

Interview with **Normareen Shaw**

1979

Production Team: N/A

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Note: These transcripts contain material that did not appear in the final program. Only text appearing in *bold italics* was used in the final version of *Eyes on the Prize*.

00:00:02:00

[camera roll 13]

[sound roll 8]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: YOUR NAME AND—YOUR NAME PLEASE.

NORMAREEN SHAW: My—Normareen Shaw.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: SPEED.

INTERVIEWER: THE NIGHT THAT THE—JIMMIE LEE JACKSON WAS SHOT YOU HAD—YOU WERE THE OWNER OF, OF THE MACK'S CAFÉ RIGHT?

Shaw: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT WAS THE, WHAT WAS THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE TOWN AT THAT TIME?

Shaw: I'd say rather exciting. The—this march was being planned for that particular night.

INTERVIEWER: WHY WAS THE MARCH—WAS THERE SOME SPECIAL REASON FOR THE MARCH THAT NIGHT?

Shaw: Voter registration.

INTERVIEWER: NICE. DID IT HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE FACT THAT JIM ORANGE FROM THE SCLC WAS IN JAIL OR NOT? AS FAR AS YOU KNEW.

Shaw: As far as I know, I, I can't say, really.

INTERVIEWER: WOULD YOU SAY THAT THE PEOPLE, THAT THE BLACKS IN THE TOWN WERE AFRAID OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN AT A DEMONSTRATION LIKE THIS? WERE YOU AFRAID?

Shaw: They didn't seem to be. No, I was not afraid.

INTERVIEWER: EVEN THOUGH YOU KNEW THAT THE ALABAMA STATE POLICE HAD MOVED IN AND—THAT YOU WEREN'T AFRAID? YOU, YOU DIDN'T ANTICIPATE THIS KIND OF VIOLENCE?

Shaw: No, I did not.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT HAPPENED, THEN, WHEN THE CHURCH SERVICE ENDED AND THEN WHAT? SOMETHING PEOPLE CAME INTO YOUR CAFÉ—JUST TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED.

Shaw: OK. The service ended and the march began. And the two people leading the march come down the steps to the sidewalk and they kneel to pray.

INTERVIEWER: WHO WERE THE PEOPLE LEADING IT?

Shaw: A Reverend Dobyne and—was black.

INTERVIEWER: RIGHT.

Shaw: And George Baker, a young man. A young white man.

INTERVIEWER: I SEE. OK.

Shaw: And they kneel to pray—

INTERVIEWER: NOW WHERE WAS THIS? OUTSIDE OF THE ZION CHURCH?

Shaw: The Zion Methodist Church, right. I was standing in the doorway—

INTERVIEWER: OF YOUR CAFÉ?

Shaw: Of the church.

INTERVIEWER: OH RIGHT.

00:02:10

Shaw: I was standing in the doorway of the church and I had to wait for them to come out. I look down and they were beating both of the men.

INTERVIEWER: THE STATE POLICE WERE?

Shaw: Right. Well, at that time, it said state troopers. I don't know what they were or who they were. But they were in uniform. And there was a big light on the porch of the City Hall which is across the street.

INTERVIEWER: RIGHT.

Shaw: And all of a sudden that light went out. [pause] I went down the steps and a man looked at me and said, you are the girl who run the café. Get down there and open that door.

INTERVIEWER: A BLACK MAN SAID THIS TO YOU?

Shaw: No, he was white. In uniform. I don't know who they were.

INTERVIEWER: BUT WHAT WAS THE REASON TO SAY THIS?

Shaw: I'd like to know that myself. I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: I SEE. WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU OPENED UP THE CAFÉ?
DID JIMMIE LEE JACKSON COME IN, DO YOU REMEMBER?

Shaw: When I got to the porch of the café I stopped. The troopers were still behind me. There were several behind me and on the porch and there was one man dressed in plain clothes standing at the front door of the restaurant. And he looked at me and said, you are the girl who run this place. Open that door and let them go in. And with billy clubs and guns. I had no choice, but to open the door.

INTERVIEWER: NOW WHEN THE PEOPLE WENT IN DID JIMMIE LEE JACKSON
GO IN TOO?

Shaw: I saw him come in later. He was in the crowd—it was, it was a large crowd.

00:04:01:00

INTERVIEWER: RIGHT.

Shaw: Right.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT SORT OF A PERSON WAS HE BY THE WAY?

Shaw: He was a very quiet person. Intelligent person. Worked hard. Very concerned about his mother and his sister and his grandfather.

INTERVIEWER: ALL RIGHT.

Shaw: He, he was definitely a family type.

INTERVIEWER: HIS GRANDFATHER HAD BEEN A SLAVE? CAGER LEE? IS THAT RIGHT?

Shaw: Right. As I understand it.

INTERVIEWER: NOW WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO JIMMIE LEE JACKSON BEING SHOT?

Shaw: [pause] It was a big hassle in the café. Crowded, very crowded. People and troopers.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

Shaw: During the time they were using the billy clubs. Hitting people over the head—

INTERVIEWER: INSIDE THE CAFÉ?

Shaw: —the shoulders. Inside the café. And I happened to turn around and look back, because I had gone back into the kitchen area, then. Jimmy was heading toward the counter.

INTERVIEWER: RIGHT.

