



Interview with **Arthur Eve**

Date: November 11, 1988

Interviewers: Sam Pollard and Judy Richardson

Camera Rolls: 2070-2073

Sound Rolls: 232-233

Team: B and C

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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 II*.

[camera roll #2070]

[sound roll #232]

00:00:13:00

Camera crew member #1:

Mark it.

Camera crew member #2:

Sound three, two—two, three two.

[slate]

00:00:21:00

Interviewer #1:

OK, then. I just want you to go back to 1971, and my first question is, just sorta give me an idea. What, what was Attica like? How were the conditions there at Attica?

00:00:31:00

Arthur Eve:

Well, Attica had a reputation for being very inhuman and insensitive in its treatment of inmates. We'd been there on several occasions, and it was just a, sort of a hellhole to live in. Many of the inmates were brutalized in various forms in the way they were treated. Now, I had the experience once of going there, and four guards are blocking my passage in the hallway. And I said, That's why we're having problems as these prisons, is because of this attitude. And they waited their own time to then step aside, so I could continue walking down the, you know, hallway. Again, that's the kind of attitude that was there at Attica. If they would do that to me as an African American state representative, what do you think they were doing to the inmates?

00:01:25:00

Interviewer #1:

Let's cut.

Camera crew member #1:

Cut? OK.

Interviewer #1:

Cut.

[cut]

00:01:30:00

Camera crew member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

Camera crew member #1:

OK.

00:01:33:00

Interviewer #1:

OK, speaker, tell me about the first time you went to Attica, that grandmother.

00:01:37:00

Arthur Eve:

Yeah. The first time I went to Attica was to take a grandmother out to see her grandson. She didn't have any transportation to go there. And I was just sort of taken back and shocked at the massiveness of the institution, the large walls, all of the security, and it was just sorta frightening, and very, very intimidating when you first went into the institution, and that, that was my first visit, and that was in the late '60s, and, and as time went on, I got more and more involved in the prison issues and what was happening to the inmates, because the vast majority of them were African Americans.

00:02:13:00

Interviewer #1:

Good. Yeah, let's, let's keep going.

Camera crew member #1:

OK. [inaudible] question.

00:02:17:00

Interviewer #1:

Yeah. How, how did you hear about the takeover at Attica?

Arthur Eve:

I was in my car, and I heard it on one of the African American radios.

Interviewer #1:

Start again, and just say, I heard about the, the Attica takeover—

Arthur Eve:

OK.

Interviewer #1:

—Attica, Attica inmate [unintelligible].

00:02:31:00

Arthur Eve:

Yeah, right. I heard about the Attica inmate rebellion in my car, from one of the local stations. I drove out to the radio station, and they gave me the tape of the report that had come off the wire services. I went by my office and told my staff that I was going out to Attica. Not until I got there did I find out, after meeting with the commissioner, that the inmates had sent for me. We were, I think, one of five or six people that they had asked the state to reach out to, and once I got there, then I, you know, insisted that I be allowed to go in, and after some exchange, and I imagine checking with Albany, they finally consented to let me go into the yard.

00:03:19:00

Interviewer #1:

Let's cut. That's good. Very good.

[cut]

00:03:24:00

[slate]

00:03:27:00

Interviewer #1:

OK, speaker. If you could, tell me about after you, when you went into the yard, what did you see?

00:03:32:00

Arthur Eve:

Yeah. There was a, an attorney named Herman Schwartz, who had handled a number of appeals applications for the inmates, who went in with me. And the two of us went in, and it was a, something that was just awesome, literally, a large number of inmates, we were told there were 43 hostages in there, and they were all out in the yard, the D yard, and that was my first approach, you know, going in there and seeing all of this. And it was somewhat concerning to see this massiveness, and not knowing what was going to take place, what would be the reaction. People have asked me, Were you afraid in going in, and I said Yes, I was concerned. But I said, and I prayed, and that whatever happened, let it be God's will. And if you put your faith in God, then whatever happens to you, you know, accept his will. And so, my faith in God really helped me tremendously to, you know, go in there.

00:04:34:00

Interviewer #1:

OK, I'm gonna ask you what, what was the atmosphere like among the inmates, when you in there at first, that Thursday?

00:04:38:00

Arthur Eve:

Well, when I went in there, interesting enough, one of the main issues that came up was that Herman Schwartz, the attorney who had been handling some of their appeals, some of the inmates were very upset, that they felt that the appeal process was not moving fast enough, and he was not doing all that he could've been doing. And so, I ended up having to defend [laughs] Herman Schwartz, and say that he's a good guy. He's trying. You know, you have to understand that the process is somewhat, very, difficult. And so we spent a little time on that, because it was critical that, that they have the confidence of the people who came in, and so without that level of confidence, it would've been, I think, almost impossible for dialogue to begin. And so the first thing we did was really try to deal with their questions about Herman Schwartz.

