

TAPED INTERVIEW

L.B. To start off and say the whole thing, I have to start off when I left work, I was working the third shift and I get off at 7:30

R.B. Now this was at Tension Envelope

L.B. Yeah, I get off at 7:30 in the morning and -

R.B. Now this was Tuesday, April 9th

L.B. Right - That Tuesday - and left and went home, washed up, changed clothes and was on my way back down to Manual High School taking my little brother Edward to school and when we got to, I believe it was 15th and Paseo, I noticed all these kids in the street, you know, they were all out Paseo and I asked him, I said, whats going on here today, are you having a march or something up here, and he said, no, he never heard of anything like that, I said, do you want to go ahead down here and see whats going on, or go on to school, and he said I'm going on to school, take me on to school. So I took him on up to school and dropped him off and I went on back down 16th Street and I drove up there and for a little while there I just rode along and watched and you know, just got a general picture of what was going on, just from looking, you know, I never said anything to any body else. There were a few of the kids that I knew, and they spoke to me and everything, and then I finally asked them what -- A couple of the guys I saw, were out in front and seemed to be leading the whole deal and I asked them what was going on and he said, they was having a march, you know, honoring Martin Luther King, and I said, well, alright. And so I went on for awhile, maybe 3 or 4 blocks in my car and there was another kid that was there and he drove my car for awhile and I walked and just, you know, - So, this went on and you know we just walked on out Paseo and then finally I got, the kids were, I noticed - some of them began to scatter and I just took it on myself, I wasn't elected or wasn't

L.B.

chosen or anything, maybe I'll just say I was "Bullheaded" and barged in, you know, but I got in there and I called the kids in and stopped everything and called them in and talked to them and told them if we was going to have a march, one of the main things we had to have first was organization, we'd have to be - to do it in an organized manner so that we wouldn't be scattered all over like chickens, you know, and so they all seemed to comply quite well and we got back - I got back in my car and I drove down some more and everybody came on- and I got out and walked, so we went on out Paseo until about 24th Street, I'd say and then went over to Vine and everything was orderly and the kids weren't - a lot of them were jumping on top of cars and I had to keep telling them, I walked up to them and tell them to get off the cars and things like this, but basically everything was orderly, there wasn't no hollering at !asserbys or throwing or anything like this, they was just walking and singing and went on out to Vine to Linwood and turned left on Linwood and in the meantime there were no police officers around anyplace. We didn't see anyone anyplace

R.B. Did you see any other people coming up that you knew? Any people joining?

L.B. Any people joining in? No, not really - no

There were --

R.B. Did you notice that the crowd was growing?

L.B. There were -- No, the crowd seemed basically the same, as far as I know, maybe, now see, you get a case where you got- What was it out there, maybe 8 hundred, 9 hundred students, I guess, maybe a thousand, I don't know, I'm not very good at estimating crowds. But anyway, I know that you can't just look around and see. I'm sure that maybe 20 kids came in, you know, kids driving past in cars who were leaving or going to Manual High School, to pick up somebody or dropping somebody off and they happened to see things going on and they come on in cars, you know, and they happen to join in and driving their cars along and everything. But, you can't just look at it and

L.B.

say that the crowd grew by 20 people or 30 people, you know. Anyway I couldn't notice too much whether there was any extra people coming in because as long as everybody is as orderly as they were, and nobody was making any kind of statements or anything, you can't notice anybody, I mean nobody goes noticed, you know, so this goes on and by the time we get out to Linwood, everybody is walking then, very few cars, most everybody is walking, cause I had told everybody that could, get out of their cars and put their cars out in the front and let everybody walk, you know. We get out to about Linwood and - Am I passing up anything you want to know? Just stop, you know ?

R.B.

Whatever you remember, thats what I want to hear

L.B.

Oh, well we get out to about Linwood and Michigan and , I don't know exactly where Vernon Thompson came in at, but he was there

R.B.

Now, is he a friend of yours?

L. B.

No, not until- right now, he's still not what you say- a friend of mine, he's an acquaintance, you know- I know him and I had seen him- Thats something I had never mentioned to anybody before, and I'll bet-- one of these days , if things keep going like they are- This will come back up.

That Saturday before all this happened- downtown in downtown Kansas City- there was not a disturbance down there. But, what happened- there was a lot of teenagers downtown and they just persisted to walk around downtown in groups, maybe you heard about it , there was maybe, oh maybe 25 of them and they walked downtown, they walked up by Krigels' Jewelry store and Zales and Helzbergs and they closed the jewelry stores and everything- the downtown area was virtually closed down, it was about 2'oclock in the afternoon, you heard about it?

R.B.

Oh, I heard something about it

L.B.

Yeah

R.B.

They called it an invasion

L.B. Is that what they called it
Anyway, they had gangs and gangs of cops down there. So, I don't know, what I went downtown for that day, I went downtown to get me a shirt-I took a friend of mine downtown and I stopped and bought me a shirt, and I got down there and I saw all of this going on and I was down there then out of curiosity, I saw everybody going, and I knew very few of those guys, I knew some of the guys that were there, but I didn't know many of them and so I just stood around watching and seeing how everything was going on, so the guys stopped me and they recognized me from being around the neighborhood and everything and they called me over and I walked up to the group, where they were - maybe 20 of them, 15 - 20 of them standing up there, so I walked into the group, and as I think about it now, it does seem like I was walking in and giving instructions and something like that, I'll bet you one of these days, it'll come out like that, too. They called me over there, I was walking- They were walking- lets see- This way on Grand and they had just left up to Helzbergs, they were between 11th and 12th on Grand when I first saw them, and I was walking on that side of the street and they were on this side of the street, so -

