

Interview with **Colonel Floyd Mann**

February 18, 1986

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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*.

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[camera roll 393]

[sound roll 1342]

[slate]

INTERVIEWER: I'M JUST GOING TO ASK YOU A VERY SHORT QUESTION.

Mann: OK.

INTERVIEWER: IF IT RUNS TOO LONG WE'LL ASK YOU TO GIVE IT AWAY AND START OVER.

Mann: OK.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

Mann: [coughs]

INTERVIEWER: FIRST QUESTION. FIRST OF ALL, WHAT, WHAT WAS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY IN '60, '61, YOUR JURISDICTION? WHAT WERE YOU, WHAT WERE YOU DOING IN THE ALABAMA STATE GOVERNMENT?

Mann: In 1961, I was the director of the Alabama State Police which includes Alabama State Troopers, state investigators, two, three other divisions.

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INTERVIEWER: WHEN DID YOU FIRST HEAR ABOUT THE FREEDOM RIDERS COMING INTO ALABAMA AND WHAT WAS YOUR—WHAT WAS THE FEELING IN THE STATE? NOT AMONG OFFICIALS, BUT LOCAL PEOPLE?

Mann: Well, of course it was something new. We picked up rumors several weeks prior to them arriving in Alabama. Also it was a certain something that the state police had not been confronted with in the past. We'd had local demonstrations by local people and—but this was the first time we'd had an interstate movement on the part of people. It was testing such things as lunch counters, water fountains, restrooms, so we knew that it would be a in all probability a, a police problem.

00:01:17:00

INTERVIEWER: TELL ME A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT HOW PEOPLE IN ALABAMA FELT ABOUT THE FREEDOM RIDERS. GIVE ME AN IDEA OF WHAT THE, THE LOCAL FEELING WAS.

Mann: Well, at that point in time, what you could hear more than anything else was that this was outsiders coming into the state.

INTERVIEWER: I'M SORRY, COULD YOU MENTION THE WORD FREEDOM RIDERS SOMEWHERE IN THERE, JUST SO I GET THAT—WE KNOW WHO YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.

Mann: All right. [coughs] At this point in time, the most people in Alabama that you'd hear speaking about this, thought the Freedom Riders were a, were a group of people that—outsiders that were coming into the state that was coming to the state for—to cause problems. That's what the average person was saying around in Alabama at that time.

00:02:06:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT ABOUT THE, THE CLIMATE COMING OUT OF THE GOVERNOR'S CAMPAIGN IN 1958?

Mann: [coughs] Well, I'm sure that this also, this also had a bearing because we had had an election in 1958 whereby both Governor Wallace and John Patterson was running against each other for governor and, of course, the segregation is—issue at that time was a strong issue in the race, very strong issue, and different groups of people were supporting different candidates because of those issues.

INTERVIEWER: CAN YOU GET MORE SPECIFIC ON THAT. LIKE WHAT, WHAT SORT OF ATTITUDES WERE TAKEN BY BOTH PATTERSON AND WALLACE.

Mann: Well, [coughs] let me say this. I think both Patterson and Wallace would have both enjoyed having the support of the Ku Klux Klan [sic] if that answers your question.

INTERVIEWER: OK, LET'S CUT RIGHT THERE.

[cut]

00:03:14:00

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: AND MARK.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: MARKER.

INTERVIEWER: OK, SO I'M GONNA BACKTRACK A LITTLE BIT. JUST GIVE ME AN IDEA OF WHAT THE CHOICE WAS FOR THE PEOPLE OF ALABAMA IN THAT ELECTION, '58, '59.

Mann: Well, in the 1958 election in the Governor's race you had a—the race was being run by Governor George Wallace and John Patterson. Governor John Patterson's father had been assassinated in Phenix City, Alabama. As a result of having been elected Attorney General and he was elected on a campaign to clean up vice and corruption in Phenix City which had been in—involved with crime for many years. Before he was able to take office he was assassinated. The Democratic Party then named his son—

INTERVIEWER: LET, LET ME STOP YOU RIGHT THERE. LET'S, LET'S CUT FOR A SECOND.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: OK.

00:04:06

[cut]

[wild audio]

INTERVIEWER: —ABOUT PHENIX CITY—

Mann: OK.

INTERVIEWER: —WILL NEVER MAKE IT IN THE FILM.

00:04:08:00

[cut]

[slate]

Mann: Well, ask me the question again.

INTERVIEWER: OK. [laughs]

Mann: OK. So you don't want Phenix City in the film.

INTERVIEWER: I DON'T THINK—

Mann: OK. OK. OK.

INTERVIEWER: I DON'T THINK IT WILL MAKE IT. SO, JUST GIVE ME AN IDEA OF WHAT THE CHOICES WERE FOR THE VOTER IN '58 ELECTION IN ALABAMA.

