

[Allen, Emma]

MEMORANDUM

To: Tim West

Fm: Joe Sinsheimer *JAS*

Re: Interview With Emma Allen

Dt: November 29, 1998

Enclosed is an interview I conducted with Emma Allen, a local civil rights activist active in the Greenwood, Mississippi area in 1962-1963.

In the interview, Allen discusses 1) Robert Moses' leadership role in the movement 2) the role of different black churches in supporting the Greenwood movement 3) black Greenwood's economic boycott of Slim Henderson's store in 1964 4) and the difficulty of attempting to register to vote in Greenwood.

Also enclosed is an interview with Father Nathaniel Machesky, who served as a Catholic priest in Greenwood during most of the 1960's. Father Machesky came to Greenwood in 1951 and started working with Greenwood's black community in 1952. A founder of the St. Francis Center in the heart of black Greenwood, Machesky was an active supporter of the Greenwood civil rights movement.

In the interview, Machesky discusses 1) Dick Gregory's effort to bring food to black Greenwood during the winter of 1962-1963 2) the formation of a weekly newsletter/newspaper (the Center Light) to serve black Greenwood 3) the relationship between Greenwood's white Catholics and Greenwood's black community 4) development of economic boycotts in Greenwood in 1967-69 5) the formation of a credit union in Greenwood to serve the town's black population 6) the role of various white leaders in Greenwood during 1962-63.

Interview with Mrs. Emma Allen
Greenwood, Mississippi
May 5, 1986

J. Sinsheimer: ... Well, if you want to just start us out we will go ahead....

Emma Allen: Well, when they first come for meetings, whatever you call it, I reckon one person called it a project or something. Well anyway, when it first started we had mass meetings, meetings called mass meetings. We had them at some of the churches, not all of the churches because some of the people wouldn't let us go in their church. Turner's Chapel CME, Wesley's Chapel ME, Turner's Chapel AME. And we would just go every night to the meetings, you know, different ones would come in. Sometime it would be Martin Luther King, sometimes it would be some of our people around here like Mr. Jordan's father. I don't know what Mr. Jordan's father, all I know is Mr. Jordan, I don't know his first name.

Sinsheimer: David Jordan? {His father's name was Clarence Jordan, the man Mrs. Allen is refering too}

Allen: Sometimes it would be somebody like him. Sometimes it would be somebody like Lawrence Guyot. He might speak sometimes. Also we had Hubert Humphrey come and Senator {Representative?} Diggs. We just had quite a few. Medgar Evers, he would come to the meetings.

Sinsheimer: What was he like, what was Medgar like?

Allen: Medgar was an NAACP man.

Sinsheimer: Did you like him?

Allen: Medgar Evers? Oh yes, we really liked him.

Sinsheimer: Why did people like him so much?

Allen: Why did they like him? Well, one of the main reason they liked him was for what

he stood for. The NAACP, you know, was always getting something that helped the colored people. Not only colored people, just to help people, poor people really. And so that was one of the main reasons why we liked Medgar Evers.

I never had no close talk with him but we would see him at the meetings and he would speak there on different things.

Sinsheimer:

Was he a good speaker?

Allen:

Yes, he was. He was real good. Well, the next thing the marching started. When they marching started the dogs started to bite. Reverend Tucker, he was pastor at Turner's Chapel the AME church, and they marched downtown--now I was at work that day so I don't know exactly where the dog bit him at but I know they had a dog up there and the dog did bite.

And then that brought in more people from different parts, like Washington, Colorado, I can't think of that other place. We had a lot of students in here, I can't think of the name of that school, I had better not try to tell that. People would just come in. We had ministers, white ministers. We had a lot of white people come in from California, just different places. You know we all marched.

We were marching around the courthouse one day and I was in the march {laughter}. I have always been scared of dogs.

Sinsheimer:

You were scared of dogs?

Allen:

Yeah, I am still scared of dogs. But you know, the different people here, the whites, they would be looking at us, you know. And one man was sitting up in his truck and he had a dog in his truck and I said, "You reckon he is going to sick that dog on us?" And they said, "No, he isn't going to turn that dog loose." But I was really afraid of the dog, but he didn't turn the dog loose on me.

