

Alice Tregay

[tape one of six]

DINO ROBINSON: This is Dino Robinson, June 8th, 2012 at the home of James and Alice Tregay. If I just start by just you both saying or stating your name and one of you spelling the last name, please.

ALICE TREGAY: My name is Alice Tregay, T-R-E-G-A-Y.

JAMES TREGAY: My name is James Tregay. You put it as that?

DR: Yeah. Thank you very much, and we're going to start I guess with your career and experience working with what led up and during the Civil Rights Movement, and we're going to start with year 1964.

AT: Sixty-four.

DR: You have the floor.

AT: Yes. Jimmy and I, we were in South Shore and we were part -- as a matter of fact, he was the president of the South Shore Organization for Human Rights, and we became a part of coordinating council of community organizations. During that time, we also got involved with the American Friends Service Committee. A gentleman in charge of that was Kale Williams, and we worked with Bert Ransom. Bill Moyer did the research on segregated housing in Chicago and suburbs. This provided the background that preceded the marches. He

did a lot of research, and Oak Park, Illinois only had one black family, and the only way they got the house was that a white woman bought the house and then sold it to them, I guess on the QT or...

JT: Well they used to do that regularly in those difficult situations.

AT: Before we started marching, we did something else. What did we do before we started marching?

JT: Well you did some testing, and then the testing was just...

AT: Oh, yes, Baird and Warner. We tested to see if they would sell us a house in Oak Park, and they would not.

DR: Well describe that process with testing. Was that through an organization specifically that did the testing or you decided to test on your accord?

AT: Oh, no. Everything was done through the American Friends. They're the ones who took all the cases that we were involved in to get them resolved and try and get them to not do the same thing over again, and we had some really good cases. We did the testing and of course they did not sell us any housing.

DR: Let's say when you went to go testing at Baird and Warner, you would walk in and you would do what?

AT: Oh, we'd tell them we'd like to see some homes, would they show us some homes in Oak Park. They said they didn't have

any, and they had a whole room full of them listed (laughs). They just would not show us anything. We ended up picketing Baird and Warner, and my girlfriend, Myrtle Taylor, and I, we told them we were going to have a sit-in, and they were so nice. It was unbelievable. They showed us where the washrooms were. They showed us where the coffee was, [00:05:00] told us where we could sit. They had magazines for us to read and they had I think some donuts or something. But it was so disgusting. They were happy to have us there, so they claimed. (laughs) And after about four or five hours, we were tired of sitting there.

JT: See, they sort of did a non-violent response to a non-violent, so it turned out kind of a flop. (laughs)

AT: It was a flop.

DR: So were you expecting some animosity, some anger, some hurt words?

AT: Well then we started marching and we would march on the weekend, and Jimmy would run into some of his coaches and some people he went to school with there in Oak Park, and they were never mean. They didn't call us names. The chief of police, Chief Nester, I'll never forget his name. He was one of the nicest men you will ever meet, and I told him I wasn't going to jail so he didn't have to worry about

me, I said, because I'm not having nobody do these nasty things they do in Chicago. You know what they do when you go to jail. They search you all over. He said, "We wouldn't do that to you." He said, "If you come to my jail," he said, "Alice, I will treat you like a queen." He said, "I will order you a steak," and he said, "You can walk in and out of the cell any time you want." He just made it sound so wonderful (laughs). It was so different when we started marching a few years later in Chicago with Dr. King. It was like night and day. I thought marching was easy as all get out because we had marched there and nothing happened. Then I did testing in Hyde Park. I have a friend who's white, and her name is Alice Wright.

DR: Can you spell her last name? Alice...

AT: Well it's not that name anymore, but then it was W-R-I-G-H-T. We would just go together. I would go in first; she'd sit in the car and she would come in shortly after I had been there. They said they had nothing east of the railroad tracks, and they would be happy to show me anything on the other side of the railroad tracks. They took all of the information, where Jimmy was with IBEW. That's electrical workers. Alice's husband was a bank teller. Well you know they don't make very much money, do they? Alice Wright was shown houses east, and they said

when they were confronted by the American Friends that my husband didn't make enough money, which of course was a lie. We made double what Alice Wright's husband made. There was some kind of commission downtown that they went before, housing commission, and they said that they wouldn't do that again and they made all kinds of promises. But it was pure discrimination.

