thanks to Ellen (

A verbatim copy of John's tape on civil rights

s involvement in the activities surrounding the black community, and our involvement in the civil rights movement during these very eventful years that we lived in the South. You know, growing up as a boy, I had gone to school in Cincinnati with black children. We had integrated schools, we had wonderful black friends. It was a normal way of life for me. In my traveling days, you know I told you I had a chauffeur named Rabbit, and I remember how humbly he would step aside when he was walking on the sidewalk toward a white person and always the white person had the right of way. Or if he would come into the store, whatever into a house, into a restaurant, off would come his cap immediately, and he always was deferential to the white person. This was ingrained in the black people. I remember that they were denied good educations. Rabbit, for instance, was once driving through Birmingham with me. He was driving the car, and all at once he jammed on the brakes, and I said, "Why did you stop, Rabbit?" And he said, "Well, the sign there says 'Stop.'" And I looked at it and said, "That's bus stop." Which is an indication of the education that some of these poor folks had. So anyway, when I lived in Rome and started to work in the store, one of the first things I noticed was that our salespeople would address all the black customers who came in by their first names or by no name whatsoever whereas all the white customers were known, just as the black customers were known to all of us, and they were greeted with "Mr." or "Mrs." unless you were on very good terms with them, and then it was on a first name basis, but all of the black people were on a first name basis. I remember, for instance, the widow of the deceased very prominent black dentist, a woman named Louie Johnson, Louie was her first name, and she'd come in the store, always in a dignified manner, always beautifully dressed, very cultured and well-educated. And these little girls, salespeople, would say, "What do you want, Louie?" Well, we said this is something that's got to stop, that people who come into Esserman's Store must be treated with courtesy regardless of their color or their station in life. There was some resistance on the part of our salespeople to this. They had been raised in an entirely different culture, and this was ingrained in them. But it was a question of either or, and it wasn't long before we were the only store in town that was addressing all our customers with a courtesy title like Mr. or Mrs. and giving them a kind of respect that any individual would deserve. In addition to that, at the time there were no restroom facilities for black people who came shopping in town, and we had a nice restroom for the men and a nice restroom for the ladies upstairs, but when black customers came in, there was no way that they could use these facilities. Well, it wasn't long before we had a little meeting, and we said we are going to open up our restrooms to the black community just as well as to the whites. And, once again, we were told, "Oh, you're going to lose a lot of customers. Your salespeople are really going to resent this." We said, "Sorry, Charlie, but that's the way it is." And to their credit, the Esserman family really went along with this. You know, they felt the old Jewish ethic, that the dignity of the individual must be preserved. I always did respect them for the support they gave to this idea. We opened up the restrooms, and not long afterwards, so did the rest of the community.

Another of the deprivations given the black customers was the fact that they couldn't try on clothes, that if they wanted to buy something, they had to buy it without trying it on, whereas the white customer would go into the fitting room and take an armload of clothes with her or him. Try them on, anything he didn't want, send them

back. If a black person tried on something once, it was his or hers. So that was something else that we stopped. We just stopped that. It was unfitting, which is not a joke, and unbefitting.

We had a black employee named Paulie McConnell, who was in a sense, a maid. She would go around, she would keep the fashion floor on the 2nd floor straightened out, cleaned, and at times she would even wait on black customers. And then the white people liked her so much that she would even help white people. And I would say that she was probably the first person in Rome who was black who would wait on white customers.

