consideration, the thinking about the appointment was prior to my coming on. By the time I came on, one heard very little about that consideration. So, it must have been working up to the July period when McKeldin was being considered, and surely after taking the office I don't recall any serious consideration given to McKeldin, but if there had been, I probably personally wouldn't have taken it seriously.

I: As far as you know, did McKeldin remain active? Did he do anything after his public years to aid or work with anything in the civil rights movement?

A: I don't recall, because the movement had changed so much. I am sure he was there on the speaker's platform in any moment that was necessary. I had left the days of the big meetings and the long speeches. It was a much more activist time. So if he was in--if he were, I should say, because I don't even know that it's not contrary to fact, but if he was still very much out front, it would have been at the big meetings and the big speeches. And this was not where I was in those years, and I don't think even where the civil rights movement was in those years.

But I'm sure, til his death that he would have been ready and willing to come to the fore to do what was asked of him and what he felt he could do. So, I'm sure somewhere--and somewhere still, I'm sure, he's talking up the cause.

I: You talked about belonging to CORE. Maybe you could tell me then in your perceptions why CORE chose Baltimore as a Target City?

A: Well, keep in mind that we were--it was so young that we didn't even know the name of the organization which they were giving us buttons and passes and telling us that we were members of. I don't think we had that kind of self-consciousness to know why it was chosen, and surely it was chosen by those who were in the hub of power somewhere, and that wasn't Baltimore.

In other words, when it came into Baltimore, it came from another source and we didn't make that decision. But, if I can second guess the people who did, they may have considered Baltimore, being a border state, to be truly Southern and an excellent testing ground, but with perhaps a touch of

Northern-ness enough to break the mold at that time. They may have considered it big enough to make a dent. It was then probably the sixth largest city in the country; big enough to make the papers and small enough that if we made too many mistakes, we could cover up for some of it.

I: Not too much lost.

A: Right. And I would think that it was a good take-off point, also, being near the Nation's Capital and easily able to tie in, and on the Eastern Seaboard where the problem obviously has to be the most exacerbated. I would think that if I had sat around choosing a city, Baltimore would have been an excellent choice.

I: Now, how did McKeldin deal with that sort of situation. I mean, he in his own perception thought that he had done so much and that Baltimore was so great.

A: Well, there was a benignness about it. I mean when we were thrown out of places, as I recall. When we were thrown out of Lexington Street...

I: He wasn't there?

A: No. It wasn't that. I guess, emotionally, one could say that he was there because we were thrown out with a certain benignness. I couldn't liken the fire of those days. Maybe I was just younger and it didn't frighten me. I don't know, though I don't think--there's not much that frightens me today. It seemed to me, though, I remembered enough goodwill remaining even in the process of being chucked out. There was humiliation and disrespect shown, and aggravation, but I think, perhaps,



without that benign attitude of his, without that pervasive goodness of his, it could have been an uglier situation.

I: He could have asked for military back-up....?

A: Yes. Well, his whole attitude could have trickled down and could have spread. You see, I think destructive things spread very quickly. They're very virulent. Good health doesn't spread. It's interesting when you stop to think about it, only disease does.

I: Diseases. Right.

A: And I think the fact that he had such mental health about his attitude toward people didn't give as much of a chance for disease to spread. Or not quite as virulently.

I: Did he use his influence behind the scenes to help avert nasty situations?

A: I think so. Yes, I think he did a lot. Now, mind you, I wasn't behind the scenes in those days. So when I say, "I think," I'm not using that loosely. I really only think.

I: O.K. Were you involved in the peace movement as well?

A: You mean against Viet Nam?

I: Against Viet Nam. Right.

A: Earlier than you would believe, I was...

I: At this point I would believe anything.

A: Well, I was working with Wayne Morse, and since Morse and Gruening were the only two out front in the very early days. In fact, I have the most magnificent video tapes of Morse out-- either just before or just after Chunking--talking from our home against the involvement in Viet Nam. We remember the early days very, very painfully, and to me it is still a very painful

