

George Lewis II
7/23/1978

I'm George Lewis the Second. I was born in Tallahassee on November 4, 1913. My father George Edward Lewis, my mother was Sarah David Lewis. I was the first of eight children. Okay you heard my wife yesterday that she had three brothers and I have three sisters and four brothers. Her family started with two boys and a girl and another boy. My family started out the same way and then my parents had four additional children. Two boys and two girls. I attended public schools in Tallahassee from about 1919 until 1932 when I graduated from Leon High and entered University of Florida at Gainesville in February I believe 1932. It must have been 1933 because the...I don't remember...it must have been 1933 because I graduated in June 1935. My wife's oldest brother Bill was organist for the University at the time I graduated and Clif and her family came down to Gainesville to hear him play and so she was in on my graduation. I had just met her a couple of months earlier down at the coast at St. Teresa and I ___?___ see her a little bit right after my graduation.

Ice – Her family had a cottage there in St. Teresa.

George – Her family had a cottage about five houses east of what is now Camp Week and my father had built a house, third house west of their house.

Ice – I see.

George – First time I ever remember seeing Clif she was...had been swimming out at the end of the dock, community dock, and she was walking up that dock toward the shore and I was looking out the front door of downstairs bedroom and I went after her ever since.

Ice – What did you major in in college, the University of Gainesville?

George – I studied business administration.

Ice – I see.

George – With Dean Matherly and Montgomery Drummond Anderson and Professor ___? ___ and a bunch of others.

Ice – Did your grandfather found the bank, Lewis State Bank in Tallahassee?

George – My great-grandfather.

Ice – Great-grandfather

George – Started a private banking business in 1856 and well he took my grandfather, his oldest son, in partnership as D.C. Lewis & Sons along about 1860 I believe it was. No, it must have been right about in the latter part of the 1860's I believe.

Ice – I see.

George – Cause he was too young, he was, my grandfather was in college at the time of the Battle of Natural Bridge.

Ice – Oh.

George – Right here at Florida State University which was then Seminary West of the Suwannee I believe.

Ice – I see. Seminary West of the Suwannee right. And did he participate in the defending of the Capitol here in Tallahassee against the...

George – He was at the Battle of Natural Bridge along with quite a few other cadets in the seminary and he remembered firing a shot at the Yankee on a white horse but he doesn't think he hit him.

Ice – I see. And then of course your father continued the banking business.

George – Well the second son went into business with my great-grandfather he was William C. Lewis for whom my youngest brother is named and they continued the

partnership until Florida passed a State banking act which prohibited private banks and required that all banks be incorporated and of course regulated by the State or the national authorities. And the national banks wouldn't let their commercial banks make mortgage loans to they incorporated First National Bank and at the same time State Savings Bank which operated until 1916 to serve the mortgage market that the First National couldn't serve. Then in let's see in 1916 the Federal Reserve told my grandfather that had to remit ___?___ all the checks draw on them presented by the Federal Reserve and said no I don't they charged \$1.25 a thousand I think to exchange back at that time so my grandfather took a state charter for the Lewis State Bank and then there wasn't any point in operating two separate banks anymore, so they consolidated the State Saving Bank into the Lewis State Bank as a savings department.

Ice – I see. Was there any other family, George, involved in the merger or in the ownership of the bank?

George – The bank was...First National Bank was principally owned by grandfather and my great uncle I believe and but sometime after the consolidation of the two banks my great uncle sold his interest to my grandfather who owned the principle interest and over a period of time he sold that to my father who controlled the bank until sometime in the 1950's.

Ice – That long huh? That long.

George – In effect he controlled it after he had given his children enough of the stock so that he didn't have a majority of it, he still controlled it for quite a few years after that.

Ice – Of course George you worked in your father's bank and came eventually President of the bank and...

George – That's right.

Ice – Chairman of the Board. Were your brother also involved in the banking business?

George – I'm quite sure that at one time or another all of my brothers and sisters worked in the bank. And all of my children worked there at one time or another.

Ice – I see. George do you remember as a child where you lived in Tallahassee? Where your family home was?

George – I was born on Gadsden Street about a block from my great-grandfather's house which had descended to his daughters I think who gave it to my father and that house is at 316 East Park.

Ice – I see. The Randall House figures somehow into your...

George – My grandfather bought the Randall House sometime in the 1870's and my father was born there and I think that his two older sister's were but I'm not sure about that. But my father and his youngest sister were born there.

Ice – I see. The house you mentioned in Park, is it still standing?

George – That's where my mother lives now.

Ice – I see. Your mother still lives there. Did your father's family come from the North or from the South before they came to Tallahassee?

George – My great-grandfather moved from Salem, Massachusetts to Tallahassee about 1836.

Ice – Why would he move all the way down here in this small place I wonder. What lured him South?

George – I don't remember ever having heard that.

Ice – And your mother's family, where did they come from?

George – My mother was born and raised in Quincy and here mother was an Etheridge from somewhere up in Georgia I'm not sure just where and her father was born in Mt. Pleasant I believe a little west of Quincy.

