

L: Testing test. test 1, 2, testing.....DBX (snap, snap)  
DBX. No attenuation, monitor, monitor. Test, test,  
testing, 1, 2, test. Bill, you want to just ah,. take the  
lamp and, let me just do a test. Make sure everything's  
functioning here .....BEEP...okay  
B: Test, test, test, test, Bill, Bill, Bill  
L: Okay  
B: Selma, out there to  
S: Yeh, yeh  
B: you want to say something so Larry can test you.  
L: We're all set  
B: We're all set. MAKE it a little warm.  
S: So if I forgot anything I'll just call out to you  
L: Oh yeh, please. Would you like a drink of some spring  
water.  
S: I think just a little bit of water. Yeh, I think I would  
like that, just a  
L: Well everything seems to be functioning fine..... I  
was telling Mrs. Saperstein how much, how many years we've  
been working on this. It's like the holy grail. We've been  
all over the place. This is our third summer travelling.  
Mrs. S: Elias said that he described all the places you  
went to, it's really extreme.  
L: We've gone all over and we've got more people to see.  
You know, the episcopal church is trying to turn Johnathan  
inot a saint. At Pheinox, Arizona in 2 monthsthey are  
having ah, um, every threyears the episcopal church has a  
meeting of all the chapters in the country and they want to  
put Johnathan on the church calender and make him a saint.  
S: Really,  
L: So, do you know a man named John Morris, Morris, he was  
head of ESCRU?  
S: I had some correspondence with him there yeh, I did know  
him.  
L: He's a wonderful fellow.  
S: Yeh, one of the letters in our correspondence thing had  
to do with him, who was in touch with him after Johnathan's  
death and ah, as I mentioned, I went up to Cambridge, I  
don't want to take too much credit, but my son was teaching  
up in Harvard, so I went to a theological seminary and I got  
a letter from the head of the fund raising for a some  
memorial project and I got a letter from the head of the  
seminary saying, "I heard of your visit and," but I'm glad  
to hear incidently, are we on?  
L: Everything's running, we've got so much tape we can just  
take our time. It's the filming that becomes a problem.  
But this isn't running, this is just.  
B: We don't have that much film so we'll run through the  
interview and then we'll ask you to repeat certain sections  
S: All right, suppose we do that  
B: So you feel, I can put that over here  
S: We can just stop it there  
B: Yeh, we'll stop any time you want  
S: OKAY  
B: So why don't you just begin by telling us how you got  
involved with the Selma project, when you came and why you  
came. that sort of thing.  
S: IN the summer of 1965, Marsha, my wife, and I had been in



Israel with a group of people during the early part of the summer, people from our congregation, and I came back and I found that an appeal had gone out, in my case from the Synagogue Council of America, which is the overall religious organization of all branches of religious judaism, for a volunteer religious presence in Selma. The march had been taken place, it made it's impact on publicity but the marchers went home and the condition remained there and they felt you had to have people who would remain there for some time and ah, the challenge impressed us very much and we were one of the few, if the only, jewish volunteers for participation in that project. We arranged it and went down there. I could only be there for about, at first we thought it would just be a couple of weeks, we expanded it for almost a month. I had to come back because I made a commitment to preform the wedding for one of my former students who was already a rabbi and was marrying another of my former students and I promised them that I would make it and so I left the group.

B: What month were you there then?

S: We were there largely during August. The end of July and August and we lived in Selma in the black section of the community. There was a little housing project there, we lived ah, with one of the woman who had also hosted other civil rights workers,

B: Do you remember her name?