00:05:27:00

Interviewer #1:

Right. What was sort of the attitude of brothers in there? I mean, after they had just initially taken over this yard?

00:05:33:00

Arthur Eve:

Well, I, you know, when, when you look at the 28 demands, they were really saying, We want to be helped while we're here. We don't wanna be brutalized. We don't wanna be dehumanized, so that when we go out of here, we then victimize our own people. I think one of them made that presentation. It was absolutely fantastic. Said, We wanna be helped. We wanna help the guards who are watching over us, to understand that we are human beings. And when you look at the demands, it was all about improving on the quality of life, so they could be helped. Education, there was schooling, there was sensitivity training they wanted for the, for the guards, so they would understand this new population they were dealing with. And so it was a lot of very positive things, and they knew they had to serve their time. It wasn't a matter of them, you know, diminishing time to, to, to serve, and I just saw people crying out for help. That wanted help, needed help, and as a, one brother said, If you dehumanize us in here, and we don't value our lives, and then we're let out of here, then we will go out and victimize our people more, because ninety-five percent of all crimes committed by African Americans are against African Americans. So, they saw themselves being used as a process of genocide, and they wanted to get away, and be helped, so they can be constructive.

00:06:58:00

Interviewer #1:

Let's cut. That's very good.

Arthur Eve:

Good.

[cut]

00:07:00:00

Camera crew member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

Camera crew member #1:

OK. OK, Sam.

00:07:04:00

Interviewer #1:

So, so if you could describe for me what the, the atmosphere among the inmates was like when you went into the yard that first day?

00:07:12:00

Arthur Eve:

One of the first of the questions that may have come up, they—I had a sense that they, for the first time, felt that they were in a position to make something happen, and there was a sense that some positive things will ultimately come out of this. And, there was a sense of hope. There was a sense of hope. No one knew where this thing would end up, subsequently, but this was the first time that they had to get their concerns properly addressed, and they had tried to convey to the state prior to that their concerns and got absolutely no response. And in many cases, they were further brutalized, or harassed, or whatever the case might be. *So, there was a sense of hope that, for the first time, there were some outsiders, people would now begin to listen, and hopefully some changes could be made.*

00:08:06:00

Interviewer #1:

K, let's cut. That was very good.

[cut]

00:08:08:00

Camera crew member #2:

Speed.

Camera crew member #1:

Marker.

[slate]

Camera crew member #1:

[inaudible] OK, yes.

00:08:12:00

Interviewer #1:

OK. So, if you give us a visual picture of what happened when you walked into the yard.

Arthur Eve:

There were, yeah, it, it seemed like hundreds or maybe thousands of people.

Interviewer #1:

Excuse me, say, When we walked into D yard.

00:08:24:00

Arthur Eve:

Yeah. When we walked into D yard, it seemed like literally hundreds and thousands of people were in there, and certainly they were pleased to see some outsiders. There were some people who recognized who I was, and also Herman Schwartz, and many would then converge, and the word would pass, and, you know, they would all come around us. The

inmates had set up a fairly elaborate speaking system. So that, when they spoke to you, it could be heard in the whole yard, so that everyone knew what was being said. And so, it was all of them around you, and listening for what you had to say, and to a kind of message that you would bring to them. And, as, as I stated, Herman Schwartz issue was a major concern. When they began, a few of them, to recognize that he was the guy who was handling their appeal, and so there was then a big question. You know, whether or not I, to a degree, to a great degree, our credibility sorta rested on the questions raised about Herman Schwartz. And that's why I tried to deal with that first, and get that behind us, but they were very pleased that we were there, and that someone was listening from the outside. And that, I think, was very important. I don't know how many hours that, that they had taken over that facility, and not have had anyone to come in and to talk to them, I think, was just creating a lot of frustrations, and so there was literally joy when we walked in.

00:09:51:00

Interviewer #1:

Great.

Camera crew member #2:

Stop down?

Camera crew member #1:

Yes.

[cut]

00:09:54:00

Camera crew member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

Interviewer #1:

OK.

Camera crew member #1:

Just a second. OK, Sam.

00:09:59:00

Interviewer #1:

OK. Deputy speaker, if you could sorta describe how it, how it was organized in the yard.

