

L: Why don't you just by you saying who you are and ah, maybe you can help guide me through some of the questions too because I....

F: Well I'm Francis Walter and what else?

L: That should be good on tape.

F: Okay.

L: That statement itself um, what Bill and I are trying to do is to build a documentary a 60 sixty minute documentary on a, well the question that interests us is, and this isn't something that maybe is real important in this present conference but, how does someone come from a yankee town where there's no black people, from a privileged family of a physician, what makes him take some of the choices he did and ah, down in the streets of Hainville, Alabama. That's one of our questions. But ah, your, um, there's no real way you could address that, so I'd like to know more about how you met Johnathan and how you came to be in Selma. You're a native of down there aren't you?

F: Yes, I was born Mobile. Well I had left Grace Church in Jersey City in the um, middle of the year and wanted to come back south, um, that was '65, and um, I didn't have a job and I knew I couldn't just be a parish priest in Alabama because a Bishop Carpenter wouldn't want me there, so, I got the idea of, which was floating around, I made working for the National Council of Churches as a um, as um, man out in the field, so I was talking to some people about that, at the National Council of Churches, and then and, my former wife and I had moved to ah, Decata where her aunt lived and we were sort of just camping out there, waiting for something, like, to develop, and we were hoping it would. The Ford Foundation was talking about giving some money to the National Council of Churches. So then, um, it appeared that different, well when James Reed was killed, the Unitarians said, well our response to this is that we will send someone else, and if they kill them then we'll send somebody else. So they set up a rotating group of clergy.

L: All Unitarians?

F: Yes. That was their response to Reed's murder. So um, that made other churches think, well we really ought to have a representative down there. Many people were asking, local people, black people, were asking the churches for money and for various resources, and also there was um, um, really, um, uncontrollable response, people, one thing, one of the first things I did when I went to work, October 1, I spent months trying to get out of a warehouse and distribute something like 20,000 pounds of books, which were worthless, I mean these yankees had scooped up just trash, you know, old grammar school books and sent literally tons of them down to this warehouse, so ah..

L: What was the reason that they..

F: Oh the black people didn't have anything, they didn't have anything (S: I see) and in my own sociological opinion that's where the hippee movement started and the civil rights movement in the south, because when these kids came down for the march, they stayed, so we had the Selma free medical clinic, we had the Selma free library and um, and what else free?, and um the idea was, you know, people

shouldn't have to pay for anything and there was a very large library run by young, mostly white kids from the north whose parents had lots of money and they were just living down there in sleeping bags running this library and,

L: Were you in Selma at the time that this happened?

F: Well that, yes, that's I got, well to back up a little bit, I ah, so different, ah, denominations began to get together and say, well maybe we ought to have some sort of office or liason person down there and this guy Francis wanted to be a National Council for Churches field representative for racial justice so maybe he'll, maybe he could do it. Now that's my recollection of it so um, I then um, exactly why I was to meet Henry, Henry had money to get Johnathan out of jail. But whether Henry was going before Johnathan was jailed on the 14th or not I don't recall.

L: I think he would have gone just because of that.

F: But because of that, like John's support and Escrue's support, uh, and of course John was, I think did a little coordinating with Johnathan maybe, Anyway it fell out that just prior, maybe on the 13th, I got my former father-in-laws car and, in North Alabama, and drove down. I believe that I met Henry at the Montgomery airport, ah, or either the Burmingham airport and ah, he got in the car and we arrived in Selma. We were arrested as we came into town for speeding. We were going like 15 miles an hour (laughs) but we were arrested for speeding. We were taken down to the police department ah, perhaps, it was probably the sheriff, Jim Clark was the bad guy, Wilson Baker, Baker was the good guy, the police chief. Um and we were interagated and um, we then went to the SCLC office, or the snake office. Yuh, we ended in the snake office.

L: So they just stopped you to harass you?

F: Oh sure, well they wanted to know who we were.

L: You weren't charged with a crime. You were just interagated.

F: Well they said we were speeding but then they, I think we paid them five dollars. But they were..

L: This was on the 14th of August?

F: Well perhaps it was the 13th.

L: But had you known at this time, John hadn't been arrested then. Not 'til..

F: When we learned, I don't remember, but we either learned that day or or, yuh. I think we were aware when we got there 'cause we were talking about, well if they were treating us this way and we just drove into town, what's going to happen when we go over to Hainville to see him in jail. So we got, we checked into the black motel here all civil rights activists stayed, it was the only place you could stay, pay money to stay, you could stay in a black person's house.

L: Where was this?

F: Oh, I forget, it was off back behind the Methodist orphanage, little ol' concrete block. I stayed there quite a bit. Well I stayed with the edmonite fathers who were good friends of Johnathan's. Right. Well I didn't know him. He had been sent packing about Bishop Tooly by the time I had got there so,

L: He was sent to Connecticut in disgrace.

F: That's right. Ah, and integrated ah, integrated priests in the rectory. Now in the monistary that wasn't allowed. So Henry and I got briefed by an SCLC person after we got checked in we went down and got, I think our headquarters was sort of the snake office which was in the black business district of Selma, right next door to the police station on the second floor of a old 19th century building. So we could look down at the police station from the snake office. Ah, just one building down the street and on the ground floor was a black funeral home. So um, they said, well if you go tomorrow to the jail ah, let's check the car out and ah, so we got little tips like, we drive with the windows rolled up because that deflects bullets and ah, don't have anything in the car that could be called a weapon, ah, which is ironic because Johnathan, you know, one of Coleman's defense was that he had something shiney in his hands. That's a good ol' southern expression "he had something shiney in his hand, That's why I shot him" and um, so ah, we said, well we got the car cleaned out and so one of the SCLC workers said "Let me see!", so he found a fork and Henry and I laughed (laugh) and he said "Uhuh, you take that fork out of there,", he said "They'll think that's a weapon, You can be arrested for having a fork in the car.", and I said "Don't give anybody improvication." So I think that, I know Henry had his clerical collar on and ah, I don't know whether I did or not. Probably not. I think I was scared and decided it was better if I didn't have one on. But I was glad that at least one of us did. So we,

L: Excuse me. Wouldn't you be safer with it on Francis?