R.B. They were going south on Grand

L.B. Yeah, they were going South, and I was going south on Grand, and they looked over and they guy that was in front, he looked over and he did like this to me - (come here come here) just like that, and he pointed to the corner and he told me to come across when we got to the corner, so when they got to the corner- we got to the corner about the same time, and I walked across to where they were, and he stopped- and they was telling me what was going on, so I said, alright, I'm going to walk around and I'll keep in touch

- L.B. And he said alright
- R.B. What did he say they were doing?
- L.B. Well, just roaming around, heckling the police, thats all. Everybody thought that they were doing something, but see, the idea is- people- I have noticed I'm not a psychologist, don't know anything about it, but I know people, especially Black people, especially Black young people, it's just as much difference in black young people and white young people, as night and day, I don't care what nobody says. I know young Black People, they find that they're being watched and they'll do things to make people see them, now they didn't have any, these guys didn't have, wasn't thinking about doing any of this stuff, until they saw that they were being watched, and then they got the idea, if they're going to watch us, we might as well do something, so they started going around, and gathering up people, you know, and then -
- R.B. Listen, what time of day did you say this was?
- L.B. Around 2'oclock
- R.B. Two o'clock, yeah
- L.B. About 2 maybe 2:30 at the most
- R.B. And you say they were closing the stores?
- L.B. They closed, I know they closed Goldman's Jewelry definitely, I know they closed Goldmans Jewelry, Helzbergs was closed, uhh what else, do I know definitely Goldman's on this side, Helzbergs on that side, those two were definitely closed on Grand. And on Walnut street, on Walnut, they were closed because after all these guys went down the street, I was- I must admit, I was part of the heckling- when I came up- I had these chains around my neck, they saw these cjains around my neck and I had on this Black - uh - deal that I made up myself, with high collar and everything, it's completely different, and these gold and black chains.

L.B. So, as soon as I walked across the street and I walked up and talked to these guys, and all of these officers were standing around watching me, and everywhere that I went, I saw them watching me, following me, just like- I didn't even know half these guys, anyway, when I went down to Goldman's Jewelry store and I started looking in windows and everything, all the jewelry and everything was out of the windows and I went over to Helzbergs and everything was out of their window, and so I walked back down, and when I got to the corner, I was talking to these guys and I left and I went down the street and I saw some more guys over there that I knew- and they just started following me, and I never asked them to- but once they started following, I wasn't going to tell them to get the hell away, and so we was walking along there and talking and so, maybe it got to be about 5-6 of us together and then we walked back down to 11th and Walnut and by the time we got back down there these guys were coming, they had went around the block or someplace and they were coming back to 11th and Walnut, but they were coming from the east, and we met up there, we were still on this side of the street and they were on that side of the street So, some of the guys that were with me, most of them anyway, except one or two of them, that I knew well, went over to that side and joined them and then they walked back down the street again and I stayed on this side of the street and by the time I got down to the corner, I remember, Vernon Thompson was standing on the opposite corner, he was standing on the southeast corner and I was standing on the northwest corner and he hollered at me and he - like so (motioning) and he went back like that, you know, and I went over - and we -

R.B. Now, you knew who Vernon Thompson was though?

L.B. Yeah, I mean he's - everybody in the neighborhood knows Vernon Thompson, you know, but -

R.B. Do they know him for any particular thing?

L.B. No, they know him because he drives an HRC bus

R.B. Un huh

L.B. Thats why most of the people know him

R.B. He drives an HRC bus

L.B. Thats why most of the people that I know, know him, because until this time, all I knew about Vernon Thompson was he drove the HRC bus and he was interested in young, black people, now what he did, I didn't know, now that I know, he's trying to organize a group or something like that, called the Soul Brothers or something - The Young Brothers, I don't know, anyway, I still don't know and I know him quite well now. But, when I saw him over there

R.B. Did he quit his HRC job or is he still driving the bus

L.B. He was driving a bus last week when I talked with him. Anyhow, we give the old sign and instead of- I don't know why- this is coincidence, the average person, if I was explaining, to the police department, they would check into it and make a big issue out of it, I know, but coincidently, instead of him waiting for me on that corner, or instead of me waiting for him on this corner, I started to walk that way and he started to walk this way and we met out in the middle of the street and the cars were coming and everything, we looked like a dummy, and then we started laughing and talking and then we started walking over to the side and we stood there talking and Vernon Thompson and I were standing on the corner and talking and a few more of the young brothers came around and they started talking to us and in the meantime all these other guys were still over on the other corner and they started re-enforcing the police then, they already had maybe oh - a hundred of them in a four block area, and then I could see more police coming in, maybe they were just coming in closer where you could see them more better,

L.B.