Mann: Well, in the 1958 governor's election, the choices was Governor John Patterson or Governor George Wallace. Both, at that time, segregation in Alabama was a political issue. And, I believe, at that point in time in Alabama, to those candidates it was very important that they receive support from people who felt very strongly on this is—issue. And so you will know more of what I mean, I'm talking about groups like the Ku Klux Klan [sic], that type of people, because you have to remember, at that point in time in Alabama politics, that was before the voting act, so how other people felt at that time was not of a great concern of people running for Governor.

INTERVIEWER: OK, LET'S CUT THERE.

[cut]

00:05:17:00

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: MARKER.

INTERVIEWER: SO LET'S—JUST RIGHT WHERE YOU STARTED BEFORE IN '58 ELECTION.

Mann: Start again?

INTERVIEWER: YEAH, GO AHEAD.

Mann: Over, totally?

INTERVIEWER: YEAH. [laughs]

Mann: Well, in the governor's election in 1958, two candidates, Governor John Patterson and Governor George Wallace were the candidates. At that time in Alabama, segregation was an issue, a very burning issue apparently, and it became very competitive on the part of both Patterson and Wallace to try to get the support of people who felt very strongly about these issues because, as you are aware, black people—not many black people could vote in Alabama at that point in time. So, it's very evident to me that who won the governor's race, at that point in time, would be the people who could muster the most white support.

INTERVIEWER: OK, THAT'S GOOD. AND SO, I'M SORRY LET'S CUT. LET ME JUST TAKE A BREAK HERE.

00:06:25:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

INTERVIEWER: WHAT THE CLIMATE WAS THEN.

00:06:29:00

[cut]

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: OK. MARKER.

INTERVIEWER: OK, SO WHEN THE FREEDOM RIDERS CAME INTO THE STATE, THEY LEFT ATLANTA IN—ON MAY 14. THERE WAS AN OFFICIAL ON THE BUS. JUST EXPLAIN WHO THAT PERSON WAS AND WHY HE WAS ON THE BUS?

Mann: [coughs] Well, we knew that the bus was going to be coming into Alabama from Atlanta. We did not have any communications or any information from those people about what route they'd be taking in Alabama, so we decided that for the benefit of the state police and also try to protect this bus and the people on the bus, it would be important for us to have some type of information. So we sent one of the state investigators, a Mr. L. Cowden to Atlanta to board that bus. This, this was on Sunday, I remember, New Year's Day of 1961.

INTERVIEWER: LET'S, LET'S STOP. LISTEN, I THINK—LET'S CUT FOR A SECOND. NEW YEAR'S—

[cut]

00:07:30:00

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: MARKER.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

Mann: [coughs] We knew that it would be very important for the state police to know what route these people were going to take when they arrived in Alabama. So we thought it would be a good idea to send a state investigator to Atlanta to board this bus. [coughs] And Mother's Day 1961 was when they arrived in Alabama; Anniston, Alabama. While this bus was in Anniston the Ku Klux Klan [sic] and other members surrounded that bus and would not let the people off the bus. While it was in the bus station they also cut the tires on the bus. They knew that those tires would go down. So when the bus left Anniston toward Birmingham, the Klan followed the bus out on the highway. Excuse me a minute. I need a little drink of water.

INTERVIEWER: SURE LET'S CUT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: SURE.

[cut]

00:08:23:00

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: MARKER. OK, WE'RE SET.

INTERVIEWER: OK. LET'S SEE, WHY DON'T YOU JUST KEEP GOING RIGHT WHERE YOU LEFT OFF.

Mann: OK. Several miles out of Anniston, the tire went down on the bus. The bus stopped. The Klan had followed the bus to this point. At that point they set the bus on fire, the Klansmen did. [coughs] Those people on the bus could not get off the bus and if we had not had the state investigator on the bus, I think, everyone on the bus would have burned to death. But the investigator unlocked the door and pulled his gun and showed his badge and made the people back up and got the people off the bus. From that point they scattered around where the bus was burning and the more troopers arrived and then another bus arrived and they took that group on into Birmingham, where another outbreak occurred.

INTERVIEWER: WON'T YOU DESCRIBE THAT OUTBREAK?

Mann: [coughs] Well, I was not there, I just had reports of what had happened. Several people were beaten and some knocked unconscious.

INTERVIEWER: LET ME STOP YOU RIGHT THERE. WHY DON'T YOU BEGIN IN, IN BY SAYING—

00:09:37:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

INTERVIEWER: —WELL I DIDN'T WANT TO CUT, ACTUALLY.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: OH, I'M SORRY.

00:09:38:00

[cut]

[slate]

Mann: All right.

INTERVIEWER: YOU'RE ABOUT THE ONLY ONE TELLING THE STORY.

Mann: [coughs] OK.

INTERVIEWER: SO WE'RE IN BIRMINGHAM NOW. YOU, YOU SET?

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: YEAH.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

Mann: So that's when several other things occurred. Another riot broke out at the bus station in Birmingham. Several people, several people were beaten, some knocked unconscious, it became generally known as the Mother's Day Massacre in Alabama.

INTERVIEWER: HOW COME?