At any event, the black community has its own method of communication, and over a period of time, we started to see black people come into our store in increasing numbers, and we used to get signals, shall I say, that they felt we were their friends. There was always a tentative approach on their part because they had been conditioned throughout their lives to be suspicious of white people. But we gradually saw a beginning, a burgeoning, shall I say, of genuine relationships between, oh say, Mrs. Johnson, for instance, and a family there called the Thomas family, which had a number of members of ladies who were teachers, and they had a brother named John Thomas, I remember, who became a doctor. He and I were on a first name basis. I was Jule to him, and he was John to me. He was about my age, maybe a year or so older, and maybe a year or so younger, I don't remember. But he came into the store one day after he had come out of medical school and his residency, and he went into business in Rome, and we became fast friends. And he used to come in and chat with me, and we used to exchange ideas on how the community could improve the lot of the black people and how the black people themselves could cooperate in this effort. Sad to say, one day some years later, Dr. Thomas came in to say goodbye to me, and I said, "What's the matter, John?" and he said, "Jule, I know they need me here, but who have I got to socialize with? The man who shines my shoes? The man who cuts my hair? My wife has no real friends who have education. Our family is all we've got. I'm going up to Nashville to Maharry College there and become a heart specialist." And he did. And in 1987, I saw his sister and asked her about John. Yes, he's still at Maharry College, and he's a professor of cardiology up there, and he's done very well.

We had such good friends in the black community besides Dr. Thomas. There were lesser people, shall I say. Henry Payne, for instance, a young black man who really was obsessed with drink but who was the most loyal of friends and so dear to us. He would cut the grass at our house, come to the store. John Flood, who worked for us those years in the store, and whose children were named after Mildred's, after Ann Marsha. And Russell Gore, who came after John left. And people who worked for us. We had such good friends.

Through the years as I say, the black community, gradually reached out to us. I remember in the early 1960's, I was asked to speak at Main High Class Day, to the Main High Student Body on their, right before their graduation. And it was an unusual experience for me to stand there in this auditorium before this mass of young black people, fine-looking young people. I asked them during the course of my talk how many of them were going to go to college, and I'd say over half of them raised their hands. And I said after college, how many of you are coming back to Rome, and I think

one or two of them raised their hands. Which gave you an idea, you know, of the hopelessness that they felt about coming back then. Who are their friends, the janitors for the stores or the banks, you know? They really didn't have the good jobs.

I remember I was asked to help form a club for, you know there was a Boy's Club I had been active in. You'll hear about that in some other tape that I'm going to make, but there was nothing there for black girls, except there was supposed to be one black Girls Scout troop, but there was nothing, and so two teachers, one from Berry School and one from Shorter College and myself, in cooperation with several of the black ladies in the community got together, and we organized the Rome Girls Club. It was the first of its type, and it had a budget, shall I say, of maybe, maybe a thousand dollars a year. And it met in one of the basement rooms of a housing project there in Rome. There was no facility, there was no real staff, there was no equipment, but there was a great need. And I remember the first kind of classes or programs that they had after school for these young black children were classes in etiquette, classes in self-grooming, classes in a certain amount of housekeeping, classes that were so practical and so elemental that your heart ached, you know, that this was the primitive level almost at which we had to make a beginning. And years later, years later, I remember going before the United Appeal allocations board in Rome, when the budget was given them was around $1500, and with the black president of the Girls Club, who was a minister at that time, said, "Let me make this appeal." And I made this appeal for them, and I appealed to the noblesse oblige of the white community to their black citizens, saying that we do so much with the YMCA and with the Boys Club and with all of the other social services that we provide for the white community, and it is incumbent upon us, it behooves us, we would honor ourselves, you know, by supporting really properly the Girls Club. And they went from $1500 to, I think, $5000 that year. We were able to have a full time director, Perdetha Thomas, I never forgot her, and since then in the intervening years, I understand that she has become a state figure in the Rome Girls Club, in the black Girls Club movement.

So anyway, these were critical years if you know your history. But back in 1960, it was shortly after the Supreme Court had stated that segregated schools were unlawful and that, I guess, federal money was going to be withdrawn from supporting any school that was not integrated, that the legislature in the state of Georgia decided that it was going to close the public schools. And this created quite a furor in the, throughout the state, and before any action was made, it was decided to have a group of hearings around the state which would give the various citizens in the various sections of the state a chance to voice their views as to what should be done with the school system. Should it be closed, should various counties, for instance, have the option to operate their own schools, or would parents have the option to take their children out of the public schools and put them into a private school? Many people wanted just to close up the public school system and create a private school system and send their children there. This, of course, would leave the black children out in the cold. A Sibley Commission was appointed. Judge Sibley was a retired judge who was very respected in the state. He with seven other members, I believe it was, of the legislature went around the state in different courthouses, and they came to Cartersville, Georgia, which I believe is about 25 miles from Rome for a regional meeting there. And a group of us, a large group, went down there to protest, you

know, against the possible closing of schools. It was a very, very critical time, and it was a wonderful idea to have these commission meetings because it was a cooling off period. It gave people a chance to discuss, to express their views, and in the end, the local option idea was more or less a consensus of what would be done.