and these two guys came by in this little red sports car and they had Naturals and had on blue jeans and jumpers and things like this and so one of them must have recognized me, I didn't know them, anyway, he hollered at me and said whats going on, brother, and Vernon said, hey man, park the car and come on and get out, so they parked their car- no, they went around the block and parked across the street somewhere, anyway, they came back walking back down the street, so, when they got down there, that made Vernon Thompson, and myself and these two guys standing up here and I know, looking like the typical crowd of Black Militants standing here in a crowd, you know, and I didn't know any one of them , I didn't even know Vernon Thompson, I didn't even know Vernon's name. That was the day that Vernon gave me his address and told me, that it looked like me and him should get together cause it looked like we might be thinking about the same thing. That was the day, that Saturday before all this happened. And, everything began to cool down, the cops went over to us and they started talking to some of those guys and they came over and one- this black officer, he's got a heavy mustache, kind of heavy set, I can't ever think of his name, but he's all over the black community all the time, he came over and he talked to me and he asked me, whats going on, and I said, I don't know whats going on, he said, alright, man, he said, I know you don't want to talk about it, you don't want to tell nobody nothing, you think everybody's doing something good, he said, but, it's not good, I'm telling you, he said, the best thing to do is try to get these guys on away from here. I said, I don't know, I don't know whats going on, I don't know anything about whats going on here, and which I didn't, I was serious, I didn't know a doggone thing, but they thought that I did, anyway I stood there on the corner for a heck of a time after a lot of the guys dispersed. No, before they did, some of them came over there and talked to

L.B.

us and says, say man, you going down with us and I said, whats up, so they said they was going down to someplace - and walk in the store and take a bunch of stuff and just walk out, you know. There was 25 or 30 of them, and they said, they can't catch us all. I says, naw, I'm not going that route, I says, if you going to do something thats beneficial to me or to somebody where it makes sense, that we can get something out of it like that, I says, I might go along with it, which maybe I will, I'm just that type of person, I says, but I see it's insane to walk in to stores with 20 people and take a chance on 15 of them getting arrested so 5 of them can get away with \$10.00 worth of crap, I says, I'm not going to be in that. So, he says, naw, why don't you come on and I says, no, I'm not going with you and he says well, thats your privilege, I'm not going to knock you, you go ahead, but you're taking a chance. So, some of the other guys heard this that was with us, some of the younger guys and wasn't so bullheaded, and they came over and asked me, you not going, and I said naw, I'm not going and they asked me why and I explained to them, like I explained to him, it's ridiculous, so this took away, maybe, oh, I'd say about 60 % of this crowd maybe 15 of them there and it took away 6% left maybe 4 or 5 of them there. And just like in a crowd, if you take away the leader, you lost the crowd, you take away the crowd you lost the leader, so they dispersed and everybody went on home, still- as I walked around town, the cops were following me all around downtown area all day long until finally I left and came on home, and I know one of these days sooner or later that will come back up, but I - until just this minute, I never thought about that before.

R.B.

Now that was on the Saturday before that Tuesday

L.B.

Yeah, the Saturday before

R.B.

Well, thats interesting, I had heard, you know, well, some people had talked about this before and used the term "invasion", you know

R.B. Thats kind of interesting

L.B. There was another thing that happened, you know, just spontaneously, it wasn't -

R.B. Sure

L.B. It wasn't- those guys never would have been doing those things if the cops hadn't been watching

R.B. A couple of other spontaneous events that I heard about, one was the Saturday after, you know, just before Easter Sunday, I guess, the Saturday after, some time in there. There was a whole -- oh, it must have been hundreds of black women downtown in Macys and another one I heard, that for the first time on that same day, or on that weekend, that for the first time they had a number of black people on Swope Golf Course

L.B. Huh?

R.B. Thats what I heard

L.B. I don't know, my impression is thats the only place black people go to golf, almost

R.B. Is that right?

L.B. Yeah

R.B. Well, this was what I was wondering , because the people that told me were white people and natrually any -- you know

L.B. Any time the average white person goes to Swope Park - he only goes there now and then and maybe he hadn't been there in five years and then he got there he saw all these colored people out there, then - thats the only place - where else do colored people go to golf? Blue Ridge Country Club?

R.B. Okay - At the Rockhill Tennis Club, huh?

L.B. Yeah, Homestead Country Club, someplace

Well, anyway, that Tuesday

- 11 -

R.B. Yeah, now we're back at Linwood and Michigan

L.B. Yeah, somewhere in that vicinity, and I look around and see we got a couple of plainclothes, unmarked cars out in front

R.B. Okay, now Vernon Thompson was in on it now

L.B. Yeah, yeah, Vernon was in on it now, and he was in on getting the crowd together and everything and we were all working together and so I looked and we see these cars standing here and the crowd is beginning to get a little restless, they wasn't getting restless to the point where they wanted to tear up anything or anything like that, but they had walked all the way out here and they began to scatter a little bit and ask questions about - what the hell all those cops doing up there for, we're not doing nothing, why are they watching us like that, and they got a couple of helicopters overhead and a couple cars out front and so Vernon stopped the crowd, I believe, no, he got a lot of guys in front and he stopped the thing and uh uh, what happened- I don't know but what I actually- I'm trying to think of the actual point where as I was recognized as the person that had influence in the crowd. I know, I remember one point, it was right in this vicinity someplace, where the crowd was barging over everybody- I mean the people that were in front were trying to control everything and the crowd just began to move - Oh, we had got past here- the crowd - let me go down this way - They saw all these cops and everything and they started asking questions and everything so I got out there and I --

R.B. Now, the cops, now by that you mean when you saw the cops, you saw a few police, now, were they standing by a barricade in the street?

L.B. No, no no no, there wasn't- we just saw one car, parked up here on this side of the street, another one up ahead, parked on that side of the street, these are plain cars, unmarked cars, and the helicopters were ahead. But, as far as uniform police and all this crap --

R.B.

You did notice helicopters, though?

L.B.