Ice – I see

George – And when I first knew them they lived in Quincy.

Ice – I see. Well then after coming back from the University of Florida at Gainesville I imagine you worked full time in your father's bank.

George – Well right after I graduated I started building a sailboat.

Ice – Ah. Good.

George – That was in 1935 and on the 4th of November my birthday that year I started working in the bank. And for about the next more than 39 years that's what I did. Incidentally I finished that sailboat which was a 20 ft. catboat designed very much like two 18 catboats my grandfather had built. I finished it in 1945 after World War II.

Ice – I took you that long. Did...

George – Had a lot of interruptions, going to work in the bank interrupted and courting Clif interrupted and some of our children interrupted.

Ice – Did it sail successfully after you got it finished.

George – We used it for over 20 years.

Ice – Do you still have it?

George – Still in our backyard down at St. Teresa but it's not in sailing condition anymore. We had to pull it out to have some fiberglass work done in the center board well which had become worm eaten and the guy that was going to do the fiberglass didn't get around to it and the boat started dry rotting.

Ice – So you married Clifton Van Brundt about the year what

George – In 1940

Ice – 1940

George – It took me five years to catch up with her

Ice – Five years to catch her? How many children did you have?

George – We have two sons and a daughter and another son.

Ice – May I ask for my own information how old are they, what range?

George – Well George Edward was born in 1941 on July 27 so he has a birthday coming up right away

Ice – He sure does

George – Van was born on May 17, 1943. His name is William Van Brundt for my wife's father. Clifton Byrd was named for my wife's mother was born on April 29, 1945 and Ben Bridges who's named for the cousin that Clif told you about yesterday was born on January 19 in 1948 on Robert E. Lee's birthday.

Ice – Robert E. Lee's birthday that's ___?___

I'm pretty sure you realize and everyone else does that the Lewis's have been here a long time and are considered one of the founding fathers so to speak in first families and it always, ever since I came to Tallahassee, which was in 1955 was always amazed and pleased that a sort of first family of Tallahassee was so interested in and involved in civil liberties and civil rights and formed and worked with so many organizations that were concerned with those rights and liberties. Could you speak just briefly about how you might have become interested as a young man maybe at school, maybe the church influence led you to this.

George – It was a combination I think. In the summer of 1933 my next younger brother and I had a good fortune to make a trip around the world with the Professor Howard Backman (sp?) who was the professor of finance at the University of Florida.

Ice – How did that come about, George? The trip around the world. Did your father finance it or did they have a group?

George – Two of our fraternity brothers from Tampa went with us and we had a real interesting summer.

Ice – That's most interesting.

George – And I think I must have realized sometime on that trip that, maybe Professor Backman (sp?) told me that the world was round.

Ice – 'Cause it was true.

George – You know that does make a difference.

Ice – Yes. Where did you go? Where did you begin and end your travels?

George – We left Tallahassee early in June and on the train to Los Angeles where we took the Japanese ship ___?___ to San Francisco and Hawaii and Yokohoma then we traveled up and down Japan on a train. We caught another, no I think we caught the same ship to Shanghai and...

Ice – That must have been some experience.

George – It really was. And then we went from Shanghai to Manilla and Singapore and up the west coast of Indochina to Calcutta.

Ice – How long were you say in Calcutta just for an example?

George – Probably a couple of days. We had to go too fast because we had to be back in school in September but we stayed about three or four days in Paris and five or six in England.

Ice – You must of course gone by boat to Marsaille and...

George – No from Calcutta we went across India by train.

Ice – I see.

George – And got a P&O boat from Bombay to Celan, I think they called it Columbo Celan at that time. Not even Celan anymore. Then across by another boat to Aden(?)

and up the Red Sea to Suez and we went by automobile from Suez to Cairo and out to the Pyramids and Sphinx...

Ice – Oh yes did you rent a car or did you have someone meet you?

George – No. We had a chauffeur. We rented a car with a driver.

Ice – Do you remember the kind of car?

George – It was a touring car but I don't remember the make. We went across the Sinai to Cairo and then back across the Alexandria where we caught the boat, which had been going through the canal while we were going into Egypt.

Ice – What an experience. That was really wide-open territory. I mean there weren't airlines in those days were there? Flights you...

George – No. There was almost no commercial aviation at that time. Probably some mail went by air then.

Ice – Yes.

George – But not very many people.

Ice – Was England the last place in Europe where you stayed for a few days?

George – We went by boat from Alexandria to Naples and then by train to Rome and Florence, Milan.

Ice – How did you like those places way back then? It must have...

George – That was fantastic country.

Ice – It must have been overpowering to see all of these things. Huh?

George – It really was. It's hard to take in but I remember a lot of it still.

Ice – I can imagine.

George – We were on a train from Milan to Lucerne and I think from Lucerne to Munich, from Munich to Paris and from Paris to LaHarve I believe and across the channel to England and some train traveling around in England and we went to Cambridge and Oxford.

Ice – Marvelous places. I've been there myself.

George – Yeah. Really interesting.

Ice – Have you ever been back to any of those places?

