

**GREENSBORO VOICES/GREENSBORO PUBLIC LIBRARY ORAL HISTORY  
PROJECT**

INTERVIEWEE: Reverend A. Knighton Stanley

INTERVIEWER: Eugene E. Pfaff

DATE: N.D.

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

EP: Initially, I would like to ask, concerning the newspaper account of June 7, 1963, would you consider it generally accurate when it said that neither the law officers or the demonstration leaders quite knew what to expect at that time?

AS: Okay now, the June seventh demonstration was the one when they sat down in the street?

EP: Yes.

AS: That is substantially correct.

EP: Is your quote from the same article when you said, "But I have a feeling my services are no longer needed. There has been no significant action on the part of the city and I have nothing to lead with." What exactly did you mean by this statement? Did you really feel that violence was eminent?

AS: No, I did not. I never felt that in the Greensboro movement. It was a statement of strategy. The--I had been noted as a somewhat moderate person, a responsible person with the CORE organization, and by June seventh, A&T and Bennett colleges both were about to close, the end of the school year, which meant that we would not have adequate personnel for demonstrations.

And what I was indicating in the statement, which is simply strategic, is that I was going to withdraw, which would mean to many people, through that public statement, that the demonstrations would in effect become accelerated. But my chief concern was that we bring closure on the Greensboro situation prior to the close of school or otherwise we might not have a movement.

EP: So that was not a fear that, as fewer and fewer students trained in nonviolent tactics were

replaced by just people in the community, this might lead to violence?

AS: No, it didn't mean that. At no time did I feel that Greensboro blacks would become violent.

EP: You also, in the same article, made a quote about Jesse Jackson, saying that it was a mistake to arrest him, in that many of the students had looked to him as their leader and that if he was out of jail he might keep any sort of violence under control. Was--did he really have this strong a hold over the students or was this once again, just a pressure?

AS: No. In fact, those days Jesse was not a part of those who called strategy for the demonstrations. He led them, because he was a winsome person, handsome personality, and so forth. The strategy was actually developed by a group of which he was not always a part. And the quote in regard to Jesse Jackson in that article was to have the same effect as the previous quotation.

EP: I'm rather interested in Jesse Jackson's role. Was he just more or less informed of what the executive committee had decided and more or less told what to carry out?

AS: Substantially, yes, because he did not come into the movement until a later time, which is to say even prior to demonstrations, the acceleration of which started with the incidents at McDonald's on Summit Avenue, I believe, he was not involved. It was only when there was extreme escalation of demonstrations when we were demonstrating downtown, with--the papers used to say that we demonstrated with fifteen hundred students, so forth and so on, but there was never quite that many. It was more like seven or eight hundred. It was then that we solicited his leadership.

EP: Did he come in cooperatively or did he sort of like make any demands that, "Well, if I'm going to lead this thing," so and so?

AS: He was a congenial and willing participant once he was involved.

EP: Inasmuch as these statements were, as you have just said--

AS: I was responsible for his participation, in fact, so I am accurate in that.

EP: I see. Inasmuch as the statements for the press were geared to be pressure tactics, was there a more radical element in CORE that might have suggested more confrontation tactics?

AS: The very interesting thing about it is that the more radical element, the element which had advocated more direct action--not violence, but more direct action and heavier confrontation, and had argued that point in CORE months before, disappeared from the movement and from leadership capacities once it started. And it had basically to deal with style of leadership and personality kinds of conflicts. There were those who would have wanted us to escalate demonstrations, but at no time was I aware of anyone who called for violence.

EP: Well, when I speak of radical, I'm not necessarily thinking of armed conflict or violence. But what were some of the suggestions that this group made?

AS: Which group?

EP: You said that there was a group that wanted more direct nonviolent confrontation--

AS: They wanted--they did not trust negotiations at all and wanted demonstrations to begin early in that school year, which would have been in the fall of the school year.

EP: You mean fall of '62?

AS: That's right. Fall of '62 they were pressing for demonstrations, picketing. We had not developed at that point in time the techniques of mass demonstrations, which turned out to be the most successful thing that we did. But they wanted persistent picketing and so forth and so on, and attempted entry into places that were segregated, like the S&W Cafeteria, and the theatres, McDonald's, and so forth.

EP: You mean rather than just picketing outside, to actually go in these places?

AS: To attempt entry.

EP: I see. If I may ask, you say that you had not developed mass demonstration techniques. Why was it not until May that you felt you had these skills?

AS: Well, you have to do what you have personnel to do, and you develop that kind of volunteer personnel within the context of the particular climate. And it was easier to--when you picket, for example, you got to picket for a long time to make it effective. You can't go for an hour and come back, as we were able to do on mass demonstrations, so it was an easier time commitment.

And the atmosphere and climate was set for mass demonstrations in the spring. The weather was less inclement. And also, Mrs. [Willa B.] Player, who was president of

Bennett College then, after the arrest where her students were incarcerated over at the polio hospital, set the tone for student participation by her endorsement of what her students had done.

EP: In other words, tacit consent.

AS: Yeah, one person could picket, but if you are going to have a mass march, [laughs] you've got to have masses.

EP: Who would some of these individuals have been that advocated actual entry into the establishments?

AS: I would prefer not to name them. Several of them were Bennett College students for the most part, and two of them were on the faculty of Bennett College.

EP: I see. In the *Greensboro Daily News* of June eighth, the demonstrations were called off by CORE due to what was called "the strong statement by Mayor [David] Schenck." Was this true? Did CORE--

AS: No. [laughs] Absolutely not. We knew that under the Greensboro system, and given the kind of political weakness of Mayor Schenck and his relatively low position in the power hierarchy of Greensboro, that whatever he said didn't amount to too much anyhow. It just becomes a point in time when you become tired, and, you know, you have to sit up all night to keep the mass demonstrations going. And so there were times when we were pleased to call things off. And you will note that several times I talked in terms of that in such a way as to be gracious for what had been done, whether we believed it to be significant or not.