Sinsheimer:

Was he a policeman or just someone in town?

Allen: No, just somebody in town. Had one of those great big old dogs on the back of his truck. I guess he had him tied. I didn't know because I was too scared to try to see.

Sinsheimer: When you were marching do you remember who else was marching? Was there somebody leading the march? Did you march in those first marches?

Allen: No, the first march was when Reverend Tucker {got bit}, those marches. That is when the dog, you know.

Sinsheimer: You said you were working then, where did you work?

Allen: I was working different places. I worked for _____ {Mrs. Allen names a number of Greenwood families}.

Sinsheimer: In their houses?

Allen: Yes. But after I marched they let me go because they really didn't want you marching. And I was also working at the Presbyterian kindergarten.

Sinsheimer: Presbyterian kindergarten?

Allen: That was my main job, Presbyterian kindergarten.

Sinsheimer: Was that white children or black children?

Allen: White. Well, they just let me go after the march, so they just didn't want you if you got in a march. Some of them didn't and some of them did. So that is one of the things that happened.
And I had two boys stay with me a whole-- well I think it was three months-- the whole summer.

Sinsheimer: You had two people stay with you?

Allen: Yes. Bill Hodges and Bob Masters. I think Bob's name was Robert. He was Robert Masters. But they both were from New

York. I have a letter-- I guess I can find it. I don't know if I can or not. I should have got this stuff together before you come out here. But I had a letter here from Bill-- I don't think I am going to find it.... And they stayed with us the whole summer and they would march, you know, around to different places, kind of sort of boycotting so they could try and see if they would hire some black people.

Sinsheimer: Were you married at that time?

Allen: My husband was named Reverend Allen and at that time he had a barbershop over on Johnson Street.

Sinsheimer: He was a reverend?

Allen: Yes. And when they were trying to get people to write their names on the piece of paper so they get them registered. He didn't have his own place, he rented the place.

Sinsheimer: The barber shop?

Allen: Yeah. And somebody didn't like it and they threw a brick through there. And after they threw the brick the man he was renting from told him that he would have to go {Mrs. Allen finds the letter she was searching for}. Now you can read the letter--now I think I don't know that might not be-- I have got some more but I don't where they at. But that one I tried to keep because that one is from New Orleans ain't it.

Sinsheimer: Right, sure is. That is a nice letter.

Allen: Let Steve see it I didn't show it to him>

Sinsheimer: Okay. Did your husband preach somewhere, was he pastor somewhere.

Allen: Well, he had a church at one time but he didn't have one then. He was just a barber, he just cut hair. Of course he preached sometimes for different people but he didn't have....

Sinsheimer: Was he Methodist or Baptist?

Allen: Baptist. He was Bapist.

Sinsheimer: When you decided to take on these two fellows for the summer.... How did you decide to take on Bill and Bob Masters?

Allen: Well, we went to a mass meeting and they were asking, telling that these children were {coming} to town and they were here to help us and they had to have a stay place. And they wanted to know who was afraid to take them and who wasn't afraid to take them home. So I took Bill and Bob. But I fed beaucoups of them. Bill and Bob would always brag and tell about my cooking. I cooked a cabbage, they just loved cabbage.

Sinsheimer: They loved the cabbage?

Allen: Yes, chinamen and everything come and eat at my house {laughter}. Yes sir, they had a big time eating. We would go to church together on Sunday.

Sinsheimer: Where were you going to church at that time?

Allen: Well, sometimes we would go over to my church, my church is Baptist, but my children belong to the Methodist Church that Reverend Tucker had on Walthall {Street}, Turner's Chapel. We would go there quite a bit.

Sinsheimer: What kind of man was Reverend Tucker? Can you describe him for me? What was he like?

Allen: Oh ... he was about Steve's {build}-- I don't know if he was quite heavy as Steve. Just a nice, fine-looking young-- he was young, he was a youngster.

Sinsheimer: Reverend Tucker was young?