Meanwhile, we, Rose particularly, had helped organize a Rome chapter of the Georgia Council on Human Relations. She displayed unusual courage, unusual, because the first several meetings were held with just a handful of white members and the rest were, of course, black. I remember the priest from the Episcopal Church, Rev. Beeland, I think that was his name. No not Beeland, I forget right now. It will come back to me. I thought it was Beeland but maybe not. ..and Rose were prime movers in getting this started, and a friend of hers from Shorter College, Francisca Boaz, the daughter incidentally, of Franz Boaz, the great anthropologist from Columbia University. And Rose would go to these meetings in the back streets were in black churches at night and come out. She came out one of the first nights there that they had a meeting, and there were a group of people with cameras to take their pictures, and it was scary. It was scary. Rose had guts. She was courageous, she was counted, she was there. I was exceptionately proud of her, I really was. And Rose was in communication with a lot of the students. This was the time, if you remember, there was great ferment going on in the black community. The adults, who had really been raised in such segregation that they were almost immobilized except for a few leaders, the ones who really got started were the students. And there was a wave of sit-downs and student protests throughout the south. And it was inevitable that this would eventually come to Rome. And sure enough, the students from the Main High School would march periodically from the school downtown and would sit down at the various lunch counters asking to be served. Well, they got the same treatment that was being given other protesters throughout the south. The lights were turned out, service was refused. In some cases, ammonia was thrown on the counter there and they were left to sit there to inhale the terrible fumes of the ammonia. In addition to that, after a while, the police departments were on hand, and they started to arrest these children. Put them in jail. Put kids in jail. And I remember, for instance, one day when there was a march and the children ended up at the J.C. Murphy store at the counter there, and outside the store was a mob of jeering white students and white adults, and these black kids quietly, in just a very orderly fashion, walked into this Murphy's store, sat down at the counters there, and amid all this noise and confusion and jeering, just sat there very quietly, whereupon the management turned out the lights, and that was it. And listen, meanwhile, all of the towns in the south: Albany, Georgia; Atlanta, Georgia: there was great, great trauma on how to resolve this problem. Ultimately, you know, and I'll never forget this experience, the counters were integrated.

I'll tell you the most interesting story for me, at least, I was very active in the Chamber of Commerce, which I'll talk about also at another time, and I had just been the president the previous year, I believe, when I went to a meeting at the Chamber of Commerce, which was called by all of the store owners who had lunch counters. Restaurantuers, but particularly the chain stores: the Woolworths, Kress, the Walgreen Drug Stores, there must have been 20 or 25 people there who were discussing, "What do you do about all these marches that are coming in? How do you face it? We can't just stay closed. You know we are businesses." The national firms were prepared,

really, to open up their lunch counters, because that was national policy, but they followed local policy at a local level. I remember going to this particular meeting and being a spokesman for the Chamber of Commerce there. Our next door neighbor two doors down from our store was a Walgreen drug store whose owner was a fellow named Jim Keith. And I remember at this meeting saying that we've got to get together. If everyone would open up their counters at the same time, I said this thing could be knocked because that's the way it was resolved, I think, in Albany, Georgia. Jim Keith got up and said, "Jule, you have no goddamn business telling us what to do. You don't have a lunch counter, you don't have to have all these problems." And there he was. I was really talked down in front of that crowd, and I got up and I said, "Jim Keith, you can talk about your lunch counter, but I'm talking about Rome, Georgia. There's a bunch of us fellas who work for the Chamber of Commerce and have given everything we have got to make this town a great town. We try to get industry in here that will help every business in this town. All we've got to do is get a hard line reputation, and we can forget about any industry down the line here for the next 25 or 50 years." And with that, everybody supported me! And it was agreed, it was agreed at that meeting that everybody would open up his lunch counter to anybody on a given day and without any advance notice, without any fanfare, and this was done, and there was absolutely nothing, no event happened because of it, and they were integrated after that.