F: Oh, absolutely not. That's a moving target, you know.

L: So as soon as they spotted, you wouldn't be protected by virtue of your clerical collar?

F: No, no. As my brother-in-laws family said down in Mobile, there wasn't an actor's costume in New York City that had any, nuns or priests costumes, that all the communists had rented um to come down to Selma.

?: Let me add something. When the group was arrested in Jackson, Mississippi in 1961, 23 of us, we were treated very politely because of that. But that was so early on that clergy were considered the specialists and you treat them nice. Now in '65, the collar meant that he's a trouble maker.

F: There are two, there are two types of people to look out for: the law and then um, racists, either clan members or not. Now, politics, southern politics dictated that the clan didn't operate in Dallas County because, Judge Reynolds and other people, that's a common thing, you know. like the mafia doesn't operate in Newark and you know, they don't, or Jersey City. They do it, 'cause they live there. So um, we knew when we got out of Dallas County that we, well or anybody, you know, Mrs Wheats who had been shot, so we knew. Anyway we, anyway we drove to Hainville and ah, do you want me to go on with this?

S&L: yeah I'm interested in this L: Sure this is great

background. As much as you want to say.

F: Uh, so I think we spent the night, yes, I know we did, and then we got up the next morning to go to Hainville and

L: And you had said you spent the night the motel.

F: Yuh, uhuh

L: That's quite a drive. You drove past where (?) was murdered.

F: uh, to turn off to go to Hainville I don't know, I don't know where she was, I don't recall. So we got to Hainville and we kinda wondered around until we found the jail, and we walked up to the jail, it's a little two story, red brick building, and two black trustees were there and they came out and told us we couldn't go in because uh, they didn't have permission to let us go in. And we said well how do we get permission and they said, well you'll have to find the sheriff, and we said, well where is he and they said, we don't know where he is, we said, well what do we do, and they said, well we don't know what you do. So finally they said, well he might be eating lunch. So we went back to the town square and parked and got out and went into this restaurant, now that was scarey, you know (laughing) these old guys sitting there eating lunch and drinking coffee and chewing tobacco and looked up at us and Henry's black, and another thing I recall when I was driving over here, Henry was representing Escrue to try and get John out of jail so I looked upon Henry as the spokesperson and I, and that drives, back in that day, that would drive white folks crazy for an integrated group to show up to deal with a person, a white person, in authority and then the blacks become the spokespeople and the whites just stand there, I mean they, that just made them wild. I remember in Santatolista Hills office when we went up later with the Selma project, I drove people up there to try to get a farmers cooperative started and about ten people walked into his office when his secretary let us in and I was in the very back and I was the only white person and this, he was old, and he said "Ah, what are you all here for?" (Laughing in the background) and I said "Ask them. I just drove the car." (everyone laughing) so, anyway, so ah, these guys in the restaurant said the sheriff wasn't there, he might be over in the court house. Well, we went over to the court house and it is a raised, the courtroom is raised and then there was a sort of ground floor that had a hallway that went all the way through it and, you know, I was thinking just intuitively, when you go inside that's bad, you know, it's better(laughs). But we walked down this dark hallway and out came the sheriff and the deputy and ah, the sheriff was like, it was like talking to a bomb. He was fat and red faced and you know, his belly was sticking out, he was just right out of the movies, and he was just barely in control, you know, he wanted to know what we wanted and we said we wanted to visit the people that had been arrested and um, he said okay, you can do it. And we had to turn around and walk away from him and get outside and then we went back to the

jail and we went up um,

L: Now let me ask you a question on this one. Henry said a few days ago um, Henry doesn't remember going with you, it's kind of interesting, he thinks he went by himself, but it's been 25 years. Also his recollection was that when he went into the jail there were um, a couple of cooks or something,

F: That's the trustees, the cooks umhm.

L: He said there weren't any, the sheriff wasn't there...

F: That's right. But they wouldn't let us in the first time. We had to go find the sheriff and get verbal permission, and the sheriff, I don't know what the sheriff did. Whether he telephoned and told them to let us in, but when we got back there we said, well the sheriff said we could come on in and they said okay.

L: So how was it when you went in there? thought that anybody could have walked in and shot anyone.

F: Oh, absolutely. It was wide open. There were no, the doors were just standing open, it was um, yuh it was just like fish in a barrel. Ah,

L: Now the men were on the second floor, rather than on the first?

F: My recollection is that they were in adjoining cells, but that might be wrong. Because I think we would of, out of courtesy, wanted to at least see everybody, 'cause we knew having somebody that cared for you was important to visit and I think we spent a little time, I can't, like I remember going back and forth between these two cells, which were rather small. When we got upstairs, the first impression I had was of, of ah, you know, rotten food and just filth ah, I don't know how many days they had been in there 'cause I can't remember whether it was the day after we visited that Johnathan was shot or two days after we visited.

L: Henry thought it was the Wednesday before Johnathan was killed, two days before.

F: Well it probably was. Anyway, the food was so horrible that they were being fed, that they couldn't eat it, so the sheriff, just to be petty said, Well by god if you won't eat it, I won't clean it up." So they would push it underneath the, the bars and out into the little hallway, which was only about that wide, so it was all of these paper plates and white beans cooked without salt meat and, the worst cornbread I ever, it was a disgrace to the south, the worst cornbread I ever seen in my life. Just stuff like that, and all this out in the hall and we kinda stood in it while we were talking to them.

L: What um, how were their spirits?