Allen: Oh yeah, he was, I believe he was somewhere in his thirties, he might have been in his middle thirties or close to

it. I don't think he was older than that but he could have been, you know, but he didn't look it. He was a Methodist, Turner's Chapel.

Sinsheimer: Did you like him?

Allen: Oh yes, everybody liked him. So we just--I don't know-- well they would put you in jail. They didn't put me in there.... Now one day my daughter Ann and her friend, my friend's daughter, they arrested two of her boys, something like that. {Sent} them to the county farm.

Sinsheimer: What were there names?

Allen: I believe it was Queen and Harris because Velma wasn't here.

Sinsheimer: What were their names?

Allen: Queen and Harris. Now their last names was Brooks.

Sinsheimer: Oh Brooks, okay. My daughter was Juanita and their sister was Rebbecca. Juanita said-- I was at work that day but she said they told them to break up or else go to jail so she and Rebbecca they came on back home, you know, but Queen and Harris they just stayed on the picket line.

They had an old black bus. We called it Black Annie. They would put you in it and take you on to the county farm or somewhere or the jail house. Bob {Masters} said, he told me, when they arrested him. Bill would wear some of the pins, you know, they would have a different pin representing different things. And they said whenever they would arrest him they would take the pin off and stick him with it.

Bob said when he was in there, when they started singing the freedom song, "I Won't Let Nobody Turn Me Around," they said the other ones that weren't in it {the movement} said they would have knives and they would draw knives. Now that is what they told me. He told me, "I didn't know they put you in jail with

knives." And I said, "They don't." And he said, "Yes, they do." I said, "How do you know?" And he said everytime he started to sing they would draw knives on him.

That old TV what you saw out there in the store room, we had it on the day they found the three boys where they buried them. Bill and Bob were-- I was cooking dinner-- and they was watching TV and when that announcement came on they called me, "Come here Mrs. Allen. They done found the boys. They found them in Philadelphia."

Sinsheimer: In the dam.

Allen: Dug with one of those road diggers, you know. They was buried.

Sinsheimer: Do you remember Dick Gregory coming to town?

Allen: My goodness I remember. Dick Gregory was on that march when Tucker got bit by that dog. Dick Gregory was there, sure was.

Sinsheimer: What did you think of him? Had you ever heard of him before?

Allen: Oh no, I had never heard of Dick Gregory but I thought he was just wonderful.

Sinsheimer: Why? Why did you think he was so wonderful?

Allen: He was so great, you know, so great. Bob Moses too. Did you know Bob Moses?

Sinsheimer: I have met Bob. Did you know Bob well?

Allen: Yeah, I know Bob. Bob was here some few years ago visiting a girl that go along with my children named June Johnson. Do you know June?

Sinsheimer: I know of her, right? Did you see Bob when he was here?

Allen: I went to see him, I went to see him.... Stokley Carmichael.

Sinsheimer: What can you tell me about Bob, what do

you remember about Bob?

Allen: Well, I don't know, Bob was so quiet. He could make speeches and he could just tell about you need to be brave and stand up and be counted and don't be cowering down and things like that. Bob didn't do too much talking.

Sinsheimer: It seems that everybody I talk to really likes Bob?

Allen: Bob was a fine person.

Sinsheimer: I am trying to find out what exactly about Bob people really liked.

Allen: One thing about Bob, you know, Bob was so interested in the Movement and he knew how to handle it, knew about telling you how to do to try to keep out of so much danger. And then we had another boy called Dickie, I don't know what Dickie's name, I think Dickie's name was Frey. Do you know him?

Sinsheimer: Dick Frey. I know the name.

Allen: Well, anytime poor Dickie was marching they would put in jail. Every time. I believe he stayed in jail more than he did on the picket line. James Moore-- you have met James Moore?

Sinsheimer: I have met James Moore.

Allen: Yeah, he was marching and they turned the water hoses on him from the fire trucks, you know, and knocked him down. And it was cold, it wasn't hot, it was cold.

Sinsheimer: Oh gosh.

Allen: And Lawrence Guyot do you know him? Willie Peacock?

Sinsheimer: Tell me about Willie Peacock? What do you know about Willie Peacock.