experience. To me, it's what robs me, I think, today of the mood I'd love to have that of the Bi-Centennial. I just have not been able to get over the extreme sense of pain for this country's involvement in that war. Maybe if I hadn't worked in Germany those years I'd be able to get rid of this feeling a little bit, but when a country commits genocide--and I do believe that was genocide in Viet Nam--a few years just aren't long enough for me to get beyond it. I used to work with Humphrey very early in the days of Americans for Democratic Action. Very, very early. I was the Vice Chairman here in Baltimore, here in Maryland under Herbert Fetter who was Chairman of Maryland Americans for Democratic Action. Hubert, of course, was very active at that time. And so I've known him for well over twenty-five years, and I think I understand his reasons for not coming out against that war when he was Vice President. But I've been unable to forgive him. I've been unable, I guess, to find in my heart any reasonable explanation. When I say forgive, maybe that's a wrong term. Certainly I think well of him. He has enough credit in the bank, of humanism. He's paid his dues--that is Hubert Humphrey. And many people who didn't stand up against the Viet Nam war have paid their dues and are full-blooded humanists. But it's almost an irretrievable mistake, in my opinion, the dead Vietnamese like the dead German Nationals, I don't know how they can ever be atoned for. I just don't know how we can ever get beyond that. Maybe I feel that it's going to be hard to get beyond the first few hundred years of black history in America. I'm not sure I know how we'll get beyond that. And maybe that's a

terrible thing to say. The people who argue that, "I didn't do it and I oughtn't pay the price." I'm thinking particularly now of the educational thing. The people who argue, understandably: "I want a good school for my children. The busing is the difficulty. I believe in equality, but still I didn't set the scene. I didn't create the situation. I don't want to suffer for it or have my children suffer for it."

I can't take that route. I think by being human, since I am Whiteheadian and believe that the future changes the past, I think we all contributed to it. And I think we all bear the national shame and the national responsibility; and I'm not sure, maybe this is where I go into a belief in preferential treatment for people who have been so far placed back--that only preferential treatment will start them out from the starting line. So when you talk about the peace movement, if a movement--well, when you talk about everything you've talked about today, you're talking about, I think, my innards. You're talking about things that are very, very personal.

I: Did the peace movement take some of the thunder away from the civil rights movement?

A: No. No. No.

I: Or take some of the steam away?

A: It took some boys away, so there were fewer people to fight. It took some black boys away so there were fewer leaders perhaps. It killed some so permanently we probably were robbed of leaders yet unshown, but--and maybe it was another way to let off aggressions. Maybe inherent in us is the need to harm. I look at the penal system and I feel that we must need to

harm. Since we've done so little to crack the impossible chronology system, we have no rehabilitation. We must not want to rehabilitate. So, perhaps we do need to harm and hurt. Perhaps there is something perverse in us that does need that, and maybe to that degree Viet Nam gave us an outlet for our ugliness and drained off a little here. But the importance of these movements, it seems to me, is their--it's like the tree making a noise when it falls in the forest whether there's an ear to hear it or not. If every black were to leave this country, the problem wouldn't leave this country until every white is human, is humanized. The problem is there whether someone's suffering for the problem or not, whether it's being committed then or not. I think as long as there is bias and hatred and negativism in our souls, in our psyches, the problem is there.

I: If we could go back a little bit and climb back to the Commission on Human Relations and their Commission on Interracial Problems, and...

A: Maryland Commission on Interracial Problems and Relations. Right.

T: As it used to be known. I want to ask you a little bit about that, too. How were you appointed to the Commission? You said that you went and...

*Interview*

McKeldin-Jackson Project  
Interviewee: Mrs. Lane Berk  
Interviewer: Ellen Paul  
Date: July 18, 1976  
Place: Mrs. Berk's Home on Greenspring  
Valley Road  
Transcriber: Garnette Brant  
Cassette II Side 1:36

A: Pick up on that again.

I: Yes. You were talking about how it was a different situation from being on the staff member as an arbitrator.

A: As arbitrator, and I would like to repeat that in case it didn't get on, I was the second professional, Parren Mitchell being the top dog there. And that's a good phrase. I was probably considerate a little bit. But we did have two other staff members. Fantastic women, Alice Thomas, whom you said you have spoken to, and Fran Scott, and they have been laboring in those vineyards quite awhile. Really, I think, heroic women who had done a great deal with the Commission and have the feeling of the State because they have been there quite a long time. They're secretaries, but the--are you asking me how I got the appointment as arbitrator as a staff member, or how I got my current appointment as..?

I: Your current appointment as a Commissioner.

A: That's very hard. We've heard it said, now particularly with the inter-nation stresses of the Commission, we've heard it said that Commissioners are given their appointments because someone bought them or some power intrigue effectuated them. I know it not to be true in many cases, but certainly not true in my own. I think that I was the most shocked person in Baltimore when Frank DeFilipo called. Frank had, Flip, had been a newspaper reporter and a very sharp one, an incredibly shrewd

one, during the days that I had been in the civil rights movement and then certainly during the days that I was arbitrator. And so we did know one another well.

On the morning that he called to say I was appointed as Commissioner, I said, "You've got to be kidding, because I don't think the Governor wants the vote blocked." Well, the Governor hasn't had his vote blocked, unfortunately...