F: Well this is where I get real ah, this is the kind of, one of the spiritual crisis' in my life when I talk about this. The um, everybody was mood, was quiet and moody, except Johnathan, and Johnathan was up. He was really, he was, I don't think it would be going too far to say that he was acting like he was the cheerleader and it was his job to keep people encouraged and laughing. So Johnathan was walking around the cell and he would come up to the bars and he would talk and he would go back. My recollection is that

Father Morisroe was in the back and wouldn't even look at us. He was dejected, frightened, I guess frightened. I don't think he ever walked up, you know everybody kinda walked up and said "Hey man!" or you know, we shook hands through the bars, and Johnathan was, he was up, and um, Henry made the offer of the bail, and they repeated what I think we had already heard, that um, there was no way they were going to go, they were either all going to get bailed out or they were gonna all stay. And it was no big deal, Johnathan just said, oh no, no. How much do you have? And I think it was about 200 dollars.

L: That was Henry's offer, Henry's offer, to bail out whoever would want to come.

F: Right, that's right.

?: Now, was the offer to anyone who wanted to come out.

L: No that wasn't it.

F: It was Johnathan.

?: We sent Henry over with a limited amount of money because we didn't have any money.

F: It was to get Johnathan out. That's what I..

L: Not Morisroe, not anybody else, just Johnathan. That's all they had money for.

F: Right. And they said we are all bailed out or nobody is bailed out. And I could ah, I could appreciate that. Ah, we didn't stay very long. I wouldn't say we were there more than ten minutes. There wasn't much to say. Ah, the blacks were far more, well, everybody was withdrawn, except Johnathan, and that's where my ah, the only time I ever met the man was that ten minute period and I didn't like him.

L: How come?

F: Because I misunderstood him, I can say that now. I felt like he didn't know that he was from the north, that he didn't know how bad things were, that he thought it was kind of a lark.

L: Do you think now that he did know how bad things were?

F: yes.

L: But then you didn't?

F: No, and I was scared and I was also prudent. I was wanting to do things like, as I later did. I dressed just like a white farmer would dress. I wore brown work clothes and I got me a plastic liner and put some ball point pens in it, and I didn't wear a collar unless I went to a church or something where I was with black people, where I would be safe. I

L: You must have been seen...

F: But Johnathan had even asked to wear a seminarian collar, which is a very unusual thing in the episcopal churches. You've seen pictures of it. It has a little black stripe here in the kind of high Roman churches (laughs) of the prevatican too, that meant that you were a seminary student. But I never heard of any, maybe it, I don't know. Did you ever hear of it? But Johnathan, but you know, he wanted to, he wanted to make that witness. Only if I read what Johnathan had written, read everything that I can, that all of us have available now, and thought about it I realized

that he....I accused him of a sin against prudence I guess.

L: Not a sin against humanity or anything like that?

F: Absolutely not, just a sin against prudence, that, that he was, he was ah, so up, I wouldn't use the word manic, but he was really up and everybody else was down and,..and I think he felt it incumbent upon himself to, you know, to be lifting people's spirits. So I interpret as "You're just a kid from up north and you just don't know what the hell's goin' on here(laugh) man. we could all get killed." and ah,

L: Do you think it was naive?

F: No, I think he knew exactly. After reading what he had to say, ah, but that was just his, his, in other words he had weighed his life and he decided that he'd do it. So I don't think, now, looking back on the things he said, and encounters that he had with white churchmen and Judge Reynolds and all those people. He got a, see I knew nothing of that. I thought he might have been around some black people. Also, I was beginning to develop, already had, but was beginning to develop my own style, which was strictly, as a white southerner, it was fitted me better, to be an adjunct and enabler to blacks who had a fight of their own goin' on. Now, we had a fight in Escrue because our church was in a state of a heresy, it was, you know, we had a heretical church because church is supposed to be one and when you theologize about that it's pretty clear, when you have a segregated church you're sinning against the unity of the church. So that was Johnathan's issue too. But

Johnathan, as Ruby Sayles said or no, Gloria Larey, she's not Gloria Larey now, I mean that stuff I read, she said he was just like one of us and she said other people, other white people, you know, were patronizing. They stood apart and kind of looked down, even though they had the best will in the world, and I said, I thought, "Gloria, I'm afraid you're remembering me.", 'cause I knew her very well after Johnathan's death. We worshiped together at St. Pauls and, and I think she misunderstood. I was saying ah, it's your alls fight and if there is any way, back in the background, that we can help, you tell us what to do and we'll do it. But ah, I wouldn't presume to demonstrate with you unless you asked me ah, But Johnathan just, he didn't see it that way and that was not his role and,

L: So you wouldn't say it's your office, your fight. What would he say?

F: He'd just say I, I'm with you. Here I am. um

L: Judith Upton said that they were (?) (F: umhm) She called them (?).

F: Well as I saw, with me being from Mobile and six generations of Alabamians, there wasn't any way that I was gunna ah, be a joined snake, or something like that. That was not my, my role was to, frankly, to analyze the requesta and, and um what um, see that the resources, financial and otherwise that were available from white churches, were made available to the appropriate black organizations, 'cause there were a lot of scams goin' on, my gosh. I mean, someone said that if the white folks in Selma could have gotten off

their sexual obsession about blacks and just focused in on petty larceny and the theft of food stuffs that were coming from all over, the Quakers would send a bunch of hams and those hams would get sold by somebody, that if they just, if they focused on that, they could have put some black people in jail. But no, they had to go trying to count condoms, you know, on the road to, to Montgomery and things like that.

Find out how many nuns were having sex with black guys and stuff like that so (laughs). Anyway, um,

L: Okay, so I understand... I think, I mean I don't know a whole lot about...