Allen: Oh, he was a singer from back yonder. He sang all those songs.

Sinsheimer: He has a beautiful voice.

Allen: And he could sing, he would sing all those songs. We had one song, "We ain't going to let nobody, we are going to let no jail house, we ain't going to let no sheriff turn us around..." You know, we just put all that stuff together. We would pat our hands and jump up and holler {laughter}....

Sinsheimer: Do you know Sam Block?

Allen: Oh yes, Sam Block. I think it was Sam Block, Willie Peacock, and I don't know if Bob Moses was in that or not. But--I didn't see that now-- but they were talking about they got in behind those boys. They tried to hem them up like they did James Chaney and Mickey Schwerner and them, over there on Maclaurin.

Sinsheimer: In the office there?

Allen: No, they were in a house there somewhere doing whatever. That was before I even learned about them. You know, they were here getting things organized. That is what they were doing. Somebody tells me that those boys had to walk the tops of the houses to get out of the way. That is what I heard. Now I didn't see that, but I am just saying what they said.

But I do know one night ... but somebody shot at Sam Block and missed him.

Sinsheimer: Do you remember the first meeting you went to, or how you first heard about the Movement?

Allen: Now I know how I first heard about it. My son was going to Cambell College.

Sinsheimer: What was your son's name?

Allen: T.V. Brown, he is a reverend.

Sinsheimer: Reverend T.V. Brown.

Allen: ... And what struck this thing off--Johnny {one of her son's friends}

was sitting along and you know they have street buses in Jackson. And Johnny was sitting on it-- he just got a seat where he saw one and he didn't get up a white lady or white man or whoever sit down. And they threw him in jail. Now that is what struck the whole thing. Then the people started coming in after that.

Sinsheimer: So that was right before Peacock and Bob....

Allen: Before Peacock or Sam Block or the marches or any of the meeting. I was working for a man named Thomas Barrentine. And he said to me-- see my son and this boy were going to the same college-- and Mr. Barrentine said to me, "Does your son know that boy?" I said, "Yes sir, they are good friends." He said, "Well you had better tell him to have nothing to do with him because he is going to be getting in a wad of trouble." And I said to him like this, I said, "Well, I am here and they are in Jackson, now how am I going to tell him." That is way I said it.

Sinsheimer: Now Mr. Barrentine was talking about one of your son's friends?

Allen: He was talking about Johnny Barber. Johnny is a reverend too. He is a reverend now.

Sinsheimer: So Johnny Barber and your son were in college together? And Mr. Barrentine was the one that owned that factory, Barrentine Manufacturing?

Allen: Yeah, he owned that and I was working for him at that time when they put Johnny in jail because he wouldn't give a white man or a lady his seat, some white person you know. And he just sat there and they put him in jail. Well, now Johnny-- now to get it started off Medgar had been meeting with those children and he was telling them things that they could do.

Sinsheimer: So your son called you?

Allen: No, he didn't call me. It was in the paper.

Sinsheimer: It was in the paper?

Allen: Yeah, they put it in the paper they had arrested....

Sinsheimer: Arrested these two Greenwood kids down in Jackson.

Allen: Right. Now they didn't arrest my son now he wasn't on this, he wasn't on the bus.

Sinsheimer: But Johnny Barber was? Okay. What did you think about that? Were you scared for your son?

Allen: I wasn't afraid because I had been hearing the news, you know just hear them talking about some of them coming. I would hear the white people talking it is going to be a mess. I would be around but I would be hearing them talking. But I couldn't get the whole gist of it because I didn't know what they were talking about see. But after this thing come through then it come to me that is some of what they were talking about.

Sinsheimer: What were you doing for Mr. Barrentine?

Allen: Cooking.

Sinsheimer: At his house?

Allen: Yes.

Sinsheimer: They told me he was a mean one.

Allen: Well, he treated me very nice but now I think he was one that, you know, he helped these people out in doing these dirty works to these black folks. I heard a lot of people say that.

Sinsheimer: Yeah, they told me he was in that Citizens' Council and he was pretty active.