EP: So this was just a propitious time to make it look like a breakthrough had been--

AS: It gets described as "street drama" that you fight through the press.

EP: Were there any--

AS: The press were our ally in all of this. They needed news, and so a lot of our demonstrating was done through the press. And the statements were a matter of strategy, and often what was said was not what was meant. But the intention either to be gracious in Greensboro society or to put the pressure on through the press with capabilities that we--by implying capabilities that we did not have.

EP: In relation to this, Lois Lucas said that one problem with the press was they would just come on campus and identify someone, whether or not he was really in the know, and ask for a statement, and then this is what would appear in the press. Would you agree with that, or do you think that CORE got in the press pretty much what it wanted, and--

AS: I would absolutely disagree with that, and the test of the credibility of it would have to be that she would have to cite examples of that. I would say it's absolutely false.

EP: Or were there--I'm sorry.

AS: CORE was very--one of the basic tenants of CORE is that spokespersons were appointed and nobody was to speak. They were severely chastised if they spoke out of school. Nobody was appointed to speak for CORE except those who were charged with the responsibility.

EP: Several members of the coordinating committee said that Rev. [Otis] Hairston was designated as their official spokesman. Was there an official spokesman for CORE?

AS: For the most part, Bill Thomas and I did the speaking on behalf of CORE.

EP: One example of using the press to get across the feeling at the time was when the USIS or the USIA [United States Information Agency] sent a film crew to--and they filmed the one demonstration in front of the S&W on Thanksgiving in fall of '62. Was this carefully arranged by CORE or was this just serendipity?

AS: No, CORE did not arrange that. I don't recall the incident, but I do know it was not arranged by CORE. And by the way, Lois Lucas was one of the radicals who withdrew at the point that demonstrations actually got started.

EP: So when the demon[strations]--it does sound kind of ironic that when the demonstrations actually occurred is exactly when the radicals withdrew.

AS: Well, some people make a rhetorical commitment.

EP: By that do you mean that they weren't really willing to follow through with what they had said they were going to do?

AS: Well, I'm saying that some people are committed to rhetoric and others to action.

EP: I see. Does this--in getting back to this statement that CORE made to the press about

Schenck's statement, were there behind-the-scenes promises or negotiations going on then?

AS: Yes, very vague kinds of words would come, and nobody would say what was forthcoming, but just kind of, "just take my word" kinds of statements. "Something's going to happen, but I can't say what it is, because all of it is not in place." Yeah, there were always those kinds of commitments. They were basically delivered to us by persons of an older black generation in Greensboro at that time, who were very confident that the white community would deliver on whatever it is they promised, no matter how vague.

EP: So in other words, CORE did not have direct communication with the city administration, it was more or less, through the coordinating council?

AS: We were not aware that the city had an administration. [laughs] We never spoke directly with Schenck, for example, and I don't even recall who the city manager was [George Aull]. But we were politically astute enough to know that Schenck had absolutely no power, both in the political structure and within the power structure of Greensboro. He just wasn't competent enough to have it. And--

EP: Did, did the coordinating council serve as a genuine conduit of information, or was it a figurehead in that, really, private individuals--

AS: What coordinating council?

EP: I beg your pardon?

AS: What coordinating council?

EP: I believe that the official name of it in the paper was called the Coordinating Committee or Coordinating Council of Pro-Integration Groups. And CORE, and NAACP, the Greensboro Citizens Association, and the ministers' fellowship--

AS: There was some work behind the scenes, but I'll say this, for the most part, when the demonstrations escalated, the other components of the coordinating council, other than CORE, served as service units to take care of humanitarian needs of those who were in prison. Now there were some negotiations which continued, but by and large, they turned their attention toward the health and humanitarian needs of those who were in jail.

EP: Rather than as a negotiating function?

AS: They did some negotiating, but it was not terribly serious.

EP: There are several points that I was interested in that did not appear in the paper and just come through by people mentioning them in interviews such as this. For instance, Rev. Hairston mentioned that at one meeting in Mayor Schenck's office, he apparently speculated that he could shut off the water at A&T and Bennett. And he says he angrily jumped up and said, "Well, if you do that we'll have five thousand demonstrators on the street, and we'll keep them there." Do you have any knowledge of this meeting?

AS: I vaguely remember it and I recall it through having heard Rev. Hairston make the statement.

EP: But you were not a participant?

AS: I was not present. It was always within the Greensboro movement a kind of power struggle between the older black community and the student community in Greensboro. And the students constantly felt quite undercut by the older black community. And the older black community was very much of the opinion that here you have transient populations trying to dictate the future of the city and take the responsibilities of leadership. There was not always, there was not always coordination between the two.

Looking at it from this point in history, it might have been different had the students realized their inability to negotiate and even articulate goals and objectives for the city. And I thought of that this evening as I reviewed this material, because a set of demands that was developed by that coordinating council--very articulate, quite to the point. Ones developed by the students were quite unclear in terms of motivation and so forth. It took place in a wide-open kind of a democratic forum process, and--but at the time we were not able to see that as clearly.

Now a part of that tension was created by those who left the movement, because they had a sense of wishing to remain in charge and they were always very threatened by the presence of articulate, substantial, long-term citizens of Greensboro who were present at CORE meetings and so forth.

EP: I understand that--or at least I have been told--that CORE asked for, as matter-of-fact insisted on this coordinating council of being formed during the first week, of being formed during that first week of demonstrations, and asked the participation of some of the older adult organizations. Do you think that whoever told me this was being less than candid?

AS: Oh, no, that would be quite accurate. But please understand that the arrogance of youth would also dictate that if you called for this and call it together, that you would be in

charge of the whole thing, and that they support your ideology and methodology in that whole process. The tension developed when that did not always take place.