Yeah, yeah, when we were at Linwood and - I remember this point, cause we stopped there, and I stopped and I - this must be the point where I started- where I stopped everybody and I talked to them and I tried to blend everything in when I talked to these people, like I said, I try to pride myself in understanding and being able to talk on the same level as young black people , and I figure this is not only with young, black people- this is anybody that you talk to, and try to have any influence with, you have to talk on their level, you have to go- sort of in the way that they are going, but still, kind of curve the thing around, and go. So I got over there and I started talking and I told them that we were all going to walk and we were going- that we were on our way to Central High School and anywhere they wanted to go, I would go with them

R.B.

Now you didn't recognize the officer?

L.B.

No I didn't, he was a white officer, I know he was a white officer

R.B.

You didn't notice if he was a lieutenant or -

L.B.

I said he was a officer, he was a lieutenant, or something, he had on a cap and the kids stopped and they listened to me and I got up on top of this car and talked, and raised hands and everything and they said okay, LeBo, we're going, and I got down and we began to walk

R.B.

What did you say to them on top of the car?

L.B.

I don't remember exactly what I said to them at this point, I told them that, Oh, I said something like - Now, listen, everybody, I says, you see that we are- wait a minute, let me see, I know I told them that we were being recognized as a crowd or something or other and that you see, everybody is watching us, we have these good white folks in their cars on the streets watching us and we have good white folks in these buildings watching us and we got the police watching us and I said, they even went to the expense of bringing helicopters out and put them over our head and watching us, so lets make a

good showing, lets not make them think that we're a bunch of dogs and can't organize ourselves like people, lets make a good showing, lets fall in line, and everybody started getting back together, I said, now we're going walk here together and we going to talk together and we're going to look like people, and so the good white folks will stop calling us dirty niggers and things, and stuff like that and they said alright, alright I said now, are we going to go, and they said Yeah, Yeah, Okay, you know, all kinds of crap like that, not verbatim, but something like that. And we walked on down the street and in the process of walking down the street, I continued to say things like this and, by the time they got past Brooklyn they were way past Brooklyn, maybe over to Benton somewhere in there, and no sense in going through that- cause it was the same thing- walking and hollering, and everybody pulling everybody in and all like this- we got over there- somewhere near Benton, someplace and the crowd began to get restless to the point where they could see Central High School vicinity and they can see kids down there and they want to get in- the sooner the better- they get in with this crowd and make a bigger crowd and they- they reached their goal, they looking out to get to Central High School and once they get to Central High School, they rushing to get to it- you know, like a bunch of cattle to water, you know. So they began to rush through the crowd, they was going to walk over everybody, you know, they began to run and I remember Vernon, particulary, Vernon , I hadn't expected him to do it, because he's the type of person, sort of like I am , I mean, in a deal like this, I couldn't be a follower in a group like that, I just couldn't, if I wasn't going to be in it and be a leader in a group like that, I wouldn't be in it, not because I am not a follower, but I feel like I have to follow people that are more capable of leading than I am myself, now, say, another person that has more capabilities of leading than I have, I'd be less than

- L.B. a fool not to follow them, so with the people that were out here today, their standing was down to at least to where mine is or below
- R.B. Who were some of the people that were trying to lead?
- L.B. Oh - Vernon Thompson, one guy, all I know about him is the name of Tripp, and another guy- Willie Stringer, and those are about the only ones I know by name.
- R.B. Now, they were kind of making bids for leadership at this time, huh?
- L.B. Yeah, sort of informally, you know, If I stopped the crowd here- right here, to talk to them and maybe I shouldn't-- It sounds like a brag or something like that- but it's just the facts ---I stopped the crowd here and I get up in front of the crowd and the whole crowd would get silent and listen, and I'd talk to them, I'd say listen - Bla Bla Bla, we're going to do this, and we're going to do that, we're going to act right and look like people, and everybody would stop and listen, and maybe one might blurt out in the back, and say, Aw, come on LeBo, come on lets go, lets get on over to the school, I said, wait a minute baby, now, listen, listen, and they'd stop and listen and the people that were supposed to be leaders, they would wait, and while the crowd listened, and I 'd say, alright, lets go, and we'd all walk, and then maybe another block later, another guy would , maybe he would, it seemed as if to me he would deliberately think of something that should be said, they he thought should be said , so he could get his bid in for leadership, you know, and he would stop and uh wait a minute, wait a minute, and he'd stop and try to talk to the crowd and they would just walk on over him, you know, maybe a few of them would stop but the rest of them would walk on over him and then they'd begin to walk on around him and go ahead you know, and this was happening from one to another, but Vernon was quite well, I believe in - with the crowd, because a lot of the kids - he knew

L.B. and he did pretty good.

R. B. Did you feel any pressure from these guys, do you think they were trying yo take it over, or compete with you?

L.B. No, not really, I think that - oh, sure compete - just like I said, They were trying to compete, but not to take anything from me, they were trying to instead of-I might say, instead of putting the emphasis on taking from me, they were trying to add to themselves, you know, but in adding to themselves, they were taking from me, but they weren't thinking of it as I'm going to take this crowd over from LeBo, they was thinking about I'm going to take this crowd over for myself. This is what the idea was, I don't think they was trying to do anything - take anything from me, but they were unsuccessful, definitely.

R.B. Did you notice any of them watching you?

L.B. Sure, sure I went to the point, I mean, anytime that I do anything, - like you, for instance, I sit here and I watch you, I be sitting here talking to you, and I try to figure out what question that you're going to ask, in response to what I say, and I do the same thing all the time, like these people, I actually took time and I noticed some of these guys saying some of the things that I had said earlier , and this is definite proof that they were watching me, and they were taking mental notes of what I was saying, and, you know , maybe - not exactly patterning themselves after me but seeing that I was doing good, and acting the way that I was acting and saying what I was saying they was just taking this for granted, you know, going through the motions. And , as we -

R.B. We're over about to Central now, I guess is where we are

L.B. Yeah, well, as we get up to Central High School, we still don't see, we see a few uh -!