I: Nobody told you first. They told him first?

A: Well, Flip, of course, was working with the Governor.

I: Oh. I see.

A: Mandel at the time, and we were appointed by Governor Mandel, that is this current Commission, and I served on the Board of Commissioners before this one. Because this is going into my second term for it's my seventh year. I had talked about dissatisfactions with the Commission and where it was heading with a number of people who were close friends, Bob Watts among them. I do recall talking with Bob whose, by the way, if you want to talk about a leader--you asked me before about a leader. I think I might mention Bob Watts.

There, too, in an incredibly humanizing, loving way, but so forceful, I think he's left his imprimatur on Baltimore, too. But surely I had talked with Bob, and I've known Bob--oh let me see--for over thirty years, maybe for thirty-five years, and been a friend of his for that long. I know that there were others then that I talked to about disagreements with the way the Commission was going. I felt that it wasn't forceful enough, that it wasn't hard nosed enough, that it had not assumed a tough enough position. And I'm sure that that

attitude and interaction, inter-facing with them, must have got across to the Governor. As I say, I knew Flip and I had followed Flip, as he had me, in Annapolis when we'd go down on, he on his work and me on mine. We'd often see one another, and so, I'm sure that that, there was some input there. Well, I can't say I'm sure. I'm just assuming. I just feel this. It's not that I intellectually know where the appointment came from. I do remember the shock. I do remember when I was told about the other Commissioners as well, a guy like Bill Adkins, that I was feeling that this group of Commissioners that I was told--Sam Greene--as Flip was telling me who the other appointees were, I remember feeling, "No. No. It's absolutely impossible, because any one of us would create too much trouble for a Governor to appoint. Unfortunately, we haven't been able to create enough trouble. And when I say that, I say that in a particular way. I think the Commission has never won the battle of being a law enforcement agency, which is what it's supposed to be. I think when people say that the Commission goes on fishing expeditions or it's too tough, or goes beyond its domain when it's a front to the chamber, I'm very much reminded of the feeling that Zeke must have had as he was driving down the dirt road, his horses pulling him, and he saw a new fan-dangled thing, a red light, and he must have thought society had gone too far--telling him that he had to stop for something like that. But now we take that as a matter of form. Obviously, we have to stop for red lights. Nobody says, "Is it a good thing or a bad thing? Is it a good light or a bad light? Does it go too far? Is it on a fishing expedition

because it stopped my car at five in the morning when there are no cars on the road. Why is it picking on me?"

I mean that is simply a fact of law enforcement, and a suitable, necessary aspect of law enforcement, and I think that human rights are just that necessary and just that given and there ought to be a human rights agency that has absolute teeth to enforce human rights.

I: Now, the Commission can no longer give awards for compensation in a case where it feels that the complaint was justified. Is that right?

A: You're citing the Guttwein case, and that was just an utter tragic case. It certainly set back, not the cause of human rights because the cause of human rights is a long-term cause. It set back the cause of human dignity. We can lose dignity in a moment. We can't lose rights. We may have to fight for them again.

I: So, now the Commission just basically hears the cases and decides not...

A: Oh, well, it has more teeth than that. First of all, it's been able to do remarkable things with conciliation and still get monetary awards. Secondly, of course, it can set up a case for a court proceeding and the courts can certainly award monetary damages. Thirdly, it can act in a way to weed out cases so that you know which are important and which are not. There's a great deal that it can do, but it's unconscionable not to have full authority.

I: One of the issues surrounding the Commission was the ability to go out and seek out and investigate cases before



they were brought to the Commission. Do you do that with the Commission now or is that still something that's not done?

A: Well, it's done. Of course, the problem is that we have more cases than we're handling, so to seek out is both a moral and an immoral thing if you're not handling the cases you've got, to find the others so that you don't handle them. Our backlog is a very painful thing.

I: I was there the other day and it's certainly an impressive office with a lot of people working really hard.

A: Yes. I think it is. I think they're committed people. I think they're better trained than they have been in the past and it is an impressive office. The job we're doing is not impressive.

I: Is that necessary?

A: No. I mean that we're not doing what we're actually able to do, and I don't think that we're fulfilling not only our mandate to Maryland citizens, I don't think we're fulfilling our capabilities.

I: Is there a large difference in the sort of cases that are being heard at the Commission now than were, say, in the early sixties or late fifties?