EP: Does this mean that the relationship between CORE and the coordinating council was not always as smooth as it appeared in the press?

AS: I think it does.

EP: I see. Was there this feeling that, well, you can do what you want or you can pass resolutions, but the demonstrations are in our hands and we'll go our own way if necessary?

AS: It was very much that at times.

EP: I see. Did [cough]--excuse me--I realize that you and, if I'm not mistaken, you served on this committee as a representative of CORE with Bill Thomas or that--

AS: Yes.

EP: Did CORE frequently meet with the committee, the coordinating council?

AS: It did not meet that often. As I read your questions and the material, I don't recall a significant meeting with that council.

EP: So the CORE planned the demonstrations and just met infrequently with the council?

AS: Oh, yes.

EP: Well, you had mentioned that the council met the humanitarian needs of the students when they were incarcerated. Given this infrequent meeting schedule and this element of tension you mentioned, what function did the council serve?

AS: I think it served a good one, as I look back on it. And in retrospect, with students--could not have negotiated substantial changes within the Greensboro climate of racial segregation. There is often a time when there is a--that even to be in dialogue with your allies is detrimental to what you are trying to do, especially in that case if your allies--meaning those in that coordinating council other than CORE--counseled moderation. And had CORE been moderate, it would have deescalated the negotiations that the council participated in. Plus, had that not come into being, we clearly understand the attitude of Mayor Schenck, who really didn't understand what demonstrations were about anyway,



not to talk with the demonstrators. His only asset was that he was a very proud man in that position.

EP: One point here that's a little confusing in the paper, when I first read the paper, it sounded like the meeting with Bill Trotter took place on the evening, late in the evening that the students were released from the polio hospital. Then someone else has told me, "No, that meeting took place I believe at the Church of the Redeemer, late in the evening of the first demonstrations," that is on Wednesday, May fifteenth. Do you recall this meeting?

AS: You will have to remind me of who Bill Trotter is.

EP: He was the mayor pro tem, and Schenck was out of town. And as the paper--

AS: I have no recall.

EP: I see. The paper seemed to indicate that members of the coordinating committee, or council, asked for a meeting, and--at the church, rather late in the evening, and that he reluctantly agreed to form this committee, which became the committee under George Evans and--

AS: I have no recall.

EP: I see. Did you serve on Dr. Evans's committee?

AS: No, I did not.

EP: Did any member of CORE?

AS: I have no recall for that.

EP: I see. This was the committee that supposedly--well, they subdivided and met with the restaurant people and the theatre people. And I think they actually did get the theatre people to agree after a Justice Department meeting in Washington, where Robert Kennedy more or less told the owners of theatre chains in the South that "you had better go ahead and desegregate." Do you recall this?

AS: The meeting with--I never met with them. The--one of the interesting notes of history though, and that you don't raise a question but perhaps you're aware of, you'll probably know that through the coordinating council, passes [laughs] were given out to so-called

responsible Negroes to be admitted to the theatres on an experimental basis if they had those passes. I have that material stored with other archival stuff at the Amistad Research Center in New Orleans, but that's an interesting note of history.

EP: Is that how it worked out? Did the committee pass out a limited number of tickets?

AS: Yes, you had to have a pass in order to get in. Now if they were ever used on any large-scale basis, I am not aware of it. But I ended up with five myself, which are filed down in New Orleans. I have never been in what was initially a white area in a theatre in Greensboro in all of my years. [both laugh]

EP: I gather that--

AS: I don't think any of them are existing now anyway. The Center's [Theatre] closed, I'm sure.

EP: Yes, it is.

AS: Carolina [Theatre]?

EP: Yes, it did close a few years later and is now operating as essentially an art center or art theatre.

AS: I missed my big chance.

[both laugh]

EP: Well, you mentioned these twelve grievances, or list of demands, that CORE presented to the mayor. I gather that they were a revised list that had been presented earlier and rejected by the city council. Is this correct?

AS: I do not have recall of that. But I know that when I came back to Greensboro after finishing professional school in 1962, fall thereof, that there were grievances [laughs]. There was a list of grievances that [laughs] surfaced from time to time, and it was essentially the same list, give or take a little bit. But it was an old list of grievances, I mean, they're just basic things that had been there. And I think the real author of those grievances--and you may wish to check this--would be George Simkins and Kenneth Lee. The language is legal.

EP: Did--was there a good working relationship between CORE and the NAACP here in

Greensboro?

AS: George Simkins was the NAACP, and a fine gentlemen who had a greater understanding of students and what they were about than most. And, yes, George Simkins was the NAACP.

EP: And he didn't exhibit any sort of professional or organizational jealousy?

AS: No, never. He did not have that kind of ego or personality. Never did he exhibit that, nor did George Evans.

EP: He was more or less the--well, he was president of the Greensboro Citizens Association, wasn't he? So both of them cooperated with CORE?

AS: Yeah. He was a wise choice for that position. Nobody would criticize Evans, not because of the severity of the man, but because of his sincerity.

EP: In the *Daily News*, again on June eighth, you were quoted as changing your mind about resigning a leadership position in CORE. Was this something you were seriously considering or was this again another pressure tactic?

AS: Absolutely not, absolutely not. Although there was, as I recall my feelings at that time, I had not concurred with the sit-down in the square, which I now judge to be my own conservatism. But more than that, whatever depression or reluctance that gets expressed here, which was never genuine and real, was precipitated because of the fact that I felt that if that radical a move was to be taken, that "the" leadership of CORE should have been present and involved in it and to have seen to it that the demonstrators were protected. And I refer to myself in that, Bill Thomas and Isaac--what's his name.

EP: Reynolds.

AS: Reynolds.

EP: Are you saying they did not--

AS: I'm not sure if Lewis Brandon was with them or not.