George – No. I haven't been out of the country since then except to Mexico, just to northern part of Mexico and Bahamas and Canada.

Ice – Um huh. And you feel that this trip this time in your life had an expanding influence?

George – I didn't do much about it until well let's see in 1937, 1938, and 39 I went to graduate school of banking at Rutgers University in New Brunswick and Everet Dean Martin was the philosopher in residence I guess you would call him at this bankers school and every night after dinner he would give us a lecture and I think probably that started bringing things together for me a little bit more and I remember running into Dr. Martin in the bar in Astoria Hotel in New York and I remember asking him if he were a world federalist and I don't know where I had run into the idea of world federalist as an organization and I don't remember what his answer was but in some way I had the idea of organized world federalist at least by 1939 but it was 1947 or 48 when Vernon Nash came to Tallahassee that it was really organized.

Ice – Vernon Nash was one of the first presidents or organizers wasn't he?

George – He was one of the founders of the United World Federalists which was organized in 1947 I believe it was in Asheville, North Carolina where representatives of four or five separate groups in this country got together and they were all World Federalists but after that they were United World Federalists.

Ice – That's very interesting. I know that this is one of your main interests and has been for a long time in your life and that you are still a member of this group and have been working for it. I guess maybe then your professors the trip, meeting these people gave you the ideas of well of all people somehow being able to join together in the world federation for peace and so forth. Did you...

George – Peace and humanitarian rights when...

Ice – Yes.

George – I think Jimmy Carter was about to get those together.

Ice – I hope so.

George – He had been going after the human rights part of it at least.

Ice – He had certainly been mentioning coming hard on that. When you went to New Brunswick up North did they sort of, the Yankees up there talk about your being a

Southerner or refer to your accent or some of your prejudices or anything like this in Yankeeland?

George – Well my accent was probably the main thing that would distinguish me from them. I don't remember getting much kidding about it though.

Ice – George I was wondering as a young man growing up in Tallahassee did you have any basic prejudices against the Blacks or didn't think much about them or just sort of took it for granted? You were raised in this type of atmosphere. I'm thinking about your younger years. You said yesterday that you weren't you were not necessarily given the familiar prejudices by your family, the usual ones which...

George – That's right. My mother wasn't raised in a prejudice atmosphere or background. My father was probably more, a little more exposed to the traditional prejudices than my mother, but he never did pass them on to children.

Ice – But your mother came from Quincy.

George – That's right

Ice – Which is more backwoodsey

George – Quincy must not be as bad a place as we give it credit for sometimes.

Ice – And therefore I suppose your treatment of...you had of course the Black servants in your home. I suppose well did you feel somehow that some the Blacks ought to be treated when you were a young man with more respect or given more opportunity even then I'm trying to find out how far back your...

George – Well I was taught the same way as Clif was that there was no such word as nigger. And only poor white trash used it.

Ice – But if...

George – And there was a lot of poor white trash.

Ice – Yes.

George – And it wasn't all poor.

Ice – Did you actually say this to some of your White friends in Tallahassee that there is no such word as nigger, you ought not to use it or you just keep quiet about that when you heard the term.

George – I don't remember doing anything about it except not participating that kind of activity. But I didn't get particularly involved in civil rights until long after I had been

working with the World Federalists I think probably the two most influential books on my thinking were Madison, Hamilton, and Jay Federalist Papers which Dean Martin had talked about a whole lot but that I had never read as far as I know. And the 1984 George Orwell.

Ice – George Orwell's book yes.

George – I studied the Federalist papers one summer and I read 1984 the same summer and the combination...

Ice – Clicked.

George – Golly what an impact. To see if what the founding fathers of the country had said were true and we kept going the way we were going 1984 was going to happen just as sure as the Constitution was written and ratified.

Ice – You felt that strongly then. That's why you've been a member ever since. How did some of your cohorts or colleagues feel about those ideas at the bank or here in town. Did you express them?

George – Well we had such different background and prejudices that we were seldom much meeting of the minds see. They by and large were prejudice against big government and me too only I figured the way to control the national powers was with the World Federation and they didn't understand the idea. I see my prejudices are different from theirs. Mine are principally against, what's the word....

Ice – Against intervention...

George – No. Parochialism including nationalism.

Ice – Okay

George – Sorry it took me so long think of that.

Ice – No, no that's ___?___. Listen I know that you and your family would meet together since you were...your brothers were here in Tallahassee your family lives here even after your father retired. I imagine you met together in the house, family home. How is it that some of your own brothers differed so widely being raised in the same family, same atmosphere? That always puzzles me too.

George – It's a puzzle. My youngest brother was a John Bircher for a long time maybe still is I don't know.

Ice – I can't believe that.

George – We haven't talked about politics in quite a while.

Ice – Did he go to the University of Florida too?

George – No he followed my great uncle for whom he is named and my father who graduated from VMI 1900 and my youngest brother Bill graduated there 1950.

Ice – Is it a difference therefore maybe in education background as a young man. Difference between the two schools or of the people he might have met that influenced his mind then?

George – Well Bill's got that military background and but some of the best military people don't think that way.