But coming back to these marches that the students made. That was the year I was president of the Chamber of Commerce, and I had access to all the information that was going on. And every morning I would go over to the Chamber and I'd have my contact there, and I would find out whether or not the police department was going to arrest students that day. Some days they just let them march. Some days they would arrest them, and after a while, the kids were spending nights in the jails and some of them getting out on bail. Rose has a number of letters from these kids who gave them to her personally about their experiences there. And something that will make most interesting reading for you all down through the years. Anyway, I'd go back to the store, and I'd call up Rose. I'd say, "Rose," and this was our underground connection, so to speak, I'd say, "Rose, no," which meant they weren't going to arrest them that day. Rose, in turn, would call up her contact at Shorter College, that would be Francisca Boaz. Francisca would leave her class. She taught dance and physical ed there at Shorter College. She'd leave her class and drive out to Main High School, where she would contact the principal there, whose name was Dr. Aycock. He, in turn, was the strategist for the students, and he would tell them on those days to march. So that's how we got around getting the children arrested. And that was really one of the real honest-to-good experiences that we had living down there, you know.

It was around 1961 or 1962, I forget which, I think '61, that the black community came to the Chamber of Commerce for the first time and said, "We want to have a meeting with representatives of the white community." And it was agreed that we should meet with these black citizens because, listen, we were leading, we were trying to, and I don't think it is self-serving to say that I was pushing the Chamber to cooperate with the black community and so...

And let me talk to you about a couple of things before I talk to you about this grievance committee. When I had been president of the Chamber of Commerce, I

remember, the year that we had our, the time of the year, when we had our regular meeting about Career Day, which was something that we had every year. And we had there the superintendants of the city schools and of the county schools, we had the representative of the state Board of Education and from the state Chamber of Commerce, who was from the education committee. Plus several members of our committee, and it was agreed at the time, in five minutes they had an agreement that we would have our Career Day as usual at the high school, East Rome High School. West Rome had not been built yet, and that yes, this lady from Atlanta who represented the Chamber said that the chairman of the board of Emory University would could come and be our speaker, and it was all agreed upon. Everybody was ready to get up, and I said, "Just a minute, everybody. We've got a speaker for the Career Day for the white children, how about for Main High School, for the black school?" And, you know, they stopped short, they just stopped short and then one of them said, "We've never done that before." Another one said, "Why not?" And I remember John Bertrand, who was the president of Berry School at that time, was one the committee. I think he was chairman of the education committee in fact. He supported the idea, and I loved that man always for his wonderful views and so we did it. We agreed to do it. It had never been done before, and I'll never forget the day we sat up there on the platform, on the stage there of the Main High School, and this black man from the Georgia Employment Service, I guess you might call it, Bureau of Employment, who gave the whole black student body this talk, and he held up his briefcase. I'll never forget what he said. He said, "Right here in this briefcase I've got job requests for maybe 15 or 20 good typists who know English well and I've got jobs waiting for them. Go out and get that education. I've got the jobs for you." And sitting up there behind him were members of the Board of Education, white members, a new experience for them, too, you can believe me.

Well anyway back to this black/white grievance meeting we had. I was one of five people appointed to represent Rome, the white community, and the black people came, there were 5 of them, as I remember and 5 of us, and the ones I can remember: one was a barber, one a minister, one was a painter. I'll never forget what he said. He said that he wants to live to see the time when "White only" comes off, but you know at the risk of not hopefully boring you but at the risk of taking a little longer on this subject, and it's going to take a little bit of time, I'm going to read out to you the list of grievances that this group brought to us that you've got an idea of what their thinking was about and here's the way it started: "We, the Negro citizens of Rome and Floyd County, hereby wish to respectfully submit the following grievances: A) Economic (this they assigned to me). 1) Qualified Negro boys and girls, men and women are not given jobs other than menial ones, with the business firms in Rome department stores, grocery stores, five and dime stores, not even the federal institutions as the post office and office of social security. There should be equitable distribution of jobs based on qualification and merit and not on race. ... Negro (?) doctors who would come into the community and help with much-needed medical care. 4) Each year we have graduated a large number of young people. Not one job of any significance has ever been made available to any one of these graduates.