DR: So with that testing, they caught got and had to appear before a board or something like [00:10:00] that?

AT: Right.

DR: The government?

AT: That's correct.

JT: It was a bit of a surprise. I think most of us thought of Hyde Park as a fairly progressive community that wouldn't be so restrictive, and it was very much so. At least the realtors as a group operated on a certain basis that they wouldn't open up new communities without first following their restrictive procedures.

DR: At this time in 1964, were there still restrictive covenants and housing dates?

JT: There were some in some places, but I'm not sure about Chicago as a whole. It probably wasn't.

AT: There was a quiet restriction. It wasn't in writing. Everywhere we moved, they tried to hold the line, and this

went on all through the years. I mean when Reverend Jackson was living there, we were the second blacks to move into our building, and within a year, there were no whites. It was a six-flat. Before I married to Jimmy, we moved into a block on Yale, eighty-first and Yale, and there was maybe two blacks on the block. The white people would flee so fast it would make your head swim, and we were just nice black people. When I finished testing, I was so depressed. I went to place on the north side on Belmont, and this place, this real estate place, was a half a block long full of desks, and salesmen, and whatever have you. And we parked along the corner, Alice Wright and I, and I walked around and let them know I would be interested in looking at some housing for my husband and I. And so they said, "Oh, you have to make an appointment." I'm looking at this half a block of all these white men in the desks. I said, "They not doing nothing. Why can't they wait on me?" "Oh, no. We only take appointments." And I argued with them for a while, and they said, "What we have to do is get your name, address, and telephone number, and then you call and we'll set up an appointment for you." And Alice Wright walks in and they take her to the corner and say, "Let us get rid of the nigger and then we'll wait on you." And she almost flipped out because (laughs) it really, it was hard

on her too, and she had to go through with this after I finally left my name and blah, blah, blah. And of course, they never would set up an appointment. But Alice brought her husband over there and they showed them all kinds of apartments. Homes, rather. It just really hurt me that they would just out and out tell her that, not know of course she was my friend.

DR: Were there any instances where you did walk into real estate agencies and they basically said get out, we don't serve...

AT: No, they didn't do that; they just played games. They loved playing games. They were taken before the housing commission [00:15:00] and they were really brought down pretty good because what they did was really, really bad.

DR: What were some of the penalties? Were they fines, or threat of loss of license, or...

AT: I'm not really sure because that was not part of what I did. I did the housing and I did the testifying, and Alice also did that, Alice Wright. It took me maybe about a month or two to get over being depressed because when everything you do, you find it touches your soul, and that people could be so mean and discriminate against you for no reason. I said, "Well let me pick myself up by the bootstraps and get out here and do whatever I have to do."

And we went from testing to marching against the Willis Wagons, this is still 1964, with Al Raby and Dick Gregory.

DR: Now describe the Willis Wagons. What was that about?

AT: Well before I do that, Al Raby again had the CCCO, which is the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations, and this one that Jimmy headed, South Shore Organization for Human Rights. We were a part of it, as was all kinds of community. (inaudible) was a part of it and everybody we knew had a part in it, including the west side. What was that question you asked me?

DR: What was the function of the Willis Wagon?

AT: What happened was that when blacks started to integrate neighborhoods, we were in South Shore, and what happened was you had quite a few elderly Jewish white people whose children had gone to school, and moved out, and gone other places. When the blacks started to come in, they had children. I had three, and the lady on the third floor had six. So there's a lot of kids and they filled up the school. Well rather than let them go to the next school over, and some of them even lived closer to the white school, they put up these -- they called them the Willis Wagons. They were mobile units.

JT: It was like a mobile home but made into a classroom and they would just park them on the playgrounds of the

schools, and of course they weren't outfitted with sophisticated facilities like heating, and air conditioning, and stuff like that. So it was a pretty dismal place for kids to try to learn. They were using these to maintain the schools the way they were and not --

AT: The segregated schools.

JT: The segregated schools. There was a lot of objection to them. Until there was some real organization, they maintained those for a number of years.

AT: And we marched for a number of years against the Willis Wagon, and we finally won. But not before a lot of people were arrested. I believe one time they sat down on Michigan Avenue.

