

HULETT

John Hulett 6/14/90

JH: well she was hired 17, 18 years ago, you could hire relatives and I needed somebody to work with me, I needed a female and she was the youngest and didn;t have a job so she started working with me and to the day she is one of the best prepared ????? we've got in this courthouse I think. She ran for tax assessor a couple of weeks ago and won that position and I don't know what, I guess the set is all family but we're looking for the people who can do what needs to be done, that's most important thing. But she's a gorgeous young lady, very,

LB: Your son's pretty young I've heard, 25

JH: No he's 30, no I wish he was 25, (Laughs) make me look young.

S: That's quite a turnabout. Could you tell us a little bit about how all that started, how you started organizing in 65.

JH: Well let me say, prior to 65 I worked in Birmingham and I worked with groups there. We had a, the NAACP was outlawed in 1950, I believe it was by Governor Person. I worked with the NAACP and after they outlawed the NAACP they organized a state organization known as the Alabama State Coordinating Association registration and voting. I worked with that organization through the years and then in 64 they had the problem when Arthur Lewis tried to get into the University of Alabama, Rev. Showorth was president of the organization then, Alabama Christian Movements for Human rights, Dr. King was in Montgomery and I worked with a group in Birmingham, the lady King ???? to Lowndes County in 59 I believe it was and in 65 we pulled together an organization here known as the Lowndes County Christian Movements for Human Rights and I was chosen preseident of the organization.

S: Lowndes County, could you repeat the name again?

JH: LOWndes County Christian Movement for Human Rights and then I was president of that organization and Showorth (?) and that kind of give us a working relationship and we had a pretty strong organization during that time.

S: And the ah, when did, at that point you began to try to register?

JH: Register folks ahha

(Phone rings and Hulett has to answer, says to hold rest of the calls)

S: How difficult was that?

JH: It was difficult simply because most blacks at that time were afraid, they'd been living on plantations, they were share croppers and it really was, it was tough to start but we had people from the SNCC office in Atlanta, Stokely Carmichael and Bob Mass and others who came in and helped with the, and then you had SCLC people who in and out of this county and we chose to work with SNCC rather than SCLC. So it was a long, we pulled a really strong organization together. We had, there was a church in this county that could hold the people every Sunday night or whenever we had mass meetings and I think that gave a lot of encouragement to people to get them to register to vote at that time.

S: And their fears would come out above (?)

JH: That's right, their fears, they just, they didn't have any more fears once they started it. They'd done it together as a group, we were not allowed to go into areas like Fort Deposit and when we decided to have a mass meeting there, everybody just met in a safe area and just had maybe 50, 60 cars in a convoy to go in that area which gave a lot of encouragement to people and then we had older people that knew about the condition and whether, and they were real strong behind us and they gave a lot of encouragement too.

S: What were some of the things that could happen to a person if he or she registered to vote?

JH: If he was registered and you lived along a plantation, a lot of times he was evicted off that plantation. For example in July/August after your major crops and the men got to walk and leave everything, you work for the ????, that happened to quite a few then we got together and filed suits, tried to stop them from evicting people and all the folks had to leave and find another place to go to. The blacks had very little land by the time so we spent a lot of our time trying to find somebody who owned land who would sell off lots to other people, and it was work for us, a lot of people left went to Montgomery, Selma, up north and some of them came back and some never came back.

S: And ah, how many eligible black voters were there at that time?

REGISTRAR

JH: Let me tell you, when we first started we had no black voters, not a single black voter and then during the time the county registrar hours, there was very few people who registered then because the process was so slow and so finding with all these questions and they were turning people down and when the federal people came here and started registering, that's when it really picked up and after, in 66 I believe we had close to 3000 people who had registered under the federation, just kind of picked up.



S: UM, when did SNCC come in again?

JH: SNCC came in sometime, maybe the first of MARCH. They had been in this county since February I believe it was but in and out, but they started spending more time here in March.

S: Was there a freedom house in the area that they's stay at?

JH: We had a freedom house in Hayneville ah, not to far from here, about 6 blocks from here. We had one White hall at the time.