S: No, the name is in my files someplace, you may come across it. She was a very lovely woman who cared, who was a nurse, a practicum nurse to an elderly woman intown, but she was glad to for very modest charge to make her home available to us. It was quite an experience. We soon found that our presence was not relished by the white community and so when we would walk through the streets of Selma and here the footsteps of people behind us, you look back over your shoulder with apprehension. When we got back into the black section of town where we were living where people knew us, they quickly learned who we were and waved to us as they sat on their porches in the evening. You breath a sigh of relief, "We're safe, we got through that okay.", you know, and ah, what I did was to make my contact with the other religious groups and with the black organizations that were in the process of carrying on a program to encourage black registration. Ah, the registration was extremely difficult for blacks. They were asked questions that the average lawyer could not answer and ah, so we were encouraging them still to make the application of the use of pressure to continue ah towards registration for voting and there were every ah, twice a week, there were mass meetings held in Selma by, in one of the black churches, and since I was the only jew, officially as the jews there were many young workers who were there, I had an opportunity of speaking at each of these mass meetings, I did, I think, maybe 4 of them during the time we were there, and they made a very responsive audience. Far more responsive than anything I've been, you usually preach to ah, gentile faces, you know, of people who don't want to show their emotions, but they were right with you all the way. So it was quite an experience ah, we spoke at one time at a revival meeting in one of the



churches, they didn't know the difference that christian revival was not a central concern to me but I was a clergy man and so they asked me and it was a, it was quite an experience. There was a group of young people from college in San Francisco ah, there was no library for the blacks in Selma and they had got hold of a library, just how they got it, I think they had about 15,000 books and the place where they had there closed itself to them and they had to move into a new area, and so among other things we helped them lift, physically carry the books, carton after carton of books up the steps and into the new area, There was a group of these students from this college who had instituted a freedom school for the children. It was during the summer but it was a supplementary school to broaden their vision and ah,

B: Was that Selma University or Tuskee?

S: No, they were, it was in San Francisco, I think it was San Francisco College or part of San Francisco University or something. They came from San Francisco, for a time we had some contact with some of the people there who told us what had happened to individuals, when I saw them in my notes. I no longer remember who is who. BUT they were conducting this school and we came to some of the sessions of the school. I've had the privilege of travelling around the world twice and visiting virtually every jewish community in the world at almost every country in the world. And so I was able to give them a little personal geography, you know, and I've preached all over the country, here the states and what they were, the different countries and they were great kids. We enjoyed that very much. Then the latter part, for about ten days, we put the focus on Lownes County. Lownes County was supposed to be, according to reputation, one of the toughest counties in the south. It is almost largely black, they are black farmers who I presume are share croppers or some of them may own their land, but ah, the powers in the hands of the small white minority, you'll find an exaggerated expression of the general pattern in the south, at that time and ah, we were resented in what we were doing and ah, there, while previously, we had criss-crossed with Johnathan, we had met him, we had gone out socially a few times. The one place where you might go and we were the only whites was in the chicken shack and I will always remember when one of the ah, people who was inbiding rather freely, came over to Marsha and asked her dance and she looked at me a little questioningly and I said go ahead and dance and stuff. So she did and I think he passed out after the dance was over, but ah, Johnathan was very much interested in that, I should speak about him,

B: I was going you before,

S: As soon as I came in, i was met at the airport by one of the other men who was working there but I soon got to know him. He was the only one who had been there for a ong time and he was greatly beloved, I have to say this, in the black community nad the family with whom he was living, when I would visit him there, we would be together there, you'd see the kids, there were a lot of kids in the family and he would grab on of them and he would swing them around in the air and they would come running and ah, mock fighting with



him, you know, and he would have a great time, and he, he loved kids and they loved him there and ah, we were very much impressed with him and I kind of think, in terms of his personal loss and the death of his father, that he needed a kind of father figure and I was just about the age pattern at that time, to fit in with the generation of his, of his parents,

B: Did he talk about the death of his father?