JT: There were some sit-ins [00:20:00] run by protests that were seen by the authorities as illegal so they arrested a bunch of people. We went to some of the court hearings and...

AT: I wasn't going to jail in Chicago. I would've gone to jail in Oak Park, but I was not going to jail in Chicago. (laughs) So anyhow, you saw in the video, and this was around the time 1964, '65, where the church we went to had the first couple, was one of my best friends, Myrtle Taylor. And she was there only two weeks when Jimmy and I came into the church. (laughs) And we just shook everybody

to their little bootstraps with our interracial, mixed family. It was really some trying times, even having worked in the church. Jimmy worked with a young man. You did basketball.

JT: Oh, yeah. Evening program or something, and the church had a gymnasium and other facilities that could be used for after school and evening programs.

AT: And I did volleyball, and we had a good time. We had the young people. I got a letter from the church telling me how nice it was that Jimmy and I worked with the youth and that they appreciated what we did. That was before we brought Dr. King to the church. But I don't want to get ahead of myself.

JT: Well there was a period of time when I number of people in the youth that would be a part of the neighborhood became those young people that were affiliated with various gangs. And of course, they were sometimes coming in to take part in the evening programs like everybody else, and that really scared a lot of people. They didn't know what to do with that. I don't know. We had the idea that maybe working with these kids, they would maybe enjoy doing some legal things. We might've been a little naïve, but we were also committed.

AT: By the way, Ben Willis was a Chicago superintendent for education, and we wanted him to leave. We didn't think he was trying to do the right thing by especially black children, and that was what we did for a long time.

DR: Was that through marches, sit-ins, or just petitions, or...

AT: Well it was mostly marches. It's so sad. It wasn't just Chicago schools, but the Catholic schools did the same thing. And we had some Catholic friends whose children lived a block away and they had to go to the other school because they didn't want any blacks in the school. So racism was well defined in South Shore. At the country club, it says no dogs, no blacks, and no Jews.

DR: And that was at the South Shore Country Club?

AT: That's correct.

JT: They used even more difficult language than that, but...

AT: What was?

JT: They used the "N" word and they used...

AT: Oh, excuse me.

JT: (laughs) That was a sign that had been there since [00:25:00] things were acceptable to use those kinds of words.

DR: I wonder: has anybody taken a picture of that sign up there?

JT: I don't know if it's still there.

DR: I mean it's not up there now, but...

AT: No, it's not up there now, Jimmy.

JT: But that was comparable to in the South where they would have blacks only drinking fountains and things like that.

DR: But that'd be something interesting to find, if someone took a picture of that sign.

JT: I've always heard of it, but I don't know that I've seen a picture of it.

AT: But I'm saying it was everywhere. It's almost like fighting a brick wall. You go from this thing to that thing. We had a meeting with the pastor of our church and Bevel, James Bevel, from Operation Breadbasket was there. And all this preacher could talk about to him was what blacks did on the highway that was immoral. I had to go home and look up fornicate, he said, on the highway. I had to go home and look up fornicate. (laughs)

JT: You weren't reading your bible. That's the trouble.

DR: Alice was still a little naïve at the time.

AT: When I found out what that pastor was saying, I said he got a dirty mind. And Bevel was so cool. He said, "Fornicating on the highway has nothing to do with the right to vote." And I thought to myself well, that sounds pretty good.

DR: You had mentioned Operation Breadbasket. Was that already on and going or when did that start? Was that around 1964 as well or...

AT: Nineteen sixty-seven, I believe.

JT: I'm not sure of the time, but that was something that evolved out of Dr. King's coming here and seeing the need to develop the communities in a number of different ways. It wasn't just housing, it was the right to vote, and the right to have jobs, and all that kind of stuff.

DR: Was it around 1964 when you first interacted with King, or was it after that, or before that, or...

AT: Well Dr. King didn't come in '64. I take it back. In '65 or '66 because here I got '65, '66 Hyde Park Belmont Cragin testing, Dr. King's time. Al Raby brought Dr. King to Chicago and in order to bring him here, and to start some things, we had a fundraiser in 1966, Chicago Freedom March, and that brought Dr. King here.

DR: And that was sponsored by the SCLC and the CCCO?

AT: Right.

DR: Southern Christian Leadership Council and...