S: There are some stories that I've heard that ah, sometimes those houses were attacked or surrounded,

JH: Well that wouldn't surprise me at all, especially on several occassions we had here in Hayneville where they lived ????? where they were shot into one night. Nobody got hurt and in Whitehall, they had some problems down there, go in and raid them, you know. We found out there were some things going on there that were not acceptable behavior, some guys killed somebody from Detroit and came down and was staying with those guys and I'm not sure whether SNCC was a part of that but they were there and they had arranged ????? I remember that, two of them.

S: So, we hear, you know, when we hear about Lowndes County we hear the title Bloody Lowndes County,

JH: Well this is what Lowndes County was called prior to that time, Bloody Lowndes County, there were a lot of crimes committed here, people had been killed years ago by law enforcemnt officers and other things which made us people who lived here, and if you come down and move dsome of your rent ??????? another guy killed ???????

S: Then how would SNCC operate like with Stokely Carmichael, what was their strategy to ah register voters and your strategy at the time?

JH: What we would do, we would get together and we had local peoples who some time along, most of the time they did not go out and register, they would go out with us awhile to community meetings, but we went on a day to day basis to talk with people, encouraging them to become registered voters, we would take them bring them into Hayneville and register them and then take them back to their communities, their home. A lot of them was afraid to travel with us and they'd come on their own. But Stokely and them spent most of their time in community meetings encouraging folks to do things for themselves and become a part of the registration process.

S: And he would hope that it would be the local people that would really do the registering.

JH: That was the key thing because when it was time to leave we wanted to continue to be here doing what needs to be done and carrying on and we were pretty successful there. After the first election in 19, I believe it was 66, none of our people won in that election but they left and moved on and we could continue that process and keep it going.

S: Could you tell me something about the ah, you said,

LB: Yeh I was going to ask you if you remember if Jon was actually a member of SNCC?

JH: Um, I'm not sure, they came down to work with SNCC whether he was actually a member I'm not sure.

LB: I'm all set whenever you want to go, we're videotaping, that's just for our records but if we just had a couple of shots,

S: This is videotape and that's film. Could you tell us something about the Fort Deposit demonstration?

LB: Do you want me to start Bill?

S: No not yet

JH: Let me say this, during the time of the Fort Deposit demonstration, this I didn't know was going to be happening that morning, but when I arrived in Fort Deposit we found out that the city has hose pipes and things had already put them out. They were evidently expecting this to happen and there was a group of young people who lived in Fort Deposit along with Jonathan Daniels, Father Morrisroe and a few others who joined their group in picketing a couple of stores they were going to picket, but the moment they started picketing, when they went around and started marching, they were all arrested and taken to jail and later moved from that 2 cell jail to Hayneville. They had a dumptruck and they just put them all on the back of the dumptruck, they had one black police officer who put them back there, I think there was maybe 24 or 26 of them and brought them into Hayneville. Some of them was juveniles as well as adults and arrested them and put them into jail here. The next day I believe, the juveniles got out of jail but most of the rest of the people remained in jail through that week until they were turned out. There were a couple of people who were bonded out like Geraldine Logan that was put in jail one day and she was bonded out the next day. But most of them stayed in jail. We were able to come up with enough money to bond Stokely Carmichael and one other person out of jail prior to that Friday and, so they'd be



ready for court on that Saturday and I went to work in Montgomery and when I came back i found out that Jonathan Daniels had been killed and ah, Father Morrisroe had been shot. And that was on Friday even when I came back into Hayneville and when they were supposed to be staying in jail.

LB: So Stokely was already out of jail before that Friday?

JH: Yeh he was out of jail. They got him on Tuesday or Wednesday or something, I'm not sure what they,

S: He was trying, my recollection from reading about it, was that he was trying to get up the bail money to get the others out.

JH: Others out or to have a lawyer to defend them when they go to court.

S: At Fort Deposit there was a big argument about whether they should actually demonstrate Fort Deposit because it was such ah, my understanding was that Fort Deposit was really bad. It was where they made the clubs for the klan.

JH: It was ???? Fort Deposit was ???? at that time and they started to go ahead and do it then and while there they hit up all the police officers, I think they deputized almost any man in the county. It was to try to stop it I guess and the (BEEP) the people did not resist. When they were told they were under arrest they just marched them to the jail, took them to the jail. So it was an incident that took place to hurt everybody that day.

S: OKay, and then could you explain the, the experience in the jail here?