00:10:05:00

Arthur Eve:

Yeah, it was very interesting. They had set up a very elaborate, there in D yard, they, they had set up a somewhat elaborate system of a communication system. They had certain people who were in charge of security, they had people who were in charge of dealing with the body waste, and human waste, and garbage, and some who were involved with, with food, and, and other kinds of things, and any of the inmates who were ill or sick, you know, how to deal with them. They had some of the inmates who served as, you know, medical staff. ***It was almost a community within a community, and it was somewhat, very, very impressive that they'd said, This is our home, and we're now gonna make it as livable as possible. And there was a tremendous amount of discipline there within the yard.***

00:10:52:00

Interviewer #1:

Cut.

[cut]

[wild sound]

Camera crew member #1:

[inaudible]

Arthur Eve:

You know, and they had these experts on, you know, and [laughs] it was mind blowing.

[cut]

[camera roll #2071]

00:10:59:00

Camera crew member #2:

OK, camera roll, twenty, seventy-one. Time code two, oh, seven, two.

Camera crew member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

Arthur Eve:

And now, you can transfer money out of your accounts. You know?

00:11:11:00

Interviewer #1:

This next question has to do with the issue of amnesty, which is one of the major things—

Arthur Eve:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer #1:

—stumbling point between the inmates and the state. Why was amnesty important for all the inmates, as far as you were concerned?

Arthur Eve:

Well, I, there were certain ones that wanted this—

Interviewer #1:

[unintelligible] include the issue—

00:11:28:00

Arthur Eve:

Yeah, the, the question of amnesty that was raised was very important to a segment of the inmate population. They had literally given up on this country. They'd given up on this country being fair and, and mainly to minorities, African Americans and Latinos. And they generally wanted to leave the country. They generally wanted to go somewhere else. But after a period of time, it became very clear that, that was not something the state was willing to do, and the inmates were told this, you know, on Saturday I believe, that amnesty was out. The—of the 28 demands, there were about twenty-four that the state was willing to consider,

and had literally agreed on some of them. So, amnesty was not something that everybody wanted. It was a segment of the population that wanted amnesty.

00:12:21:00

Interviewer #1:

I mean, what was your reaction to this whole issue, the issue of amnesty, as far as you were concerned?

00:12:27:00

Arthur Eve:

Well, it, it was something that many of us felt that, say it's certainly, this is a demand, this is a request, but we assumed that it would be very, very difficult for amnesty to be given. It was just something that had not, to my knowledge, ever been done, that you would then provide transportation. Oh, that's right. Shh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I'm talking about going to another country.

Interviewer #1:

[inaudible]

Arthur Eve:

Yeah. Right, right, right. Right, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry, yeah.

00:12:59:00

Camera crew member #1:

[inaudible]

Arthur Eve:

Let's just redo, do that again, yeah.

Interviewer #1:

All right, OK.

Camera crew member #1:

Continue, right?

Arthur Eve:

Yeah. Yeah.

Camera crew member #2:

Still rolling?

Interviewer #1:

Yeah.

Arthur Eve:

Oh.

00:13:06:00

Interviewer #1:

The issue [unintelligible]—

Arthur Eve:

Yeah, yeah. No. Amnesty was something that everybody wanted. Certainly they were concerned about reprisals based on the experience that happened at the Tombs and at Albany State Prison, where I went when a number of the men were locked up. They didn't want this added on to their time and so forth, and so amnesty was a major, major, major consideration. And in the course of negotiations, the state did not agree to give amnesty. I think we were—they were in the, in the process of trying to say, We'll take each case at, at, at, you know, as it went. But, I think that, though, that if we could've resolved it in a peaceful manner, that there would've been a serious consideration given on not charging anyone with a crime, and maybe narrowing it down to very, very few as, as the case ended up being. Go ahead.

00:14:06:00

Interviewer #1:

OK. Let's cut [unintelligible].

Arthur Eve:

Yeah.

[cut]

00:14:08:00

Camera crew member #2:

Speeding.

Camera crew member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

Interviewer #1:

Let's go a little closer.

Camera crew member #1:

Little closer. OK.

Arthur Eve:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer #1:

OK, deputy speaker. We ready now?

Camera crew member #1:

Yes.

00:14:16:00

Interviewer #1:

The issue of amnesty.

00:14:20:00

Arthur Eve:

Amnesty was very important to the inmates, because it, to a great degree would determine what happened to them after the state took over, or whether or not there was going to be a peaceful kind of takeover, and subsequently how they would be treated. So, their lives were on the line on the question of, of amnesty. That would begin to ease some of the pressure and

hopefully the hostility that they felt they would be experiencing once they gave up. So, amnesty was absolutely very critical to them.

