

and...

POSEY:

Well, no. Look, there was such a few of us that, in the early days, that didn't nobody have any arguments much. He just refused and thought someday things will change. I want to get back to Kennedy just one more second.

HARRIS:

Okay.

POSEY:

This is a matter of record, you know, *you can check and* _____ mark my word^s. When he was in the Senate and he voted against Civil Rights legislation. He was really senator of the president. He *was later* _____ the president; he thought he was a jury trial^a movement, *an* amendment *there in* ~~was when~~ 1960^o they passed a law, a mild voter rights law, but they put a provision in there that before a person could be held in contempt ~~at~~ ^a circuit clerk or registrar he had to be tried by a jury, and Kennedy voted for it. That was John Kennedy. He was also, John Kennedy, was a close political ally of Nixon and Senator Joseph R. McCarthy. When Nixon ran against Helen _____ Douglas and was elected and was elected senator in California, John Kennedy

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gave him
~~became~~ a five thousand dollar campaign
 contribution. So, actually, that's why I
 can't understand why blacks are always
 yelling about the Kennedys, because the
 Kennedys were very pragmatic. Joseph P.
 Kennedy, the President and Bobby's father,
 was the chief financial backer of Joseph R.
 McCarthy who was the leading fascist in
 America. So, you see, the Kennedys only
 became liberals... Now, President Kennedy
 said this, he only advocated Civil Rights
 legislation after ^{Byron DeLa Beckwith} ~~Bryan Day Leber~~ ~~was~~ killed
~~for~~ Medgar Evers. They said that was the
 turning point in his life, that he realized
 then that perhaps... Then he saw the
 reaction of the white people in Mississippi,
 which is unrestrained joy to ^{the} death of Medgar
 Evers, and I think that's really probably
 what happened.

HARRIS:

Well, were you ever active in the NAACP, you
 know, out of the marching, boycotting, things
 of this nature.

POSEY:

Yes, some. In other words, I've been in
 jail. See, I was a writer mainly for Nation
 magazine and the American Socialist magazine,

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Southern Farm and Home magazine, which was owned by Aubrey Williams who was director of the NYA under F.D.R. Then, I marched a few times here in Jackson and spoke to boycott rallies here ^{you see} that's the night they was going to kill me in the church. But, you know, blacks, ^{I assume} ~~sort of~~ in Mississippi, ~~sort of~~ protected me as much as they could, because they knew, see, I'd be killed. I was the only white member, as far as I ever showed up at the NAACP's meeting.

HARRIS:

But did it kind of disturb you, being white, that the blacks were so ^{passive} to join their own movement to better themselves.

POSEY:

Well, yes. But most blacks were apathetic. They didn't think anything could happen, number one, and number two, they were frightened, and they had a reason to be frightened. Hell, when you know, you're black, but just taking it, if all of a sudden...

In ^{any policeman} those days every cop in Jackson and in the state of Mississippi were white and ~~even if~~ ^{that} ~~the police would have~~ wanted to kill you, they could without fear of reprisal...

HARRIS: Right.

POSEY: ~~and~~ ^{he} be believed that it wasn't a sin to kill you. So, when you put it that way, ^{that} there wasn't anything wrong about killing you, ~~Wouldn't~~ you be afraid?

HARRIS: That's true.

POSEY: So, you young folks don't pat yourself on the back too much. That's just the way the ball bounces. So, the mayor of Jackson, like the current mayor or what's his name. Oh, hell, I can't think of it. He wanted black votes, the guy that got defeated.

HARRIS: Cochran.

POSEY: Of course, Neal Cochran got elected and this other fellow, ^{just recently run for} ~~this~~ _____ ~~cc~~ city commissioner, ^{they} they wanted black votes.

HARRIS: Doug Shanks.

POSEY: Doug Shanks, you know, had Dr. Burns supposedly, and that's what the fellow got elected, what was his name?

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HARRIS: Oh, I know who you're talking about.

POSEY: Anyway, he had Fred Banks Jr.'s support. He did. You've got a lot of black ^{cops} ~~caucus~~ in Jackson now. See, I'm talking about a time when there wasn't no black ^{cops in Jackson} ~~caucus election~~.

HARRIS: Well, don't you feel like there's still in a sense singing to their music?

POSEY: Well, probably so. Yes. You know, they're not picking radical blacks to make a policeman. We know that.

HARRIS: That's true.