- R.B. Now, you mentioned that it seemed that the crowd was going to get out of hand and start trampling people that they were moving sort of fast
- L.B. Yeah, they began to walk faster and we got in the midst of the crowd, and like I said, I stopped the crowd and maybe 5 times
- R.B. How do you stop them, do you get on top of a car and shout to make yourself heard?
- L.B. Right, right, or instead of- a number of times, the first time, I think we had a car there and I got on top of the car- after that, I just got in the midst of the crowd, I mean like they were all across this one side of the street and I just stopped them and said, wait a minute everybody, just wait, will you stop and listen to me, just a minute, and they'd stop and they'd stand there and listen and I just walk into the crowd, and maybe three or four people back and walk out and scream and talk and carry on, and get out in front of them and walk back and forth across the street and talk to them and maybe a couple of the guys would get restless and walk - wanting to walk past me, you know, I'd be standing here talking and a couple of guys would want to go that way, and instead of telling them, hey, man get on back in line, you know, I'd just continue to talk and I'd walk over toward him and concentrate my conversation like I was talking to him, you know, just Bla, Bla Bla, back and forth like this and keeping the whole thing in file there, you know, so, it wasn't very hard, and I did this, maybe 4 or 5 times in the process and like I said, I never noticed Vernon - when I got off onto the leadership subject, I was thinking about, I never expected Vernon to stop and call me and- I was up front- He was leading the actual crowd and I was way out in the front, talking to some of the people that were out there, trying to get the people back to right and everything and he tried to stop them and he wanted to tell them something - he said, when we get up to the school Oh, he was telling them that we hear that they are throwing rocks at cars or

L.B.

turning over cars or something like that at Central High School, and he said, now, first thing we gotta do, is we gotta get up there and don't take part in this, or something like that, he says, lets all go up there and act orderly, first off and they wouldn't seem to listen at all, and he called me, and he says, get LeBo back here, get LeBo back here, and I got back there and he said, say, LeBo, man, come here and talk to them, they listen to you and I stopped and I talked to them at that point- Just like I said, I hadn't expected him to do it , but he did

R.B.

What did you say to them

L.B.

I don't know exactly what it was, but basically, it was actually the same thing, when the time come up, I can get these things to say, you know, I can say them and make them sound reasonable well when I need them , you know, but I can't just go back over them like that- because theyres no pattern, I told them, this is what is expected of us, this is whats gonna- if this thing keeps going like it is- this is whats going to be on Tv this is whats going to be on radio- now, we had a lot of Black kids to take it in their own hands and - regardless to the rules and regulations of the school board and of the city and march all through town and start throwing bricks at white people and breaking up cars and things like this and I said, this is what we're trying to show everybody we're not, this is what we're trying to show everybody that we're not going to do, so lets take it on our own, just like the white folks are taking it on themselves to brand us, like this, lets take it on our own to wipe this brand away and to do things right for a change, and they listened and by the time we got to - up to Central High School , there at Linwood and Indiana, all these other kids over there, everybody just rushed on in and met with this other crowd and every body began to shake hands and greet everybody "Soul Brother" and all like this, you know, and so they said - Where to now, you know, and there was a couple of suggestions

L.B.

for a Memorial service here on Central's campus and like this- but- the basic crowd, the majority of the crowd was more in favor of going on out to Paseo High School and picking up students from Paseo High School, so- and I thought and I still - and I agree now that it would have been more harm than good to try to persuade these kids to stop right here and, I mean, especially from me, now, if I had got in and tried to persuade them definitely to stop everything right now, lets stop everything right here, this is as far as we go- I would have been branded right along with one of the "good whites folks", as they call them or one of the police or whatever- as just a "Do- Gooder", you know, So, I said, thats it, we're on our way over to Paseo High School, then, you know, so, we left and headed for Paseo High School, and when we got to 34th-

R.B.

Now, did you notice at Central before you left, if there were any cars turned over?

L.B.

No-

R.B.

Any broken windows?

L.B.

No

R.B.

Glass or bottles?

L.B.

I never noticed- Now, I say this, there has been substantial proof, later, that there were windows broken and things like this, but personally, I never saw them. I never saw one thing. Because, I guess, I never left Indiana, I came right up to Linwood and Indiana and walked down Indiana, and at the time, I was in the midst of a crowd and the crowd was around me and so forth like that and I couldn't have noticed anything like that - I didn't notice any disturbance, up until thei spoint, nothing., not one thing. And I told them that we were going to Paseo High School and we left to go to Paseo High School.

R.B. In the meantime did you notice any people in the crowd, like Herman Johnson, or Everett O'Neal, or anybody like that?

L.B. Not yet, no

R.B. They hadn't arrived yet?

L.B. No, I don't think so, I'm quite sure they hadn't, because Mr. Sweeney, I think he was the first one to arrive in a public address car, I'm not sure now, but I believe, I'm doing this from what I can think, not exactly, I think Mr. Sweeney, he had a public address system on his car, and he had a student from Manual High School in the car with him

R.B. Now, was that after you had left Central for Paseo ?