F: Well it's not that it was my personality and my personality. I think that uh, he was the type of person that I would have been not naturally gravitated to and it, it's kind of like Lindberg and cheese (laughs) you know. You have to, I would have to, and I'm old enough to know that that's happened to plenty of people that I'm very close to and admire, but at first it's not a natural attraction. And even at the time, of course after the next, two days later when I learned he was shot um, I began to morn, so I have mauled this over for years....and um, I really believe that ah, he just was, he really was an unusual person and he had just made the decision and so like ah, you know, renaissance englishmen when they went to have their heads cut off they always wanted to sat something nice and quotable and was cavalier.

L: Did he say anything um?

F: Nope. Well if he did I don't remember it. He um, hum, I honestly, I don't remember.

L: 25 years later...

F: It was just that short discussion of the bail and it was just, oh well we can't do that and everybody was nodding their heads um, Stokely Carmichael was in there but I never, I don't think there was a word, Stokely Carmichael meant nothing to me then and um, he didn't ah, he didn't say anything um.

L: So what did you do then? You turned around and left.

F: We turned around and left. We later linked up with Mu Song Li who was a, was with the National Council of Churches. She was an expert on resolving conflict in communities and she's been living in Selma and stayed there many, so we had our little list of people to meet and John Ruskin Clark, if I have the name right or correct, was the present unitarian minister.

L: Great name.

F: Yeah, real unitarian name, so John, we met up with him and uh, I don't know what we did the next day ah, I guess we were meeting Mu Song Li and we were.....I don't know what we were doing but the next thing that I remember was that we, John Ruskin Clark and Mu Song Li and I, and then Henry must of gone on back. Maybe the next day I was taking Henry to the airport.

L: You did as a matter of fact because he heard about Johnathan's death while he was driving in an automobile.

F: Okay.

L: By a car radio.

F: Well he had rented a car then or something. I don't know where he got the car, as I recall.

L: Then he stopped at a telephone and called his wife and she confirmed it.

F: It may have been that I didn't, well never mind. It may have been I didn't pick him up in my father-in-law's car at all. It may have been that I got the car later, after Johnathan was shot and I think that is what happened. I think Henry had the car, but I don't know how he got me. But anyway, small detail in history, but..

L: I'm beginning to understand a few things now. I haven't asked you any questions that were,

F: You can ask me anything you want.

L: Well i'm real interested, let's see, how did you learn about Johnathan's death?

F: Oh that's where, that's where I'm getting to.

L: Yeah.

F: Ah, we, we had gotten an appointment with ah, the rector of St Pauls Episcopal church, Frank Matthews, and Frank and I had known each other in ah, the diocese in Alabama. Frank was a, up and coming priest and to be rector of St. Pauls in those days was a real plum. I mean he was on the way to becoming a cardinal rector and ah, he was a really, Bishop Carpenter loved Frank and Frank is a, hearty, extrovert wit, or he was and at diocese and conventions and everything, Frank was always the one that was allowed by Bishop Carpenter to make clips and remarks and everything, and if you were a junior priest you know, you'd have been canned if you acted like Frank would act, but anyway,

L: He's in Fortain isn't he?

F: Yes.

L: Yeah we tried to get in touch with him, he must have been on vacation. We called and called, I would like very much to talk with him.

F: Yeah it would be good if you could. So I don't know what we were talking about, we were just talking about the situation in Selma when Mu Song Li was interested in well off white people and ah, negros as we would have said, you know and talking and ah. So we were just having a conversation and we were sitting down. The telephone rang and Frank said Oh no!, and that's how we heard he, and he put the phone down and he said Johnathan and another man have just been killed in Hainville, and we just ah, without saying anything, all four of us stood up and Frank did like that, and we held hands and we prayed, and ah, even the unitarian had a good prayer. All of us prayed and ah, that was a very uh, moving thing because we were adva, you know Frank was an adversary, and at that we then sat down and ah, he said ah, they think that ah they're bringing the bodies to Selma to the negro funeral home. So I knew where that was. I knew that was right, you know, just close to the snake office next door, and this thought popped into my head that I had read about in Mississippi, how some people had been killed running away, but Mississippi state troopers

turned the bodies over and shot them in such a way that it showed they were coming toward the people that shot them, and I thought, you know protecting, we can't do anything for them, but protecting those bodies is important, so somebody needs to be down at the funeral home. So, um... we had the impression that maybe the bodies were already at the funeral home, we thought both of them were dead so we didn't know who was dead. Johnathan and somebody else. So ah, I said, my job, one of my jobs, I thought, was to get other episcopal clergy to be more engaged in the, in the agony of making some resolution of the racial mess that the episcopal church was in. So I was constantly, you know, I was pushing Frank, couldn't we do this Frank, before the phone call came. So I said, "Well Frank. let's the two of us go down to the funeral home." Because as priests we, we had ah litany for the dying and the commendation of a soul and we had our liturgy that we could at least pray and we could maybe be, and he, and, I wanted Frank to assume responsibility for Johnathan because Johnathan wasn't a member of the congregation in the books but he worshiped there. So Frank said that ah, I don't know what he said, he wouldn't or couldn't go or he wasn't gunna go and he reached up on a book shelf and he said "Do you have a prayer book?", and I said no and he said, "Well here, I'll give you a prayer book." So um, once I knew I was going to be talking to you, I began to think about, well what was my feeling? Well I was angry at him. You know, I really came out looking good. I was going to go down there and maybe it was dangerous and he had proven that he was my adversary, so he had proven that he was morally inferior to me, you know to me. Well later I wrote, in the prayer book, something like this: This prayer book was given to me by Frank Matthews when um, I was asked, I asked, him, the two of us to go to Johnathan's body and I dated it and I kept it for years and I gave it away to somebody. Somebody, just needed a prayer book. It was an inexpensive one, and the reason I, I gave it away, I didn't want to be, the reason I kept it was because I was angry and I was putting him down, you know.