AT: Coordinating Council of Community Organizations. That's where that picture was taken before that as some of the money we needed to bring Dr. King here and to pay for Soldier Field. That's where we had it. And his wife was

supposed to come, and she couldn't come, and he came, and he said he hoped we didn't mind him coming. My name is barely on the program, but it is there.

DR: This is Al Raby that you've been mentioning.

AT: That's Al Raby.

DR: Raby, OK. [00:30:00] I wouldn't recognize Dick Gregory back then as I see him now. (laughter) He's clean cut.

AT: Here's where we get mentioned.

DR: There you go. Of course, as Mrs. James Tregay. As a historian and always looking up people to research, when it comes to researching women and what they did, it became extremely difficult because going underneath the --

AT: The husband's name.

DR: -- the husband's name. And there was one person I was researching for a while that was around Evanston in the late 1800s. She always went by initials and then her husband's last name. And she did a lot of stuff, and couldn't find any information on her until we started reading newspapers. I had to go through newspapers and find her name finally.

AT: I'm (inaudible) to go by my brothers. I'm going to regress a little bit to my childhood out here in Evanston. My mother did housework and she took in laundry, which my grandmother did. We had a washing machine in the basement

and that kind of thing. A lot of the blacks did the same thing, so it didn't seem like it was anything bad. And my mother kept going to school until she got her license to practice nursing. And I was just looking at a picture of my aunt and it just brought tears to your eyes to see her waiting on the white people. It was really, really hurtful. We didn't know we were poor because everybody was poor. The only person in the house that had a job was Uncle Fred, my mother's brother. I mean they did day work and took in laundry. We even had Mr. Charlie who did the ironing for these white folks. (laughs) We had Miss Fan and Mr. Charlie. So I guess through the years, things just never seemed even nowadays they still aren't as good as they should be. When you watch the Tea Party and you see how disrespectful these people are to the President of the United States, it's unbelievable. I'm sorry to just interject those kind of things.

DR: No, that's good because what it does, it talks about your early influences to what you do now.

JT: I might just put a little thing in. My life experience in some ways very much the same. We had limited money coming up. I came kind of after the Depression, but elder brothers and sisters suffered through the Depression with my father out of work for a good, long time. But we didn't

have the business of racism challenging us, but I had a lot of feelings about it.

AT: That's because there were no blacks there, or one. There was one black in Oak Park.

JT: Yeah, there was one that I went to school with and there was only one in the high school. (inaudible) child was there. At the same time, I didn't have the kind of personal feelings that Alice had from suffering under it. I had a lot of feelings about the unfairness of it, so I was as much motivated to try to make the changes as Alice was I think. Even when I was in high school, I had kind of some radical feelings. I used to march downtown against the (inaudible) testing we were doing because I just felt that that was wrong [00:35:00]. When it came time and Dr. King was marching in Washington, I went with my mother and my sister in 1963. That was something I felt very strongly about.

AT: In 1966, I was working for Abner Mikva and I was a precinct worker. And I was doing such a good job. I really knocked on the doors and did all the things you're supposed to do, and they took notice. And I tell everybody if you want to work hard, you can move up real fast in the political arena (laughs) because I immediately got promoted to area coordinator. Excuse me. They gave me seven precincts that

I was in charge of. They gave me people who were supposed to work it, but most of them didn't work it. So I ended up working seven precincts. But I liked what I was doing. And as I tell everybody, all my life, it seems I've always worked two jobs. I go to work at night and in the daytime, and then I go to work at night and I campaign. And I won all seven of my precincts, and I was hustling back to the office with a smile on my face, and hand my winning tickets in, and come to find out he was losing and he lost. Then in 1967, I worked for Alderman William Cousins, who was running for alderman of the eight ward, and he won. But it was not an easy win. Bill's administrative assistant, his name was Leo Johnston. He understood what I had to do to make these people do the right thing that were knocking on doors. I had knocked on doors. I know what to do. We had looked at the previous record, and we knew what precincts we had to work hard in to win because he lost in the primary and now we were in the general because used to be two elections for alderman. Now it's just one. I did some things that I thought was really, really good. I put a white man named Mack [Hansabraw?] from North Carolina.

JT: Tennessee.