Mann: Well, because of the people that was hurt and how they were treated at the bus station.

INTERVIEWER: CAN YOU DESCRIBE LIKE WHAT HAPPENED AT BIRMINGHAM IN TERMS—

Mann: Well, at that point in time, it was just totally something new to, to law enforcement in Alabama. What was happening and why it was happening and it caught 'em, the Police Departments and the people, off guard. They had, certainly had not been trained for this type of thing, the police, deputies and what have you. So, I think the best way to tell you that the people that was handling the situation there were people that had rather that bus had never come to Alabama.

00:10:46:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT ABOUT BULL CONNORS [sic]? DIDN'T, DOESN'T HE HAVE—

Mann: He was police commissioner at that time, Police Commissioner. Bull Connor, was in charge of the Police Department in Birmingham at that time.

INTERVIEWER: BUT DIDN'T PEOPLE LATER SAY THAT HE WAS—SHOULD BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE FACT THAT THERE WERE NO POLICE THERE?

Mann: [coughs] Well, sure, people did, people did say that, of course, you have to bring—people that was in charge of a situation like that whether things are happening good or bad—

00:11:16:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Mann: —you have to hold those people accountable for it.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: OOPS, I'M SORRY.

INTERVIEWER: OK LET'S CUT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: WE JUST RUN OUT.

INTERVIEWER: THAT'S FINE.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: I THOUGHT WE WERE GOING TO MAKE IT.

00:11:19:00

[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 394]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: AND MARK.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: MARKER.

Mann: Well, to my best—

INTERVIEWER: WAIT, WAIT. JUST HOLD ON ONE SECOND. JUST GOTTA FOCUS.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: WE'RE SET.

INTERVIEWER: OK, GO AHEAD.

Mann: To my best recollection when the bus arrived in Birmingham, I was informed that there was either no policemen or too few policemen there to handle the situation. Many people were hurt, injured, some seriously, and what happened after that, at that point in time to the people on the bus, I do not know, but I think they were all at some point carried to a central location.

00:11:57:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT ABOUT BULL CONNOR'S—

Mann: He was in charge—Bull Connor was in charge of the Police Department in Birmingham at that point in time. He was police commissioner.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT WAS HIS COMMENT ON THE WHOLE THING?

Mann: Well, his comment was that it was just absolutely ridiculous for those people to be in Alabama doing what they were doing.

INTERVIEWER: OK, LET'S CUT RIGHT THERE.

[cut]

00:12:21:00

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: AND MARK.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: MARKER.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: LET ME GET SETTLED DOWN HERE. OK FOLKS, IT'S ALL YOURS.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

Mann: After what happened in Anniston, Alabama and Birmingham, as Director of Public Safety, I certainly knew that we had a tremendous problem on our hands. [coughs] So did the Governor, so did Attorney General Kennedy, apparently, because, at that point in time, he began to send people into Alabama, like Mr. John Siegenthaler, also Mr. "Whizzer" White,

who's now a member of the Supreme Court, [coughs] and others. So we began to try to develop some plan to get those people in and out of Alabama into Montgomery and on into Mississippi. So there were several meetings held, one in the Governor's office, where I—Mr. John Siegenthaler attended, where he wanted the assurance, from the Governor, that law and order would prevail in the state. [coughs] Governor Patterson had certainly been elected as a law and order candidate and I felt, at that point in time, even though the political situation was such that I understood the situation that Governor Patterson was in, politically, I also felt that Governor Patterson felt that I would make sure law and order did prevail in Alabama. So I assured Mr. Siegenthaler, at that point in time, that I felt that we could keep law and order in Alabama.

00:13:54:00

INTERVIEWER: TELL ME A LITTLE MORE ABOUT THE MEETING. WASN'T KENNEDY TRYING TO GET GOVERNOR PATTERSON ON THE PHONE DIRECTLY AND—

Mann: I'd, I had heard that several attempts had been made to contact the Governor by the Attorney General which had failed.

INTERVIEWER: FAILED WHY?

Mann: Well, Governor Patterson either did not take the call or was unable to be found. I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

Mann: [coughs]

INTERVIEWER: NOW TELL ME A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT SOME—LET'S CUT HERE, I'M SORRY.

[cut]

00:14:25:00

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: MARK.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: MARKER. OK, IT'S ALL YOURS.

INTERVIEWER: OK, GO AHEAD. JUST BEGIN TO LIL—TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT GOVERNOR PATTERSON'S POSITION.

Mann: Well, Governor Patterson, at that time was, in a, in my opinion, a terrible political

situation, because the very people who had so actively supported him, strongly and openly, were some of the people that was really very critical of these people coming into Alabama, the Freedom Riders and what have. So I felt like that in all probability Governor Patterson was in a situation whereby, that he had rather not make a commitment to the Government, in view of the situation he was in in Alabama.