S: He never, in great detail but it did come up in various times. At any rate, then he asked us, since he was going on to Lownes County each day, if we would come along with him. We went to a few mass meetings in Lownes County, in Fort Deposit and Hainville there, we went to mass meetings, they weren't likely mass meetings, they were worker meetings of the people who were working, Stokely was with us. We traveled, as I mentioned there, very, very fast on those country roads. When I saw that speedometer hit 100, I never prayed more diligently and seriously in my life as I did as we went, and ah, the rule was that you don't let anybody pass you, even a police car, troopers and so forth come, you make sure that they don't get past you. And so, he took that strictly. Stokely, who was with us in the group, had the, oh he was sort of a folk hero figure and they told stories about his driving facilities, that he could go at 60 miles an hour down there and make a U turn just to come back, come speeding back. You see that in the movies sometimes, I've never seen it in real life but he was quite a charismatic figure, I must say and I had high hopes at that time that he might develop with a little more maturity, into a genuine leader of the black population. It didn't work out that way. He got off on what I felt to be a wrong track and I wrote to him a few times but then he spoke of places where people whom I knew had spoke to him, but we lost track of each other, although I had gone to the, SNCC had a big dinner in one of the big hotels, plaza or someplace else and I got tickets for it and went there, I thought we had to give them moral support. But then I wrote that letter to ??? Brown after that, after Stokely had taken over, we were in Israel during the 6 day war and I got mad as hell when I read Stokely making anti-Israel comments, you know, about the war. At any rate, when we went out into the countryside in Lownes County,

B: Was Johnathan driving?

S: Johnathan was doing the driving and

B: What kind of car did he have? Do you remember?

S: It, ah, it was an american car, was it an olds or a plymouth, but it was a souped up car. It was souped and ah, very often Stokely had a car that had, you know, special springs and everything on there so that he could really drive that car really fast and stop fast and turn fast and,

B: Were you accepted as SNCC workers or were you SCLC?

S: No, no, we attended the SCLC convention, just when I left them, we went directly, I think it was Montgomery,

Mrs. S.: Birmingham

S: Birmingham was it, yeh, Birmingham where they were having the annual or biannual convention and we attended that and there was a delegation that came in from Selma that was ah, Stokely was there too, even though he was officially lined



up with SCLC and ah, with SNCC, and ah, incidently the one facisnating to me at the time was when Martin Luther King Jr. made his presidential address, he spoke only a minute or two about the racial conflict and then gfoot inot Vietnam and this was his first public pronouncement about Vietnam, which took a lot of guts I felt there because the whole Vietnam picture was so confused that all the leaders were beginning to realize that some terrible blunders had been made both politically and morally there ah,

B: Did you meet Father Morrisroe at the convention,

S:: NO, he may have been there but he joined this group after me, in a sense took my place in the team and I didn't know about him until I heard, I got the reports of the tragedy. At any rate, John was a very, very able in the way in which he organized these things. He would pick up a young black boy, teenager, who would, gain accept, you know when you first walk up as whites there to a strange farm and came to the house or to the barn or wherever it was, there was a little note of suspicion. BUT if you got one of their own to come along with you, that broke the ice and we would talk to each, to each person we came to and try to convince them of the importance of registration and the one thing I really recall and it's one of my reports there, ah, was their hospitality. All you had to do was to say, we're going to be back here in about an hour and a half, do you suppose you could put together a bite for us, because there were no places where you could get anything to eat along, along the way, and ah, they were, I remember one place where a young woman, there, puit together the most delicious meal. There was chicken and everything, my tongue got back in all those vegetables grown there, and as we were there, her father came in and he said, "I registered," he'd been trying for years, "I registered. For the first time I feel that I'm a citizen and a human being" and ah, we, we spent a great deal of time at that sort of thing ah, I remember one time when we were driving back from Fort Deposit and one of the ah, troopers cars came after us. We had an, an opportunity of seeing that principal in action. We, it was like the movies. We finally, I think, crossed over railroad tracks just before the train came along (laughing), ypou know, ah, but ah,

B: Johnathan had been in Lownes County quite a bit before the, Fort Deposit, so they knew who he was.

S: Yes, oh there was no question about that. Ah, in, I have a few reports in my files that Johnathan had given, I don't know whether you have them there. Well these are reports that he gave to the ecclesiastical authorities of what motivated him there and some of this experience that are incidental there. In one of them he talks how stopped at a light, a man got out of a neighboring car and came over to him and said, "You scum stay out of our church," you know, and he did bring the young people to church and ah, they ah, were made to sit in the back row among other things to keep them separated but also so that those who were taking communion wouldn't have to touch the cup that had been handled or tasted from by black kids. They were sweet kids, the kids who he brought there but,



B: The West family

S: Yeh, that was a family that he was with, yeh

B: They were catholic I guess

S: Really, I didn't know that, but he went there because he felt that was his church and he wors clerical apperal so that he would be, so that he would recognized,

B: How did Johnathan and Stokely get along? Do you remember anything about their relationship?