Allen: I know he told me to tell my son-- he said, "Because that boy is in a world of

trouble. He don't know it but he is in a world of trouble. And tell your son that he had better not have anything to do with it." And I said to him, "Well, Mr. Barrentine, how am I going to tell him? I am up here and they are down in Jackson. How am I going to tell him?" And he didn't say nothing to me then.

Sinsheimer: What about here? Do you remember the first thing you might have done here to get involved? Do you remember the first meeting? Or how you got involved?

Allen: Now, the first meeting that I went to was the meeting when they said Martin Luther King was coming.

Sinsheimer: I don't think he was here that early. I don't think he came before when Reverend Tucker was bitten.

Allen: Lord, I went to a meeting before that. I just really don't know. I don't know I guess this one was saying let's go the meeting and the other one. I guess that is how I got started, really and truly.

Sinsheimer: Did your husband go with you?

Allen: Yeah, we walked every night and worked every day {laughter}. They would have a meeting somewhere every night. They would have it sometimes at the Sanders Building. Mr. Sanders was active and he let them use his building.

Sinsheimer: That was over on Avenue I?

Allen: Yes, on the corner, in there somewhere. He had a great big building, but they finally got around to burning it down.

Sinsheimer: In every community there are people that you look up to, you know. At that time were the-- I don't want to say leaders but who were the people who you looked up to in Greenwood?

Allen: Talking about ... you mean the white people?

Sinsheimer: No, black people.

Allen: We had a few ministers, but just a very few. I looked up more to Mr. Jordan's father because he could just tell you so much, you know. He could make such nice speeches whenever we didn't have nobody else to speak up. I just enjoyed hearing him because I loved to hear him talk. He would talk about different things.

Sinsheimer: I heard he was very committed.

Allen: He sure was, he really was, really.

Sinsheimer: Now did he go that Baptist Church that you all went to?

Allen: No, he went to New Zion, that over there on, that's on Carrolton Avenue across the railroad. A great big old redbrick church.

Sinsheimer: When you went to Baptist Church where did you go?

Allen: I went to Friendship on _____ St. It is across the railroad too, but it is right off of Maclaurin.

Sinsheimer: Who was the minister out there?

Allen: At that time? Reverend Washington, our pastor he lived in Greenville at that time because he came over here.... {Short inaudible portion}

Sinsheimer: Now, did they have meetings in Friendship Baptist Church?

Allen: Well, later on. It was quite a while before you could get a Baptist Church to open.

Sinsheimer: Right, that is what I heard.

Allen: Now, you heard right. It was quite a while. The Methodist people, they wasn't afraid.

Sinsheimer: Why do you think the Methodists...?

Allen: Those people are--I don't know but if you will just read they have these papers that come out-- if you would just read that those people are more equipped with this, what was going on than the Baptist folks were. They had no _____ about it, if they set out to do a thing they just go ahead on and do it.

Sinsheimer: Did that make you mad that your church wasn't open?

Allen: Well, I will tell you. One night we were at Turner's Chapel which is a Methodist Chapel and a man said we need to get all these churches to pen so people will know what to do. Do just like they did in Jackson . Said that their pastor wouldn't have a meeting and all the members got together and made up-- in place of putting fifty cents or a quarter on the table, they put pennies on there and he knew something was wrong.

Sinsheimer: So they made it clear.

Allen: They said you can bring, you can make them open the doors and let you all in. So finally, it wasn't Reverend Washington or anything but those deacons.

Sinsheimer: So it was up to the deacons?

Allen: It wasn't on Reverend Washington because Reverend Washington came over here from Greenville and marched with us twice around that courthouse. We would have a line that would go all the way around that courthouse. Didn't have as much space between people as from here to here {pointing to a distance of two feet} We had white ministers.... This white minister he wouldn't talk, he would just march and read his Bible, march and read his Bible. ... Somebody had a monkey out there and Doc Sanderson told him to throw that monkey in the ring, told him to throw that monkey in to march with us.

Sinsheimer: Who said that they should do that?

Allen: Doc Sanderson. He was a doctor, white man.