AT: Oh, sorry. Tennessee. (laughter) And I put [Aryllia?] Chastain, who was a very fair black woman in this precinct

that we had lost. And they knocked on doors. Well she was from the South too and they had these little Southern drawls to them. We would report each week how many doors we've knocked on, how many plus, minus, and zeros. And this fool sat up there and told me he had all pluses and he worked half his precinct. And I told him he was a damn liar [00:40:00]. Bill flew out of the room. He didn't want to hear it because his friend's out. And I said, "You must hate Bill or you wouldn't be sitting up here lying in front of all these people because Bill lost this precinct and you should've had so many minuses, so many zeros, people don't know what they're going to do, and so many pluses. There's no way in hell you could have all pluses." And he told Bill he hated me. I said, "On election day, your little, tired ass is going to pick me up and say we won if you just do the right thing. You don't do the right thing, we're not going to win. But you have to do the right thing." So it's that kind of toughness that you have to put into people to get them to understand they really have to do the right thing. And we won.

JT: One of the things that I --

DR: I could just imagine you standing up to people.

AT: I was 92 pounds.

DR: I was going to ask you: what was your stature? Ninety-two pounds. How tall?

AT: I'm four-eleven.

DR: Ninety-two pounds, four-eleven, and whipping people into shape.

JT: Well her mouth was doing more of it than her biceps were. That's for sure. The thing I remember about some of those black politicians that were able to get through and get over, and I think Cousins was one of them, you started out as a Republican because even get on the ballot as a Democrat. Democrats were everywhere; they would fill all of the spots. But then once he got into a position, then he moved into being a Democrat. But it was mostly a matter of just logistical kind of. But a lot of people were sincerely believing in the Republican Party at that time because of Lincoln. Alice's mother was one. It took her a while to get --

AT: I changed her mind. But you know what? From Abner Mikva's, the following year, I became part of the IVI, Independent Voters of Illinois, and I was their office manager. And we had Democrats and Republicans. I even worked for, I don't remember his name, but a man that ran for mayor against Daley. We didn't do well because Daley had it sewn up.

JT: Mostly what IVI was and I think IPO was put together now, but they were maybe progressive and independent thinking, and so their way of dealing with the machine is to work outside the machine. But then in a lot of ways, they worked the same system, like she was talking about, the pluses and minuses and stuff. That's all part of what the old machine had doing. It wasn't easy for blacks to break through that unless they were willing to just get down on their knees and kiss.

AT: Jimmy and I did march with Dr. King for a long time. I don't even kind of know how we did it. But I do know that we had a group of us in South Shore and all the kids would come to -- they all had little kids -- to somebody's house to babysit, and we would go out on the marches. Jimmy was at work, but Jimmy got off from work at three o'clock or three thirty.

JT: Three thirty probably [00:45:00].

AT: And wherever we were, he would park his truck somewhere and join the march (laughs).

DR: Now when you say you used to march with Dr. King, was that throughout the Chicago Metro area or throughout the country?

AT: No, we were here in Chicago. This was a totally different kind of march. And one of my neighbors, her family lived

in the Belmont Cragin. Not the Belmont, I'm sorry. Gage Park when we were marching. And even her own family was throwing rocks at her. We had priests, we had nuns, we had so many people marching with us of all races and colors. It was a really fantastic march. I didn't do as much marching as everybody else because I didn't like them white folks and I got tired of being called a nigger. And so I did really what I think was dumb as hell. I agreed to go pick them up because we couldn't take our cars anymore. They threw the cars in the water, and busted out the windows, and they were mean white people. And here I would sit, me and three other cars or four other cars, waiting to bring some of the people. We'd shuttle them back and forth, and we didn't have any protection. At least they had some protection with the cops. We didn't have nothing.

JT: It was always hard to tell who was on your side or not.

AT: The police weren't on your side.

JT: They weren't always very helpful.

AT: The man that threw a rock and hit Dr. King, they took him around the corner and let him loose. The saddest part was the black policemen. There weren't many of them, but there was nothing that they could do.

JT: Their choices were pretty minimal. If they were going to survive in the force, they had to kind of go on.

AT: Comply. That's how you got (inaudible) Robinson. They put his behind in the alley behind the police station. That's his job to stay there and watch the police station, and he was a policemen.