00:14:51:00

Interviewer #1:

All right, let's cut.

[cut]

00:14:55:00

Camera crew member #2:

And speed.

[slate]

00:15:00:00

Interviewer #1:

So, if you could tell us about that day in the diner, that Sunday.

00:15:03:00

Arthur Eve:

On Sunday, we went into the diner to have breakfast there in the Attica community. And that was the, the day after Officer Cunningham—

00:15:14:00

Interviewer #1:

Let's, let's cut a second.

[cut]

00:15:17:00

Camera crew member #2:

And speed.

Arthur Eve:

[inaudible]—yeah. Right.

Camera crew member #1:

OK, mark it.

[slate]

Camera crew member #2:

[inaudible] the closest part Sam or—

Arthur Eve:

I'm—

Camera crew member #2:

OK.

Arthur Eve:

Yeah.

00:15:26:00

Interviewer #1:

Well, this is, you know, if you can take me back—

Arthur Eve:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—to the time you were in the diner, that Sunday.

00:15:31:00

Arthur Eve:

On, on the Sunday before the takeover, we were in a diner in the Attica community. Several of us, Tom Wicker and a few others, having breakfast, or at least ordering breakfast at the

time. And it was after Officer Quinn had, had died, and so there was a lot of, of tension. And we were told by the waitress that she hoped they would kill all of us, you know? And it was a, a level of racism that, you know, that just sort of hit you very stark and very clear. And, she represented, obviously, that community, and, and the guards in there, and so it had made us aware that we had to prevent as much as we could, you know, the state from going in, and seeing how we could resolve this thing peacefully, because she expressed, I guess, it's—to many of us, the hatred, and allowing that hatred to go into that prison yard would be absolutely devastating.

00:16:27:00

Interviewer #1:

How did you react to it? I mean, when, when you heard this woman?

00:16:30:00

Arthur Eve:

Well, it was sorta shocking, but having been raised in the South, and having had a lot of derogatory things said to you, and then having experienced things in the state legislature, and traveling, it was shocking, but it was something that, knowing the Attica com-community, and having worked with Black guards who had previously worked there, and who had to quit, because they could not take the pressure of working in that institution. And one of them who actually tried to live in the Attica community, and had to move his family, so the area, who had a reputation of being hostile to African American people.

00:17:10:00

Interviewer #1:

Let's cut.

Arthur Eve:

Yeah.

[cut]

00:17:13:00

Camera crew member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

Camera crew member #1:

Second focal length?

Interviewer #1:

Second.

Camera crew member #1:

Yeah, it's fine.

00:17:21:00

Interviewer #1:

So, just give me a picture, if you can, and visualize the last, the last time you went into that yard. This is right after you had the confrontation with Oswald, telling him you had put your life on the line.

00:17:32:00

Arthur Eve:

Right. For the first time, I was really very frightened and very concerned, the last time we went in that yard. Oswald and those had given the inmates a letter saying that, we, we had agreed to certain conditions, and that they should now then give, give up, and, and let the hostages go, and turn the facility back over to the state. That was not so. I mean, the inmates said, You cannot make any decisions for us. All you can do is take in in-information, back and forth. And so, having known that they had set us up for the inmates to be negative towards us, our lives were in danger. In fact I, before I went into the yard, I broke down, and I said, You know, you've set them up for them to kill us. And if not, if we don't go back in there, they will harbor the idea that we double-crossed them, and maybe when some of them come out, that our families could even be endangered, because I had an experience once where some folks wanted to off me by throwing a fire bomb in my house, and then cross-firing, and hopefully to kill me, and so I said, you know, You've not only jeopardized our lives, you've jeopardized our families. And so, going back in there the last time, that, that Sunday, was very difficult. And I sought to get others to go in with me, and I, I wanted to, to get some volunteers, and the, the main volunteers, was Kunstler, and Bill Geder [sic], Franklin, and myself. And I then asked for some of the more credible quote Whites to come back, so they can report it. When we went back in that yard, and that's when John Wicker, when I asked John, Tom, Tom Wicker, I'm sorry. I asked Tom Wicker, Would, would you go back? And he said, Let me think about it a while. And then he said, Yes, he would go. And when we went back in there, the inmates had greeted us, greeted us with tears in their eyes, that we had betrayed them. We had lied to them. They had given, you know, their confidence

of their lives to us to properly represent them, and when we took information out, and it was a very tense moment. Thank God for a former inmate in Attica named GI that we called who spoke up and said, Listen. They are trying to set these brothers up. He said, I've been with Brother Eve everywhere he's been. When he went in to talk to this one or that one, and they wanted to speak to him, I was present at all times. If you hurt him or any of these observers, they're watching. It will give them justification to come in, and not only kill you, but kill everybody. And he said, Don't fall into that trap. You know? The brothers did not betray your confidence, OK? And so, that was the really, what, [laughs] to me, one of the most tense moments that I had in that whole experience.