S: No, I don't really, he spoke aboiut stokely quite admireringly and the folklore about Stokely I got largely from him. BUT, at that time, you must remember that Stokely still, he was a charismatic personality. He may have had ambitions, political, within the black world there which Johnathan wasn't concerned with, but he was a advocate of nonviolence and that would make him much more acceptable to ah, ah, Johnathan. He talks again and again in the articles that he had written about how difficult it was to preserve a feeling of love for your fellow human being when the guy is a bastard who is doing the most vicious things possible contrary to everything that you stand for.

Remember that he is a human being, that he has the, the ah, ah, the, spiritual element that every human being has. He's a creation of the almighty and he talks about the inner struggles he had at that time and those days that we had together, we were out together oh I would say, 7 or 8 days that we actually took, were extremely significant to us.

B: What would you say motivated Johnathan to stay there and then go into this dangerous county?

S: Well, I think going into the dangerous county was not part of the plan. He was down there in Selma and the, Lowndes County was just next door to Selma ah, and so he that became part of the job. I think that, he uses the term in his writings of witness. That's a christian theological term that ah, I can say, in other words, you were to ah, show your religious, spiritual ideals not just by words but by your personal life and if there is a cause where these ideals are challenged, the cause of the basic brotherhood of human beings, he felt that that was where he should be even if it involved an element of danger and facing that danger and facing also, the necessity of trying to gain understanding on the part of people who rejected your whole value system. That was the challenge that he confronted and he got his leave of absence for that purpose and he felt that he would, he could ah, spend his year, this year, more fruitfully for his own spiritual growth than by spending the time over his books, theological practates and books. Want to hold it up for a minute now til I just,

L: Want to get up for a little walk?

S: No, no, I just want to ask Marsha, what have I left out Marsha that you would have brought in?

L: She's been adding a couple of things here, we might want to talk to her, if you don't mind.

Mrs. S.: Why don't describe the first day of the voter registration, on the steps of the court house, you remember,

S: Yeh

Mrs. S.: On the steps of the courthouse and the epople, it was an exceedingly hot and sunny day and um,

B: This is at Hainville or at,



Mrs. S.: In selma

S: In Selma, the day that the federal voter registrars were there and they were able to come up and now it became just a matter of form to put them through, and they were lined up around, the picture that I have only shows a couple of individuals. Actually, as they were coming out, they were lined up around like people waiting to get into a hot movie in New York city, you know, the line around the block and ah, everybody was beaming, you know, excepting for the whites, who went by blindly, wouldn't look them in the eye and just show their unhappiness by their expressions. But these people, so we did, a number, we had met at one point, I didn't know their names but they were familiar faces you know, and we walked up and down the line greeting everybody and saying good luck and congratulations and everything,

Mrs.S.: Bringing cold drinks

S: That's right we did bring cold,

M.S.: People were shouting those terrible epithets as they,

S: And it was very hot, they wouldn't allow them to get indoors, they had to wait in line until they could pass, it was a long line but it was moving faster than it ever moved before because previously, if you lined up for voter registration tests, each person would get over an hour of testing. So if you've got 6 or 8 tests in a day, that was a busy day. And if you were in line, you could spend the day waiting there and you didn't want to lose your place in line. So you had to be something of a hero to just take, put your name on the list and line up there to take the test and the chances are you'd be turned down.

B: How fast did it go with the ah, federal registrar?

S: They, I couldn't do that, but there was line and they were moving along and so far as I could see, I didn't stand around to see what kind of testing they had but the idea was that ah, if they could show their literacy in some simple fashion, they didn't have to read some abstruse legal passage, you know, or an analysis of the ah, of the constitution and then put into their own words what it said, you know. Most of the ah, people who were giving, who were examiners, couldn't have passed the test themselves. They, no matter what you said, it was wrong.