Sinsheimer: You were about to tell me about the church, the deacons didn't want to open up the church?

Allen: No, they didn't want that....They didn't want us in there. Well, we could always go to Jennings, Turner's, and Wesley's. All those places.

Sinsheimer: What about First Christain and Reverend {Aaron} Johnson?

Allen: Yeah, he was open to. Reverend Johnson.

Sinsheimer: Yeah, I met him, I like Reverend Johnson.

Allen: His church then was very, very small. You know it didn't hold too many people. And we also met at the Elks Hall. Harry Belafonte, I think it was, I don't know {but I} think he gave us a check one night for the Movement.

Sinshimer: Who was that?

Allen: Harry Belafonte. But we could always have meetings. I forgot about the Elks hall, we could always meet there. We could always meet there.

Sinsheimer: While all this was happening, did you have any children at home still?

Allen: Yeah, all my children. Two of them were home.

Sinsheimer: How many children do you have.

Allen: Four, two boys and two girls.

Sinsheimer: Your one son was ar Cambell. Tom or T.V.. Who were the other ones?

Allen: A.J.. Tom and Mabel's father died and I married again to Reverend Allen. And my daughter was named Juanita.

Sinsheimer: Mabel Brown? So what was the order? Who came first?

Allen: Tom and then Mabel, then Juanita and then A.J.

Sinsheimer: So how old are they today, do you know?

Allen: A.J is 35, and Juanita is about 37.

Sinsheimer: Twenty-three years ago-- they would have been little.

Allen: They have been in marches because Slim Henderson was a police at that time and they say--now I wasn't up there when this happened-- but they say this girl was pregnant and I think Slim hit her or drug her or knocked her down and made her miscarry. And the children marched around his store until they put him out of business because he will tell you you won't believe them folks put you out of business.

Sinsheimer: He had a little grocery store and he used to lend people money right?

Allen: Yes.

Sinsheimer: And then they put him out of business?

Allen: Put him out of business?

Sinsheimer: Do you know when that might have happened?

Allen: That was about ... let's see about '64, probably somewhere up around there '64. I couldn't say for sure because if it was a little after then it wasn't too far away.

Sinsheimer: Do you know the name of his store?

Allen: No, I don't. A little old grocery store.

Sinsheimer: Were there any white people in town that you liked at that time?

Allen: You know what I mean, I try to like everybody. I try to be like the Lord, He loves everybody whether they are right or wrong. Now that is my makeup.

Sinsheimer: I guess what I meant were there any that you felt were on your side.

Allen: Mr. Anderson, the Presbyterian preacher was on my side, and he is still on my side. Yes, Mr. Anderson.

Sinsheimer: Because you worked up at the kindergarten there right.

Allen: See, after they let me go in the kindergarten he hired me. He wasn't such a well-to-do man. I think they had six children... five children. And he told me that he would hire me but he wouldn't be able to pay me more than \$15 a week. He just wasn't able with the family he had.

Sinsheimer: Do you remember what you were making at the kindergarten?

Allen: Same thing.

Sinsheimer: Fifteen dollars. Was that five days a week?

Allen: Yeah, five.

Sinsheimer: What were the hours there do you remember?

Allen: I went in at 7:00 abd get off ... well I would get off around ... let's see they picked up the children at 12:00 and then I would clean up after that. It would take me about and an hour and a half to do all that.

Sinsheimer: 7:00-2:00pm? And then you worked in people's home too.

Allen: Yeah, on Saturday I would go Mrs. _____ this Saturday and I would go to Mrs. Barrentine the next Saturday.

Sinsheimer: And how much could you make there at that those homes?

Allen: Three dollars, four dollars a day.

Sinsheimer: Do you know how much money your husband was able to make during that time in his

barbershop?

Allen: My husband would make-- you know you don't get your hair cut every week. If this was a week for him to really cut all his customers hair he would make maybe \$80, \$90, or maybe a \$100 dollars.

Sinsheimer: In a good week. Reverend Johnson who cuts hair was telling me that his business--whenever....{the lights in Mrs. Allen's home went off for a few minutes} Yeah, he was telling me that it was whenever people had money is when they would get haircuts. Around wintertime when people weren't working....