Now the second section was B, had to do with housing, and this was assigned to a fellow named Sam Doss. 1) The city offers no section where Negroes can buy

better homes at low down payments and monthly installments. 2) Street lighting in Negro neighborhoods is far from adequate, even the Park Home area, a recently constructed government and city project, is poorly lighted. 3) No opportunity to buy wherever homes are available without a rise in price. 4) Almost impassable streets in many Negro sections despite high taxes that are levied on all alike.

The third category was public facilities, and this was Billy Hoffman was given this. 1) All signs in all places designating areas for Negroes are offensive. They're over entrances, drinking fountains, tables at the courthouse used for filling out blanks when applying for drivers' license. 2) Schools should be open to all alike. Students attend school in sections where they live. 3) Negroes be welcome and informed about the new vocational school in Floyd County and 4) desegregation of all buses.

The fourth section was D for voting, and this was also assigned to Billy Hoffman. There should be no separate sheet for recording the Negroes' taxes. What is the purpose of this? It does not provide for a tax cut. The law enforcement. This was given to Tulle Rowe. 1) In many school areas, there are no signs conspicuously posted to warn drivers to go slow. There is no regularly assigned officer to see that these are honored in Negro sections. The same holds true for residential sections where children play. 2) There is laxity in the law when whites commit crimes against Negroes. Boy, that's so true. 3) All law enforcement officers should have the same authority with regard to all persons. They had a couple of Negro officers, and boy, they were afraid to arrest a white person. And finally, for recreation (this was given to Dan Hanks): 1) There are too few public parks open to Negroes. 2) There is a lack of necessary equipment in the parks in Negro communities. 3) All theaters should be open to Negroes. They appreciate enjoyment and culture, too. And 4) the restaurants and lunch counters should serve everyone. Negroes are human beings. Their basic needs are the same as the white mans'.

Well, I don't know how many of these things basically were acted upon at the time, but I remember in the discussion that followed one of the, for instance, on the economic sections, one of the black men said to me, said, "Mr. Levin, would you hire a black salesperson in your store?" I said, "We certainly would. All we want is anyone who's qualified; we're glad to do it." And Esserman's turned out to be the first store to hire a black salesperson. And many of these requests were implemented in the ensuing years. You know, you go back to Rome now and you see practically all of these things now have been acted upon. Although, it really took a tremendous amount of travail.

Rose tells this story, which I think is a great story, about the contest, the art contest that was held in the public schools. The winning picture that was drawn was to be put on display in the public library downtown, and so when the judges did choose the winning art, it turned out to be the work of a black child. And they really were in a dilemma because all the schools were going to be invited to see this art, and the blacks were not allowed in the library. There was no black library for the black community. And except in the school, what little they had. And so the library trustees were in kind of a dilemma. But they ended up by solving it in this way: there was an entrance hall before you got into the main library, which was a small, kind of a small lobby, and they just put that winning picture up there in the lobby. You know, there was a very small little entrance way as you come in. There it was, and they got around

it, which will give you an idea of some of the crazy things that went on.

Well, anyway, things got better, and I remember I got a lovely letter when we were leaving Rome, Georgia, from the executive of the Georgia Council on Human Relations, thanking us for the job we did, and when we left Rome, I guess we were probably the only ~~black (I assume he meant~~ white) couple that were ever given a testimonial by the black community. The board of the Rome Girls' Club, which really represented the leadership of the black community, invited us to a testimonial dinner at the Thankful Baptist Church. That was on the 16th of May in 1963. And there we were given a real public farewell. It was a very wonderful evening, a very sentimental evening in many ways for us because already we were heartsick about leaving these good friends and these wonderful experiences. And I remember after all the thanks and the praise and the award had been given us, I was talking to a woman whose name was Myrtle Jones whose son, incidentally, became the chairman of the city council of the city of Atlanta. And she was a fine teacher, and I said, she was congratulating me, and I said, " Mrs. Jones, I really haven't done all that much." She said, "Jule, you've done one thing that nobody else in Rome has ever done for us. You've given us hope." And I guess I'll carry that to my dying days. I'll remember that one compliment that really touched me.