A: Oh, yes. Well, first of all, in '63 it was just public accommodations and you didn't have employment. You didn't have housing at that time, and aside from--oh, well, of course, now there are sex cases, handicapped (discrimination against the handicapped), age--but aside from that, the level of sophistication is enormous. The body of law that one needs to know, the subtleties, the nuances of law that one needs to know, the amount of precedents that has set a direction--it's a completely

different world of civil rights today.

I: What would you consider to be the most pressing of those problems, or can't they be rated like that?

A: Now, you mean pressing of civil rights problems, the pressing of Agency problems, or pressing of which problems?

I: No. The civil rights problems.

A: Pressing of the civil rights problems. Well, can I give you two? Or must there be one?

I: Sure. No. Two is fine. If you can narrow it down that well, fine.

A: One thing that I think is most pressing of the civil rights problems is that we really aren't yet a nation that is decided. I still don't think, as I mentioned before, that when you even can conceive of a civil rights law enforcement agency as having less sanction, less ability, less teeth, than are required to do the job. When you can still conceive of that, it must mean that we're still a nation that hasn't decided for civil rights. That's number one. So, the battle isn't in its final stretch. In my mind there is a very beginning quality to it. We are not yet committed, really, to civil rights, or you could not possibly say, "We want a police force, but we don't really want them to be able to do the job," and say that you're committed to police protection. O.K. So that's problem one.

Now, problem two, I suppose, is that until you get a starting gate opening with horses of equal power running the same track and finishing with a line drawn the same for both, you don't have even equal opportunity. And I go back now to what I consider as necessary preferential treatment. I think that when you have kept a people from opportunity for so long,

it's insufficient to give them the opportunity. You have to make them open to it, ready for it, as utilizing of it as others.

I: Now, suppose a case came to the Commission--I'm thinking specifically in terms of something like accommodations, like the Gwin Oak incident, and that could come to the Commission and be decided, and yet the people who own the accommodation, say in this case the amusement part, would still refuse to integrate. Is that a problem still? Do you find that happening?

A: No. They could no longer do that. I mean they would have to follow the order of the Commission. What the Commission could not do is make them pay (1) the financial detriments that they have to pay back, the financial detriments that they have imposed upon people. People who couldn't get jobs there, who had alive businesses that couldn't have concessions there, have, in fact, lost money by not being able to make it there. People that couldn't go there and might have to go further away for entertainment. There are actual financial losses as well as human losses, in addition to which, when you talk to Western Man and his pocketbook you talk loudest. It's sad but it's true. We certainly found that, much as one might hate the riots or the cookout's, they did more to accomplish civil rights than a great many good words from many pulpits have done. And you just apparently have to hit people where they feel their phallus is, in the groin, which is the pocketbook. And I think, therefore, that we could do something greatly by saying--I think you can hit people hard by forcing them to make a change by Commission order. You can't make them pay monetarily for

breaking the law and you can't make them pay monetarily to the people who have suffered monetarily, in the State of Maryland, that is, by law. I think this is an enormous loss, so that, that's to me a tragedy, but you don't have as much trouble with public accommodations as one does in other areas. I think housing is still very difficult, subtle aspects of employment, promotional aspects of employment particularly. And, of course, you have the first fired because the last hired. You're going to have that unless you can work out something incredibly fine to prevent that, because American capitalism is like the accordion. We pull people out when we need the employment pictures broadened and push them back, squeeze them into starvation when we don't need full employment.

I've always been committed to the view that if the conservative who wants welfare that if the person who wants the capitalistic system to be able to put people in the deep freeze until the accordion can start opening again, and pull them out again. The fact that everybody might have a job might mean when an expanded economy requires more cheap labor. Where is it? So, you see, I'm committed to the view that what we don't like we get rid of.

I: You said to me earlier that you were consultant to the United States Civil Rights Commission. Can you compare the two for me? How does that Commission work?

A: Poorly. Even more poorly.

I: Even more poorly?

A: First of all, of course, it has no teeth really. It's

back where NCIPR was in its study days. The consultant arrangement with the Federal Commission is that every state has its State Advisory Committee, , State Advisory Committee; and these consultants are advisors, supposedly get the feel of their states and tell the Federal Commission what to do. But the fact is, what can the Federal Commission do? It can make studies, some of which are extremely well made, and it can publish reams of paper, some of which are beautifully articulated. And then what?

I: And it has no power to act or it just simply doesn't act?

A: Not really. Oh, it does act. In fact, it acts even without power and sometimes even achieves something, because, fortunately, we can work with ignorance. When people don't know we don't have the power to act we can do a great many things.

I: That's always a good way to handle it. Did either McKeldin or Lillie May Jackson ever come to the Commission with a case? Or even the NAACP--did they bring it to the Commission on their own initiative?