00:15:19:00

INTERVIEWER: COULD YOU JUST SAY THAT AGAIN, THAT GOVERNOR PATTERSON COULDN'T MAKE A COMMITMENT TO GUARANTEE THE SAFETY OF—

Mann: Right, I don't think he wanted to make that commitment at that point in time.

INTERVIEWER: WHY DON'T YOU SAY ON CAMERA WHAT THE COMMITMENT WAS SO—CAUSE THEY WON'T—THE AUDIENCE WON'T HEAR ME SAY THIS.

Mann: Well, at that point in time, I think the Attorney General was wanting to get Governor Patterson publicly committed to guaranteeing the safety of these people throughout Alabama and, politically speaking, I felt that Governor Patterson did not want to make a public commitment.

00:15:56:00

INTERVIEWER: OK, THAT'S GOOD. WHAT DO YOU THINK THE KENNEDYS, BOTH ROBERT AND JOHN KENNEDYS [sic], SAW GOVERNOR PATTERSON'S RESPONSIBILITY AS? HOW DO YOU SEE—THINK THEY VIEWED IT?

Mann: [coughs] Well, I think they both viewed his responsibility—

INTERVIEWER: I'M SORRY, I HAVE TO CUT YOU OFF. MAKE SURE YOU MENTION THE KENNEDYS WE WERE TALKING ABOUT.

Mann: Well, I think both President Kennedy and the Attorney General Robert Kennedy felt that Governor Patterson, as Governor of Alabama, should have no hesitancy, at that time, in making that commitment, but I really don't think either one of 'em understood the position that the Governor was in in Alabama politically with his own constituency.

00:16:48:00

INTERVIEWER: TELL ME MORE ABOUT THE CONSTITUENCY. WHAT THEY WOULD HAVE DONE.

Mann: [pause] Well, at this point in time, I don't know what his constituency would have done and I don't think Governor Patterson knew at that time. Looking back on it, I don't think it would have mattered what they would have done.

INTERVIEWER: SO YOU THINK THE GOVERNOR COULD HAVE TAKEN SOME LEAD IN THIS?

Mann: Probably and he—[coughs] and in all probability he wishes today that he had.

INTERVIEWER: I'M SORRY, WHY DON'T YOU START AGAIN AND JUST EXPLAIN THAT, BECAUSE THE AUDIENCE WON'T HEAR ME.

Mann: I say, I don't know what his constituency, what that reaction would have been and I don't think the Governor knows either, at this point in time, but now in 1986, I think the Governor may have handled that totally different.

INTERVIEWER: LET'S CUT FOR A SECOND. LET ME JUST SEE WHERE WE'RE AT.

[cut]

00:17:48:00

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: MARK.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: MARKER. OK, ONE SECOND TO GET SETTLED HERE. AND I AM ALMOST SETTLED. OK, FOLKS IT'S ALL YOURS.

INTERVIEWER: OK, WHY DON'T YOU START WHERE YOU DID JUST NOW.

Mann: I think Governor Patterson felt that the Freedom Riders were being encouraged and supported by the Kennedys in this effort and I think he resented that.

INTERVIEWER: WHY?

Mann: Well, I think, he felt that they probably should have given him, as Governor, more consideration, especially since he was one of the first Governors in the South that came out openly for President Kennedy.

00:18:29:00

INTERVIEWER: BUT—OK, LET ME JUST KEEP ROLLING HERE. [pause] HOW COULD PATTERSON JUSTIFY SAYING THOUGH THAT HE COULDN'T PROTECT THESE PEOPLE?

Mann: Well, I think he was saying that more for the press.

INTERVIEWER: I'M SORRY, BE SURE YOU MENTION HIS NAME.

Mann: I think Governor Patterson was saying that more for the press that he couldn't protect 'em more than the actual protection of those people. Because as I stated a while ago, I, I believe that Governor Patterson knew that the state police was going to do their job.

INTERVIEWER: OK. LET'S CUT FOR A SECOND.

[cut]

00:19:10:00

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: AND MARKER.

INTERVIEWER: AND THIS IS A, A DIFFERENT KIND OF QUESTION, BUT SOME PEOPLE SAY THAT, MORALLY, GOVERNOR PATTERSON HAD A RESPONSIBILITY TO UPHOLD THE RIGHTS OF THE FREEDOM RIDERS TO COME THROUGH THE STATE OF ALABAMA. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE, THE MORALITY OF THIS WHOLE THING? GOVERNOR PATTERSON'S POSITION? BECAUSE THEY WERE, THEY WERE TESTING A FEDERAL LAW.

Mann: Well, I think Governor Patterson at that time disagreed with what they were doing, totally.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT WHO WAS—

Mann: I felt—

INTERVIEWER: WHY DON'T YOU START AGAIN?

Mann: I think Governor Patterson, at that time, disagreed totally with what the Freedom Riders were doing and what they were trying to prove, because I—in my own mind at that time, just remembering the transaction between he and the Government, I think, he felt that this was an effort to bring this type of publicity on the state and also to put him in a very awkward position politically.