Ice – I guess you're right.

George – Like Omar Bradley and

Ice – George Marshall

George – George Marshall. My father was in school at VMI with George Marshall.

Ice – He was? That's most interesting...Do you know yesterday you were talking, trying to remember when the Tallahassee Council of Human Relations was first formed here in the city. I wasn't here I guess at the time. I came later. You had already been meeting apparently. When do you recall some of the first meetings I believe in the Courthouse wasn't it?

George – I'm not sure whether the first ones were there. But I think the organization had gotten fairly strong before we met in the courthouse. It seems we met first in church setting.

Ice – Tell me which church.

George – Probably

Ice – Do you remember?

George – I know the Unitarian Church was...

Ice – Very active in that I know...

George – used

Ice - ...And you've met, we met in the, that's where I met in the new building there near the campus at FSU but Clifton remembers when the group met first at the Courthouse. I doesn't really make much difference exactly when I just was wondering can you

remember some of the people or some of the programs when you first were in attendance?

George – The...it seems to me that the organization the Tallahassee Council on Human Relations was started just to get people together and exchange ideas. We did have speakers at times but I don't remember very much about who they were or...

Ice – Some of the people you can remember...

George – I saw George Conoly at the Leon County Democrat Executive meeting last night. He was one of the first ones I remember at a Tallahassee Council Meeting. I've been wondering since we talked yesterday what part of the Southern Regional Council had to do with starting the Tallahassee Council on Human Relations. I remember that somebody from the Council came to Tallahassee a long time ago. But I don't remember who it was.

Ice – I don't either remember. I remember that we did...were visited by the member. I don't know whether it was the president or not of the Southern Region Conference or not but anyway we paid dues I know to the state-wide organization and also to the Southern Regional Council. It was the only place.

George – Excuse me. The Southern Regional Council supported the Florida Council after it was started by sending an executive director down here.

Ice – Oh I see. Of course since you were the treasurer way way back you remember when you first became the treasurer of the group? You took over...Jim Shaw I think or something like that or vice versa.

George – Seems like the Tallahassee Council was started in the early '50's but I don't remember the year.

Ice – That would be my guess. How large was it to do you remember when you first attended it?

George – Probably 15 or 20 people.

Ice – Yeah, that's about what I remember. It was a small group. And when you attended of course there were Blacks in attendance, you just mentioned Conoley.

George – Fairly well integrated group.

Ice – Isn't it true George that people criticized you for attending?

(Tape stops recording)

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George – Well there were a few. James and Lillian Shaw and...

Ice – Um huh. They were members I know...

George – Susan Ausley

Ice – Yes

George – Annelle Street

Ice – Yes. I imagine you remember Morey Vance.

George – Oh yeah. Morey was one of the early members.

Ice – I imagine you remember Bobby Lenson and George. Bobbie Lenson the Chinese woman. I think she supplied refreshments quite often.

George – Clif and I were talking about Bobbie just a little while ago.

Ice – She's in Washington I believe.

George – Is she in Tallahassee now?

Ice – No no.

George – She's in Oregon.

Ice – She's in Oregon, yes. Can you remember any other of the Whites or Blacks that were in attendance just for the record?

George – There were several Florida A&M professors who were members

Ice – C.U. Smith

George – Dan Speed I think from the community.

Ice – Rev. Hudson, the chaplain

George – Right

Ice – at A&M. I can't remember can you whether or not any of the minister White ministers attended. Can you think of any?

George – I'm sure there were by I can't remember who. There weren't many I know.

Ice – No I remember. Did you yourself demonstrate or take part in any of the activities that were going on after the bus boycott began do you remember in any way supporting or...

George – In Tallahassee that was in 1955 wasn't it?

Ice – 1956?

George – '56?

Ice – Um huh.

George – I remember Rev. Steele especially in connection with the bus boycott. I didn't have anything much to do with that myself but when the big demonstrations were going on about the restaurants and theaters, particularly the one about the theaters I remember I was not in the march it was just about 100% Black I think. They were the ones that were...

Ice – putting their heads on the line...

George - ...being discriminated against and protesting about it. But I was very close up observer. I remember talking with one of the Tallahassee city policemen while that was going on and there were a whole bunch of policemen of course to try to prevent any violence and I was out there on the streets for the same purpose. I don't think I did much about preventing any violence but...

Ice – Of course being an officer of the bank you couldn't do much I imagine but did you feel that the police were very prejudice or were the White people, I imagine some of them were very violent, angry. Did you feel the police did...Stoudamire for example...Chief did a pretty good job in maintaining order.

George – I thought they did real well. But you know we've had parades from A&M through Tallahassee ever since I can remember...

Ice – What kind of parades?

George – Mostly I guess in connection with sports activities.

Ice – I see. Oh the A&M marching band and

George – football parade and of course in the last few years we've had a lot of I guess all the time we had Black bands and White bands.

Ice – Not all the time. They weren't integrated until...

George – Black bands and White bands in the same parade.

Ice – But how far back? I don't know. I thought about that.

George – I think that that's been going on for a long time.