L.B. No, we were still at Central Now, I'm trying to think- the first to arrive

R.B. I don't even remember when Mr. Sweeney arrived, but I know, there wasn't no PA car there when we left Central going to Paseo, and I didn't see any of the disc jockeys and things like this, as we were on the way to Paseo I didn't see anybody. Because, when we got up to 34th and Indiana, and turned west, there was a barricade of police at 34- Between Benton and College, somewhere in that vicinity, and they was standing there- all armed to kill, the kids saw, they turned the corner and saw these cops there and some of them began to balk and actually turn and start back, and I was out in the front and at that point I was a little bit, you might say, astride the fence. I was wondering whether to walk right on up here to these police officers- because the kids would have went, if I had went - they would have went- because some of them were going anyway, and the kids would have followed anyway, and then I began to think about these cops that were up here, and think about what they would do and like it was later proven, - that they would have done anything, and this guy came up and he says, somebody was down at the school - the principal or somebody- and this guy said -

R.B. Now, who is this guy, a student or?

L.B. I can't think, --No, this guy, he is a student at Manual High School, I believe, he got a blue 55 Chevy, a blue 55 Chevy, I can't think of his name and he was there all day, anyway, he came up to me and he said, they going to have a service back down to Central High School and everybody started hollering, We want to go to Paseo, we ain't going back to no Central, we going to Paseo, and at this point, some started going on- just like I say, some were going on past the cops anyway, and I was trying to decide, for a split second

R.B. Now the cops, where were the cops ranged?

L.B. I think they were at the corner at 34th and Benton, They were on 34th Street and they were between Benton and Indiana, - between Benton and College- because we were between College and Indiana, and they were between Benton and College, whether they were directly at the corner or a little ways down the block

R.B. Now how did they look to you, were they sort of grouped around cars, or were they spread out across the street

L.B. No, they were across the street

R.B. Spread out across the street, did they have masks on?

L.B. I can't say definitely, I can't definitely say. I wish I had talked to you a week or so after, then I'd know

R.B. Yeah, well, I was trying to get to you before, but never got around to it

L.B. I can't definitely say - What time is it?

R.B. It's not 3:15 yet, you got about 8 minutes

L.B. They were sort of spread out across the street, as far as I could tell.

L.B.

And I got up and I told these kids, I said that I know the fact that Kansas City has spent a large sum of money on riot equipment they have spent a large sum of money - this I was telling to the kids- they have spent a large sum of money on training of police officers for riots. They have spent a large sum of money in training these officers the riot tactics of other cities, and things like this, and we've never had a riot in this city before, and in the meantime, I'd like to say that these kids were listening to all this crap, and this is the main thing- to get something that they would listen to-- they were standing there listening to all this crap, while I was on top of this car, and I says now, whats going to happen is that all these good "Honkey" cops is wanting a chance to try all this stuff out. They ain't got nobody to try it on but us black folks and and if you go on up there, thats whats gonna happen, they going to use that good riot equipment and they going to see just how it works and there were a couple of the kids- there were alot of the kids standing around, I mean young kids, like 14, maybe I'd say younger than than, I'd say 12, 13 11 maybe and they was standing around, this tall, and I mean there were a lot of big ones in the midst of them, so to emphasize the point, I walked up and - got off the car and walked up to the front end of the crowd, and by this time, they were gathered in a semi-circle around me, and I talked to one of the big kids, No, one of the big kids was there and his little brother or his little cousin, or somebody anyway, I said, how would you like for your little brother to end up shot in his head, how would you like to see this little kid rolling on the ground from tear gas in his eyes, how would you like that huh, and he stood there and they listenend and I said, now this is ridiculous, we not going to prove anything by getting bricks and throwing them at them cops up there, I said, we not going to do that, I said we going to go

L.B.

Paseo High School if you want to, but we got to do it by way that nobody gets hurt, so lets go back to Central High Scholl and see whats going on back there first , but eventually, if thats the thing that everybody wants to do, we'll go to Paseo High School, but we can't do it by walking over them cops, and getting everybody all hurt and beat up, so, everybody turned back, I'm not saying they turned back at my suggestion, somebody came up and said this and that, but I think they stopped and they listened at my suggestion, and whether they went back because I said so, I don't know, but they went back and in the process of going back, there was a car coming down Indiana, I don't know if he was exactly- I didn't see this either, but I know it happened, because they guy, I didn't even know him, he came straight to me and he said, LeBo, LeBo, the cops are spraying that stuff in our eyes back there, inside the car. And the understanding I got later on was that the cops came up and asked this guy to move his car and he couldn't go anywhere and he just opened the door and started spraying this stuff in the car and told him to get out, and whether they said anything abusive to this cop or done anything, I don't know, but I know, that they sprayed it inside the car

R.B.

Now, who was this stuff sprayed on, did you know him?

L.B.

Nope

R.B.

Never saw him before

L.B.

No

R.B.

Did he look old or young?

L.B.

Young, High School kid

R. B.

Oh, high school kid- Manual High School

L.B.

I know he had on a red shirt, with a white handkerchief tied around his neck

L.B.