JT: We used to live right at seventy-third and Jeffery, and his organization had a little basement office there at seventy-second I think it was. They were almost kind of in our neighborhood. I don't know. There were some scary times but there was also some heartwarming times when you get people to come along.

DR: Well why don't we talk about that? What was the scariest time? And then we'll follow that up with what was the most heartwarming.

AT: We had one where my daughter was chasing a kid because a rock had been thrown. We had first all gone to training and we were taught that if there was some confrontation, we should go on the ground, roll into a ball, and don't do anything but protect our heads. And apparently this kid didn't come to none of the training. He shot off to find who hit him with that rock. My daughter and another little girl chased after him and tackled him. Had that young man got in that crowd of white people, they would have killed him. He would not have to worry about going home.

JT: See one of the things that happened, we were trying to include as many people on these marches as we could. We maybe even reached out to some of the gang kids.

AT: Gangs. We did.

JT: And they weren't [00:50:00] very much disciplined in this non-violent. It takes a little bit of sophistication, and they were young kids and stuff, and that's where they got into that kind of trouble. But there wasn't much you could expect in the way of help from the police. They were just sort of there to keep the people apart. It was more a matter I think of showing, in a public way, how really nasty and wrong this whole thing was. Like was Alice is talking about in Oak Park, I didn't think that served our purpose all that much to have somebody treat us very nicely and have us go home. It was much better to have a confrontation. And of course you wouldn't want it to come to bloodshed, but at the same time, a little bit of confrontation was a good thing as far as I could see. But of course it did lead to some sacrifices, and some people were injured, and that's Dr. King.

AT: And we had to stop taking cars period, and they would go on the bus, and then the bus would go and pick them up when the march was over with.

JT: There were times when I got on the CTA bus and they broke out all the windows in the bus and you didn't know what was going to happen next.

DR: At any of these marches, did you ever take photographs at all, or that's not something you thought about?

JT: There was a lot of people taking photographs. There were some black press people that someone had. I don't know. The photographs were made available in the public press, but I don't know whatever happened to them now.

AT: I have just one, and that was when Myrtle Taylor was carrying my grandson and it says, "My daddy needs a job." That was one of the marches with that.

JT: See, a lot of those marches, the major picketing things, were not all that violent. The violence came when you really, really challenged the people and stirred up the -- a bunch of angry people. One of the times was scary for me when we were still in the St. John's Methodist Church in South Shore. Dr. King had been out of town for quite a while, and he was trying to reach out to more people. So we made an agreement for him to come to St. John's church in the evening and speak to the community people. And then we also invited representatives from the --

AT: Black P. Stone Nation.

JT: -- Black Stone Nation and Black Stone Rangers they're called now.

AT: Black Panthers.

JT: No, no. Well that Black Stone Nation was Woodlawn, but the people from Englewood. What were they called? The Disciples I think.

JT: We had three gangs there. They had the Latin Kings, but I'm not sure if there was some other name. There was another name for them anyway. And we had these groups together and Dr. King was supposed to be talking to them, and these kids really felt as if they were being -- like they had gotten trapped, and they were afraid for their...

AT: They put me out.

JT: They were beginning to rumble and it was kind of scary. There was the one big guy from...

AT: James Orange.

JT: James Orange.

AT: He was Dr. King's bodyguard.

JT: He was like a football player.

AT: He was really big too.

JT: Great big guy. He stood up on the table and started bringing order to things and he did a good job of that.

AT: He put me out.

JT: But it was something to try to control all these young kids that were really -- they really felt like we put them in a --

DR: In a trap?

JT: -- in a trap.

AT: But Dr. King talked to them. It wasn't that bad, was it?

JT: No, but it was a kind of a scary thing because we couldn't convince them that everything was OK, and so --

AT: I wasn't there.

JT: -- we kind of separate everybody. But we did get some of the gang kids to take part in some of the marches though. I don't know if they learning anything or got anything out of it or not.

DR: What was the most heartwarming incidents?

AT: Winning the election. (laughter) Well of course when Willis resigned, that was heartwarming because we had marched a long time to [00:55:00] get rid of that man. And when he finally resigned, that was a celebration.

JT: And this is what, 40 years later, they named a building after him, Willis Towers. (laughter) I'm not sure how that got bought. I don't know.