Well, anyway, when we got back here to Cincinnati, I'll never forget this. I was asked by the B'nai B'rith to speak on Jews and the experience in the South with the Jews and Blacks. And I was telling them about some of the things that had gone on in the civil rights movement, and then I said, "You know, coming back to Cincinnati, I really felt I was coming back to a liberal Jewish community that was going to be supportive of this whole effort. Instead I find a handful of people who really are caring, and the vast bulk of them are just as anti-black as many of the old white group in the South." They sure didn't like that, they didn't like it. I'll be back in just a minute.

What's interesting, I remember, when I was asked to be a president of the Chamber of Commerce, it was in 1960, and a committee, the selection committee had me before them, and I said, "Fellows, you guys are crazy. You know what my attitudes are about so many things that are not that popular." I remember, my good friend, Warren Coppedge, saying to me, "Jule, we know what we're doing," and I always thought in the back of my mind that the white community really wanted to move ahead on this civil rights movement, but you know, from the peer pressures they got in their social life or their business or their church, it was difficult for any of them to step out, and here was a Jewish person who was articulate and who was out front on it, and look, he'd been a good, loyal worker for the Chamber and had capabilities, so he'll carry the ball. And I really got the feeling that they wanted me to do that. And I got support all the way through whenever I had some issue that I wanted to push, they permitted.

I remember when I was getting ready to leave Rome. I sat down at lunch with three fellows. One was Bob Shirer, who later, he was the vice-president of the Georgia Power Co., later became president of the Georgia Power Co. There was a most prominent attorney, John Maddox, a lovely man, who was my good friend who has since passed away. And the other person was a vice-president of the National City Bank, that was Billy Maddox. And got to talking with these fellows and said, "Fellows, you know, we've done so much and this town has got so much, has handled

it so well. I hate to leave. You guys are just basically going to have to carry on in this respect." They wouldn't make any commitments, but their sentiments were favorable. And I remember John Maddox was talking about the time he was a little child, and his parents had gone to Washington (they were very, very prominent people), leaving him and his brother in the hands of their black mammy. And he said while they were gone, there was this terrible flu epidemic. That sounds like 1917 to me. And he says he and his brother got very, very ill, and they were almost dead, and he says their black nurse stayed with them just day and night and nursed them through, and by the time their parents got back, they were recovering. But she caught it from them, and she died. And the way he said that, you know, you could just see the tremendous dichotomy, the mixed emotions that he had to have. It was the expression of a southern mind that had an affection for these people and a tug attitude (?) to give them everything they really deserved. There was the pull on the other side of all of the tradition of the old South, but it has changed and when you go there, I know you will see it, and I'll be back to you.

Just a couple of more little items. I remember at that meeting with the black committee on their grievances, after it was over, the white members sat together, and Billy Hoffman looked and me, and he said, "Jule, how can you say some of the things you say? You just sound like a communist." And I looked and him and I said, "Bill, maybe you were raised under a different Constitution than I was. The way I was taught is that everybody has the same rights under our Constitution." And to their credit, the other three fellows really backed me up. And Bill has remained my friend throughout the years, but it was a minus factor in my respect for him throughout.

A second thing that had to do with my quiet involvement in helping the black movement was, and I'll come to this in some other little tape that I'm going to make, but I made a lot of talks around on Judaism to practically all of the church groups and civic groups, schools in the entire area, and the main theme that I would really hammer at was the belief that Judaism has in the dignity of man, that the individual must be respected regardless of his station in life, the color of his skin, or what-have-you, and always, always, I was received with respect when I made that assertion. There had to be the overtones there of an appeal to them to basically grant this sense of dignity to the black citizen around them, but I just hammered that particular theme. And I will always be glad that I did, I really will. So, I'll be back.