L: So once that was over, did you need the prayer book?

F: I didn't want the prayer book. I didn't like what I had written in it, even though it had some his, minor historic value.

L: Now Matthews had been on the outs with Johnathan?

F: Oh, absolutely.

L: How did he handle the death of Johnathan.

F: He was very shaken by it.....I don't recall that he wept but he, he was, well of course he was, I mean, well you wouldn't say of course, but I know Frank and he was deeply moved, and ah, he said is there anything I can do, and ah, where are you staying Francis? So I went down to the Snake office, well I went down to the funeral home and walked in and said, it was just quiet as the tombed (laughs0, nothing goin' on. So I went up to the snake office and it was just something. I mean I should back track and say that uh, a lawyer named Peter Hall from Birmingham, a black attorney, who later became a city judge and is just recently retired

from the bench in Birmingham. Those days before he, Peter Hall was supposed to be gettin' there with the money to bail everybody out and Henry, I think left the 200 dollars with me or it seemed that's what he should have done. But Peter Hall is and was an eccentric and undependable person and Peter Hall was, well in the movement, nothing ever happened when it was supposed to happen. It always happened a couple of days later or 45 minutes later or a day earlier or, so everybody was waiting for Peter Hall to get down from Birmingham with the money and Peter Hall got there after Johnathan was dead and they'd been set up and let out and everything. So I don't know whether he had all the money or not but I remember him as a young, you know, aggressive um competent looking lawyer who, but um, when I got to the snake office, you can imagine. It was just turmoil, I mean people were crying and saying "We got to get them, we got to get there", and ah,

L: No one knew where the body was at that time.

F: We've got to get Stokely, and they didn't know who'd been shot. Some people said Ruby's been shot and nobody knew anything and they wanted to go and other people were hanging on and said we can't go. It's too dangerous and well where are they. It was just chaos and ah, I remember there was a guy there that everyone called "The FBI Spy" and he was a volunteer in a suit and everyone said that he was an FBI plant, so they would give him low level things to do like stuffing envelopes and (laughs) all the shit work you know, and they were contemptuous at him and he would just smile, so I, it looked to me like he really was, probably worked with the FBI. It looked like Hoover had told him how to knot his tie and everything so, ah, he was there and ah, as far, I don't recall any other white people there. So all this turmoil and then, you know, the news began to filter in that ah, the bodies were being taken to Montgomery, we were told by the state troopers and, and then we heard that, well we heard that Morisroe was alive and then the thing was well we got to get guards in the hospital. Maybe, you know, I might have to go, I guess I was on the phone to you all by then, I don't know and we needed, you know that was pretty obvious. If somebody..

L: Yeah (?) just said the same thing.

F: Ah, we needed to protect them ah and then the body had gone to Montgomery and I thought well, you know, if he's with state troopers, nothing we can do about the body now um, then what happened was I did some telephone calling back up to North Alabama and I decided to stay as kind of an Escrue representative and a press representative and ah, one who would begin to work, organize a memorial service for Johnathan, and the idea from the black side, and that's when they kinda looked at me 'cause they knew I was an episcopal priest, was we got to calm things down and this was an opportunity for ah, reconciliation. So it got to involve the white, let's see if we could involve the white community and the place to start was Johnathan's church, the episcopal church and the argument then went, but they would never come to Brown's chapel or any of the black churches

for a memorial service for Johnathan. So can, let's see if we can work together and you can work with Rev. Matthews and let's see if we can have the memorial service at St. Paul's church. So then this diplomacy began. My press desk was the lobby of the black motel and, you know, I'd telephone Frank and um. So I remember I was getting in a shouting match I said "Well why can't you do that?", and he said "It took me ten years to air condition this place.", or five years or something "and you think I can get 'em to do that." and he said "and they didn't air condition it until the baptists air conditioned theirs and then we had to be air conditioned because we couldn't let the baptists get ahead of us.", and I said "Well this is something more important than air conditioning", you know, and I was getting the high moral ground again and we were yelling at each other, and so finally Wilson Baker, the public safety commissioner, said he wouldn't allow it ah, they had machine guns on top of the city building and they said they wouldn't allow it because it was too dangerous to allow the blacks across the line and over to Frank's church and Frank's, of course Frank was caught. Frank would have been a lot more outgoing, but ah, he was always listen to Johnathan, and he would ah, but he was not prepared to take a stand that would cost him his job and he was not prepared to resign. He would have had to resign and he was not, one reason or another he didn't think that was what he should do with his life, so he was, you know going on to, I would say, to all these ah..

L: What about the catholic church St Elizabeth?

End of side one

F: He retired still the rector of St. Stephen's, I think Utah, and when I went (laugh) later when I got to Lownes County and was talking to some (laugh) black people I said "Well I'm an episcopalian." I said, "You know, the episcopal church, you know Rev. Kendall?" and they said no we've never heard of the man. (laughs) they had been there 60 years but they had never heard of him, 50 years, so anyway, it was, it was, I really felt lousy calling Ralph Kendall up and saying, "Ralph, ah, you know, Johnathan was in this ministry through the episcopal society of the culture and racial unity and I'm down here in Selma and we were, it's our idea that we'd like an episcopal priest from every little community to go to the church, the black church that will be having the service tonight and would you go?", and of course he wouldn't go.

(?): Did I think up that?

F: Yes, I think you thought up that.

(?): It almost seems like, I can't imagine clergy doing that at that time.

F: Well we knew they wouldn't do it and then we could say that they refused to..

(?): I was also thinking if some malicious things.

F: Well we could then say that they didn't do it, you know. It was a win-win situation and kind of a sneaky thing, I mean, I think you and I dreamed it up and we thought well, if they refused then that goes in their spring news letter and gets in the New York Times if we can and if they go, god

love 'em, you know, that's what they should of been doin'.

L: Did you end up coming to Keene to the funeral?