B: Well why don't we shoot a few things ah, Larry, think

L: Do you have any other questions that you'd like to ah,

S: I'm very sorry here, I sort of rambled around,

B: No, no, no, we got it. We were interested probing a little more, Johnathan's kind of character and motivation. Was there a clear political viewpoint that he had or was it all theologically based?

S: I, see, unfortunately, ah, I've never come across his personal correspondence, we had no correspondence at all. I was about ready, at the time that the news of his death came, to write to him and tell him how things were going and find out how things were going. We never had that opportunity and I haven't seen any of his personal letters to friends and so forth. The reports that I saw were all ah, sort of semi official reports that he made to ecclesiastical bodies and as such, his motivation and direction would be influenced by the person to whom the organization to which this was being directed and he used



the theological terminology and justification for what he was doing. I think it was part of a broader pattern in his personality and character ah, which was not political. I don't think that he was very sophisticated politically as such, but I think it was, his humanity, He had a sensitive personality with a feeling for people. He liked people and the people that he worked with liked him very much. It is possible to go down there and do much the same things as we were doing but to do it in an objectionable fashion, you know, with a kind of condescending, you're doing these poor unfortunate people a great favor by helping them out. But he didn't think, the people with whom he lived became his family and the people with whom he worked were his larger family and ah, ah, many of them were, some of them ah, the ah, girls that he worked with there were bright girls but not all of them were too educated or, or overly sharing of intellectual interests and so on that he had, but he recognized their basic humanity and treated them with a measure of, I can see it when I, I can see him just in casual talk with people. He was one of them and they were his and I think that that was his most powerful motivation, the motivation of a sense of humanity and of, what we call the brotherhood of humanity.

B: Okay, and just before we start filming, the father business, we're really interested in that and we sense that but we don't have much on, him

S: No, it didn't, he talked about his father and you could see the closeness and love that he had for his father but ah, I never pushed it and questioned and he never volunteered it,

B: Did he talk about his father's life or,

S: Well he talked with great pride about his father's ah, place in the community, apparently. From the picture that I got, his father was, in a sense, the town doctor, you know, who was known in the community and who was a very decent understanding person and I think that, from what he said, I met his mother only once and that was when I met the members of his family at the funeral when Ruby Sales and 2 others, I've got the names of the 3 and their then addresses on one of the slips of paper in one of the files, and ah, they came over, I was able to get several friends to help me with the money to send them tickets so they could come up and they stayed over night at our house and then we drove up together to Keene and that's where I met his mother and the members of his family, his sister, his sister, I don't know where she is now.

B: She's in Baltimore.

S: She is yeh, he had spoken about her, ah

B: Anything about Emily?

S: MArshe, do you recall anything that ah, that Johnathan had mentioned.

Mrs. S: disturbed at her life style and her gentleman who she, he really loved her very much. He was very unhappy about what was happening to her.

B: yeh, she had a bad marriage.

S: Yeh, yeh, I recall that now.

B: Okay well why don't we film a few things and see how we



do.

L: Plenty of film

S: We've got to get a shot of the Sapersteins together too, I think at some point.

L: Absolutely, turn the video around and we can all sit in there.

B: BUT,

L: Let me ah, let me just get a light reading

S: As I said to Bill, you must forgive that fact that I'm wearing my working clothes

B: No you look very nice

L: So are we

S: I'd be dressed much more informally if,

L: We better wait till,

S: Marsha's out here

L: because, you know, if she happens to flush the toilet or something it will be picked up.

S: Yeh

B: I have to tell you, I have a grandchild now, who is a member of the jewish church. My son married a jewish woman and converted to judaism and they just had a child.

S: Well that's an exciting thing, yeh

B: Yeh,

S: Where do they live?

B: They live just outside of Washington DC and ah, Anningdale. She'll be going to the University of Maryland to finish her doctorate, so they'll be living and they'll come in the fall.