And he came to me and told me that this guy had sprayed this stuff in his eyes and everything like this and I was inquiring as to why so, by this time I notice that we got everybody in town here - we got the athletes, Curtis McClinton, Otis Taylor, Fred Williamson, uh, John L. Frazier, Skip Carter, Ron McCormick, Mr. Sweeney, O'Neal hadn't arrived on the scene yet, and plus, we got about 30 cops all across Indiana now they got Indiana completely blocked off, they standing shoulder to shoulder, armed with field equipment and riot guns and gas and everything, masks on and all, so we stopped and the crowd began to -- when they heard about this this is I figure, you might say like a communication system, these kids- when this kid got this stuff on him, before he could get down there on the other end of the crowd, the people on the other end of the crowd practically knew what had happened already, and they began to get real abusive to the police officers, they started cursing and calling them names, and I know there were a couple of rocks and bottles thrown at this time, and they had this PA system there and Mr. Sweeney was trying to get somebody to pray, or something like that and they- these kids didn't care anything about praying or anything like that, they were thinking about them throwing this stuff on this guy and this began to bring out the things that had been happening to people all this time. They began to talk about, you talking about praying, what about - say for example, one of the kids was telling about his little brother going to the store, and the white man pushed him out of the store and he fell and hurt his arm or something like that - "what about my little brother what about the people in Alabama that they ain't doing right, what about praying for them, pray for them, don't be praying for me, I'm not going to pray, we going to do this, and then somebody threw some rocks or something at the cops and anyway, to bring this thing to order I tried to talk to the

- 24 -

L.B.

kids and try to get them- I can't remember anything I said at this point, but I know - OH- I asked that - I said that it was wrong for them "Honkey" cops to spray that stuff on that boy, and I said that I had mentioned to you kids before that them white folks wanted to use that new equipment on you, I said, and this proves it, I said, and it also proves that if you continue to act disorganized, they will continue to get you, just like this, I says, uh, thats done - and we not going to criticize it, but, what we want to do, I says, I'm asking you to support me and asking this officer in charge of this group to come in and apologize for throwing that stuff on that boy for nothing, so he -- They said YEAH YEAH, make him apologize-- so I left out of the car and I went over there and I talked to somebody or something or other ---Rev. White, Rev. White of Emmanuel Baptist Church, he was there at the time, he made it out there by some hook or crook and this officer came up and he says, LeBo, this officer says he's gonna go in and apologize over the PA system, if you'll walk with him, now, I don't know anything about this officer, but this is what- I don't even know who he was - maybe you know who he was, by now, But I didn't know who he was, but Rev. White said to me that he said, if I would go in with him to the car, that he would go in a apologize, so whatever I had been doing out there, it must have been recognized, by somebody more than me cause- anyway, I walked with this officer and heput his arm on my shoulder, or something like that and we walked in here and he got in his car and this other - about three more cops were coming in with him, and I got in between him and the other 3 cops and I said, I don't see what the hell yall going for, I said, I told you ain't nothing going to happen to the man, what are you trying to prove, that we're the dogs that you think we are and it was this Black cop that was with them, and I said, look at you, you'r

L.B. worse than all the rest of them, what are you supposed to be, some kind of Uncle Tom or something, what are you doing, pushing these white folks on us anyway, and he looked kind of you know (laughs) he kind of felt something, but he had to do his job, this I knew and I also knew I had to keep the support of these people, I had to keep myself out in front of these people and making a slight statement like this, now and then, was the only way to stay out in front, if I started going all for the "goody-goody" side, I wouldn't have had nothing and this was known

R.B. Sure

L.B. So, he got in and he apologized, he said that - He didn't apologize in saying that the man was wrong, and I'm telling you right now, he was wrong, and theres no excuse for it. He said that it was bad that this had to happen, or something like that, and he says, I'm sorry that it did happen he said something of that nature, but a lot of the people in the crowd were pleased by it and a lot of them weren't, but after that he said his little piece and I'd just like to say, that cop, evidently he had to be on the police force 20 years or more, or a hell of a lot of years, cause he was a officer, he had all this brass and stuff on him, and he grabbed at me and he went like that, boy I tell you, I got up and every body was booing each other and on like that, and I got up and told him to stand up, and he didn't know why I wanted him to stand up, I said, can you speak standning up and he was holding this thing like that and he got up on the car, and I said, Look here, ain't no sense in scaring him no more, look at his hands everybody started laughing at him and all this crap, you know --

B. Well, listen, it's 2:15 if you want to

L.B. Yeah, I gotta get out of here, Anyway I can say a little more, I wanted to go back downtown, I can stay a couple of more minutes.

R.B.

Good, good

L.B.

I gotta go back downtown and deliver some material, but I'm not going to have time, so I'll go on home.

Uh - after this, I don't know whether I made the statement, I don't think I did, I don't think it was my advise to go downtown

R.B.

Well, after the policeman stood up and said something, then, how did he get out of the scene, did he just walk away or what?

L.B.

I walked out with him

R.B.

Oh, you had to walk with him?

L.B.

Right, I didn't have to , I-

R.B.

Did he ask you to

L.B.

No, like I said, this Rev. was there and he was walking with me, I think- did this officer have my arm, or what, I don't know, but I know definitely that I walked out with him, and then this - by the time we got a few feet away from the car, this Black cop walked out with him then. This big, black guy

R.B.

Not the same one with the mustache that you saw before?

L.B.

Huh? No - not him this was a different- this was a regular plain clothes officer I saw downtown with the mustache, this was another guy, Riot Helmet and everything. Anyway we some kind of way, how ever it was and the discussion came up, I remember I made a statement, I don't remember if it was after someone suggested it or what - But I made a statement, that standing out here and talking or something like wasn't going to get our problems solved, we have to work our problems through downtown or something like that, so we were going downtown, we were going downtown, somebody made the statement, the mayor's not going to see us if we go downtown, the mayor's not going to see us, and I said, we're going downtown and we going to see the mayor and tell him to come out and talk to us and if he doesn't come out and talk to us I'm going to go and kick on his door until he come out

L.B.

or something of that nature, you know. So, we left and began to- what happened, I'm trying to think of how all these cops got away, cause they were all across the street

R.B.