00:20:32:00

Interviewer #1:

Let's cut. That was—

[cut]

[camera roll #2072]

00:20:34:00

Camera crew member #2:

—oh, two, oh, oh. Camera roll twenty, seventy-two. I know it says one there.

Camera crew member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

00:20:42:00

Interviewer #1:

I want you to sort of, again, paint a picture for me about the last time you went to the yard and the confrontation with Oswald.

00:20:47:00

Arthur Eve:

OK. The last, that Sunday, and the last day that we went in, prior to going in, Oswald had shared with us a letter that they had given to the inmates, which literally had said that we, the observers, had agreed that they should accept the points, and should give up, and, and the

letter misrepresented the observers group, and as Chair of it, we had literally been set up, that if we went back in there, many of us felt we may be attacked by the inmates, and we shared that with Oswald, that he had betrayed us and really jeopardized our lives. And so, when the five of us who agreed to go back, because at that particular point, a number of the observers did not want to go back in, and five of us agreed to go back in, because we felt it was important that they know we did not lie to them, and that we did not betray their trust. When we went back into that yard, they had tears in their eyes. And they told us that they had trusted me, and, and, and they trusted us collectively, and that we had betrayed them, you know, and the, and the anger and the frustration was very clear. And thank God to a former Puerto Rican inmate who, who said to them that, Listen, everywhere Brother Eve has gone, I have been with him. He has not had any conversation with anybody without my being present, and what you're doing is falling into a trap. That if you hurt him, or any of these observers, they will come in, and use that as a justification for killing all of us, and he said, Don't do it. You know, he said the brothers have been true, you know, and he really played a major, I mean, a significant role in really calming down the tensions and the animosity, and obviously maybe even hatred that had been developed by the inmates in the yard for us. So, that was to me the most difficult visit and the most frightening and concerning period that I had in the whole experience.

00:22:49:00

Interviewer #1:

All right, next question is, you're leaving the yard, and sort of want you to recount, recall embracing Big Black and—

Arthur Eve:

Oh yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—you know, and just the feeling between the inmates and the observers, when you left that last time.

00:23:03:00

Arthur Eve:

The hostages appealed to the state not to come in, not to kill, that the inmates' requests were, were right. On that last day we were there, I mean, it was a very emotional kind of exchange, from the hostages and from everyone. And many of us had planned to stay in there, and, and spend the night in, and to stay right in there with the inmates, and it was the inmates who said, We want you men to leave, because we believe the state's going to come in, and they're going to kill all of us, and we need to have someone to tell the true story on Attica. And so the inmates made us leave. They said, Go out of here. Get out of here. And

one offered to give me the tapes that they had been taping, that whole dialogue in the prison had been put on tape in the yard, and I said, No, we'll get it tomorrow. And so, you know, and so I didn't take it, and that's one thing that I really regret that, not taking it, but it was a very emotional period, and leaving, and as we left, Big Black, who was in charge of security, he and I embraced each other, and, and we cried in each other's arms. And it was a very, you know, they sensed, and they had obviously a better knowledge of the mentality of the system than we did, and so many of us probably owe our lives to them for getting us out of there, but it was a very emotional parting, and the next time I saw Big Black, they had him on a table out in the yard, after the state had taken over.

00:24:37:00

Interviewer #1:

OK, let's cut.

Arthur Eve:

OK.

[cut]

00:24:39:00

Camera crew member #1:

Mark it.

Interviewer #1:

[coughs]

Camera crew member #2:

Marker.

[slate]

Arthur Eve:

Mm-hmm.

00:24:44:00

Interviewer #1:

Deputy speaker, if you could describe for me that last, that day, that Monday.