EP: Are you saying that they did not take the steps to see that they were protected?

AS: No, what I'm saying is that Jesse Jackson led them, he was giving the order. The

demonstrators themselves did not know that was what they were supposed to do. The notion was advanced by Isaac Reynolds. I did not concur as a part of the strategy committee. I did not go, Bill Thomas did not go, nor did Isaac Reynolds. Lewis Brandon, as I recall, did not concur with that either. I don't think that he went, but he was not with us when we heard the commotion in the Jefferson Square from Church of the Redeemer. And I had a deep sense of guilt about demonstrators being there without the kind of controls that we usually had for their protection.

EP: Why did the leadership not go?

AS: I have no idea.

EP: Was--did it indicate a sense that they did not agree with it, or--

AS: No, they had called the play.

EP: I see. Well, I talked to Pat Patterson, and he said that he was against it. As a matter-of-fact, he--

AS: I must say that he was. Brandon, Patterson, and I were against it. We were. We concurred in being against it.

EP: And you would say that Bill Thomas and who else were for it?

AS: Well, I would say, I would not wish to say anyone, but you can see who is left.

EP: Yes. Lewis Brandon told me that this option had been discussed for quite some time and had not been put forth. He said that other things were calling students out of school at a particular time, on a particular day, sitting in, mass sit-ins on the floors on the large department stores. Is this true? Were these debated over a long period of time?

AS: We never--the mass meetings--please keep in mind that when demonstrations really escalated in the spring of 1963, the mass meetings that we had were not for the purpose of developing demonstration strategies. Those were pep rallies and also rallies to remind students of the discipline of CORE. The plays were actually called by a very small group of people.

EP: Would that be the executive committee or maybe even a subset of the executive committee?

AS: A subset of the executive committee, because we lost some of the executive committee to the jails and fatigue.

EP: Did the executive committee meet on a daily basis to determine this?

AS: We met all day, every day, every minute.

EP: And in these pep rally mass rallies, were the decisions of the executive committee told to the members, or was it just told to the leaders?

AS: In the mass demonstration what you do is get people up to a feverish pitch, and you called the game plan, as much of it as you want them to know--that we're going downtown, and you follow your leaders and so forth, stay in line, sing or don't sing, and so forth.

EP: So it was really up to the marshals and the leaders of each groups to direct the demonstration at their target?

AS: CORE leadership was usually on hand, and the demonstrations we had organized so that a mass demonstration was of one unit; there were no splinter groups, and very few people who could even call decisions on the spot. And by the way, we usually informed the police department through Captain [William] Jackson as to demonstration route and as much of demonstration strategy as we wanted him to know in order to protect the demonstrators, which he did a most adequate job of.

EP: In other words, you told him that, "We're going to have a group of people circling in front of the door and every now and then one is going to go up and ask to be admitted and is willing--"

AS: We might not tell him that detail.

EP: I see. The newspaper, in describing the demonstrations, indicated that they were pre-assigned groups to each target. And I get the impression that rather than going from one target to the next, the groups more or less went to their targets simultaneously. Is that correct?

AS: Yeah, that was a part of strategy from time-to-time. There was no point in having a demonstration, of course, of that nature if it is totally predictable.

EP: One--please correct me if I misinterpret this--but what, I get a sense of what you're

saying is that there was sort of a split in CORE between those who wanted to do more aggressive, but still nonviolent, demonstrations.

AS: No, that was not a split. That leadership remained together, if you are referring to the Jefferson Square incident where there was a sit-down in the street. Even subsequent to that, Thomas, Brandon, Reid[?], Patterson and I remained together. We just disagreed on that issue, but we remained together. The CORE split came at an earlier point, and that is prior to, or just subsequent to, the McDonald's arrest earlier in that season.

EP: So would you say that when the McDonald's arrest actually occurred, this group had already left CORE or really ceased to be influenced--?

AS: They ceased--they were not present after that point. Now if they had gotten--had left prior to then, I can't recall, but they did not show and participate. Yes, that is substantially correct.

EP: Would you say it was because their strategy was not adopted?

AS: I cannot read their heads. We assumed that with the strategy of going to McDonald's where Bill Thomas and I were arrested--and there seems to me there may have been one other person in that--we assumed that it would really turn them on. [laughs] But apparently it had the opposite effect. Or at least there is a correlation in terms of whatever turned them off, whether it was that or something else, which meant that they were no longer there after that time.

EP: But it did turn on the masses of students that flocked to the movement, is that correct?

AS: No, it built subsequently. That was kind of symbolic. After we were placed out of jail, we did discover that, as S&W was the target, that the number of persons who began to demonstrate with us increased.

EP: Is this something that CORE had planned on? Had they more or less prepared flyers and--

AS: No, there was a grapevine, just a grapevine. No flyers. We very seldom circulated anything. We weren't equipped to do it.

EP: But the [clears throat]--excuse me--mass meetings that were held immediately after the McDonald's arrest did draw large numbers of students?

AS: Large numbers. And here again, that was the *Greensboro Daily News* and *News-Record*

did more than anything. We didn't need a leaflet. [both laugh] They did it for us, as far as strategy.

EP: And these students that came, they readily accepted the CORE discipline?

AS: Oh, yes. There was, there--to my knowledge, with the exception of the physical damage done to the bus property, there was no violence directed at persons. There was a point in time when an A&T instructor became quite emotionally excited at a demonstration, but that was not directed toward persons. He just--it was almost a hysterical rage, but that was not directed at persons.

EP: I gather that you don't want to name names, but could you describe this incident?

AS: The--what he did?

EP: Yes.

AS: He began to babble, what in a religious movement would be almost speaking in tongues, but you could tell that it was just from tremendous inward rage after, I guess, a lifetime of subjection to racial oppression.

EP: Did this precipitate any kind of action amongst the students?