A: I'm sure that they did. I would hate to have you ask me to cite one. I'm not sure that I keep a mental log of who brings what, but there's no doubt in my mind that, as persistent as they've been through the years, they certainly would have.

I: Let me ask you something about the politics of the situation. Are you a Democrat or a Republican?

A: Well, I'm registered Democrat and I vote my conscience. What I'm saying is, I don't toe any mark. Well, and perhaps that's not even true. I just don't toe any sort of delineated line. I make a decision on each issue as it comes.

I: How did McKeldin work with the Democrats?

A: Well, of course, McKeldin really is and was a Democrat. You know that. Like Carrie Ramsay and Mac Mathias and a number of others.

I: And so he was just a shelf Republican, just the title?

A: Well, I don't know what one could call that. I think that what I consider a Democrat, if you exclude the Dixiecrats, is that there is a sense of changing the world instead of inheriting it. I think that's what, for me, distinguishes the two parties--that the Republican Party has a mind set of inheriting the world and the Democratic Party of changing it.

I: How did McKeldin react to someone like Agnew who in 1968 inflamed the black population by calling the leaders together and charging them with responsibility for things like riots. How did he handle that?

A: I imagine in his heart of hearts with disdain. I never saw any of it, however.

I: He never came out publicly and made a statement to the effect that...

A: I'd have to plead ignorance to that. I don't know. He may well have. I don't know.

I: I think I've gotten through this whole list, and then some. So, from here on out we can ad lib. What would you like to add that you think that I've left out?

A: Well, I wish that I had the roster of people. I'm so very sorry that one can't call forth the people who have been so valuable to this humanist movement, because you're probably

missing some very critical people. They may be people whose names are commonplace, who are household words, as it were. But I just hope very much that the kind of heroism that I saw in the late forties, early fifties, and mid fifties--I just hope that some of those people are being brought to your attention. Because I feel very strongly about the people who were in the hustings when it wasn't popular, when it wasn't respectable. It's not that I don't welcome everyone at any point. I mean I think when you do right, it doesn't matter when you started. On the other hand, I think that somehow to have helped those to do right more recently is a gift that the early workers perhaps have given to set the stage. And I'm wondering whether you are able to get the people whose names aren't necessarily foremost.

I: We have a long list of names. Let me ask you this. Is it a mistake to consider McKeldin one of the foremost civil rights leaders in Baltimore?

A: No, I wouldn't think it's a mistake. I wouldn't think it's a mistake, but I think that there are going to be so many people who played a less obvious role and perhaps still, if history could sort itself out and equally dissect a role in terms of permanent impact, and I just wish--one thing you might do, in fact, is go back to Ellis Thomas. I just would not know where to put my hands quickly on them, but in his letters...

I: I've seen them. The few that are left. She has a few and I've seen them.

A: They're there somewhere, and I have copies of all of them, too, and I know that they're here in my home. But that

State of State message that was sent to Governor Tawes will some day, I think, be very interesting, because each...

I: I'm not familiar with this. Was it sent by the Commission?

A: This was a newsletter sent by the Commission to Governor Tawes and then a public portion of it was printed. But there was a confidential portion of it to give the State of State an insight into the riots, an insight into anything that was deeply concerning. And in that you will probably find a great many names that might not have come to the fore.

I: I do have one question that I...

A: Have you spoken to Bob Watts?

I: There is an interview with him. Yes. He was one of the first people that we talked to. This is a question I have been directed to ask and I'm not sure I understand it. I'll try. There was a Baltimore Commission Self Survey done in 1960--I don't have the exact date.

A: Yes. I have a copy of it.

I: You do have a copy? Will I be able to look at that?

A: Surely, and I was involved in that, too. I guess everybody who was sort of up front in the movement was involved in that.

I: Can you tell me, how was that conducted?

A: My memory is not that strong on it. We went house to house. We just canvassed with a list of questions. It was a self-analysis, really. A people looking at a people. There were many, many of us, and I do have a copy. Perhaps I have an extra copy which I wouldn't want to give you, because I think it's a wonderful historical document, but which I would lend you.



I: O.K. We could probably get it, in fact, I'm sure we could get it copied.

A: However, it's probably going to seem rather placid. I don't remember any turgid questions in it. It was still during the Brotherhood Week days of civil rights. It was when all one had to do was just have a kind tone of voice and a few homilies. It wasn't during the tough days, as I recall. But, still, it gave attitudes. It was a kind of a Kinsey Report, as it were.

I: Can you remember back to the Omnibus Civil Rights Bill in 1963, and perhaps you might have...

A: '63 or '64?