JH: Okay, let me tell you, once they were in jail here, I came over to visit the jail on a couple of occassions, I can remember, and I'm not sure whether the women were downstairs and the men were upstairs but the jail was filthy, really filthy and nasty at that time, they had, the commodes were stopped up where the ladies room was located and I can remember that reall well and the men felt pretty good. As far as food, I'm not sure, but we were able to bring food to the jail to give them at that time and they had them in jail and usually you go in and stay just a few minutes and they'd make you leave.

LB: Cut, I just have to say that for the tape.

S: I was going to ask you about when you met Jonathan and ah your workings with Jonathan.

LB: You want me to do that one?

S: Yeh if you could'

LB: Just give me a second to get this cranked up again, take  
2 (BEEP BEEP)

S: I was going to ask you about Jonathan and what you  
memories were about Jonathan and your experiences with  
Jonathan

LB: Take your time

JH: I met Jonathan possibly a week or two weeks prior to  
being put in jail and I think I first met him at a mass  
meeting and possibly at Mount Gilum church, I'm not sure.  
But we talked there and he also had an opportunity to  
express himself that night in the meeting, told us where he  
was from and he talked with people there encouraging them to  
move forward and one or two times after that i just got a  
chance



to just have a short conversation with him and during the time they were going to have this demonstration in Fort Deposit. He alone with others went to Fort Deposit. I believe he was living with Geraldine Logan, I believe he did but I'm not sure. But he came down to Fort Deposit to demonstrate with them and in doing that they were arrested and during that time I didn't get a chance to talk with him but while in jail I talked with him.

S: What are your impressions of Jonathan?

JH: I thought he was a wonderful young man he was real nice and he was real concerned about Lowndes County and moving forward and getting people to register and enjoy some of the things in life that they ought to enjoy. I was really impressed with him.

LB: Cut

S: You needn't film this but I was going to ask you about your memory of, you know, when they did get out. You talked about their being in jail, take it off from there.

JH: Okay, but let me say this, when they got out of jail that afternoon, when I got home, they had already been shot and killed and coming to Hayneville that afternoon we were just riding carpools back and forth to Montgomery and I guess the whole town was just full of people and then you found a lot of the whites who were investigators, I guess Alabama people were investigators, FBI agents ??? and when we drove in town I seen all these people wondered what happened and the black community was so quiet and they told about how Jonathan had been shot and killed along with another person. At that time I got out, Stokely was walking the streets here in Hayneville and we talked before it took place ????? and during the court time I came back to court but most of the time you didn't get any information because no blacks knew what took place except the people who was with him and I think Geraldine Logan would best tell that story along with another young lady who was with her

S: Yeh, we talked with her today

LB: She said we could come and we have all these instructions on how to get to her house

JH: We tell you how to get there, we did also have the store that we went to. Most of the people in Hayneville who owned a store at that time didn't want, what you call civil rights people, to come into the store. They would tell you not to come in, but they just didn't want you around. And this store was, seemed to be the most open minded person, she was nice and people came in to trade with her. She was friendly. I can't remember her name now.

LB: Farmer

JH: Ms. Farmer, that's right. But she was seemed, and that's why everybody who came into Hayneville for registration or whatever it was they went to that store instead of going to other stores.

LB: How come Tom Cleman was on the steps of the store that day?

JH: This we don't know now whether they was..... we don't know how the plan was made to let them out of jail, because they were not supposed to be getting out of jail except to be bonded out. So we're not sure whether the sheriff and his deputies planned this whole thing and then got him involved in it. We don't know how it happened, but we know they was turned out of jail without the knowledge of any of us and they started walking to the store while waiting for a ride and while there they were shot and how Tom Coleman knew about it we don't know to this day.

S: Ruby Sales thinks it was a set-up.

JH: We're almost sure it had to be a set-up but who set it up we don't know. But we fell the sheriff was responsible for the whole thing.

LB: I just have one questin, Sheriff Hulett, do you think it would be a good idea, we'd like to go to Fort Deposit to film the store. Do you think a phone call from you in advance might let the people down there that we're just filming a documentary on Jonathan Daniels.

JH: I'd be glad to call the chief, Chief Soaks and tell him you'll be coming down.

LB: Yeh Bill, do you think that would be a good idea?

S: Yeh

LB: See because here we are prowling around with this equipment and we don't want to cause problems.