AS: No, he calmed himself.

EP: You had mentioned Isaac Reynolds, and I'm very interested in some of these field secretaries that were sent by the national office. Among the names I have are Isaac Reynolds, Moon Eng.

AS: George somebody.

EP: Pardon?

AS: George somebody.

EP: Yes, I don't have his last name immediately in front of me [George Raymond], but yes, that's true. And I believe Hunter Morey was another one. Do you recall how frequently they came to Greensboro and their influence in CORE?

AS: Some were around for that, the period during which the demonstrations escalated. They

had very little influence in CORE. [laughs]

EP: In other words, they--

AS: Everybody really understood that the Greensboro movement was quite in charge of itself. And Jim Farmer had utter respect for that.

EP: He didn't try to come down with a set of directives?

AS: Oh, no, he never did. In fact, he--even when he was present--we would call him down from time to time, it was a big stick. But even when he was present, basic decisions made by the group were made by that group, and not under the influence of Jim Farmer. One thing Jim Farmer knew--by the way he lives in Washington now, Georgetown--that he had a tremendous amount of competence in the Greensboro contingent, and more so perhaps than on the staff, because CORE staff was not paid. These guys were committed and very fine young men, but they were not in charge of the CORE movement in Greensboro. At no time.

EP: I gather from what you said about Reynolds, that mainly they would suggest strategies that had worked in other parts of the country?

AS: Sometimes they would, from their experience in Mississippi, other parts of the country. But they--Reynolds was a very bright person. The fellow that I named, George--I can't think of his last name--was also a very bright person. But by and large, they did not call the plays for the city of Greensboro. And if strategies that they suggested that had worked in Greenwood, Mississippi, wherever, were not appropriate for Greensboro, we were very quick to tell them.

EP: They frequently appear in the arrest sheets. Did they have a leadership role once the marches began? Or did they just get arrested--

AS: No, that was a style of life for them.

EP: I see. I gather that national CORE, when it came to North Carolina, really centered around Floyd McKissick in Durham rather than directly in Greensboro. Is that correct?

AS: Give me the beginning of that question again.

EP: I gather that when people did come from the national office in New York, that they first went to Durham, consulted with Floyd McKissick, and then came to Greensboro.



AS: No, no, no.

EP: They came directly to Greensboro?

AS: Yes.

EP: Did Greensboro CORE sort of look to Durham and Floyd McKissick for direction or--

AS: No. He was a guiding light in the Greensboro movement. But here again, he--there was always utter respect in CORE for individual units and strategies developed by local groups. And we always felt very comfortable with Floyd McKissick around, because he was supportive of us in terms of strategies that we developed, and of course was responsible for coordinating and providing legal counsel. And he, Floyd McKissick played his role very well.

EP: I gather that [clears throat]--excuse me--there was, from the CORE archives that I have seen, that Greensboro CORE felt that the national office was in error in not being more supportive of the Monroe [North Carolina] defense group that was holding rallies earlier in '61 and maybe early '62 in support of Robert Williams. Are you familiar with any of that?

AS: No, that pre-dates me. But it sounds like the rhetorical group. [laughs] It sounds like their issue.

EP: So each--certainly Greensboro existed autonomously and didn't try to coordinate with like Durham, or Winston-Salem, or High Point?

AS: No, no, no. I did some field representation over with Winston-Salem CORE in the summer of 1963, but here again, it wasn't to bring those together. I just did some volunteer work on-call by national CORE through Floyd McKissick for expenses, and also in Williamston [North Carolina].

EP: Do you recall vividly at all these individuals I've mentioned, like Moon Eng and Isaac Reynolds--

AS: I remember Isaac very vividly and I've seen him in Washington. It's been many years ago--

[End Tape 2, Side A--Begin Tape 2, Side B]

EP: --would have been a meeting at which Schenck met with the leaders of the demonstration in the Hayes-Taylor YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] either on June seventh or June eighth. Do you recall that meeting?

AS: I have no recall for ever being in the presence of Mayor Schenck at the Hayes-Taylor YMCA.

EP: Later on, during that week--it's kind of confusing in the newspaper--but it appears that members of the coordinating council met with Schenck and the council in a rather boisterous meeting in the municipal building. Do you recall that meeting?

AS: I was not present.

EP: I see. I believe I've gone over this before, but there was a certain tone and content to articles in the newspaper concerning the sit-downs in the square on June sixth, to the effect that things had reached a crisis point, but that there was a chance that things now would work out, that apparently the mayor had seen the light and was going to appoint a human relations committee. And essentially the council adopted most of the grievances or list of demands that George Simkins presented to them. Would you agree with this tone or assessment in the newspaper, or were things still pretty much in flux?

AS: I missed that, my son was--I'm sorry, my son was saying something to me.

EP: Well, basically, after the sit-downs there seems to be a change in the tone in the articles in the newspaper. One gets the sense that, all right, the mayor had basically seen the light and he was going to adopt many of the demands of the coordinating council, and that he was going to appoint this human relations committee, and that this was a breakthrough. Would you say that this was accurate?

AS: Well, that's what the paper said, and that is substantially accurate. But let me tell you what happened. McNeill Smith was a close associate of Terry Sanford and stayed on the phone with him constantly during all of the Greensboro demonstrations. And Terry Sanford finally told them to cut that foolishness out. He appointed Capus Waynick, who had been, who was former ambassador of OAS [Organization of American States] as his man, and Capus Waynick was committed and so was Terry Sanford. And through calls to and from McNeill Smith, and also to other people who actually controlled Greensboro, they straightened it out. So Schenck just did what they told him.