Ice – Really?

George – Not integrated bands. Black bands and White bands in one parade. I'm sure that's been going on for years and years. And so when this the protest demonstrations got started in the...mostly of course they were students at A&M involved in it, it didn't make any sense at all to me that they were going to try to keep them on the South side of the railroad track down there with fire hoses, guns if necessary.

Ice – Which they

George – Should put on a parade for them.

Ice – They should have allowed them to parade you felt?

George – Certainly. Should have invited them to parade.

Ice – Do you remember when they did start to parade in protest? I remember the police and the fire chief and everyone did meet them at the tracks on South Monroe and South Adams and told them they couldn't come across of course they tried. I think there was shooting of some tear gas and I don't think anyone was hurt badly but I think a few were gassed somewhat and maybe some of the explosions might have nicked some of them but it was a pretty tense situation I know that.

George – My impression of what happened is just about the same as yours. I don't think I saw that but heard first hand accounts.

Ice – Did you hear of any other rumors or accounts of any other violence during those years?

George – I'm sure there was but I don't remember anything very seriously involved in the connection with Tallahassee protest except putting people in jail.

Ice – Yes. I know this.

George – Including a white minister

Ice – I know this that Dan Speed, Rev. Speed, and also Rev. King Solomon Dupont mentioned you specifically in their interviews that you were a big help that you actually opened the bank for them at 7:00 to that at least Dupont, Rev. Dupont, could get a loan to get some 400 Black students who were arrested that time out on bond. And they never forgot that I don't think of the help you were at that time. Do you remember any other

occasions in which you were directly involved in helping the Blacks during those times in such a manner?

George – No. I don't remember that occasion but I don't doubt that it happened.

Ice – Well.

George – But I did what little I thought I could to help by principally by trying to set an example I guess.

Ice – Yes, yes. Besides being a member of the federalist, World Federalist United World Federalists organization, isn't it true that you were not only a member of but eventually became the president of the, what was the Civil Liberties Union or President of...

George – No. I have been a member of the ACLU ever since I answered their 20 questions, all of them exactly the same as the organization did. I felt if it agrees with me like that I ought to support it.

Ice – But weren't you in...a member of another organization...I can't remember...here in Tallahassee.

George – I was let's see the Florida Advisory Committee of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.

Ice – That's it.

George – I've been a member of since about 1960.

Ice – Okay. You were a member of the Civil Rights Commission and then...

George – Florida Advisory Committee to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. In 1959 there was a Florida Advisory Committee and the chairman or the Executive Director of the Florida State Chamber of Commerce was a member of it.

Ice – Who was that? Do you remember his name?

George – Harold Colee.

Ice – How do you spell that?

George – Colee. And...

Ice – Harold

George – Harold Colee

George – I don't remember who the other members were except that Gov. Carlton was either a member of that committee or he was a member of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. I think that's what he was.

Ice – I see.

George – And they would be wasting ammunition to put Gov. Carlton on the Florida Committee if he were available for a member of the U.S. Commission. Anyway the 1959 Committee put out about a half page report to the U.S. Commission to the effect that we don't have no civil rights problems in Florida. That was the substance of it. So...

Ice – Did you do something about that eventually?

George – The next year 1960, the Commission staff reorganized the Florida Committee and Courtney Siceloff was the staffer who came from Atlanta I believe from Frogmore, South Carolina.

Ice – What was his name again?

George – Courtney, Siceloff. He's still with the staff in Atlanta.

Ice – Is he Black? No White man?

George – White. He came to Tallahassee it seems like in March of 1960 and visited Clif and me and finally asked me if I would be a member of the new Florida Advisory Committee.

Ice – The whole thing then was reorganize wasn't it?

George – So our first meeting was in Miami. Tobias Simon was a very active member of the 1960 Committee and...

Ice – He was a lawyer wasn't he?

George – Yeah. He's a fine lawyer right now.

Ice – He still is. Yes.

George – Hal Lewis from the University of Florida in Gainesville was a member of it.

Ice – Where is he now? Do you know?

George – I think he's still in Gainesville. Kaxton Doggit was a member of the 1960 Commission. He's still a member. Mabel Chessey from Daytona Beach was with the news Journal was a member.

Ice – Did this organization try to do something more directly about the situation in Tallahassee after '61 or 2 or so?

George – We've had between 1960 and time the civil rights act was passed in 1964 we met all up and down the State of Florida

Ice – I see

George – With the mostly Black citizens who thought they had more civil rights problems than what the 1959 committee allowed. And I guess White sympathizers and members of local human relations council and we invited public officials all over to meet with us.

Ice – They wouldn't meet?

George – Acceptance was practically nil.

Ice – Did you raise many money for some of the Black groups? Did you get lawyers for them or did was this just sort of a forum like the Tallahassee Council on Human Relations? This was Statewide from forum for hearing grievances or eproting on incidences.

George – The principle function was to keep up with what was going on, listen to people and report to the U.S. Commission.

Ice – I see. Did the U.S. Commission...

George – The 1960 Florida report was considerably different from 1959 report.