Yeah, yeah

L.B.

Thats what I'm trying to figure out, how they left OH. this officer said, that if we wanted to march, he would get the police to escort us where we wanted to go. So, I said, we don't need a police escort, we didn't need a police escort to get out here, so we can go where we want to go without a police escort, so you just take them out of the way and you just take them out of the way and get them completely out of the way, and this is how he got out, I was talking this to him as we left the car, I was talking to him about getting the police out of the way , I said, we'ee be alright if you just get all the police out of the way, I says, I'm not asking you to take them back downtown or whatnot, but just get them out of the way so people won't have to look at them and comment about it and everything like this and he says alright. So, he started getting some of them back and out of the way and anyway some of them came along and some of them out in front and some of them out in back, you know, but - they was still along with us, and the kids said, alright we're going downtown, but some of these kids wanted to go to 31st and Troost, with destructiveness in mind, they were thinking about breaking windows and stealing

R.B.

Well, how did you know about this, did they holler it out, or what?

L.B.

Oh, yeah, we going to 31st and Troost man, we ain't going downtown, we going to 31st and Troos, and some of them saying stuff like- Easter's next week and I ain't got no suit, nohow, man, I'm going down there and get my Easter suit, you know, something like that, and never made it up there. Everybody walked out orderly and this I'd like to say, also, once the police stopped coming around and got out of the midst of everybody , like that, everybody

- L.B. went orderly again, all the way down past Paseo, until they got up to 31st and Troost and meet up with all the cops up there again
- R.B. Well, when these guys started hollering to go to 31st and Troost, you had said to go downtown previously - Did you decide to go along with them?
- L.B. No, I said to go downtown, we were on our way downtown, but there were some of these kids in the crowd that wanted to go to 31st and Troost. We got to 31st and Paseo, and I turned down 31st and Paseo with about 75 % of the crowd, 75 or 80 % of the crowd, and the few left were radicals drawing a few of the young kids in the crowd
- R.B. Now, did you know who any of these guys were?
- L.B. That were drawing the crowd?
- R.B. Yeah
- L.B. No, I didn't know any of them by name, personally, because the one --
- R.B. Did you recognize them as being people you had seen before ?
- L.B. Right, right, I see them everyday, you know, but I don't know them by name a lot of guys I see, I don't know by name, a lot of them know me by name, but I don't know them. And Vernon Thompson was arrested - right there --
- R.B. Right at 31st and Paseo?
- L.B. He was arrested, maybe a block up from Paseo, a couple of blocks up from Paseo, between 31st and Paseo and ---
- R.B. Okay, let me go back to where you say about 25% of the crowd went the other way, and then you went on down Paseo, was it-
- L.B. We began to go down Paseo
- R.B. Yeah, okay, well, now did you notice or happen to notice of that bunch that left the main crowd, did any of them come back to your crowd again?
- L.B. Yeah, the police started throwing gas on them, they didn't give them time to do anything, cause, whatever happened at 31st and Troost, it affected

L.B. the whole deal, because the police came down everyplace they saw a bunch of people and threw gas, all over that park and everyplace, they were riding through the park with cars trying to make the people disperse and jumping out and grabbing people, and hitting them and all like this.

R.B. This hadn't happened yet?

L.B. No, it happened as we started down Paseo, a lot of these kids started going off this way and a lot of the kids that were with me, they began to hesitate and stop, undecided as to which way to go, and like this, you know and some of them stopped and were looking and all of a sudden, we saw the gas exploding and heard windows breaking and all like this --

R.B. Now, where was this happening ahead of you or behind you?

L.B. Coming out of 31st Street here, we turned on Paseo here and some of the crowd went on here, and this was happening up here, and we were down here

R.B. In other words, this happened to the 25% that left and went the other way, down 31st Street

L.B. Yeah, and then all these kids started running back this way, and started just running down toward us, and the police started chasing them and throwing gas, and by the time they got to us, the police were coming from all directions throwing gas at everybody, so this whole crowd here, just scattered out all over the park and everyplace and they were bunching up around the park in maybe 5's and 6's and so forth

R.B. So it was a park right there at that corner and they went into the park then to get away from the gas

L.B. Right, and then the police started throwing gas into the park

R.B. Well, now, how heavy was the gas there and did you get a dose of it?

L.B. Sure, I got- I couldn't help it, they were throwing it- I'd say maybe

R.B. Just every where, just ---

L.B.

Right, I'd say maybe 4, 5, 6 maybe 10 canisters were thrown. That's just my estimate, I'm not sure, I have no definite way of saying

R.B.

Well, --- what was the reaction of the people when they dumped the gas, did they run, or did some of them fall down or were any of them knocked unconscious, did you notice?

L.B.

No, not knocked unconscious of the gas, but a lot of them fell down and especially the younger kids that had no experience, or hadn't read anything on any ways to combat the affect of gas and the first thing they did was to rub their eyes, and this is terrible, once - any person is blind- the first thing he's going to reach for is something to hold up against and if they can't find anything he's going to lay down on the ground, you know -- and all these kids, you know, they fell on the ground and started rubbing their eyes and rolling around on the ground and so forth, it was terrible. A lot of these little bitty kids, were begging, pleading, please help them all like this, rolling around on the ground, and this is where the fire really broke out. These kids fled into the park and behind these apartment buildings and things and they came out from back here with bricks and rocks and sticks and stones and immediately, to throw at everything white that came out Paseo, in either direction. This is what happened. Well, I gotta go

R.B.

Okay