00:24:49:00

Arthur Eve:

Yeah. On Monday, the day of the massacre, they had us all in a room, a steward's room there in the prison. We could not leave. We could not have access. We even tried to talk to Oswald, and they said that he was not available to talk to us. And then, when we heard the popping and so forth, we were told that they had to use their tear gas that had never been used in this country before, and that it would literally immobilize the inmates, and they'd be able to go in there, and, you know, bring out the hostages, and take over the facility. We never knew that they had shot, five-four thousand rounds of bullets in that yard, and while sitting there, someone saw them bringing out the inmates who had been injured, and some who'd been dead. And we saw them bring out an African American inmate, and whom they thought was dead, and when the gentleman moved his arm, and they realized he was alive, two people who were carrying him lifted his body as high as they could, and then dashed it to the ground, hopefully that this would further hemorrhage him and guarantee his death. And it was just very frightening to see that this was the kind of feeling from the parts of the people who went into that institution, they'd also said to us that the correctional officers would not be allowed to go in, because one of their men had been killed, and we knew, you know, who died, and we knew that they would be hostile. That did, that did not happen. Correctional officers were allowed in that institution with guns. So, we were lied to consistently by the state, and it was, you know, it, that massacre was probably the worst thing that's ever happened within this country in this century.

00:26:40:00

Interviewer #1:

What I'm really kinda trying to get at is, I want you to sort of remember how you felt and the other observers felt within that ten minutes that you were in that room. You were on the floor.

Arthur Eve:

Oh, on the floor, OK. OK.

Interviewer #1:

—helicopter, and all—

Arthur Eve:

OK, OK, OK.

Interviewer #1:

—that was going on around you. You couldn't see it, but you could feel it, and—

Arthur Eve:

OK, OK.

Interviewer #1:

—how, how it all felt.

00:27:02:00

Arthur Eve:

On that day, when we were in the room, and they made us get on the floor, because of the tear gas. That it was best, they said, for us not to be affected by it, and we heard the helicopters and all of the noise. Still not being clear what was going on, and feeling just a tremendous sense of hopelessness, that we could not impact on it. I guess some of us felt that we had failed, because we could not resolve it without that going in. It was just a very frightening moment of wondering what is really going on. What's happening? You know, are they taking it without any loss of lives? So it's just a, a big question, a big, a big sense of, of hopelessness, and, and also, tremendous frustration. I mean, all of us were very frustrated. We were truly committed to trying to resolve this, and it was just what, probably one of the, one of the most difficult periods of the whole thing, was that all of the effort was literally in vain.

00:28:05:00

Interviewer #1:

OK, let's cut.

Arthur Eve:

Yeah.

[cut]

00:28:07:00

Camera crew member #2:

And speed.

Camera crew member #1:

Mark.

[slate]

Arthur Eve:

[sighs]

00:28:12:00

Interviewer #1:

Deputy speaker, if you could talk about what Rockefeller could've done [unintelligible].

00:28:18:00

Arthur Eve:

Yeah. Yeah, on that Monday, you know, it came back to time and time again that a mere visit from the governor to the western New York area, in his private plane, with communication into the yard, to the inmates, that if they gave up, that he would guarantee them as governor there would be no reprisals, no beatings, no physical harassment, no murdering of the inmate. We felt, and this was given to us from the inmates in the institution, that they were concerned about reprisals. And the mere fact that the governor would not take that last mile, that last trip. And we never ask him to come into the prison, never ask him to go into the yard. We said, Just come to the area to show that you, as governor, will back up and guarantee the inmates there will be no reprisals. And the governor refused to take that last step, and that's something that confused me. I frankly could not comprehend that lives could've been saved, and how a man just refused to show that kind of sensitivity and concern. And that's something that I thought about a lot that day, that one plane trip and one telephone conversation for five minutes could've avoided the whole massacre.

00:29:33:00

Interviewer #1:

Very good.

Arthur Eve:

Yeah.

00:29:34:00

Interviewer #1:

Thank you. Let's cut.

[cut]

00:29:35:00

Camera crew member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

00:29:40:00

Arthur Eve:

After the massacre was over, and they then took a few of us back into the yard and walked on the wall, and then began to tell us how they had to do certain things, because they had observed this one inmate who had cut out the reproductive organs of a hostage and then stuck them in the man's mouth, and how another inmate, they had to shoot, because he was running to, to stab a hostage. In fact they showed us Big Black on a table out in the center of the yard, butt naked with a football resting on his neck, and they said, He was the guy who castrated or cut out the reproductive organs of Officer Smith. And, you know, I had, I had tears in my eyes. I said, Here's the guy that, you know, I embraced with on my last day, you know, we hugged, and we cried. You know, you know, I didn't believe that he was capable of doing it, but it was told to you so convincingly. You know, and we were told there's five fellows down on the ground butt naked, stripped, and, you know, they murdered some of the hostages, and that's when I saw Barkley from Rochester, who had later on ended up dead. It, it was very frightening—

[rollout on sound roll]

[rollout on camera roll]

[cut]

[camera roll #2073]

[sound roll #233]

00:31:03:00

Camera crew member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

00:31:07:00

Interviewer #1:

After this, the retaking of the yard. You went into the yard with the deputy [unintelligible]. Sort of describe what you saw.