00:20:05:00

INTERVIEWER: OK. WHAT ABOUT THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AND, AND GOVERNOR PATTERSON AS, AS THE, THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE STATE AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT—CAN YOU JUST ELABORATE ON THAT? WHAT WAS THE ISSUE REALLY HERE?

Mann: Well, I think the issue between Governor Patterson and the Attorney General was the, the issue of publicly trying to get a commitment from the Governor to protect these people

while they were in Alabama. And I don't think the Governor ever did want to get—go on record of giving a commitment to him for—about that.

00:20:45:00

INTERVIEWER: OK, WHAT WERE THE PLANS NOW TO GUARANTEE THE FREEDOM RIDERS WOULD MAKE IT FROM BIRMINGHAM TO MONTGOMERY? WHAT WAS—

Mann: Well, the state, the state police and Mr. Siegenthaler, along with other governmental officials, maybe some marshals' assistants, we determined that the best way and the safest way to get those people into Montgomery and on into Mississippi was to make certain that they were protected. So, when they left Birmingham we had sixteen highway patrol cars in front of that bus and sixteen patrol cars behind the bus with troopers. Also we had small aircraft running reconnaissance for—watching for bridges, where someone might try to sabotage that bus. [coughs] During that period of time, I received some confidential information that when they arrived at the bus station in Montgomery that the police had planned to take a holiday there'd be no one present. So we made sure that we didn't want to get in that situation so we ordered a hundred state troopers into Montgomery immediately. And we quartered those troopers at the Alabama Police Academy because we didn't want to bring them into the bus station because, at that point in time in Alabama, the state police never entered a city—

00:22:20:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Mann: —unless they were invited. Either it became obvious that law and order had totally broken down—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: WE HAVE TO CHANGE NOW.

INTERVIEWER: LET'S CUT. DID WE GET ALL THAT OR...

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: YOU—

00:22:30:00

[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 395]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: GREAT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: FOURTEEN.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: IT'S ALL YOURS, PRU.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

Mann: It was a policy of the state police in 1961 not to ever enter a city unless they were invited or either it became very apparent that law and order had broken down. So, at the time the bus arrived at the Montgomery bus station, only the Assistant Director Mr. W.R. Jones and myself was there when the bus arrived. As soon as the people began to get off the bus I noticed these strange people all around the bus which I knew immediately they were Klansmen. No sooner than they had gotten off the bus a riot evolved. At that point in time, it certainly became obvious to me that law and order had broken down and there's no police around the bus station. So we immediately sent for those hundred state—

00:23:30:00

[cut]

00:23:32:00

Mann: —troopers that we had quartered at the police academy. And prior to them arriving there, several people were hurt and we had to command cars to take some to the hospital.

00:23:42:00

INTERVIEWER: DESCRIBE THE SCENE A LITTLE BIT WHEN YOU, YOU APPARENTLY HAD TO FIRE YOUR GUN. DESCRIBE EXACTLY WHAT YOU DID ON THE SCENE—

Mann: Well there was people being beat with baseball bats—

INTERVIEWER: SORRY, START AGAIN.

Mann: OK.

INTERVIEWER: GO AHEAD.

Mann: [coughs] Those Freedom Riders, some of them were being beaten with baseball bats, some of the newspeoples' cameras were being crushed. Therefore, we did have to resort to pulling our weapons to stop that and also to get some of those people to the hospital.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT DID YOU DO?

Mann: Well, we had to threaten to take some lives of ourselves unless that violence stopped immediately.

INTERVIEWER: DID YOU PULL A GUN OUT YOURSELF?

Mann: I did.

INTERVIEWER: WHY DON'T YOU DESCRIBE THAT JUST NOW?

Mann: Well, there's nothing really to describe except I just put my pistol to the head of one or two of those folks who was using baseball bats and told them unless they stopped immediately they was going be hurt. And it did stop immediately.

00:24:35:00

INTERVIEWER: TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE SC—[laughs] THE—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: IT'S GREAT.

INTERVIEWER: —THE, THE SCENE AT THE BUS STATION? CAN YOU JUST DESCRIBE—

Mann: Well—

INTERVIEWER: —AS THE FREEDOM RIDERS ARE COMING OUT THEY'RE, THEY'RE BLACK AND WHITE, MEN AND WOMEN AT THIS POINT, RIGHT?

Mann: That's right and newspaper people and just mobs of people begin to appear. Just—

INTERVIEWER: I'M SORRY. THEN BACK UP AND RESTART AGAIN. I DON'T WANT YOU TO—

Mann: [coughs] Well, when they began to get off the bus, people began to attack 'em and looked like it just coming out of all—everywhere. Just mobs of people began to appear at the bus station. That's when we immediately sent for the an hundred state troopers, but before they could arrive cars were set on fire, people were attacked. Newspaper people were beaten, their cameras bursted. But after the troopers arrived law and order was restored and we marched those people to a church. At this point in time, [coughs] Governor Patterson decided that we needed to call—we needed to have martial law in Montgomery, Alabama.