POSEY: Black cops are not actually, if you sassed him he probably wouldn't kill you, but in those days if you sassed a ^{white} ~~black~~ cop he would kill you. I remember a young fellow named Brown sassed a white cop about 1964 or 1965, and he was a college student over at Jackson State there, shot him. Nobody got arrested for it. Things are not good yet, I don't think it's nothing near paradise, but I have seen the day when if you were in this room

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the cops would come over and get you and me too.

HARRIS: Were you still in Mississippi during the incident at Ole Miss when James Meredith...

POSEY: Yes. I was here.

HARRIS: What was your attitudes towards that?

POSEY: What was my attitude? You mean the public attitude?

HARRIS: And yours. Did you feel that he should have been admitted without all that problem or...

POSEY: Well, I was a member of the NAACP, of course I did, but the average white person in Mississippi was hoping he'd be killed. In fact, Governor Barnett tried to set up a trap. That's the one thing that at the time that Joe Patterson was Attorney General, he wouldn't go along with it. They tried to get Joe... See, Joe Patterson was a very conservative attorney general, but he was a friend of Bobby Kennedy who was attorney general so, Governor Barnett tried to set up

a trap for Meredith at Holly Springs, which the highway patrol would kill Meredith. Joe Patterson said no to this but you've got to understand, in those days, you know, old General Walker, a nut from Texas, came over from Dallas and conferred with Governor Barnett and went to Ole Miss to lead the mob. Walter Walker, that wasn't his name; it was something else, but anyway, General Walker, ^{general} a retired. So, you see, everybody was they didn't want to have any Civil Rights in their place, and they was scared to death. I won't say scared to death, but nervous, put it that way.

HARRIS:

Right. Well, did you happen to know the former Governor James P. Coleman?

POSEY:

Yes. He was the guy that cracked down on me. See, what happened, he got elected by speaking to all the founding groups of the White Citizen's Council. See, Eastland was going to start it to elect his protege Paul Johnson governor, but Coleman jumped in and took over the White Citizen's Council. He beat Johnson, well, Johnson, at that time, really wasn't such a racist because he was

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about a fourth Jew, and he really didn't think there was going to be much to it ^{but} Coleman jumped in and took it over. He was a Universalist, which is a quite liberal religious group; it's called the Universalist Unitarian Association now, but before he decided to run and get into politics Coleman quit the Universalist Church and joined the Methodist Church and then he joined the Citizen's Council. When he was governor they helped ^{of} ~~had~~ the staff of State Sovereignty Commission, which gave the Citizen's Council five thousand dollars a month; hired Percy Green at five hundred dollars a month. Reverend Clemmon King went to Ole Miss and Coleman puts it in the paper - you can check the Clarion-Ledger and the Daily News. He said, "Any black man that tried to go to Ole Miss had to be crazy." So, he had the highway patrol pick Clemmon King up and put him into Whitfield.

HARRIS:

Well, why was Coleman so rough on you?

POSEY:

Well, because the fellow I was clashing with, Jack Tannehill, who was local Neshoba County public relations director of the White

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Citizen's Council, he and Coleman were close political allies. He was a colonel on his staff. I'd supported Johnson for governor. At that time, believe it or not, Paul Johnson was a so-called ^Y if such a word could be used ^Y liberal candidate for governor in Mississippi.

HARRIS:

Well, out of all the hardships you've faced so far through your life, did you once ever regret joining the NAACP?

POSEY:

Oh, I guess not. I always thought I was right. ^{I never did give a shit about it.} ~~See, I never did get to~~ a lot of people did. I was ostracized. I used to could walk by and people speak to me ~~now~~, but they never used to, a lot of people didn't. They put me in jail one time - about four times in one week.

HARRIS:

For what?

POSEY:

Well, they got me dueling; they got me for vandalism. Hell, I don't know, just any charges they could label.

HARRIS:

I think there was a reference made in

Florence Mars' book about your dueling.

Would you like to ^{Ex pound} ~~explore~~ on that?