Ice – Do you remember reporting an incident that...is it not Daytona Beach but some beach that the Blacks tried to integrate and there was a great deal of disturbance. I don't know whether...

George – St. Augustine.

Ice – I imagine that was one of them I know. There was well anyway I know that that was one of the troubles.

George – We met in St. Augustine shortly before the eruption over there and we met in the County courthouse and reported to the U.S. Commission that St. Augustine was a bomb with a lighted fuse and the fuse was short. And...

Ice – Did the U.S. Commission help in anyway? Did they act on your report in that situation at all? Do you remember?

George – I'm not sure what the federal involvement in the subsequent problems over there was but I think it would have been a good bit worse if people hadn't had a chance to let off steam.

Ice – Steam. Yeah.

George – Ahead of time. It didn't stop it for sure but I think it had a the open meeting we call them...the open meeting __?__ probably helped defuse the situation.

Ice – Therefore George as I understand it during those years '60 to '64 certainly you were giving of your time, traveling around different places in the state meeting with this Commission.

George – Right. We met frequently during that time probably on the average of six or eight times a year.

Ice – I see.

George – But of course that would only take up a couple of days at the time.

Ice – Did you...? Ask you...What do you think, in what ways, I certainly know there were many...in what ways do you think you helped directly in bringing about of desegregation and equal rights in your own city here? I mean besides your example, besides your attitude and besides your talking with people individually. I know that was a big help, big influence. I was wondering if there were any other ways that you can think of that you participated indirectly or directly in?

George – Well Clif and I helped a little bit with the airlift of lawyers from Miami and transportation for them in Tallahassee. I thing that was mostly during this same time.

Ice – Did you receive any personal threats?

George – Not directly. Nobody said they were going...told me they were going to bomb my house but I had a report from a friend that that was a strong possibility. Of course that's nothing but heresy.

Ice – Did you support Rev. King Solomon Dupont when he ran for the City Commission? He was the first Black I think to run.

George – I couldn't support him with a vote because I haven't had a vote in the City since 1954.

Ice – Why?

George – Because I live out in the county.

Ice – Oh. That's right. That's right you moved out.

George – I think I've helped him...I'm sure I'd have helped him a little bit if I could.

Ice – Yes. For example Dr. Russell Anderson also ran for an office.

George – He was one of the first members of the Human Relations Council.

Ice – That's right. Human Relations Council too. I was wondering whether he met at your house or whether you had helped him with this campaign or any of these Blacks. There were a number after that that followed suit that had some help from the White community not only with votes but with money with passing out pamphlets and encouraging them to run. I was wondering whether you or Clifton were involved in any of the Black politics during those years.

George – To some extent but not a whole lot.

Ice – I'll tell you what I would like to...

George – I'm speaking for me. Clif has been involved in it a good bit more than I have.

Ice – Yes. Well apparently from your attitude in talking with you it seems that you were more or less in favor of what the Blacks were trying to do, even their demonstrations and their marches because you felt they should be heard and you think that the laws should be changed naturally. You didn't, excuse me, you didn't speak with say Sam Teague who was Mayor, one of the Mayors or you didn't speak with any of the commissioners to try to dissuade them or influence them in any way did you?

George – I've talked at various times with different ones to try to give them a little different point of view than what they were usually accustomed to.

Ice – Yes. You were alone in that I imagine too. I don't know whether, do you think it did much good?

George – I don't think it changed anybody's mind.

Ice – What did change? What really?

George – The law.

Ice – The law. Right. That's the only thing that really changed the whole situation. George you and I know and I say this on most of my tapes you know the tremendous changes since you have lived through them that have occurred since 1956 and the present time in Tallahassee but so many young students, Black and White, do not even know of the sacrifices, of the energy time and money spent, of the great changes for good that have taken place. Do you think it's important that some of our youth really try to know

this or remember this in their eagerness to move ahead they sometimes might forget that where we were and how bit it really was and how many people entered into this and gave a lot of their time and energy to better the situation.

George – Well I think they probably see most of the changes that still need to be made and...

Ice – That's true

George – I think that's good.

Ice – You think its good?

George – That they see that.

Ice – Instead of resting on our laurels they should definitely keep on pushing and say not yet we have so much more to do.

George – Yeah. I think they would still see the bad things instead of ...

Ice – Being happy about only all of the good things.

George – It's not as bad as it used to be.

Ice – Could you name maybe just one or two thing you feel that still have to be changed there in the South and problems that still exist in that as the civil rights say?

George – We are still a long way from equal treatment of Whites and Blacks and riches and poors.

Ice – Thinking about law, mainly about law?

George – Administration of justice, still big differences in educational opportunity

Ice – jobs

George – job opportunities and housing and

Ice – You think it will come about? Do you think in other words do you think the tings are worse right in 1978 for the Blacks than they were five or ten years ago or you think they're better?

George – Well it seems like we were...in the last six years anyway the rate of progress has slowed down drastically or maybe turned around a little bit.

Ice – Therefore if this is so we need another group. We need some more organizations to bring this to light don't you think?