EP: So in other words, when you say that he had lost--Sanford had lost patience and said to

“cut it out,” he was addressing--

AS: Yeah. Other cities were beginning to desegregate. They were desegregating, though I think it is important to point out that on the basis of what was happening in Greensboro, because in Greensboro I think history will indicate that at a given point we had more people in jails because of civil rights demonstrations than any other location in the country, including Birmingham. And it was because of the intensity of the Greensboro movement that Charlotte and all of these other places began to open up. And much of that had to do with Terry Sanford's commitment, which he did not state in the press. But he was quite committed. And I knew it for a fact. One of his aides had been at Yale Law [School] when I had been in the divinity school at Yale. I knew where he stood, and I knew it through McNeill Smith.

EP: Could you provide me with the name of this aide?

AS: Jim Turner. I'm sorry, no, it was not Jim Turner. Jim Turner was with McNeill Smith. Jim Turner, who was with McNeill Smith, though, at the time, would know who that was, because he was at Yale Law at the same time also with the guy who was Terry Sanford's aide, who may be an attorney yet in the state of North Carolina.

EP: So basically, what got things going were these private telephone calls?

AS: Absolutely, absolutely. McNeill Smith was quite strategic in all of that, that's the truth of the matter. I have sat [laughs], I have sat on many occasions in friendly conversation--in fact, let me see. I have sat in McNeill Smith's house with Attorney [Armistead] Sapp, who was a most delightful fellow. If he had a problem, it was not that he was racist at all, but that he represented his clients, and they had gotten to him early on, because he's a quite liberal fellow and most brilliant. But a lot went on in situations like that. McNeill Smith was very strategic in all of that, and the governor of North Carolina just called and told him, “Just cut that out. Everybody else is doing the right thing, so you all straighten the little man out.” He didn't know which end was up.

EP: Well, I mentioned--there are some other names here in addition to the CORE field secretaries that seem to have some kind of influence with CORE. Among them, in the American Friends Service Committee [AFSC], were Harry Boyte and Richard Ramsey. Do you recall these two individuals?

AS: Oh yeah. Herring?

EP: Pardon me?

AS: Herring? Sarah Herring? Herbin?

EP: This is a name I don't have, but if you could tell me about what she did.

AS: Yes, Sarah Herbin was--Tartt Bell was the director of the American Friends Service office over in High Point, the Southeast Regional Office. Dick Ramsey was a field representative, who at a point in time became almost exclusively related to CORE, although his assignment with them, I believe, was peace. There was--name another name.

EP: Harry Boyte.

AS: That name doesn't ring a bell. It does ring a bell but I can't get it together.

EP: I got the impression that Harry Boyte actually was fired by AFSC for taking too direct a role in the demonstrations.

AS: I would not say that that was the case, because certainly Dick Ramsay was, certainly Sarah Herbin was, and there was a black fellow who was assigned to education issues who also was [Charles Davis].

EP: And you say their role was to see that violence didn't occur, that it was peaceful?

AS: I don't know if that was their role, but they were certainly attached to us.

EP: Did CORE work with the AFSC?

AS: Oh, yes.

EP: Even though their whole point-of-view and perspective was quite different from--

AS: Oh, no, it was quite the same.

EP: I guess what I mean is in terms of tactics.

AS: No, they--no, no, no. It was quite the same.

EP: I see. I'd gotten that impression that from reading this book, *CORE: A Study in Civil Rights Movement [1942-1968]* by Rudwick and Meier. I got the impression that CORE readily worked with the AFSC, but that--even though their manner of approaching

things was different. But you say that they did support the--

AS: Oh, yeah. You see, the Quaker denomination is what we would call a peace church. And the tie-in with CORE was that CORE was a movement. And the Quakers, of course, were liberal, social action-type people. And the tie-in with CORE was that CORE was a direct-action group, more so than the American Friends Service Committee might have been, but yet they were committed to the tenets of peace and nonviolence. And there was never any conflict in that.

EP: What was the reaction of CORE to the announcement by the theatres that they were going to desegregate during that, the first few days of June? It this something that they--

AS: There was nobody there to rejoice too much, because the students had gone; that was the heart of our movement. I don't recall that we were, you know, had any party. [laughs]

EP: I see. There was a rumor that Sapp had scuttled the first agreement by announcing it prematurely before the theaters were ready to announce it, and that there were a flurry of denials. Do you have any knowledge of this?

AS: I have some vague recall for it, and I can only make a judgment about it. It became important to Mr. Sapp at the point in time that history record that he favored progress in race relations.

EP: I see. Did you have any direct negotiations or talks with Sapp?

AS: Oh, I tell you, if you could find it, it would be very interesting. Scott Jarrett, who was news director, reporter, and cameraman, and everything else over at WFMY-TV in those days, ran some tape on Sapp and me in the studio. We went there just to do a brief thing for an evening news shot and he said, "Look, I've got some tape in this thing, you all keep talking." We had a very interesting conversation. I don't know if that's in the WFMY-TV files or not, but I do know that Scott Jarrett recorded it.

EP: You mean of you all with Sapp?

AS: Me in dialogue.

EP: Was it a confrontation situation?

AS: It was--yes, but it was rational conversation and debate. It was not, you know, name-calling kind of thing, but debate on the issue.

EP: Was his role kind of played down once the demonstrations actually had begun?

AS: Sapp?

EP: Yes.

AS: There was a point in time when Sapp was the symbol of racism among the demonstrators. A great deal of hostility, not necessarily toward him as a person, he just became kind of symbolic. And that finally cooled down, and there was a point in time when Schenck became that. But his role kind of played out as changes became apparent.

EP: I'm particularly interested in the truce that was announced. It's always put in quotation marks as if it wasn't a real truce. But anyway, for purposes of discussion, a truce from May twenty-fifth through June third, in which CORE said that it had ceased demonstrations, or at least it was only going to hold rather symbolic marches within the black community. Do you know who arranged it and why CORE agreed to it?

AS: Well, students do take exams.

EP: So that was the real reason for it? Aha. I see!

AS: [laughs] They were there to go to school, you know.