POSEY:

Well, Jack Long Tannehill was local editor of the Neshoba Democrat, number one. That was where he made his money. ~~He was~~

----- ^{you know} His name was Jack Long Tannehill; he was second cousin to Huey P. Long, but ^{you know} the Long family feuded a lot. So, they run his tail out of Louisiana and came to Philadelphia, Mississippi. Well, he had that Long characteristic of wanting to be a big shot. He supported Coleman for governor and then ~~they~~ named him ^{since} he owned the Democrat, the only weekly county newspaper ^{Y-} they named him publicity director for the White Citizen's Council. So, Boots Harpole, who is a ⁿ aid, chief ~~flunky~~ to Norman Johnson Jr., who is chairman of the Mississippi Public Service Commission - both from Philadelphia. Boots found out, see, the White Citizen's Council started having ~~a clipping~~ service, and they found out I had written some articles in favor of Civil Rights. So, Norman Johnson Jr. sent Boots up to Philadelphia with these articles to be reprinted in the Neshoba Democrat ~~and~~

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Tannehill kept hitting me every week. He said I didn't believe in Southern traditions, and so, the last white man, that I told the other day, that was killed in a duel in Neshoba County was my great uncle, so, I said, "well, let's just fight a duel. That's the oldest Southern tradition of all to so, that's kind of a joke, but of course, they jumped on it to get me. His uncle, the sheriff, wouldn't pay any attention, but Governor Coleman sent the highway patrol in to get me. ~~and~~ when he did the local sheriff came out to the house and said, "You better come with me because they've got sub- ~~some~~ machine guns, the highway patrol, and they intend to kill you." He didn't really put me in jail. He just carried me to the sheriff's office and let me make bond; he put me under peace bond. Then, later tried me in Justice of the Peace Court to take away my I am Mississippi citizenship about the only fellow ever been so honored.

HARRIS:

Well, tell me this. Did anyone ever try to just jump on you and beat you because of your ideas?

POSEY:

Well, they shot my house a few times. No one

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ever got on me and beat me because I've got three pistols over there in the drawer. You don't beat up a Posey. Ain't nobody ever done that. That's kind of considered suicidal; that's ridiculous beating on me.

HARRIS: That's true. Well, what were some of the privileges the blacks held there in Philadelphia?

POSEY: Privileges?

HARRIS: Right. Were they allowed, really, to further educate themselves or what opportunities were presented to them?

POSEY: Well, damn few. They had dilapidated schools. Well, they finally built one half decent, wasn't much to it. Look, they just wanted the blacks to do manual labor and say yes to the boss man. That was about all they wanted out of them, and that's what they got. Those that rebelled, some of them were... there awhile, but You know, Charles Evers, was ~~that way~~ He bucked and rebuked the system, ~~but~~ they run him out, you see. Well, they did the Indians about the same way, the Choctaw Indians. There wasn't

a hell of a lot of difference.

HARRIS: But did anybody try to ever help them?

POSEY: Well, not really. See, well, a few people did, but hell, who wanted to commit suicide.

HARRIS: That's true^o but the ones that were trying to help the blacks, they were just about doing the same thing anyway.

POSEY: Yes, but see, what you don't understand, up until 1964 no one ever tried to help the blacks in Neshoba County^o not many because even the blacks didn't try to help themselves much, except Charles Evers. Like I told you earlier, they run him out in the late 1950s. You know, man, I'm trying to talk... You know what suicide is, it's when you're dead.

HARRIS: Right.

POSEY: So, that was just what it would have amounted to.

HARRIS: Well, what actually got the blacks interested in to better themselves ^{up} there in Neshoba

County?

POSEY: Well, some of them got ashamed when these first Civil Rights workers were killed. They then found^{ed} the NAACP chapter there.

HARRIS: Who was the founder of that chapter there?

POSEY: I think Amos McCullen was, an old friend of Charles Evers. Then they ~~co-~~^{o-}founded the Neshoba County Voter's League; then they ~~co-~~^{e-}founded the Neshoba County Development Association. A few whites belonged to this Neshoba County Development Association, and there were about three whites in the NAACP there. I recruited a couple.

HARRIS: Did you find it hard recruiting?

POSEY: Well, of course, but I mean certainly, sure.

HARRIS: Well, I had the idea that you were recruiting both black and white.

POSEY: Well, I'm talking about whites, yes.

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HARRIS:

But was it hard for you to even get over to the blacks? They didn't trust you that much, did they?

POSEY:

Well, they do now, you know. I'm chairman of their committee on governmental affairs, but you know everybody's... See, I'm a life member of the NAACP. They're not as afraid up there as they used to be. The trouble with the blacks of Neshoba County now, they're split into about three different factions. They're fighting each other like they are in Madison County. They've got a little prosper... you know, a little few rights. They've got a black deputy sheriff there now, and they got a couple of black policemen. They've got a few federal jobs there, a few jobs with the Welfare Department. There's two ways to look at it. One way is they haven't made a awful lot of progress, but the other one is they have. See, because they can vote free^{ly} now, but there's no blacks working in the courthouse except the deputy sheriff.

HARRIS:

If someone wished to fix it they could, really.