I: It began in '63. I think it was passed in '63. Maybe it was passed in '64 and written in '63. I thought it was '63. Do you have any recollections of how that came about? You've mentioned knowing David Glenn and Bob Watts and these are people who were involved during...

A: Well, the strange thing is, I should remember well, certainly a large portion of my interest and discussion had to do with it in those days, but so much has happened since that I can't tell you that I had anything very, very important to say about it.

I: Now let me ask you, why do you think women were so important in civil rights and in the movement?

A: Well, I think that for two reasons, primarily: Number one, I think that men in our society have more frustration and more thwart because macho has been so incredibly important. Competition--standing taller by stepping on somebody else's face, perhaps. Getting the limited slices of pie fast enough. The whole concept of, perhaps, what's wrong with our society

has had to do with this need for power, even unutilized; need for money, even unutilized, and they're sometimes synonymous. And therefore, the civil rights movement would be a bigger threat to the man. The competition in the market place, particularly before fem lib, where women were not in the market place would have been a peculiar male threat. The competition for macho in general, being a he-man, would have been greater and, therefore, would have reared its ugly little sex head with the black man possibly coming forth as a human being worthy of dignity, admiration, adoration, appreciation. My god, the idea of a white female looking upon such, so I think that for that reason it got the American male where he lives much more deeply than it got the American female.

Now, the second thing, I think, is perhaps endemic to the two species. Since I'm not a fem libber, by the way, I feel that they're very different and appreciate that men and women are extremely different. I think they are. I think they are biologically and therefore spiritually, intellectually. I think women have a bit more of the concept of Christian love

which is a tender love, and I think men have a bit more of the earlier Judaic and classical Greek love, Eros, which is a tougher type of love. I think women do have, and men who are in touch with their female (with the female within them) have a sense of compassion, a sense of empathy, a sense of bleeding when others bleed. "Behold, a man was dying in Capri. He turned his eyes and looked on me." A sense of identification. We do have to, as women, we give flesh and it becomes another human being, and we know it's our flesh, and

we identify in that way. We raise a family and are responsible for that family in a very peculiar way that a woman has given to her by the natural sciences. And I think from that point of view, there is a consideration or a concern for other creatures that is perhaps a little more natural to us. So, you put those two together, being less threatened and having compassion is a bit more natural to our primary sexual instincts, and I think you have the answer to your question.

I: Now, Lillie Jackson and people like her did not have a sense of being female when they worked on civil rights...

A: Oh, don't kid yourself. Don't kid yourself.

I: They did? O.K. Good.

A: You see, that sense of being female--now in this case I am a feminist. The roles is what you're talking about, the superficialities are what you're talking about. Sure, she could be tough. Sure, she could get up there like a soldier. But that's not male. That's only a role. Now, I wasn't talking about that. I am certainly out of patience with the attitude of male-female roles and that is a feminist statement. When a woman is assertive, she's considered aggressive. People don't understand the difference between the two, therefore, she is not considered feminine. When a woman is tough, hard nosed, incisive, has an instinct for the jugular, singleminded, professional minded, perhaps she's considered less feminine, but not by my standards. Because I think that has nothing to do with the kind of in-depth feelings that I was talking about. I think women can go into any male field but bring to that male field something that is peculiarly feminine. It may not

show on the surface. That woman may seem incredibly tough, but let her pick up a baby. Let her nurse a baby. Let her involve herself with an old, infirm person, and there is even a difference in touch. I would suspect that most blind geriatric patients could probably tell the difference if they were being handled by male or female. There is simply something different that makes a woman a woman and a man a man.

I: What kind of connection is there between the women's movement and the civil rights for black people movement? I would say they're all civil rights.

A: Now, you've asked an incendiary question and you're going to hate my answer. I think there is a very destructive, a very destructive hook-up. I was horrified when Dellim came out of the Convention and other blacks have talked for equality in the market place for women.

First of all, I'm against equal pay for women, which sounds horrible. I'm for equal pay for heads of household, and generally that's male. When a woman, particularly when I see around me many wealthy women, gifted women, but women who have been able to bring their gift to the fore because they were born with relatively silver spoons, if not silver, damned good pewter. And they can get the college education years ago. They can get the association through the relationships to business and top management. They can walk into the market place and take a job from a black male because of the civil rights movement or from any male who may have five children to support and a wife who can be supportive to him and earn that

extra money. For the second person in command who adds often to her husband's income, who adds that measure of luxury, to be able to get what the primary bread earner can get is to me utterly disrespectful.

I: Well, there's no reason why she shouldn't be the primary bread earner?

A: If she is, then I say she should also get equal pay.