S: Well if they need to have some rabbinical counsel or anything, I don't know, they may have their own rabbi down there, but my younger son lives in Washington and he is the director of what we call the Religious Action Center for the 850 congregations numbering about a million and a quarter people of reformed judaism in the country. They have a, he has his law degree too and so, you see, a rabbi is not looked upon with great respect by the average layman. They say, "Well what do you expect, he lives in an ivory tower", you know. But they have a lot to, they look at you with a little more respect. But he does political work. He's the one who called Marsha, he learned about this memorial service, so now you got, somewhere in there you'll find a copy of that program ah, he called Marsha and said, "Get up to Keene," he said, "There's a program up there." and he's the one who's custom to doing things. So he arranged for a car to be, a rented car to be available towards her for the tickets to be ah,

B: Probably got his name ?????

S: Yeh, and he's, he's om, you know, interviewed on television programs and so on quite frequently. He gets a lot of exposure but he's interested in this because he knows the story we've talked about there. He did hid undergraduate work as I did at Cornell and ah, Stokely spoke up there one time and he sort of spoke to Stokely who was already off the deep end at the time.

B: Terry, Terry came down to, I'll take this cord yep.

Terry came down to Alabama with us, um, he ah, my son, he could, they could have a good chat together.

S: Will Sharp married a jewish girl, they had a little baby who was circumcised. Our son David he got, started late in



the game and he was married when he was almost 40 but he had his, he's been married 2 years ah 2½ years and they have a little boy too. But ah, if they want to talk to somebody, David is a very understanding person, oh I'm sorry here I am. He's very sympathetic with,  
L: Mrs. Saperstein just mentioned that, what's the relationship again?

Mrs.S.: David's wife

L: David's wife is um,

S: Oh yeh, she's the executive producer of all things considered,

B: Oh wow, we were on there once

L: Twice, twice

B: Twice I guess,

Mrs.S. Weekend addition

L: Oh the weekend addition. I have a question, Do you remember when you heard Johnathan was killed, where you were?

S: Yeh, yeh

L: Would you mind?

S: Yeh, we were in the city, we had gone to a theater in New York. We were living at our home out on the island and turned on the news and heard a civil rights worker killed in Hainsville, I think it was, Hainville in Hainville and we, they didn't mention a name or anything as we caught it, we rushed to get a paper, in New York you can get the next mornings paper inthe, at night, you know it's a strange feeling of reading tomorrows news while it's still today, and we saw that and it was a very, very traumatic experience for us. Immediately we got in touch with the folks down ah, in Selma and find out what we could do and and, that led to our getting the money together and sending the tickets for the three girls who came up, Ruby Sales was one of them.

B: Ah Gloria, Gloria Leros

S: Yeh, Gloria

B: Was it Joyce BAiley, did she come

S: I don;t really know, they got the names down there someplace in one of the things. It would take only a couple of hours to go through and find it.

L: Yeh, we can send these back, we'll xerox them and mail them back to you.

S: You, don't need to xerox all of them, it's just too much to do. Look through it and use whatever you want, take as long as you want, xerox what you want and then just send it back. Oh there are probably hundreds of items there, most of them newspaper clippings, Since they are newspaper clippings during, just after the murder and during the trial, they, and many of them are from the south. We had people down in the south who mailed them up to us because they knew we were concerned and so I've got them. So they ,may give you a perspective that you otherwise wouldn't have had.

B: You want to get going?

END SIDE ONE

L: NOW, I think we should approach the filming with the same



informality, it's just the same thing. We've got plenty of film.

S: Well what we're going to do is you're going to ask questions,

B: Some of the same that we already asked you

S: All right and suppose I try consolidating a little bit more.

B: Okay, easily

S: Yeh, right

L: I'm ready to go

B: There will be three or four questions

L: We'd rather work with video than film but because we want to get this on television, we really want to get the best we can. BEEP Okay we're rolling

B: Why don't you tell me how Johnathan got along with the people in the black housing district, ah, how he got along with the kids particularly.

S: Right, Well Johnathan was a kind of a piper to the kids. He loved them very much and they responded to him like all of us who were working there on civil rights and voter registration, we were living in the black area of the Selma community and he lived with a fine family, the West family, they had a number of children there and I recall several times in the morning before we were going out, we would go down to his place, usually, he'd pick us up at ours, we'd go down to his place and wait until he got ready ah, and it was just lovely to see the way the children would chase after him and tease him and he would play with them and pick them up in the air and toss them in the air and they just loved it and the squeals of delight were heart warming there. He, he was in his glory working with those kids.