Allen: Yeah, you couldn't do too many haircuts.

Sinsheimer: Now were you born in Greenwood?

Allen: No, I was born on the other side of Sidon.

Sinsheimer: But in the county?

Allen: No, I was born in a place called Carroll County.

Sinsheimer: And your husband where was he born.

Allen: He came from Alabama....

Sinsheimer: And you met him here?

Allen: Yeah, I met him here.

Sinsheimer: When did you move into the town?

Allen: Who me? When my two oldest children's father-- back about '32 when we got married.

Sinsheimer: You got married in 1932?

Allen: Yes, my two oldest children's father.

Sinsheimer: When you got married that is when you moved into town?

Allen: Yes.

Sinsheimer: What did your first husband do?

Allen: He was a minister, he pastored churches.

Sinsheimer: Do you know which ones?

Allen: Yeah, he pastored St. John's, Mclean's Chapel.

Sinsheimer: That is Methodist or Baptist?

Allen: Baptist. He would go every Sunday to a different church.

Sinsheimer: And that is how he made his living? Can I ask you how he died?

Allen: Oh, he had a heart condition. Dr. Sanderson said that the main blood vessel that carried the blood back and forth to his heart was swollen up I think. It had swollen and everytime he would go at a fast pace i would clog up.

Sinsheimer: Do you know when he died, which year?

Allen: Let's see. I believe it was about '44.

Sinsheimer: And do you know when you got remarried?

Allen: '48.

Sinsheimer: What else was I going to ask you? What about Lawrence Guyot? What do you remember about him?

Allen: ... I don't where I put it, but I know I had it {Searching for a letter}.

Sinsheimer: I know when you heard about that dog biting Reverend Tucker, I know people were upset. Tell me-- did that really make people angry?

Allen: Yeah, we kind of got upset with Dick Gregory . But one thing about it. I couldn't be at everything because I be working.

S. Saltzman: Did the Movement become a big item of conversation? Is that what people were talking about?

Allen:

Yes. I will tell you-- I was on my way to work one morning. The first thing happened to me-- some white children going up down Liberty Cash on the bus to school. And they hollered out the window to me, "Nigger." Well, I got on there by Delta Steam Laundry-- some white boys come along.... They were trying to hit me with the arrow on the car.

Sinsheimer:

What did they do? With the antennae?

Allen:

The antennae. {After the incident one of the white teachers at the kindergarten said, "Don't you fool with none of them Mrs. Allen because you might get hurt.}

Went to a meeting and got to understanding what it was all about. And I was getting in it. And after I marched-- what was that white man's name, Smitty that who it was. After we started marching, "Don't you work with our children?" Reverend Washington told him none of his business. But I said yes. "Don't you work at our church?" I told him yes. That is when the harassment started, they wanted the teachers to let me go. But they had a meeting about it before they let me go. And Mrs. _____ told me that I would be surprised who was for me. This was a man who was a World War I veteran and I couldn't stand him. Mr. {Anderson} could make me so mad. When I would get ready for something like tissue or paper towels I had to go over to the church and get it from him. And he would talk all this big talk to me and make me so mad.

Sinsheimer:

But he ended up being for you?

Allen:

Mrs. _____ I bet you can't guess who was for you. And I said no I can't. And I went on to name somebody and she said Mr. Eade. And I said well bless his heart. And I said I have been saying I couldn't stand him I will have to take it back {laughter}.

But that is what I tried to find, I don't know what I did with those things, I ahve done put them somewhere. After I

started for Mr. Anderson I had two Ku Klux Klan notes I found in his yard. They didn't want him to hire me. I have one of them here but the other one got away. I don't know if it is in one of these things....

.... I have got the letter Lawrence Guyot wrote telling about the people down here needing help, you know. Some of them were hungry and some of them didn't have a place to stay, and....

Sinsheimer: What about Mrs. Hamer? Did you ever meet Mrs. Hamer?