George – Well there are a lot of people working on it. But the civil rights enforcement activities of the federal government have gone downhill I think.

Ice – Really? Become more lax and therefore the old prejudices among the Whites in control are coming to the surface. They were hidden but now you feel they might be overt?

George – Well I just don't have the feeling that we are going ahead like we were.

Ice – By the way many Blacks would agree with you on this particular point which is not healthy.

George – I don't think we going back very far.

Ice – No. Well

George – And the young people will probably come on in and keep things going.

Ice – Good. I have that impression. What then since we are on the subject what the do you sort of hope for or see for the future of relationships between the races. Do you think it will eventually be equal or do you think we'll never attain true equality?

George – I doubt if we ever will but if we can get equal treatment in from the law and do a reasonable job of enforcing the laws against racial discrimination I think we'll make progress over a period of time.

Ice – Yeah. I see. What would you reply to one of the men I interviewed who is a judge in Tallahassee that it really wasn't his fault that he had a job to do and he took an oath to uphold the ordinances and that why he had to arrest and fine any of the Blacks, Whites who where demonstrating in those days. How do you answer someone who says that this is my job and my duty. Do you say

George – I would say he probably went beyond the call of duty.

Ice – In what ways. In other words

George – Well he's a sworn to uphold the Constitution of the State of Florida and the United States and a lot of these ordinances that he was enforcing probably were unconstitutional.

Ice - Well he figures there on the books and he's merely a judge or a lawyer and he's going to just stick to the letter of the law. That's the reply that I usually get even though

they may be unconstitutional they still hadn't stepped on him yet or hadn't told him yet and

George – Yeah. He just wants to be overturned to a higher level.

Ice – Which is as I remember a lot of his decisions were – overturned and modified eventually but he certainly caused a lot of grief. In the meantime I don't think many people realize in just meeting you or listening to you about your life, your activities, I don't think they could really get the impression of how much George Lewis II has had to give up and has had sacrifice for your liberal opinions in this town. I know you're a modest person and probably won't say much about it but I'd sure like for the record to have something from you to that effect. That it has cost you in many things hasn't it? To take a firm stand.

George – Well I think it's mostly cost me in the opinions of the people who I have a more provincial and prejudice viewpoint that I have.

Ice – You mean it cost them more than it cost you or

George – No. Probably.

Ice – I guess I misunderstood. You mean that what it cost you was

George – The benefit of their respect, whatever that's worth.

Ice – I see. But let's be realistic. I think that you have taken some monetary losses. Don't you or haven't you? Am I wrong in that?

George – Possibly but I think most of the any monetary loss has been through whatever minor amounts I've spent in connection with it. Voluntarily.

Ice – Isn't it true though that your own family and brothers were, took a stand against your opinions, some of your decisions. That must have hurt somewhat. Maybe I'm reading into it I don't know.

George – Well my father told me one time that I shouldn't have gotten on the Florida Advisory Committee without talking with the Board of Directors of the bank about it.

Ice – Was he right or wrong?

George – And that I should get off of it. I did serve only two years as Chairman of the Committee and but I've been a member probably ever since I was a chairman.

Ice – You didn't feel like you had to ask their permission as a private citizen.

George – Well I wasn't representing the bank there. I wasn't representing anybody except myself and the U.S. Commission to whatever extent I represented them.

Ice – Yeah. George were you there at the Tallahassee Council on Human Relations when I was leading a meeting and came out very strong for the rights of the Blacks to demonstrate peaceably and there was such a furor among some of the Whites there that they asked the President for my resignation.

George – Yeah. That was at the Unitarian Chapel wasn't it?

Ice – That's right. I was wondering whether you were there that night?

George – I don't know why so...there must have been a lot of non-members there that night.

Ice – There was because of the meeting and the subject matter I was there was supposed to be two lawyers, Ausley was one of them, to merely speak about the legality of demonstrations and certain civil ordinances. And one didn't show up so I had to sort of fill in a little bit and I remember quoting Thomas Jefferson and some of our founding fathers on this point about not only the privilege but the duty of American citizens to revolt and to demonstrate and of course

George - __?__ declaration

Ice – Yes. And of course the American Legion was represented there I think Messer was present and some others.

George – I'm trying to think of that head legionnaire at the time we was at that meeting.

Ice – I can't remember all the names off hand. I have of course written down some names. I was just wondering whether you had were in attendance. I think you were.

George – I remember it very well.

Ice – And unfortunately Strozier was President at that time and they asked

George – He caught hell about it.

Ice – Yes. They told him that I must be immediately dismissed. I think Garraway was very vociferous about his and I think Strozier thank goodness stood on my side and refused to fire me and I remember a terribly tense time for Strozier at that time. I felt very badly that he was under such pressure. But

George - We sure was fortunate to have him here then.