F: No, I had things to do in Alabama and so I went to ah, I can't remember, I think I went to ah, to Greensborough. That was, that, this is at the end of my dramatic, the dramatic part. So things were.....we had, we had the memorial service in Brown's Chapel and ah, an early one. That was before all the, Dean Cobern arrived and everything and a friend of mine from Burmingham, Billy Hood and my former wife and I were the only three white people in there, in Brown's Chapel, that I could see and ah, I had my father-in-laws car and of course Alabama Bureau of Investigation ah wrote every white person's telephone number down, you know, license tag down and I thought, boy, you know, what is he, what did he me, what did he think when he told me I could use his car. You know, these are segregationists and here he's going to be called up and asked "Why did you (laughing), why did you come down from Florence to John Daniel's." I remember when I first went to work there, Shirley Meshir was an SCLC um, ah, notable, come from up north and um, so we were milling around, we were going to have ah, one of the only demonstrations I was in and ah, this man walked over to me and he said, "Who are you?" and I said, "Well who are you?" and he said, "Well I just need to know your name and ah, I've already got your license number written down and." So I said, "Shirley, who is this guy?" and she said, "Oh, he's with the Alabama Bureau of Investigation." and um, I said, "Well I'm not goin' to cooperate with you." and so he walked over and he said, "Shirley, he won't give me his name." (everyone is laughing) and she said, "Francis, you don't gain anything by ah, just tell him who you are. It doesn't make any difference. He's just a spy for Gov. Wallace." So (everyone laughing) so I said, "I'm not going to do it Shirley. Maybe I ruined the game but I just, I don't want to do it." But anyway ah,

L: Did you go to the trial?

F: No

L: Anybody here? You did ah, Henry and I , both of you, yes Henry went, but you didn't?

F: Yeah, no, I didn't go. I don't know why I didn't go. I was

(?): Well it wasn't necessary for all of us to be everywhere.

F: I know, but I, I don't know why I didn't go ah. So I went, I ah, went in my former father-in-laws car to Greensborough I believe, to a black church and that was the most, that's the only time anybody really kinda threatened me, so I might as well tell that and be over with it um, I was supposed to say something and talk and, so when I got there ah, I got into town and I saw somebody black and I asked them how to get to the church and they showed me so, I had my (?) and um, the ah preacher's house was right next door to the church and um, but it was dark, and there were no lights on and they said, there were a bunch of people milling around before the service, and they said, "No, that's the preacher's house. Go on up there." So i opened

the door and uh, they were uh, it was a old house with a hall all the way through and they were all in the hall and the lights were all off and ah, they said, come on in and I said, "Well" and they said, "The place got shot up last night and we're just tryin' to keep the lights off to be safer." Well the deacons for defense that had either been invented or this was the beginning of them and I never seen so many black guys and shot guns in my life. I mean they were just all (laughs),

(?): That's what I tried to say, what happened over in Marion. That was the first night that I ever realized that some SCLC people believed in arms.

F: That's right.

(?): It was all the deacons for defense.

F: Yeah, they would laugh about it and they would say Oh we nonviolent (laugh). They go around with a shot gun, haven't shot anybody yet (laugh).

(?): Sunshine, if you ask me, all this SCLC work, I was in the pub and they said, can you wind it up Red. (laugh)

F: Sunshine drove me back.

(?): Yeah I said

F: Were we in the car together?

(?): No

F: Did I pick you up in, well we went through Marion and exchanged cars.

(?): Well remember that night then he said, "I got four shot guns and two rifles. I want two put two...ah, two shot guns and a rifle in front of you in the car out there and two shot guns and a rifle in the back. If I blink once they're coming from the back so you pull up and two cars between us and if I blink twice..

F: Exactly, you, we were together, you were, I was in Greensborough, you were in Marion.

(?): We did it all in a string, and don't stop driving the car even if they shoot,

F: Right, exactly.

(?): We're going up to Brown's even if,

F: right (laughs), well,

(?): Let me tell you, my rear end was like a suction cup on that front seat, I wouldn't let go until we ah, got to Brown's Chapel (laughing)

F: When, I went out to, I went back out to the car in Greensborough to get something out of the car.....and this car just, I was on the outside of the car, it was parked, and this car just slowed up and this white guy said in this snake like voice, that only they could do then, he said, you know, "You S.O.B., I'm going to get you." or something that was very clearly a threat to do away with me, and I just walked back into the house and I said ah, this car as far as I could tell it was a such-and-such a car and this guy rolled the window down and told me that, You S.O.B., I'm goin' to get you and they said, "Oh, that's ol' snake eyed Joe. Oh Yeh, he's been around here several nights." and I said, "Well do you think he would shoot me?", and they said, "Well he probably would if he could." (laughs), so

(?): That what it was in Marion. They said it was one eyed

Jack.

F: One eyed Jack, one eyed Jack. That's it.

(?): They said they pin him on Andy Jackson's death.

F: Oh I didn't know that about him until today.

(?): That's what Sunshine told me.

F: One eyed Jack.

(?): One eyed Jack.

F: Yeah they told me that was probably who that was. So I preach my sermon and ah, when I left I ah, had somebody in the car with me with a gun and then they were leading me and then when they got to Marion, and now I remember, you know got Kim, ah, the Greensborough car went back, and I remember they had a station wagon and it was, well it was just comical. It had an old lawn mower and the lawn mower handle was stickin' out the back and then there were about eight black guys in there, there were just guns everywhere

(laughs) and the lawn mower, you know, stickin' out the back, and that was our lead car. I remember the handle of that, (everyone laughing) lawn mower, thinking, I don't want to lose sight of that, you know and we just, yeah and we, so they got us back, so that car, the Greensborough car went back and I bid farewell to my fellow congregants and I,

L: Did you know anything about the Coleman family, just, at all?