No. There's no reason that she shouldn't be the primary bread earner. Now, that's roles again.

I: O.K.

A: I think that there should be equality of pay for every head of household, be it male or female, and I have no problem with either one being head of household. But until you have that, when you have people augmenting income and when you have women putting the , black male and other minority males, and holding back their movement because they're being put out of the market place, I think it's an utter tragedy.

When I see a woman with four college degrees and Board at the Country Club take a job that any male head of household, particularly minority males, have just been able to wrench for themselves, I'm just horrified that they can have a fourth car instead of bread for the kids. And I think it is the most destructive thing. Now, if we had 100% employment, if we had male liberation, all males--all minorities' males, Chicano males, black males, all males, gay males, all males--if we had male liberation and head of household liberation, be it male or female, then certainly, help the other women, the rest of the women. So, I think that if you're talking about pure mechanics,

just numbers, every job that a privileged woman--and after all they're the women who can get the jobs best, and the best jobs easiest, and the easiest jobs first. And you have these gifted women...

I: You were talking about the white women, the privileged women, taking away jobs from black males because of the liberties that the civil rights movement has created.

A: Yes, and I think that when a woman who is just adding to the household income and who are on reprieve from ennui and boredom gets a good job to the extent and to the numbers that she takes that job from a male or a head of household female, I think to that extent she is robbing the movement. And yet, certainly, she has a right to do that in the structure that we're setting up for her. I think that structure is being set up a little bit prematurely.

I: Now, we're talking about the women's movement, and I have been told many times in other interviews that this is just something that never came up before. This is new, and in the sixties very few women, except those few, of course, that are always there, were concerned about it. McKeldin didn't appoint women, and Lillie May Jackson didn't fight for the rights that she--well especially as her daughters had to come in then. This is something that never came up?

A: Well, she educated her daughters. I don't think you can look at Juanita Jackson Mitchell and say that Lillie May Jackson was not inherently also a feminist. You see, what I'm saying is, almost deep within her soul was the future. She was a future tripper. She was a creative artist who could do something that had yet to have its day. She knew how to grow buds instead of flowers losing their petals, and they had yet to flower. With the kind of education that Juanita has, obviously,

this was an approach to feminism. We didn't call it that in those days, and I certainly am a feminist to the extent that I think women should be educated and educate themselves, should be contributors, and the full passion of life and doing what they can as a full human being, and not relegated to any role. But I just feel that when you're talking about a movement, you don't feed the fat before you feed the starving, and I think that in the market place--and this is the area of fem lib that I'm really disagreeing with--it's equal pay for equal work. I think it should be much closer to the need of the money going to heads of household, and there's plenty other area, of course, for women to come into their own.

I have asked to be removed from any case in civil rights in the Human Relations Commission that has to do with sex discrimination if it's an economic sex discrimination, and I've been faulted for it. But I stand very committed to this position and don't feel that I need to flinch a bit. I don't want to sit on those cases because I would not be an impartial judge.

I: Is there anything else at all?

A: Black women, I think, would be different. Minority women, I think, would be different, by the way.

I: You would sit on it if there were those cases?

A: I haven't had one presented to me, but head of household women. To me, full civil rights for privileged women is like tax loopholes for the rich, and for the black male to fight for this because he either thinks he will have a larger constituency



which might be shrewd. If he needs them as a political constituency for his own movement, that's one thing. But to fight for this which helps, in my opinion, helps the white privileged female before it helps the minority male and female, is what I'm really opposed to.

I: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

A: No. But I didn't think about adding that, you see. You're the one .....Is there any more you'd like to add?

I: I think I have everything here that I need.

A: If you're going to be interviewing anybody else in the Commission, you might get even some meaningful details, but in the broad spectrum I think it's interesting to note that Guttwein is a young man that went to work for, I think it was the Easton Star, Easton newspaper. Check out later whether it was the Easton Star. It may have been the Star-Democrat. I can't quite remember. But ... and apparently thought of very, very highly, and in line for promotion, and decided that things were moving along so well and his journalism seemed so respected. The trouble started when he brought in a fiancée to find a home, a black gal. He was dismissed and not promoted, but put out. And the case was any case, because the newspapers are hell. They couldn't be considered discriminating against the white male who is not a member of the protected class. They might have tried to bring in that he was Jewish, but they didn't in my recollection. However, the idea of discrimination..... The case was ultimately found on it's merits to be as the Commission ruled, namely, that the newspaper was guilty of the .... but we lost. The patient died and the operation was a

success. The Commission decision was correct except it was ruled by Maryland Court of Appeals that we could not give monetary awards. No where would our law permit us to give monetary awards. With that loss, of course, the teeth went out of civil rights in Maryland.