I'm asking Rose to recount a few of her recollections about her involvement, and I think you're going to find this just fascinating, so hang on.

I don't quite know how to begin. I was, I became interested or involved in the civil rights movement when Fransisca Boaz, who was a dance instructor at Shorter College, asked me if I would be interested in going to a meeting. The first meeting that I went to was at the Episcopal Church, which was right next door to the synagogue in Rome. Father Daniel was the minister there, and he had gotten permission to have a board meeting or a meeting of the white citizens' council, of the Georgia Council of Human Relations come there, and it was the first time that I had ever met with, in a social kind of situation, with black people. And I remember shaking hands with a black man whose hands had been calloused by a lot of hard work. But anyway, it was a very interesting time, and I want to add, too, that Francisca Boaz was the daughter of Franz Boaz, who was the famous anthropologist, and she had just come to Rome to teach.

So I had a lot of dealings with her through this organization and through her work at Shorter. Anyway, the children were going into lunch counters to sit-in there, and they were arrested many times, as I'm sure you've read about or you know about, trying to integrate the eating places there. And I went to a party that Francisca had given along with Martha Griffin, for the children who had been in jail, and there was one young man there, in fact he was the leader of the group. His name was Lonnie Malone, if my memory serves me well, and he was 17. And I asked him, and I don't know why I did, when he decided that he was black. And he told me exactly when, that he was four years old and that he'd gone to the drug store with a friend who was white to buy an ice cream cone, and they'd gotten up on the high stools by the lunch counter there and asked for their ice cream. The man behind the counter kept pointing towards him, saying, "You'll have to go." And as Lonnie told it, he didn't quite know whether this man was talking to him or not. He kept looking around, but there was no one else in the store, and finally he decided that he really was telling him he had to go, and so he got down and he went outside. And he could see through the glass in the store window that his friend was getting his ice cream cone, and suddenly he could see his own reflection, and he knew that he was black. I thought that it was, you know, the most moving story that I nearly ever heard. And I came home and told it to Ann and Ellen, not knowing whether they were really listening to me or not. But some years later when they were both at Camp Tamakwa, Ann was giving the sermon there, apparently, on a Friday night, and her subject for her sermon was this Lonnie Malone story. And when...Ann never told me that she told this story, but Ellen did, and Ellen told me that when Ann told it, she cried, and Ellen said that I cried, and that she said that everybody at camp cried. So I thought it was you know wonderful that we had passed on something that I thought was special enough to share with a lot of people.

And in that time, you know, I went to a lot of meetings with this same council, and I had some friends who were in the movement, like Carl Griffin, but not very many. Most of the people who were in it were black. And we finally wound up by having to meet in the basement of the black churches there, and we would meet at night. It was against the law for blacks and whites to mingle together that way, and we were very careful not to be, you know, caught. We came out one night from a meeting, and there were people there with cameras, waiting to take our pictures, and I don't really know what happened because all I did was head for the car very fast, but I understand that some of the cameras were broken, and I guess there was fighting, I don't really know. But that was one of the frightening times for me.

It was, you know, I had visits from people that I knew, of course it was with the integration problem in the schools, and I had people who came to me to ask if we would be interested in helping to form the private school for girls in Rome, and of course, we were against that. We were, you know, really anxious to help improve the schools, if anything, rather than to separate the whites from the blacks. So that was, and of course, and I'm sure that Jule told you that we went to the meeting in Cartersville where they talked about having integrated or open schools, and you know, there are just so many things that float through my head, and yet, I'm not sure that I'm telling them in any kind of sensible order. I would add that I do have a collection of essays or stories, whatever you would like to call them, that the black children wrote about their experience when they were in the jail in Rome after they had been arrested

for trying to integrate the lunch counters, and some of these stories that were told were that it was cold, and instead of the heat being turned on, the powers that be, or the officers in charge turned on the fans, and turned off the heat. The children's coats had been taken away from them, and they had no blankets or anything, so they were cold. Their parents came to bring them food and were not permitted to leave the food with them, and so at best, they did not fare too well there in the jail. It was a hard time for them. But as we all know, it worked finally, and of course now, the black children can eat, or the black people can eat in the lunch counters wherever they choose. I need to sign off and don't know how, so if you'll turn this off.