00:31:14:00

Arthur Eve:

Yeah. After the massacre, the deputy commissioner took us into the yard and told us why they had to do what they did. They described an inmate cutting out the reproductive organs of a hostage and putting it in his mouth in their clear view, with all of those troopers watching. They told us of another inmate that attempted to kill a hostage with a knife, and they had to shoot him. And they showed us the inmate on the table, whom they had on his back with a football resting on his neck, and it was Big Black. And I remembered him as the brother whom I got to, to know in that yard, and really love, and we'd embraced, and, and, and, and cried on the last day. That Sunday, and I said, you know, that, that doesn't seem like Big Black, but it was told to you very convincingly, and to the degree that you believed it, and that's something that really almost destroyed me, that I really believed the lies that they had told. And then they showed me five inmates who were spread, spread eagled, and butt naked on the ground, and that they had committed crimes against the hostages, and I saw Barkley from Rochester, and remembered him, because I saw him so many times in the yard when he would say he wanted a plane to a, a non-capitalistic country. You know, and so, it was just a, a, a, a storytelling of what they did to us, to try to justify the course of action they did, and as you know, subsequently, the medical examiner from Rochester said it was all lies. Everything—that Officer Smith's reproductive organs were shot off by a shotgun by the state, and not by a, you know, inmate. So, it was just a, a horrible thing that the state did in trying to justify the worst massacre this nation has seen in this century.

00:33:29:00

Interviewer #1:

Let's cut.

Arthur Eve:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

Very—

[cut]

00:33:31:00

Camera crew member #2:

Speed.

Camera crew member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

00:33:37:00

Interviewer #1:

How did this—

Arthur Eve:

[sighs]

Interviewer #1:

—[unintelligible] change you—Attica?

00:33:41:00

Arthur Eve:

Well, during a very difficult period, it almost cost me my mind. And I thank God that I was able to keep my sanity after Attica, but it pointed up very clearly that the, the ruling class, as a very small percentage, as I've said to many audiences, the hostages in there, the guards were just like the inmates. If a Rockefeller family member had been there, they never would've used the violence, and so those who work for a living are those who are in sort of a class situation. Their lives are just as, you know, expendable as the inmates, be they White or Black, to a great degree. But it really pointed up that racism is, is very heavy in New York state, and that all of those men and women, all those men who were in the prisons, that we had to try to do more to change what was happening in our penal institutions, that people should have an opportunity, that while incarcerated, to be treated like a human being, and then hopefully rehabilitated if possible, but every chance must be given for that. It also said

that, how do I stop kids from going into crime? I mean, how do we stop poverty, hungry-hunger, ignorance, lack of education, poor housing? And so, it sort of gave, gave me a, a new resolve to try harder to prevent other Atticas from happening, and people getting into situations such as Attica state prison.

00:35:15:00

Interviewer #1:

OK, cut.

Arthur Eve:

Yeah.

[cut]

00:35:17:00

Camera crew member #2:

We have five minutes left. Our timecode, two-oh-eight-five.

Camera crew member #1:

Marker.

[slate]

00:35:24:00

Interviewer #2:

What was happening in the country around the Gary Convention that made Gary so necessary, su-such urgency?

00:35:30:00

Arthur Eve:

Well, *many of us have had experience, great expectations, and hope during the Great Society and programs of the '60s, and, and the civil rights, and so forth. We saw Nixon's election as taking away those gains. We saw the system moving away from a commitment to people, and, and hunger, and housing, and political empowerment.* So, Gary was absolutely very critical. People were frustrated, looking for answers, solutions, strategies, and so Gary came at a very, very opportune time. To bring us all together, to try to help us cope

with the frustrations we were, you know, experiencing, and to devise a strategy on how to change this situation around. So, Gary was absolutely very critical. There's also conversation prior to that and during then about a Black running for president of the United States and running in the democratic primaries, and, or running independently. So, Gary was a, a very significant time, and it was, it was just beautiful.

00:36:35:00

Interviewer #2:

Yes. Can you give me a sense also of the excitement about that time—

Arthur Eve:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—about going into Gary, of going into the convention.