Shaw: That's the last time I saw him. But, after that, we were trying to get out of the backdoor and his sister was behind me and there was a noise. And she said, oh they're shooting. I said, no they're not. I said, those drink cases fell because—they fell behind me, cut my legs, I thought—the drinks popped. Well, I thought that's what it was and I still, you know, do not know today if that was a shot or just what.

INTERVIEWER: BUT THEN DID YOU SEE JIMMY LEE SHOT?

Shaw: I didn't see him after that, but I saw him just before that.

INTERVIEWER: ALL RIGHT. IT'S GOOD. WERE THE POLICE BEATING HIS MOTHER, DO YOU KNOW?

Shaw: That I did not see.

00:06:01:00

INTERVIEWER: I SEE. WHAT, WHAT WAS THE REACTION, YOU KNOW, AFTER

YOU SAW ALL OF THIS VIOLENCE BY THE POLICE YOU, SAID YOU WEREN'T AFRAID WHEN THE DEMONSTRATION STARTED, HOW DID YOU FEEL AFTER THIS WENT, WENT DOWN?

Shaw: I really didn't get upset about it until they carried me to jail.

INTERVIEWER: OH THEY ARRESTED YOU?

Shaw: Right.

INTERVIEWER: FOR, FOR WHAT, WHAT REASON?

Shaw: OK. Before I start running the café my mother and my step-father ran that café. They went out of business. Everything was left there. The way it was. OK, my step-father had a gun and it was there, somewhere, I don't know where because it wasn't mine.

INTERVIEWER: BUT THAT NIGHT THEY CHOSE TO ARREST YOU FOR THE GUN?

Shaw: They found that—right. And they found that. Right. And, as I understand it, that's why they carried me to jail.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT WAS THE REACTION OF THE PEOPLE WHEN THEY KNEW THAT JIMMIE LEE JACKSON DIED?

Shaw: Very upsetting. Very upsetting.

INTERVIEWER: OK. WANT TO CUT, CHARLIE?

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: CUT.

[cut]

00:07:30:00

INTERVIEWER: OK.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: THAT WAS, THAT WAS VOICE OVER.

[cut]

00:07:35:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: MARION.

[cut]

00:07:37:00

INTERVIEWER: —A LITTLE LESS—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: SPEED.

INTERVIEWER: —CAUSE I'M—ARE THERE ANY WHITES IN THIS TOWN THAT WHEN YOU TALK WITH THEM YOU FEEL CONFIDENT THAT YOU'RE UNDERSTANDING THEM AND THEY'RE UNDERSTANDING YOU AND YOU BOTH ARE ON THE SAME WAVELENGTH? I MEAN, DO YOU HAVE THAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP WITH ANY OF THE WHITE PEOPLE IN TOWN?

Shaw: Some, yes.

INTERVIEWER: HAS THE FACT THAT YOU NOW HAVE A BLACK SHERIFF, HAS THAT CHANGED THE ATMOSPHERE AT ALL?

Shaw: [pause] I believe to a certain extent. Maybe not with all people, but with some.

00:08:19:00

INTERVIEWER: THANKS. DID PEOPLE—AFTER JIMMIE LEE JACKSON DIED, AND EVEN TODAY, I MEAN DID YOU REALLY FEEL ANGRY AND BITTER? HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE FACT THAT THIS YOUNG MAN, I THINK IN HIS, HIS EARLY TWENTIES AND, AS YOU SAY, HE WAS A GOOD YOUNG MAN AND A DECENT PERSON THAT HIS LIFE WAS CUT SHORT? HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT? HOW DID YOU FEEL THEN?

Shaw: I felt very sad about it. [pause] For one reason, to know that a person would have to die that way—

INTERVIEWER: YEAH.

Shaw: —trying to, maybe, find himself or find his place into society. And I have often wondered if blacks were really being accepted as people, as human beings or if we were just something out there.

INTERVIEWER: DO YOU THINK THAT JIMMY LEE'S DEATH ACHIEVED SOMETHING IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

Shaw: I believe it did.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT DO YOU THINK—I MEAN HOW DO YOU THINK IT CONTRIBUTED?

Shaw: Well, maybe people began to show more concern. [pause] Maybe blacks who were not

interested, maybe, decided—

INTERVIEWER: GOT INTERESTED.

Shaw: Right.

INTERVIEWER: HOW DID IT EFFECT, BY THE WAY, THE BLACK POPULATION IN THE TOWN? DID THE MOVEMENT THEN—DID IT GROW STRONGER IN MARION, AS YOU REMEMBER, OR, OR WHAT WAS THE RESULTS OF THE DEATH?

Shaw: It grew stronger.

INTERVIEWER: IT DID?

Shaw: It grew stronger.

INTERVIEWER: PEOPLE WERE NOT INTIMIDATED BY THIS?

Shaw: No. No.

INTERVIEWER: GOT'CHA.

Shaw: Right.

INTERVIEWER: DID—HOW DID HIS MOTHER TAKE THIS, BY THE WAY? DID YOU KNOW HIS MOTHER?

Shaw: Yes, I knew his mother.

INTERVIEWER: WAS IT VERY HARD FOR HER? WAS THAT THE ONLY SON OR—

Shaw: I believe so.

INTERVIEWER: NICE.

Shaw: Right.

INTERVIEWER: OKIDOKE [sic]. THANKS, CHARLIE.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: CUT.

[cut]

[end of interview]

00:10:44:00

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