Ice – It was. I was very fortunate to have the caliber of that man here or I would have been

George - The town was fortunate to have him, the university was fortunate

Ice – Well that's true too. Sad that he had a heart attack and died suddenly. But people I guess. I can't convey to them those newcomers I can't convey the tremendous tension that was that existed in Tallahassee and the violent feelings that people had against Blacks and particularly against what they considered Whites that sided with the Blacks and I can't really help people understand how times have changed so radically. They don't believe me when I talk about the...you couldn't have a Black man socially to your house without feeling the police could under a city ordinance could break up the meeting or party. They don't believe me but such things existed. It was a terribly tense situation. Anyway what I wanted to do just before we close this to talk briefly about some things that Clifton mentioned that I wanted to clear. I gather from her that you received a lot of harassment. That your house was broken in several times. What would that be in connection with George? Was it robbery or was it

George – I think most...I believe all of our break-ins at our home have occurred since the period of the demonstrations and I think it's been mostly in connection with our World Federalist activities rather than civil rights. I'm not sure but

Ice – I don't understand why that would be so. Why would your connection with the World Federalist Organization be a threat to anyone in Tallahassee here?

George – Well some of these five or six break-ins were undoubtedly by burglary as an objective. Last time we had one of the burglars had piled up a bunch of our belongings near the tall double glass doors on the east side of our house and Clif and I got home shortly after 6:00, we were late to hear the 6:00 news just two or three minutes late and when I opened the front door two guys had been squatting down in the middle of the living room and they jumped up and busted out of those doors and ran off through the woods.

Ice – Broke the windows.

George – Broke the door.

Ice – Broke the door.

George – Broke the double doors and fortunate they didn't break the glass and didn't hurt them and fortunately that door let them out because they had a bunch of knives down there on the floor and if they couldn't have gotten out that way I was standing in the only other way to get out. I don't know whether I could have outrun them or not.

Ice – You say that was two burglars robbing your house but other break-ins you say were different.

George – I think at least two of the others were probably official

Ice – Official in what sense, I mean CIA organization or something

George – Or something like that.

Ice – To harass or find information or to

George – Find information I think

Ice – Bug your phone

George – Well I don't think they would break in to bug a phone but that's a possibility but on a couple of occasions a bunch of Clif's files had been dumped and that must have been somebody looking for information.

Ice – What, what

George – I don't think regular burglars would

Ice – No

George – be doing that. They'd be looking for silver and T.V. and small items of value

Ice – Well then Clifton said she...this man called her up with a rumor that your house was going to be fire bombed. Now why? What were they wanted you not to do.

George – Not to do what we were doing.

Ice – What is so threatening that you were doing as a World Federalist I don't understand

George – Well that probably had to do with civil rights activity.

Ice – Oh that one huh.

George – That wasn't a break in that was just a rumor of a bomb threat

Ice – What year was that then. Do you remember vaguely? In the late '60's?

George – Oh it must have been, must have been somewhere around the '60's.

Ice – I see

George – But I don't know just when.

Ice – Well

George – I wish I had a diary

Ice – I guess all of us wish from time to time that we keep a diary. If there is anything else that you could share with us in sort of retrospect about your life or about the civil rights movement, I sure would love to have it. If you can think of anything that might contribute to our future understanding of the times of your

George – Well I've been a member of the Southern Regional Council since about 1964 or 5 I guess. I should remember the exact year and I've done a lot of World Federalist propaganda to the Council. I say a lot I've done as much as I thought would do any good because I think a lot of problems that the Southern Regional Council that has been working on since, I think it was founded in 1944.

Ice – I'm not sure

George – first integrated south-wide organization I believe while the problems that they have been working on might have been serious as we both know, I never have believed that race problems in the South in the last 20 or 30 years have been nearly as serious as the problem of anarchy in the world.

Ice – And the threat of war.

George – Right.

Ice – We have to live with this terrible threat all the time. And I hope that your

George – and we spend billions and billions of dollars to make it worse

Ice – Constantly selling arms of course to other nations that are rising nations ___?___ and then wondering why we don't have peace. I mean this is terrible to me.

George – Everybody talks about peace but as Mark Twain said about the weather nobody does anything about it. E.B. White write in the New Yorker quite a few years ago that when peace arrives it will come in the form of a world government.

Ice – And that's exactly why you and Clifton are so interested in founding a center for world law here isn't it true.

George – Right.

Ice – And I think that's a marvelous cause and a good one and I think you're right about World Federation and law. The only way toward a sound type of peace. I forgot to ask you when you were growing up in Tallahassee I forgot to ask what church your family belonged to or what church you attend.

George – From the time I was very small my family would visit other churches but our church was St. John's Episcopal all the time when Bunyon Stevens was a minister at First Baptist a long time ago he and my father were very good friends and we would visit First Baptist occasionally and Clif and I have been to the Presbyterian church on numerous occasions besides weddings and funerals and of course we've been to the Unitarian church right often.

Ice – Are you still a member of St. John's?

George – Yes. We

Ice – Do you attend regularly?

George – Well I wouldn't say we've attended very regularly in the last few years, but we've been out of town a whole lot.

Ice – Now of course the reason I ask is not just for information but was wondering whether or not your religious training or beliefs had any direct input or influence upon your civil rights beliefs.

George – Considerable on my both world federalist activity and my civil rights. I had the self righteous feeling not a few times that I was ___?___