L: Why don't you just keep going.

B: Okay, how about a typical description of one of those hairy trips in Lownes County in the car. What were you up, what were you trying to do and what might happen.

S: Yes, yes, Well when we went into Lownes County, we were there for one of two purposes. There were 3 or 4 evenings of the time that we were there. There were meetings, not mass meetings largely, but meetings of workers who were planning tactics and so on, usually held in one of the churches there and we would go to attend those meetings, Stokely Carmichael was with us, but usually he didn't participate in the give and take of the meeting. He was off with one or two of the leaders in the next room there really laying down the strategy which the others would be reported to the others and they would follow through. But ah, that was one of the things that brought us into Lownes County, but the one that brought us there most frequently was a program of voter registration and we would go from farmhouse to farmhouse and just ah, usually bring along a young black ah, teenager to sort of make us a little more acceptable there and we would speak to whoever was in the home. If the farmer was in the barn or in the area, we would go out into the field and speak to him or speak to him in the home and try to convince them that as difficult and as frustrating as it was, that they should at least make the effort to show that they wanted registration, they wanted the opportunity



of acting as citizens in their communities and in the country. And, so then we'd start out and go from farm to farm and just walk up to the front door. Now we did have a principle that when you drive along those country roads, you are known, you're, word gets around that you are, what you are doing and whenever you see a car, you must remember that it was standard, every car that passed us had a big rifle on the back, top of the back seat that you could see from the window. It was not hunting season or anything but there was a rifle there and ah, the principle was that if somebody speeded up to come up to you and pass you that ah, that was a dangerous thing and it was more dangerous then to take a risk on exceeding the speed limit by far and staying ahead.

L: Excuse me, this cartridge ran out of film. I'd be glad to throw on another one.

B: Yeh, just one more question

S: All right

L: I had ah, just enough film on this. That was great, especially the information about the car. Johnathan owned a plymouth fury, he reanted a plymouth fury right, a big plymouth fury.

Mrs.S. They were all dirt roads that they were going a hundred miles an hour on.

L: YEH, driving through Lownes, well when we went to Fort Deposit we ended up getting a polic escort, last yesr. Um, the sherriff ah, he wanted to make sure that we left alive, so

B: That was a scarey place that town, even then, even now

S: Really yeh

Mrs.S.: And what hapened that night when we were getting chased after the mass meeting. It wasn't the police it was the FBI and both Johnathan and Stokely hated the FBI and we were in this car so as we went by to go past the railroad track, they made the woman get down on the floor so that they wouldn't be identified.

S: Incedently, the only place, really that was, outside the chicken shack where we were the outsiders was the black evening, the only place we would go at that time was the holiday inn and that was I imagine because it was a national franchise and they couldn't hold out anybody who came and so whe we went in for a cup of coffee we were looked upon by great disfavor by the people serving us but they had to do it. But on several occassions when we did that, when we came out and stepped of the curb to cross the street to get our car, a car was waiting with the motor running and all of a sudden you would hear somebody gun that motor and the car came doen and you either jumped a head or jumped back or it would have been the end of the story and as you passed you would hear somebody yell "Nigger lovers" and then they passed, you know and you hear that laughter there and they saw us jump and they thought that that was funny. But ah, John was a very skillful driver and he had confidence in himslefe, he had practiced some of these little tricks of a, you know, I can remember hi talking about the fact, "When you're making a turn at this spped, you accelerate although all your instincts are to slow down, you accelerate, that keeps your center of gravity such that you're not going to go off the road, you know, there and ah, (BEEP BEEP) when I