F: Nothing, nothing

L: No, I guess in Lowndes County they were an old family.

F: Oh yes, yes. So anyway, that's my, you know, that's my you know, Johnathan Daniels close encounter with Johnathan Daniels and ah,

(?): Let me ask you a question.

F: Sure.

L: I don't have any more so,

(?): which I don't really think, I think I know the answer. Francis, is it at all possible that....um, Johnathan was so disliked by some elements in St. Paul's in Selma, that they might have even aided and embedded or encouraged or suggested to Thomas Coleman?

F: Well I certainly, I certainly think so, you know I saw Judge Reynolds, I later came to know that he was a extremely powerful, political figure in central Alabama. I mean he had (?): He was a member of St. Paul's?

F: Yeah and he had his finger in the pie. I mean when I later was living in Tuscaloosa and Bishop Carpenter allowed me to be licensed, no gave me a, well what ever he was and told me ah, well you can ah, go to the Brise Hospital, that was the state insane asylum, you can have services over there. Now Judge Reynold's sister was over there 'cause all of the politicians in Alabama, they didn't want to pay for their aunt or sister be in retirement, they just sent them to Brise Hospital to live gentile lives in the insane asylum and there wasn't anything wrong with her, she wasn't crazy, but she told me a lot about the judge 'cause she didn't like him very much (everyone laughs). So anyway ah, you know, it's almost unfair to speculate but in that, his job was to control...racial, his job was to control that part of Alabama and ah, I know that he, he played role in a taking

of a child away from.....ah....a woman that was an acquaintance of mine in ah Tuscalusa and you know, he wasn't above having a a sheriff from another county drive up, walk into a woman's home, jerk the kid up and take 'em back to Selma, I mean that's what he did.

(?): It was just the set upness of the Hainville shooting that Coleman was waiting at the store.

F: There's just no doubt, from what we heard early and then all I've read that it was absolutely a set up, it was, because ah, the cash store, the way we heard it a few days after the shooting was that um, that they even, that they even said "We don't want to leave the jail" and the trustee said ah, "You got to leave" and they said, so they milled around in the front yard of the jail for a while and what, were desperately trying to get to a telephone to call somebody to pick them up because they were exposed, and then I was told that they were all, course there were a lot of, there were things said that were just rumors and turned out not to be true in the end but. Anyway, a couple of days after we were told that they were forced off the jail property. First they didn't want to leave the building then they didn't want to leave the jail property.

L: Gloria said they were pushed off.

F: Yeh, I guess Gloria was the one that would of told me 'cause I was, Gloria and I and Mu Song Li, I just remembered though, Mu Song Li and I attended the, the next Sunday service after Johnathan died, which I would like to comment on, um, in a minute but um, then they were exposed so they said well we'll go to the cash store because this woman who owned the store was the only merchant that would sell them soft drinks and stuff. So they thought, well we'll be safe in there and also they were hungry 'cause the couldn' eat that food. They'd get disintary, that was another issue, I remember now. This place smelled more than rotten food, and ah, So they ah, that's why they went to the cash store. Well I've often wondered why somebody couldn't find that woman, but you know, she disappeared from the face of the earth. She was not locatable by the press after the shooting. She wasn't in the store and she never went back to the store. She was gone. Now whether she came back a couple of months later, I don't know.

(?): She went to the trial didn't she?

F: Did she? I don't know.

(?): I'm not sure.

F: But ah, she wasn't around for the New York Times or anybody else to talk to. She was gone.

L: We'd like to get our hands on the trial records. We tryed last summer and the Hainville court house stole all that. So we'd actually have to go through ah Montgomery to get the trial records.

F: So there not blacks in control in Hain, in Lownes County?

L: Yes accept for the clerk in charge of the trial.

F: Yeh, yeh okay.

L: Did he talk to Charles Eikels at all, the man who is writing a book on Daniels?

F: Ah yes I have, but he's never gotten to do a tape or,

maybe he did do one.

L: Maybe we'll wait and see what kind of book he produces because he's got the manuscript written.

F: Right. Well about the, let me just tell you about the Sunday service. We were, we were determined that we were going to go to church on Sunday and I don't remember whether Gloria went. I don't think so. She might have been up in Keene, but anyway, Mu Song Li and I went and it was stewardship Sunday which is the time the priest is supposed to make a pitch for the people supporting the church, signing their pledge cards, or it was one of the stewardship Sundays. So we hadn't gone to the early service and um...so you know, I was just, Mu song Li was the most passivic person I'd ever been around in my life and so she was just beatifically worshiping god there in this church and everybody was, you know, cuttin' glances at us and everything. No one knew exactly who we were....and there was not one mention of Johnathan and I was just furious, you know and Frank got up, preached this, something about money you know, supporting your church, and at the time I thought, you know, you have sold your soul to the devil. But you forget all the compromises that we all had to make back then and I confronted him about it, either at the church door or later, and I said, "You didn't even pray for him." and he said, "It's our custom to pray for the dead and the sick at the eight o'clock service and you know we prayed for Johnathan for the repose of the soul.", well Frank wouldn't have said that, he was low church but anyway, we prayed for him (laughing) and ah, and I'm sure that he did and I'm sure that he took great comfort in that. So it was, you know, just do, you know I remember when I went to the St James church in Euphora and I decided that I was going to be non-cooperative, like John did, with segregation. So I had, this was how stupid this would get, I also had another great moral or quest was that I was going to buy my own liquor in Euphora and not have the vestry buy it for me so that I wouldn't offend the baptists, which had been the custom (laughing). I remember when it came up in vestry meeting I said, "Oh you don't have to, you know, you're all playing me a good song, you don't have to buy me any liquor." and they said, "Well ah, you know, Ray always let us buy it for him and we certainly don't want you to go to the liquor store and it's too far to go, you know, it's too far to go to Columbus," and I said, "Well, I'm goin'to pray about this," that's what you always say, "and ah, let you know whether I'm goin' to buy liquor in the liquor store whether we're not gonna', we just wont drink it all when you're over to the rectory and ah," so all the alcoholics in the rectory said, "Oh no, no, we wouldn't want you to do that." (laughing), seeing you wantin' it and everybody else you know, and, and, and the guy, one of our vestrymen was a clerk in the liquor store. So I finally made my big moral stand. I was goin' to buy liquor in the liquor store, so I went to kind of case it out and it had the colored entrance and the white entrance, and then there was a bar, there was a pipe that ran down the center, but it was so that you