I: Now, you've just mentioned something that gives me an idea...How about the relationship of the Jews and the blacks in discrimination? How does it work?

A: Tragic. Tragic. You see, instead of asking me why women feature so forcibly in the civil rights movement, I think, perhaps, more pertinent a question would have been, why Jews featured so importantly. Because if one looks at the early civil rights movement...if one looks at the kind of willingness to give blood, physical and spiritual, that the Jews have shown, one has to ask why has there been a disproportionate number of Jewish people fighting for black civil rights. After one answers that, which there's an easy answer to because it's been very easy to, through history, to know what it is to be the victims of discrimination. One then has to ask why then is there so much anti-semitism among the blacks? Bayard Rustin is a notable exception among the blacks, an incredibly notable exception, one who considers himself Jewish because he knows what that, too, can .... , but I'm intrigued by the known anti-Semitism among the blacks. Intrigued by it because it because it is a very subtle sociological condition, a desire not to be pulled back, not to side with those who are only one rung above us or one step above us on the escalator. You see, there is an escalator clause. This isn't my philosophy. It's

a man by the name of Sachs in Baltimore. Leon Sachs has the philosophy of the escalator clause. Every time a group of people move up, they push up those ahead of them. But there's always a fear, there's often a fear that one might slip back if one's only on the next line, or that if one's on the line below, my god, if one can reach high enough to grasp the hand that's just above.

So there's always been struggle, incredible struggle, between people who are moving up toward the same end but at slightly different moments in history, not only their personal history but of the history in which they live. And since the Jews just made it, if one can consider they've made it at all, since the Jews have just established their place in Maryland. After all, shortly before I was born, Jews couldn't in Maryland, so it's not a very long ..... in terms of history. But, since the Jews seem to be making it, making it pretur-naturally, one wonders and one questions this. Is the black person feeling somehow more secure when he reached up higher on the line, higher up on the escalator... and that's number one.

Number two, since the Jews just made it, they've made it from the ghetto, the ones they've just left, therefore, who does the black man know? Ask his landlord and his groceryman. Ask his tailor. He knows the Jews, so that when he needs to let out his hostility towards the whites, better to hold the hand of the Wasp who can pull him up several rungs and better to shoot off the hand of the Jew who's only just that one rung above, and who also is there in image and to be

at the wire. So I think that there are many, many subtleties, and also then the guilt by association that McCarthy--Joe McCarthy's day is not over.....There is still guilt by association. And since the Jew has not been fully integrated into the psyche of modern society. There, again, as I mentioned before, brotherhood, yes. The Jew has his spot in the sun, but brotherhood is not a right to be extended....and that right is certainly not still realized. The Jewish white is obviously not realized.....We can see that the anti-Semitism is still rampant in the world when we're still wondering why the people like to protect whites.

But what I'm saying is that this guilt by association with another group..... and since there are many, many subtle aspects battling, despite the fact that I think the Jew potentially can be the undying ally to the black, and I don't even like to say to black, I mean to Christian blacks..... But the white Jew to the Christian blacks or to black Christians can be the most stalwart of allies. One finds a great deal of ....very, very disastrous. I'm sure that part of Paul as a Jew.....I don't know what religion is or whether he has any ties at all. I do know that the concern of being put out of an inch by someone else who wants that piece of pie..... to a Jew who has just found his way into the slot of higher institutions. He's frightened of being put out of the slot.

I: In Baltimore do the Jews take the position of being on the Administration's side, the official government's side?

A: Oh, no. Not only. What I found out, I don't mean... That's for sure. If one looks back in the early civil rights days here, I think if one measured by the number of Jews in society and the number of Jews on the streets...

I: As an organization or as individuals? Aside from things like B'nai B'rith.

A: No. I'm talking about firing line body--bodies to be counted. I don't know whether you've talked to Frank Furstenburg; then Herb Fetter.....Oh, there are legions. And Leon Sachs. And Sandy Franks, and I'm missing, I'm sure, scads of others. As a matter of fact, I remember once having an exquisite argument with Father Joe Connelly. Do you know him? Well, certainly Father Joe was one of the early Romans in the movement, and I remember arguing with him when he was sounding very pious and holier than thou about the place of the church in the movement. And considering how late the white church came into it and how much earlier the white Synagogues came into it, I asked him a pointed question as to why, and he referred me to a particular book of St. Catherine's, and I guess foolishly, I still have the book and the chapter he told me to go to get an answer. I could hardly wait. I suppose the question was so embarrassing that that was his way of passing it off in public. I've never forgotten that.

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