INTERVIEWER: BACK, BACK—

[cut]

00:25:40:00

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: SPEED. MARKER.

INTERVIEWER: JUST A FEW SENTENCES, OK. I'LL TELL—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: FIFTEEN.

INTERVIEWER: YOU WHEN TO START, RIGHT?

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: ONE SECOND. LET ME GET SETTLED DOWN HERE.
AND I AM SETTLED.

INTERVIEWER: OK, SO IT WAS—

Mann: [coughs] After one of the Freedom Riders were knocked unconscious we got him to a car, sent him to the hospital. [coughs] Then it was called to my attention, attention that another person had been knocked unconscious and had been taken to the hospital and I retrieved his credentials and they, I think, they had fallen out of his pocket in front of the bus station, and looking at those credentials I saw it was Mr. John Siegenthaler. After the troopers got things totally under control at the bus station, I then went to the hospital to verify if it was Mr. Siegenthaler and it was Mr. Siegenthaler and he'd been knocked unconscious.

00:26:33:00

INTERVIEWER: OK, ONE QUICK QUESTION NOW, ABOUT—AT THE MEETINGS PRIOR TO MONTGOMERY, THE WHOLE—YOUR FEELINGS ON THIS WHOLE QUESTION OF STATE VERSUS FEDERAL RESPONSIBILITY AND WHAT THE REAL ISSUES WERE HERE.

Mann: [coughs] Well, I certainly knew, as Director of Public Safety, my responsibility was law and order and to protect those people. I certainly, in those meetings that I attended with the Governor and also representatives from the Attorney General's office in Washington, that I also got the impression that certainly a, a lot of their concerns were political. Both state and national. So therefore I certainly decided that my best course was to follow my responsibility and to try to keep law and order in Alabama which I certainly did try.

00:27:27:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT ABOUT GOVERNOR PATTERSON THOUGH, HE SAID HE FELT THE FEDERALS—PEOPLE WERE HONING IN ON HIS TURF.

Mann: [coughs]

INTERVIEWER: IS THAT A REAL ISSUE OR NOT?

Mann: Well, he certainly made that statement—

INTERVIEWER: START—

Mann: —both privately—the Governor Patterson certainly made the statement both privately and publicly that he felt that the Government was intruding in Alabama. And, of course, the Attorney General and others from the Attorney General's office also was saying that their only concern was to get these people in and out of Alabama and seeing that their rights were not violated.

INTERVIEWER: DO YOU THINK GOVERNOR PATTERSON WAS PLAYING A POLITICAL GAME OF HIS OWN?

Mann: I would not.

INTERVIEWER: OK, LET'S CUT.

[cut]

00:28:13:00

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: MARKER.

INTERVIEWER: OK, JUST GIVE ME IN A FEW SENTENCES, A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SIEGENTHALER IN THAT MEETING IF YOU REMEMBER HIM, THAT MEETING IN MONTGOMERY. JUST A COUPLE OF SENTENCES. REMEMBER?

Mann: Well, Mr. Siegenthaler was kind of like myself, I think, he was there to totally represent the feelings of the attorney general and the government and *I was really impressed with Mr. Siegenthaler's seemingly sincere efforts to resolve this matter. And he pushed real hard to get an answer about, could he guarantee this, could the governor guarantee the safety of these people. The governor was just as adamant not to give that commitment. So, at that point in time, I certainly felt that by having been appointed by the governor that I certainly should assure them, at that time, that I felt that law and order could prevail in Alabama.*

00:29:15:00

INTERVIEWER: GREAT. OK, AGAIN JUST A FEW, FEW QUESTIONS, I MEAN, IN A FEW SENTENCES. DURING THE NIGHT OF MAY 21ST, WHEN THE MOB SURROUNDED THE CHURCH, THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH HERE AND MARSHALS, U.S. MARSHALS, ARE TRYING TO HOLD BACK THE CROWD, AT THAT POINT, WHY DID GOVERNOR PATTERSON DECLARE MARTIAL LAW AND

BRING IN THE NATIONAL GUARD?

Mann: [coughs] Well, I felt like the Governor Patterson declared martial law for two reasons. One was to make certain that those people were not harmed and another was to regain control of the situation because it—the U.S. Marshals had been ordered into Alabama. And I certainly felt, at that point in time, that the Governor, by ordering martial law, that he would regain control of the situation so far as being in control of what happened in Montgomery, Alabama.

00:30:20:00

INTERVIEWER: DESCRIBE THE SCENE, VERY BRIEFLY, OUTSIDE THE CHURCH.

Mann: Well, [coughs] the, the—outside the church, the crowd just continued to build and at one time there was just thousands of people were there and, I think, those marshals, some of them were just about as inexperienced at handling a crowd like that as some of the police were in Alabama, and they began to throw teargas and they threw it against the wind. And the gas began to affect the marshals more than it was the people that they were trying to control. So we just had an awful situation there for a while.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT WAS HAPPENING INSIDE THE CHURCH AS FAR AS YOU KNEW?