could communicate back and forth, and I thought, how can I be non-cooperative like Ghandi against racism and also buy liquor? Well I could just wait until, it happened that I was going down the street, I would not, in other words to walk five feet to go in the white door would be cooperating with a racist society and so I said, well I could engineer it so that I was just, happened to be walking down the street so the colored entrance was the closer (laughs) of the two, and then I thought, this is crazy you know, I'm not gonna' take my, then that's when Carl Braten taught me that you have to pick your simples or maybe you got to pick the ditch you want to die in, and it's stupid to make a big deal over which, goin' into the colored, being arrested for goin' in the colored entrance and demanding some burbon and you know, let's pick what we want to, where we want to make our stands so he said, "Forget that, go in the white entrance." So I did (laughs) but anyway. Now what do you want to know?

L: Well, I think we just, we should um, that was great.

(?): Do you want to, Francis should tell about what he's known to be the effect of that death of some folks of St. Paul's, as you know it, or your community.

L: Well let's take a break

F: Do you want me to talk for a little bit, can you hear me?

L: Just give me a test test.

F: All right, I'm talking.

L: Good (Long pause) Larry if I could see you I'd feel like you were rooting for me. It would encourage me, (laughing) to be more relaxed.

L: Oh, you don't.....yeh, it shouldn't be like the dentist's office should it? Ah, in fact if you want to, I'll stay here and you can address your observations to Fay. I'll just stay behind the camera.

F: No I think, I did the whole thing talking to you and I think that would be a little,

L: Okay, well I'll get this thing cranked and I'll just come back and sit down and I'll ask you the question of what was it like when you ah, visited Johnathan in jail.

(?): and pretend you haven't said it before.

F: Yeh I know, I'm trying to work, I bet you hate it when (Beep Beep) you say, oh yeh like you wanted me to say to you (laughing).

L: Okay, if you could just tell us please, what ah, what transpired when you visited Johnathan in jail to ah, to go as bail please?

F: Well, Henry Steins and I arrived, in Hainville, went to the jail, we found two cooks or trustees there and they told us that we couldn't come in and that the sheriff would have to give us permission to do so. Ah, the place was wide open. Ah, anybody could have walked in or out, but we knew that we better go find the sheriff so, they finally told us that he was probably eating lunch. So we went back up to town, we found this little cafe and there were all of these old guys with their brown work clothes on sitting in there at tables and that was very frightening, 'cause Henry was black and he had his collar on and I don't think I had mine on ah, and the sheriff wasn't there but they told us, kinda grudgingly,

thta he probably was over to the court house. So we walked out of the restaurant, as I remember, turning right, the court house has steps that go up to the columns and then the larger court room, but underneath is a place with a long narrow hallway and I remember feeling very uncomfortable about going in there and um, the sheriff came out of a room with a deputy, so Henry and I stood and ah, the deputy and the sheriff stood, and the deputy was like talking to a bomb. He was really on edge and he was um, the movie version of a southern sheriff. He was fat and he was red faced and he was angry and ah, Henry was the spokesperson and I let him do the talking and that infuriated him,. That a white man would stand there and let a black man control the situation.

L: Well let's jump right into the jail.

F: Okay. We got to the jail. The first thing we saw was all this litter and food in the hallway because the food was so inedible that they couldn't eat it. I remember some of them had disintary. The ah, but the jailers wouldn't remove it so they had to just kick it out in the hallway and we stood in all this litter and I recall the women were in one cell and the men in the other. Johnathan was all over the jail cell. He was ah, he was animated um. I recall Father Morisroe being in the back and almost not even wanting to look at us. I assume because he was frightened and dejected. The blacks were quiet, not very hopeful. Henry offered the 200 dollars to get Johnathan out or anybody else. But Johnathan didn't want to go out and Johnathan said, "We've agreed that we will all either go out on bail together or nobody goes out." So we were back again to not having any money to do that.

Um,

L: What were your opinions of Johnathan, when you saw him?

F: Well that's what I've thought a lot about. My first impression, after I left the jail, was that I didn't like him very much and I asked myself why and it was because I felt that he was not prudent, that he was from up north, he was young and he didn't know the peril that we were all in. He just didn't understand that this was life and death and...that's not true. After I was able to read the things that Johnathan wrote and reflect on it, it was clear that he knew exactly what he was doing and that ah, he had made a choice to do exactly what he was doing and ah, he was a prudent person. He just weighed his life that way and that's the way, and that ah, made ah, quite an impression, having to work through that. Ah, he was the one that was ah, as I remember it, making people feel good in the jail cell and ah, we...left.

L: Cut as they say. thanks

F: Okay.

L: That's good

F: Didn't think it was as good as the first time.

L: It never is, that's why videos, the reason videos never get filmed. That happens to me too.

(?): What it means is, it leaves you running the show.

L: Can't do it, because film is um, 12 minutes of film costs, for the developing, 200 dollars, where 12 minutes of

video costs nothing. But I know what you mean. It happens to me. So if I was going to do this again, I would do a high, I would use a high band 8 machine because that you can kick up to betacam.....

Talk about some 2½ minutes of Escrue's movie footage of Selma, March 20th, 1969.

Tape recorder goes off.