EP: Well, just reading it in the paper, it looks rather dramatic, that there was--

AS: Jo Spivey, if you follow the *News-Record*, Jo Spivey was a real friend of ours, and so was Scott Jarrett, who was over at WFMY-TV in those days.

EP: So they would always put the best light on it or--

AS: Well, they would not editorialize in what they reported. We wouldn't tell them the straight-up truth, but even if they saw through it, as a matter of strategy, they would not editorialize it.

EP: Well, on June third, Jesse Jackson led a silent march. And it looked like it was a break in the truce. And when interviewed by reporters, he said that it was not a CORE-sanctioned march and that he was quoted as saying, "CORE may have declared a truce and made a commitment not to march, but CORE can't dictate to the community." And he's very specific in saying it was a community march, rather than a CORE march.

AS: Okay, that relates to statements that I had made in terms of losing control. And what was to have been implied there, what the intention in terms of strategy was to say, "We can keep these students calm, but we are not quite sure that we can keep the community calm." Also, the fact that CORE had been most disciplined, and therefore we gave the appearance of a splinter.

EP: But indeed, it was not.

AS: Indeed, it was not.

EP: I see. What was CORE's reaction to the pace of negotiations being conducted?

AS: We never took those negotiations terribly seriously. That is to say that we would-- although the effort was made, not by Dr. Evans, bless him, but by some others waiting to see what they are going to do--but we knew that they would not negotiate with any haste unless pressure was maintained.

EP: There was a flurry of articles during that same week when this truce was going on indicating there were optimistic statements about possible solutions, saying that everyone was just waiting for the announcement from one side or the other, and that it never came. Was this accurate? Was CORE perhaps anticipating that something would break from the--

AS: No. The thing there was, is that as students began to take seriously the fact that school was closing and it was getting time to go home, there was dwindling away and absolute fatigue after sustaining a movement like that for a period of time. And much of what is being said in the press, at that time, is to create illusions. And the illusion intended there was that if you say that something is about to break through, then the powers-that-be, if they're going to be the nice guys, have got to come forth with something, since I'd already announced [laughs] that they were supposed to do something very wonderful.

EP: So these quotes that were attributed to you about saying that as a result of unspecified negotiations, that it was "the most enlightening since the demonstrations began," and again you were quoted as saying that if they wanted to contact people for information, it should be the people who would open their doors should make the announcement. Was this just rhetoric or were there--

AS: It was rhetoric. It's very interesting that I used the word "enlightening." [laughs] That doesn't quite describe anything. [both laugh] But as I recall, what was happening at that

particular time, I made that statement to set up the powers that could make judgment about what was to be done in the city of Greensboro, set them up as nice guys so that, you know, they got to do something to look good.

EP: Was there any--in these unofficial powers-that-be in Greensboro--you have mentioned Jim Turner and McNeill Smith--was there anybody who was going back and forth between the two groups or--

AS: Oh, yeah. Don't forget that there was a Greensboro Human Relations Council or Human something--

EP: That one under Bland Worley?

AS: No. But Bland Worley was one of the actors in the whole drama, but kind of withdrew by this point. There was a kind of an inter-racial, a Greensboro Inter-Racial Community Council or something like that.

EP: Was it the Community Fellowship?

AS: Yeah. John R. Taylor, who used to have the Holiday Inn franchise when he was on 29 North and South, Guilford College professors, and others, a Rabbi somebody. Messages got--there was communication.

EP: So they were just, more or less, going to the individual people back and forth with suggestions for resolving the issue?

AS: Yeah, yeah. Communication in the Greensboro movement--I think that Chafe's book, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, is a very good framework which interpret what was going on.

EP: So it was more less these ad hoc groups rather than the officially designated negotiating teams that were really doing more of a substantive nature?

AS: I would not be willing to conclude that. I did not--it's very difficult to do hard negotiation if you're on the frontline as one of the troops, and I absented from a lot of those things because it would be very difficult to sit across the desk from a person who was hostile toward demonstrations. You needed a person who was neutral in terms of not being a conspicuous figure in the demonstrations themselves, so that you negotiate in some degree of calmness.

EP: I've mentioned here in my last question concerning your participation on the Human



Relations Commission, how were you made aware of your invitation to serve on this commission?

AS: I think the first person to call me on that was either Kenneth Fryer[?][pause] no, I'm sorry, Lee, Attorney Lee--I run those two men together in my head sometimes--and George Simkins.

EP: What was your overall impression of this committee? It seems to be broken down pretty much along the lines of six white businessmen or attorneys, and six black attorneys or activists in the demonstration--or, in the case of Dr. Simkins, a member of professional community, and of course yourself, as a minister, but also leader of CORE. Did those two groups function well together as a single unit, or were their loyalties more or less divided between--

AS: I resigned early on from that. Not for any--it was not in protest. I just had other things that I wanted to move on to. And my experience with the committee basically was in the organizational phases. I was replaced, as I recall, by Dr. Gladys Royal, who was then on the faculty--she and her husband at A&T College.

EP: I understand that you were a chairman of the Subcommittee on Progress and Information. Essentially, what was the function of that subcommittee?

AS: Okay, my initial function was to receive from other cities and municipalities from across the country laws pertaining to, regulations pertaining to the operation of the human relations, human rights commissions--how they functioned, how they were appraised, what kinds of subcommittees, and so forth and so on, that they had.

EP: Did you receive a lot of correspondence from--

AS: Oh, yeah, yeah, from many places.

EP: Did the commission take this material and try to have the same sort of thing occur in Greensboro?

AS: Before--they had not processed it before I resigned, and that committee was given to my successor, Dr. Royal.

EP: Did the black members of the commission more or less meet either formally or informally, caucus situation or anything, to try to present a solid front as to what they wanted for the black--

AS: There were no--the short time that I served on that committee, there were really no issues. They were organizational meetings.