JH: Yeh, well you won't have a problem. We'll call Chief Soaks, tell him you all going down and ah, if somebody needs to be there to show them, and you might even get Geraldine to drive there with them. So it would be a good idea to show you the exact areas that the store was located in at that time.

LB: Okay

TERRY: I have a question

JH: Go ahead



TERRY: What was the impact on the community after Daniels was killed.

LB: Get this?

S: Yeh, let's get this.....(BEEP BEEP BEEP)

OS JH: The impact on the community, I think people even got stronger. Usually when an incident takes place everybody gets nervous and goes home ah, the week following, the Sunday following the incident of the shooting we had people, could not even, the church ground was full when we filled the building up because people felt then they had to be strong and whatever they were going to do it had to be together and they had to come together as a unit and they did. It made it much stronger in every respect. People who would not come to mass meeting started to come to mass meetings then because they felt stronger that if they did this to Jonathan Daniels then they would do it to them as an individual. But if we came together as a unit we would not have as many problems and I think because of that, you know, during that time the state troopers and everybody else was out to really get people. When we would leave a mass meeting, everybody drove together, slowly, nobody would speed and we kind of stayed together and people who lived kind of isolated by themselves, I lived a long way up the rode, they would take me home or drive and follow me home and then turn around and go back to their residence.

LB: Cut

S: Maybe we could just kind of wind up by asking you to document the changes in Lowndes County, how many blacks are registered, how many hold office, just sort of run through to get a picture of the new Lowndes County.

LB: Video or just tape?

S: Just tape will be fine. How much film do you have?

LB: Well I think we ought to be cautious Bill because we don't know what's ahead today. I think I'll just ah, on tape.

JH: To date I'm not sure exactly how many blacks and whites, but most of the ????? in this county are registered to vote, blacks are registered to vote and it's a large number, about 3 to 1 as far as a ratio in this county, all of them do not go out to the poll to vote but they ??? the voters in this county. As far as elected official in office, we have the number of people who are elected to office, our tax assessor is a white person, our county coroner is black, we have 5 school members who are black,

S: Out of?

JH: Out 5, and the county commissions has 5 members and 3 of those are black. The county sheriff is black. Those are the prominent black members that we have, the superintendent is black. He is not elected at present time but he was elected and then they changed the laws where he was being appointed.

S: And you got elected yourself, what year was it?

JH: Well I was elected in 1971 and then I've had 5 elections since that time.

LB: You don't run on the polls do you?

JH: Somehow I just get elected right and proper.

LB: What's the percentage of population of blacks in Hayneville?

JH: I guess in Hayneville you should have about, about 60 % of the people in Hayneville are black.

S: Are you pretty content with, or not content with what now exists in Lowndes County. Do you think the changes have been significant or they need to continue in any way? What's your assessment that,

JH: Well I'll briefly, I think we need to continue to move forward, I think today is a whole different, is a different day from 1965. Now I think we need to work together more or less and that you need to look for good people whether black or white and put them in office to work together, just because prior to 65, the whites controlled every position here and I thought it was wrong and I still think it would be wrong if the blacks would totally take over and take every position. I think you need to work together where you got at least 25% of the people are white and I think you need to get 25% of the positions, you know, and work together and do it for everybody.

S: So share the power

JH: We should share it together, yes, ahha

S: What's the economic status of people living in Lowndes County now?

JH: This is one of my major problems, this county is poor and they don't have a lot of industries coming in here even though General Electric is located here. But we need to do more as far as bringing in industries and I think that's one of the reasons why it's been as slow as it is. They will like to see the ratio of black and white working together,



you know, a major problem in this county is our school system. All the whites are in private school and that 8% or 9% of them are going to private schools or going to schools in other counties which people who come here with industry would like to see the education system working together with everybody. I think that's one of our major things that we're going to have to work on in the next few years. Trying to bring our school system together where black and white can work together in our school system and where the kids will come in and have a good school system for everybody.

LB: I think we're all set

S: We'd really like to thank you for taking your time.

JH: Okay

LB: I wonder if you could sketch a map to ??????

JH: ?????? yeh

S: Let me take this off for you, you going to ???? now?

LB: Well I think we'll tape Hayneville first, .....

END OF INTERVIEW