Mann: Inside the church was just singing and just trying to enjoy themselves. Singing with them because I went in with General Graham, at the time, we read the decree for martial law and it was totally orderly and seemed like they were just enjoying being together.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT WAS THE FEELING YOU GOT ABOUT—WAS THERE A FEELING OF VICTORY IN THE CHURCH OR SOMETHING HAD BEEN—

Mann: Well, I felt that they certainly felt that they had got the attention that, not only they wanted, but needed at that time.

INTERVIEWER: WHY DON'T YOU SAY THAT AGAIN SAY—AND, AND SAY WHO WE'RE TALKING ABOUT, THAT THE PEOPLE INSIDE THE CHURCH ARE—CAN YOU JUST SAY IT AGAIN?

Mann: The Freedom Riders with their supporters inside the church.

INTERVIEWER: AND WHAT—I'M SORRY START AGAIN. WHAT WAS THE WHOLE—THIS—

Mann: Well, [coughs] at the time, that General Mar—General Graham and myself went in to declare martial law, on the part of the Governor. The church was absolutely packed with people. And there was nothing panicky about the crowd. They seemed to be enjoying themselves. We had ordered the National Guard to make coffee and bring doughnuts for the

people inside the church and they were serving those doughnuts and coffee at the time we were reading the decree. So I felt that there was certainly no uneasiness, at that point in time, by the group because they knew the National Guard was there and the marshals and state police and city police.

00:32:36:00

INTERVIEWER: HOW DID YOU GET THEM OUT OF THE CHURCH, THEN, IN THE MORNING?

Mann: [coughs] In the morning to get those—to get ‘em out of the church into the homes they were staying in, instead of taking them as a, as a group, one group we let them go in small numbers protected by guardsmens [sic] and police. So it was not at any time get a huge crowd at one time. So we just let them go to their homes in small groups.

INTERVIEWER: OK, LET’S CUT THERE. OK.

[cut]

00:33:09:00

[slate]

[change to camera roll 396]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: AND MARK.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: MARKER.

INTERVIEWER: OK SO—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: CUE IN.

INTERVIEWER: —MY NEXT QUESTION IS JUST A LITTLE MORE GENERAL. WHAT DO YOU, WHAT DO YOU THINK WERE SOME OF THE IMMEDIATE RESULTS OF THE FREEDOM RIDES AS THEY CONTINUED THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER? PLEASE SUMMARIZE.

Mann: [coughs] Well, thanks to a great friend of mine and a great man, Judge Frank Johnson, he issued orders and put the police departments under restraining orders and what have you where it became the, the, the enforcement problem almost disappeared after he threatened to put some police officials in jail. If any interference with interstate travel was bothered again.

00:33:54:00

INTERVIEWER: AND WHAT HAPPENED AS A RESULT OF THE FREEDOM RIDES

IN TERMS OF PUBLIC ACCOMODATIONS? WHAT WERE THE—

Mann: Well, as a result, now, those things that they were testing, at that time, like drinking fountains, rest rooms, lunch counters, restaurants, they can go anywhere they want to in Alabama.

INTERVIEWER: DID THAT—DID YOU SEE THAT CHANGING THAT SUMMER OR, I MEAN, CAN YOU TELL ME A LITTLE BIT WHAT HAPPENED JUNE, JULY OR AUGUST AS THE FREEDOM RIDERS KEPT COMING THROUGH AND THESE CASES STARTED BUILDING UP?

Mann: Well, that was—there's a many, many things was a spin off from those Freedom Riders, that's why I think probably that was the most, probably significant event that's, other than the, the boycott in the civil rights movement, because the spin-off from that was a result of lunch counters, restrooms all being integrated. Universities being integrated. All those things were a—seemed like kind of a spin-off from that Freedom Rider movement.

00:34:53:00

INTERVIEWER: GREAT. OK, AND WHAT ABOUT THE—DID YOU HEAR ANYTHING ABOUT THE SPECIFIC ICC RULINGS THAT CAME OUT? THOSE LAWS THAT CAME OUT THAT GUARANTEED THAT PUBLIC ACCOMODATIONS—

Mann: Oh, yes, I've heard much about it that's why I mentioned Judge Frank Johnson, because Judge Frank Johnson made certain those laws were enforced and people that was charged with the responsibility of enforcing those laws, knew that Judge Johnson meant that.

INTERVIEWER: WHICH LAWS? I'M SORRY CAN YOU JUST?

Mann: The, the, the enforcement of the, of the laws which broke down the segregation barriers like lunch counters, restrooms, water fountains, going to school, that type thing.

INTERVIEWER: OK, LET'S CUT RIGHT THERE.

[cut]

00:35:43:00

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: AND MARKER.