I guess everyone looks back in his later years and tries to remember the eventful occurrences in his life, and for us the years of being involved in the civil rights movement in the South were probably the high moments of what few achievements we can measure. The influence we had was just a quiet but steady application of our efforts, our feelings, our philosophy, to a small community. In retrospect, we realize that in that kind of environment, in that size town, we were able to make a difference, that we were in a position of prominence, we were basically members of the power structure. We had platforms to speak out for what we believed. We basically were there at the right time for change, despite some of the resistance that was constantly in evidence. There was a deep current running beneath the surface that said change has got to come, and in a sense, we helped be catalysts to effect that change. I was very, very proud of the support that Hyman and Ben gave Rose and me through those years. They stood up for what was right, and while they would not get out in public and assert their views, they quietly supported everything we did and encouraged us all the time to do so, and for us, they were very, very high moments.

Of course, when we got to Cincinnati, we would not divorce ourselves from these efforts, and it wasn't long before we joined up in an enterprise called Fellowship House where we became attached to Mike and Claire Israel, who at the time were leaders of the Jewish community in the civil rights movement. Mike had been the chairman of the Ohio State Civil Rights Commission, in fact. And through them, and we were entertained a lot by them, and we met people who had been involved, people like Jim and Charlotte Paradise, people like Chuck Judd, people like Dick Eisler. All these were prominent civil rights activists in those years of the early '60's in Cincinnati. And I had a good relationship with the Rabbi Albert Goldman, who had marched at Selma and with whom I shared many of my recollections of the South and the civil rights movement.

When I became active at the Temple, I was invited to join the Board in 1966 or 7, I forget which year. Became secretary of the Board very quickly. It was a very, very conservative group of people, and I constantly kept pushing my civil rights views, feeling that the Temple should involve itself more actively in that movement. There was much resistance to any kind of outreach to the black community. In fact, there was at the time, an effort being made to change the location of the Temple and to build a new synagogue out in Amberley Village.

I remember one of the ideas I advanced to the Board of Wise Temple was to use the big parking lot facility at Wise Temple, which, Wise Center, which was then located at North Crescent and Reading Road. And I said why shouldn't this be a summer playground for all these black children in this neighborhood? There's such a shortage

of playgrounds. And after much resistance, I finally carried the day to erect basketball hoops and nets in two locations in the big parking area, and the recreation department of Cincinnati did supply a leader to run a program there one summer. But later that year, I remember, I spoke at Yom Kippur services; Rabbi Goldman asked me to give a talk during the break between the morning service and the afternoon service, and to the limited number of people who had come to such an affair. I spoke on Reform Judaism's mission to do social action, to supplement its study and its worship by action. And I'll never forget, this one man got up in the audience and said, "Yes, and you had these children playing basketball in the parking area, and they throw rocks and they broke one of our beautiful windows up here." And he was very angry that such a thing had even taken place.

I was chairman of the Social Action committee at Wise Temple there, and I remember with Rabbi Chuck Mintz, helping to organize the first, I guess it was, a council of reform congregation social action committees in Cincinnati, and together we compiled a social action agenda that had to do with employment rights that our black employees would have, of contracts that would be given to minority groups from the temples, and of a general democratic changeover from the white autocratic almost type of procedures that had been followed for all of these years. And while the Board passed this particular agenda, this set of rules, I often whether or not the practice was really followed in the years to come, but in any event that's where we were then.

I would hope that my children and my grandchildren would always remember their mother and myself for this devotion we had to civil rights and to human dignity and to the respect for everybody regardless of his color of his skin, or his economic condition, or his education. The fact that he deserved dignity and respect as a person, and I would hope that your value systems will enable you to have friends from all walks of life, for truly, truly, as a person, you will be enriched by it and as a human being, you will be a bigger person. Certainly, that was our experience.....