Allen: My lord yes. I got some papers on Fannie Lou Hamer but they are all out there ... stories and stuff. Fannie Lou Hamer oh she was a brave soul. You know they beat her and June, June had a hole right there in her head. Fannie Lou, I didn't really know her when she first started because this {the beating} started in Winona. And I reckon she swelled so tight, she was just hard like a piece of wood.

Sinsheimer: Did you June Johnson well? People said she was real good at getting things organized? Why was that you think?

Allen: Well, one thing about June. June was very young when she started. See June followed Martin Luther King, see June marched in Selma, Alabama. That is where they killed those two white people over there.

What do you reckon would be wrong with folk. We have got some people out there. ... Interpret this constitution. I didn't know nothing about no constitution because they wouldn't teach us nothing about no constitution when I was going to school. The only thing I learned about the constitution was what I learned my children had come. And they didn't know enough about it to talk about it because they wasn't teaching it, not to us.

Sinsheimer: Do you remember when you first tried to register to vote?

Allen: Yeah, Martha Lamb was there back then.

Sinsheimer: I heard she was tough?

Allen: Oh boy, she sure was tough. They had those pictures up-- Bob and Bill. She {Martha Lamb} said, "I guess you all see now them folk weren't {helping} you they just came down here to get everything they could out of you and then they make light of you." And I said, "Well, they can't make light of me Mrs. Lamb 'cause I am already light."

Sinsheimer: She thought they were making fun of you?

Allen: Making light of us. That women would find some of the hardest kind of things in that constitution for you to interpret. Sit down and write it, and then write out what you think about it, all that kind of stuff.... She said, "Well, this aint no interpretation." And I said, "Well, that is all I know." She didn't like me.... I will show you Mr. Anderson's picture..... The are fine people....

Sinsheimer: Did you go to the March on Washington?

Allen: No, I didn't go to the March on Washington.

Sinsheimer: What did you think of the Kennedy brothers? Did you like them?

Allen: Yes, I thought they were fine, I surely did.

Sinsheimer: Did you think they were on your side?

Allen: Well, I surely did.... {Mrs. Allen found her photo's of the Anderson family} They are just wonderful people, they just treat you like you are a human being.... I enjoyed working for them and then they left here and went to Montgomery, Alabama. And I was down there and was with them two weeks when they moved down. And I went back and visited them twice....

Sinsheimer: Do you remember anything about the summer when those three boys were killed in Philadelphia. The summer when you all had

the two boys staying with you and then Chaney and Schwerner and Goodman were killed in Philadelphia. At the end of that summer there was that convention in Atlantic City. Do you remember anything about that?

Allen: That was a Democratic convention. Is was big from the way they talked.

S. Saltzman: Was it important to you?

Allen: Yeah, it was very important because that is where the blacks got a chance to get identified as real Democrats you know. Yeah, they were really important.

We have come from a long way and we still have got a long ways to go. And the main thing is that we have got so many people that don't really understand, you know, how to go about trying to do things they want to do. There is a way to do anything if you just do it the right way you can always come out victorious. Got so many of them that take advantagous of things. That makes it bad for us.

I think it is a fine thing to be able to participate in things. I think it is fine for blacks. I don't appreciate nobody going in there and doing their own thing I don't care who it is. That is the way I am. I believe in doing right, as much right as I can.

Sinsheimer: Let me ask you one more question-- I am about plum out of questions. I know the singing was very important. Can you tell me about the singing.

Allen: Oh yeah, we sang and clapped our hands and made a big noise... But Peacock used to sing and Hollis Watkins.

Sinsheimer: Hollis is a good singer.

Allen: He can sing those songs, he can really sing them. To me most every song had a meaning in it, you know.... {Inaudible portion}

Sinsheimer: Why did people like Mrs. Hamer so much? Why was she so good?

Allen:

I don't know, she was brave for one thing. You know when she first started I think her boss man-- I believe they said she had something like a little office job or some kind of type of work that she was doing for him-- but he just let her go, didn't need her no more. That gave her the urge to go you know because she had really nothing but just trying to help herself out, get freed they called it. That is all she was doing.

I had a cousin... I can't find that thing either. I had a cousin {doorbell rings}...

End of interview.