INTERVIEWER: THESE ARE TWO QUESTIONS. ONE IS AT THAT MEETING IN MONTGOMERY, AT THE GOVERNOR'S MANSION, WHAT, WHAT WAS IT THAT, YOU KNOW, THE MEETING WAS SORT OF AT AN IMPASSE, THE WAY

SIEGENTHALER DESCRIBES IT, UNTIL YOU SPOKE UP. WHAT MADE YOU SPEAK UP AT THAT MEETING AND SAY THAT YOU COULD DEFEND THESE PEOPLE?

Mann: Well, because I felt like that the Attorney General expected me to do that, because I'd had several discussions with him and I also knew that the Governor expected me to do that.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: I THINK YOU'D BETTER HAVE HIM RESTATE THAT AND INSTEAD OF SAYING "IT," SAY THE GOVERNOR EXPECTED ME TO—

INTERVIEWER: OK. TO, TO—OK. TO SPELL—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: TO ENSURE WE COULD PROTECT PEOPLE.

INTERVIEWER: —IT OUT A LITTLE BIT MORE.

Mann: What? What do you—

INTERVIEWER: OK, LET'S CUT JUST FOR A SECOND. WHAT—

[cut]

00:36:41:00

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: AND MARKER.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: OK, I'M READY.

INTERVIEWER: JUST REAL SPECIFICS, OK.

Mann: Well, in the meeting with Mr. John Siegenthaler and Governor Patterson, when things seemed to get to an impasse, I knew from my conversations with the Attorney General Kennedy and also Mr. Siegenthaler, what they wanted. I also had known Governor Patterson much longer than either one of those people had known him and I felt that I knew also that he wanted me to enforce the law. So that's why I spoke up.

00:37:04:00

INTERVIEWER: OK THAT'S GREAT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: EX—EXCELLENT.

INTERVIEWER: OK. NOW WHAT ABOUT GOVERNOR PATTERSON'S SEGREGATIONIST POSITION IN THIS CAMPAIGN AS GOVERNOR? HE WAS VERY RACIALLY MOTIVATED IN, IN THE WAY HE CONDUCTED THAT CAMPAIGN. DID YOU THINK THAT HE COULD HAVE GIVEN MORE OF A LEAD IN THE SITUATION HAD HE BEEN WILLING TO RISK POLITICALLY? MAYBE HIS POLITICAL CAREER OR DO YOU THINK—WHAT, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT WHOLE GOVERNORS [sic] PATTERSON'S POSITION?

Mann: [coughs] Well, of course, I don't, I don't think anyone could speak for what his position was, at that time, because after all he was the Governor and he knew the commitments he'd made and also in his own mind he probably felt he had a better feel politically about what the people who had elected him, how they felt, than anyone else. So far as what he could have done, what position he could have taken, I don't think I should second guess him at this point.

INTERVIEWER: OK. LET'S CUT THERE. I THINK WE'VE GOT EVERYTHING ELSE, DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING?

[cut]

00:38:21:00

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: AND MARK.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: MARKER.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: GIVE ME ONE SECOND TO SETTLE DOWN HERE. OK.

INTERVIEWER: OK, IT'S YOURS.

Mann: Well, you know, it's hard to answer what those people in the mob felt they had to fear from the Freedom Riders. But first, I think, what upset—why they was acting the way they were acting is because in their own minds there'd been a lot of press and a lot of publicity about these people coming to Alabama. They'd also been a lot made of them not being Alabamians and being outsiders and been a lot said about them being agitators and the things that they were testing, you have to remember this was 1961, and never had any of those things happened in Alabama, like sharing the same restrooms in public places or sharing the same restaurant. To, to those people this was something totally new, socially, and I'm sure that they were fearful of change and something new that they didn't understand. And some of them did not understand.

00:39:30:00

INTERVIEWER: DO YOU THINK THAT THE—THEY COULD HAVE GIVEN—THE, THE LEADERSHIP IN THE STATE COULD HAVE GIVEN THEM A BETTER LEAD ON HELPING THEM THROUGH THAT TRANSITION?

Mann: Well, now we—you know, that I believe that leadership, at that point in time, if they had just conducted themselves the way they would conduct themselves in 1986 it'd have been a totally different thing.

INTERVIEWER: BUT BACK, BUT BACK THEN, I MEAN, STAYING IN 1961, DO YOU THINK THAT, DO YOU THINK THAT THINGS COULD HAVE—WOULD HAVE TURNED OUT DIFFERENTLY HAD THE LEADERSHIP IN, IN ALABAMA GIVEN—SHOWN PEOPLE THAT IT WASN'T GOING TO BE SUCH A TERRIBLE, TERRIBLE THING?

Mann: Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER: CAN YOU JUST EXPLAIN THAT YOURSELF?

Mann: Yeah, I think it certainly, if, if leaders in Alabama and all places of leadership had a give [sic] the kind of leadership that rightfully should have been given, there's no question in my mind that turmoil would not have been as great and the problems would have been solved much sooner.

INTERVIEWER: OK LET'S CUT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: THAT'S A ROLL OUT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: GOOD.

INTERVIEWER: THAT'S FINE.

[cut]

[end of interview]

00:40:42:00

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