mentioned to his mother that he was a, he was a very fast and very skillful driver, she was a little surprised and I thought she, oh he's always been very careful, you know. BUT ah, we did, we did I'd say, the speedometer passed the 100 mile an hour mark and ah, as I have said before, I prayed more fervently then any other time that I stood at a pulpit then say over the many years that I've been a rabbi but ah, he knew the reality of the dangers and risks that he, that all of us were living under but he perhaps because he wore the insignia of his calling of a priest and ah, he could be singled out more readily than others of us and I'm sure that if they knew I was a rabbi, a jew, that that would have been a mark too that would have placed me in special danger to people of bigotry ah, it is those who stand for things that that deny what they stand for and negate what they stand for. But ah, John knew the dangers of what he was doing and it was a deliberate choice that he had made and I like feel that ah, he's, you don't measure life by numbers on a calender or ahm or on a watch, you measure it by the quality of life. The values of a life, the impact of a life. I like to feel that his untimely death is offset by the fact that in the years that he had, those few years when he was involved in this kind of religious action, religion in action, that he made an impact and the fact that his memory is now retained and being and ah, enriching our lives, is an indication of the fact that his life was not a wasted one. There are many people who live 3 or 4 times, 3 times anyway his age and ah, don't achieve as much in their life time as he did in those few years of dedicated, sacrificial and dangerous service to the cause of humanity and through the cause of his faith.

B: Could you comment a little bit just on motivation, you talked about humanitarianism and the sense of calling.. Could you do that in a little short bit.

S: Sure, sure, yeh, one wonders,

L: One minute

S: All right, BEEP BEEP BEEP

B: Okay

S: One wonders sometimes what it is that drives somebody to place himself in a position of danger. I know what brought me there. It was a feeling that things that I had stood for all my life were imperelled and challenged and that I could serve those ideals not nearly by speaking about them the people most of whom perhaps agreed with me to begin with but ah, by going and entering into the battle itself. That was true for me for the few weeks that i gave to this cause. It was true in much deeper, with a much deeper truth in the case of John Daniels ah, he was a student of the of the ministry ah, and he was committed to the theology of his faith, of his denomination, but he felt that he had to express it through his life. That he had to be, he used the word in his own description, "witness" in quotation marks.. That is to put your own life on the line to show that you're sincere about what you're talking and ah, I think that was the motivation and it was, in his case, combined with a very deep human quality that he had. a love of childre. The dignity that he ascribed to the black people around him who were mostly impoverished, they were



poor farmers in most cases. Or people who did the most menial work but he never condescended to them. He listened to them, they came to them with their problems and he guided them in many cases where they would go to him rather than to their own ministers and the minister in the southern community at that time, played a very important role in the life of the people and in their political direction and so on. But he had all that they ascribed to a minister plus the fact that he didn't need to be there, that he was white and he could have walked out on it and evaded it and that he had volunteered to come there and link his life with theirs for the harrassment that he had so often which was their daily experience and for the dangers that were inviolved, that meant a great deal to the people whom he served and I think that ah, well ah, many of us feel that the most significant books of the bible are the prophetic books and the prophets were men who spoke out even if they had to stand before the throws of power and say, "Thou art the man" as Nathan did to David, "Thou art the man" pointing the finger of accusation and he was willing to ah, stand up ah, many people were not sympathetic with the work that we were doing. He had to have the almost hatred of the people of his own denomination who resented his coming to church services that they were attending on the Sabbath. To them, it destroyed the tranquility and sanctity of the Sabbath, to him it illustrated the sanctity of the Sabbath, that he could go there with black children and gather together the white congregation and offer their prayers to god. So ah, I think that John has been, to many of us who knew him, an inspiration. I make, in a measure, a better rabbi because I knew him and worked with him. I'll always be grateful for that experience.

B: We were thinking of naming our film, and we probably will from Isaiah, "~~Hearing 22~~ and me" and that was sort of capsule.

*Am I, SEND*

S: Yeh, "Whom shall I send and who will go for me. Inani shaloch nani---here I am, send me" I think that's great, yeh, he was a, he was a prophetic figure in that sense ah, I say he was only a youngster when that happened.

B: Is that right?

S: Well he was ah, ah, he had of course the time of the death of Josiah I believe was the king and he entered into the sanctuary and that's where he heard the challenge there. Jerimiah was young because he's told, "Don't say but I am but a child" you know there and he's admonished there but this is your task.

B: Well that was great, thank you so much

L: YES thank you

END INTERVIEW