00:36:42:00

Arthur Eve:

Right. Being from Buffalo, and people look upon us as sort of upstate hicks, our community, we were very excited. There were about sixty or seventy of us who—we had fund raisers, we had other activities to raise money to fly out there, and for the hotel, and people were excited about meeting national figures that they had read about, or heard about, or seen on TV. You know, Julian Bond, and Jesse Jackson, and the mayors, and so forth, so it was a very exciting period of everybody coming together. People at the lower level and at the higher level all coming together on common agendas, common goals, common hopes, and also common fears. And so it was a very exciting period, and frankly I can't remember when my community came together and really as a total community raised dollars in order to send people somewhere. So, it was a, a, a very hopeful period.

00:37:37:00

Interviewer #2:

Tell me what you remember about Richard Hatcher at that, at that—Gary.

Arthur Eve:

Dick was a very strong leader, and, and still is a strong leader today.

Interviewer #2:

Sorry, we cannot callback to now, but just keep it—

00:37:47:00

Arthur Eve:

OK. Dick was a, a tremendous inspiration, a role model for myself and for many African American men and women. And to have put this together, and brought it to his community, he was a, a wonderful host, provided tremendous leadership, and the planning, and the preparation of it, and hopefully we will have another Gary. We need it now more than ever before.

00:38:16:00

Interviewer #2:

And can you give me your sense also of Amiri Baraka?

Arthur Eve:

Because of what he had done—yeah.

Interviewer #2:

Sorry. Can—

Arthur Eve:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—you mention his name?

00:38:26:00

Arthur Eve:

Brother Baraka played a major role, and there was almost like the American Blacks and the Pan-African American Blacks, all coming together. They were a lot of the vision among the two groups in various forms. This was the first time that the two groups had come together, and Baraka played a major role in putting together those different factions and groups for common agendas and common goals, and so he played a major and a very, very significant role in that.

00:39:02:00

Interviewer #2:

Cut.

[cut]

00:39:04:00

Camera crew member #2:

Speed.

Camera crew member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

00:39:09:00

Interviewer #2:

What was the high point for you, of the convention?

00:39:12:00

Arthur Eve:

I think when you looked around in the building where we were, and you saw all of those different people representing the various states and areas from around the country, it was like a dream, you know, that you dreamed about, that here it is happening. We are together. We are one.

00:39:29:00

Interviewer #2:

Oh, thank you.

Arthur Eve:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

Cut.

Arthur Eve:

OK.

Interviewer #2:

[laughs] Did you hear any of this?

Arthur Eve:

[laughs] Thank you.

Interviewer #2:

That's lovely.

[cut]

00:39:34:00

Camera crew member #2:

Team C again.

Camera crew member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

00:39:38:00

Interviewer #2:

What was your impression of Richard Hatcher at Gary?

Arthur Eve:

Tremendous leadership—

Interviewer #2:

Sorry, if can you mention his name?

00:39:44:00

Arthur Eve:

Yeah. Dick Hatcher demonstrated tremendous leadership, first of all, in hosting and bringing together all of these hundreds of people from around the country, in planning, and the leadership that he demonstrated there was just absolutely tremendous.

00:40:02:00

Interviewer #2:

And Baraka.

00:40:03:00

Arthur Eve:

Baraka, you know, New York delegation was, I think, typical of many delegations. We had the American Black pla—and the Pan-African Black. Baraka played a major role in bringing all of the segments together. Clearly demonstrating that we had common interests, common agendas, common problems, and that we should have common strategies. So, he played a major role in helping to pull all of this together, and the two of them were absolutely fantastic.

00:40:35:00

Interviewer #2:

And can you talk about looking around that convention?

00:40:36:00

Arthur Eve:

Yeah. In Gary, I think the thing that really was just sort of uplis-uplifting and stimulating was to look around that building and see brothers and sisters from all over the country. It was just fantastic to see us all united together.

00:40:59:00

Interviewer #2:

You had said one wonderful line.

Interviewer #1:

It was beautiful. And you said, Here we are together as one.

00:41:04:00

Arthur Eve:

Oh yeah, OK.

00:41:06:00

Interviewer #2:

If you could just say it again.

Arthur Eve:

Good deal. Good deal.

Interviewer #2:

And again that sense you had. OK.

00:41:12:00

Arthur Eve:

Yeah. The thing that impressed me the most was looking around that building, and seeing all of us together, it was absolutely beautiful, and to see us all united as one, it was just a dream that I'd always hoped for.

00:41:31:00

Interviewer #2:

Cut.

Arthur Eve:

OK.

Interviewer #2:

Thank you very much.

[cut]

[end of interview]

00:41:35:00

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