EP: I see. So you never got together with, like, Dr. Simkins and--

AS: Except by phone, because as I recall, he was chairperson. Am I correct?

EP: Well, at this point that I have--

AS: Kenneth Lee, Kenneth Lee.

EP: He's listed as being a secretary and W.O. Conrad was listed as being chair--

AS: Conrad. Well, for example, I developed the language which described my subcommittee on information or whatever it was. Some materials we had received from other cities, but we never dealt with issues while I--well, I, I think my impression at the time was the mandate which established it was not a terribly serious one, and it would have been a credibility problem for me.

EP: Because, having been a member of CORE and active in the demonstrations--?

AS: Yeah. You can't rush toward the establishment too quickly.

EP: Do you think that this commission ever did accomplish anything of substance?

AS: I can make no judgment on it, because I did not pay it very much attention the months that I had left there, and all of a couple of years, and I did not follow it subsequently. But it certainly was set up to do nothing.

EP: Certain quotes in the paper at the time you were on this commission indicated you were rather angry at the slow pace that the commission was taking.

AS: Well, probably so, but I had to--you're seeing the reason there that I resigned, and that is I had to complain of that in order to remain credible with [laughs] my comrades in the revolution.

EP: Right. There was one appearance by [local businessman and jeweler] Arnold Schiffman, and it seems to me that what he said more or less spoke at the very crux of the issue of desegregation. He was asked why, essentially why merchants in Greensboro, downtown,

had not hired more black sales personnel. And he said, "Well, our experience is that they're not very good with mathematics and their command of English is such that it turns patrons off." And what he was advocating was going through the more traditional distributive education courses in the high schools. Do you think that this was just kind of a smokescreen by Schiffman and likeminded merchants to maintain the status quo and not hire more black sales personnel?

AS: I think essentially so, especially with two institutions there. They could have hired students as personnel.

EP: What two institutions are you speaking of?

AS: A&T and Bennett College.

EP: Yes, I see. Well, in conclusion about this--

AS: I remember Mr. Schiffman appearing for the hearing. As I recall, Mr. Schiffman was a man of short stature and a stiff leg. Does he still live?

EP: Yes, he--

AS: Does that describe him?

EP: Yes, that's a very good description actually.  
Conrad made a lot of speeches to [both laugh]--I can tell you're agreeing already.

AS: He sure did.

EP: And the substance of them seems to be "let's work through education courses." In other words, I get the impression--well, of course, members of the black community would concur that students do have to be prepared to enter the business world and that job opportunities that they opened up. But it seems to me this was throwing the ball back into the black community by saying, "Okay, it's not our responsibility as employers to hire more black salespeople. It's your responsibility to educate black students so that they can enter the job market."

AS: Oh, he was always trying to throw the ball back into, on our court. He was a nice guy. He didn't understand either side of the South, white or black. But he was a nice guy, and I'm sure that he took some severe beatings on both sides. But it was--you know, you always felt gently spanked by what he said, "If you all will be nice, everything will be all right."

He was a nice guy, he was just not a part of Southern tradition.

EP: So you think that he was sincere?

AS: Oh, yeah, he was sincere.

EP: Would you say that about all of the members?

AS: Of the human rights thing, Human Relations Committee?

EP: Yes.

AS: I wasn't there long enough to study that. I'm sure they weren't, because the idea was that, you know, on the Human Relations Commission, what you must do is represent all points of view. And of course, it was my contention there was not but one, and that was that you should have a city of complete racial equality. It wasn't a forum to debate whether blacks were equal.

EP: Right. Did you continue in CORE after the demonstration ceased?

AS: We met, but much of CORE after that--we understood we were rebels without a cause that we at that time had the strength to handle after very heavy battle. We understood very plainly that the battle must be fought subsequently on the economic front in terms of jobs, housing, so forth and so on. And we did not have the strength to do it. So it was quite depressing. We met informally as people who had become friends through the movement. But I don't recall a CORE meeting subsequent to our termination in June when Bill Thomas and I flew off to New York, and Rev. [Julius] Douglas called the whole thing off.

EP: Oh, Rev. Douglas was responsible for calling the demonstrations off?

AS: Called the whole thing off. Well, there was nobody to demonstrate anyhow. But Bill and I had told the city, "You'd better be straight by the time that we get back."

EP: Yes, there were threats of demonstrations that never came, came off.

AS: Well, you can't demonstrate unless you have live bodies.

EP: Right. What--Rev. Douglas, how did he, what was his position that he could call this off?

AS: I'm not sure, but he did the speaking either on behalf of Rev. Hairston--perhaps his relationship was through that group.

EP: I see. You had mentioned to me earlier the purpose of Bill Thomas and your visit to New York. Was it on CORE business or unrelated?

AS: R&R [rest and recuperation]. [EP laughs] And so was the Bill Thomas-[Jim] Farmer trip to Washington. It was R&R. You grew very weary.

EP: So it wasn't substantive meetings with the--

AS: Pardon?

EP: It wasn't substantive meetings with the federal government or anything?

AS: Oh, no. [laughs]

EP: I see. You know, that's interesting--

AP: We didn't have any of those.

EP: That's interesting, because, you know, the paper really played that up.

AS: Oh, yeah. We--I don't know if they played the New York trip, but we intended that we were--we wanted to lend the impression that we were going to New York to bring back [laughs] just all kinds of new strategies and people and orders from Jim Farmer, and so forth and so on. But it was R&R. And that is why Bill went to New York with Jim Farmer.

EP: So for all of this intense activity and organization, it ended rather abruptly because of this change in the nature of the demands or field of battle, I might say. And you remained in Greensboro how long after this?

AS: I had left Greensboro, let's see now, February '64. Am I saying that right? No, it was February '66 I left Greensboro.

[End of Interview]