DR: As you talked about 1964, Alice, I know you did a lot of marching and organizing. What did you do daily? Did you hold a full-time job? What were you doing during the day?

AT: I went to work.

DR: Where did you work? Was it a nine to five thing or was it the marching?

AT: I'm trying to remember. I started working for PUSH in 1968 or '67.

JT: PUSH was started of --

AT: Of Breadbasket. It was Breadbasket.

JT: And all of that was brought to Chicago by Dr. King, and then Jesse Jackson of course picked up the -- he was the (inaudible).

AT: Him and James Bevel. He put the two of them in charge.

DR: But in '64? What were you doing in '64?

AT: I had a job but I don't remember where.

JT: Well the kids were pretty little and I think you were kind of a stay at home for a while. But you had different jobs at different times. I was working in construction, and most of the time, it was pretty busy like she said. But somebody had to bring home some money. But we traded off and then there were times when I was a little slow and I could do some other things. I might say Dr. King, when he went to New York and it was kind of a controversial thing that he took a stand against the Vietnam war, and a lot of people felt that he should've stayed with his focus on

civil rights. But I agreed with him and I thought that's just one more thing that needed to be straightened out.

DR: When Dr. King was addressing more and more things, I wonder if that was part of a way of diluting his power and his influence by having pity on more than what his original focus was.

JT: I kind of felt that way myself and it took me a while to get to where I decided to go on that march. And I had those same feelings that the force would be diluted, but at the same time, when you're reaching out to more people, you're also organizing more people. And so there was a lot more sympathy all over the world for someone who took that kind of a positive stance in favor of humanity. It wasn't just some poor black folks from the South he was fighting for.

AT: And when he started Breadbasket, it was called the economical arm of SCLC. And what they started out doing was trying to bring black businesses into the stores, bring black people into the banks and these other highfalutin organizations that eventually we did get into. You gain a little bit. Just like people think civil rights was over with when Obama was elected president. They didn't find out. The Tea Party didn't show them. You can forget about it being over with. And for Walker to win up here? Let's

go back to where we were. Each little inch that you think you have, you find out that's all you got was an inch. We had great times because we had the commercial [01:00:00] division. Reverend [Barrel?] had gone into the store and found out they had old, dirty meat. What the stores would do is to take the food that was out of date and send it into the black community, and we picketed High-Low in 1966. We had one little black man in there. He was pitiful. He begged us not to picket the High-Low and Jimmy had worked in that High-Low before we went there.

JT: I worked for a contractor but we did High-Low work. It was kind of an awkward thing sometimes because I would run into the same people at civil rights rallies and they thought I was a spy or something. (laughter) But it was interesting. I was able to see it from the inside, and there was a lot of what Alice was talking about on disrespect for the black community. They were an old Irish outfit that was run by an Irish family that came over from Ireland. Mostly hired a bunch of Irishmen and they were really very old fashioned. I remember their place was at eighty-seventh right by the Dan Ryan there, the big warehouse, and all that. It was real crazy because they didn't have any computers or anything, even into the recent years. They're out of business now.

AT: So the A and P.

JT: Well A and P's still around, but they're...

JT: Not in Chicago.

JT: No. (laughter) Well there used to be some Kroger stores in Chicago but now the only ones you see now are the --

AT: Food for Less.

JT: -- Food for Less. I went to school with a girl named Jeannie Kroger and I always thought that her family was somehow involved in that, but I didn't know if it was.

AT: We kept getting this little, bitty steps. We started picketing to get Joe Louis Milk, and we would just ask people not to buy any milk there unless they had Joe Louis Milk. And we did the same thing with Grove Fresh orange juice, Mumbo Sauce, barbeque sauce. We just took one at a time, and we were very successful. Parker House sausage had the best damn sausage in the world. And so they wouldn't buy sausage. And everybody going in there was black. So if you can't sell that sausage or you can't sell that milk, you in trouble. Of course, they could buy the milk someplace else.

JT: That kind of thing had more or less effect at different times. Now, I don't know if people even care. I'd like to see people buy American rather than buy black. (laughs)

AT: All the drivers that brought stuff to the stores were white. All the helpers were black. They didn't make any money. And we wanted to get some black drivers because you make a percentage of what you sell to the stores. And the commercial division worked well, and Cecile, Troy, I forgot all the people who used to be there, but they worked well together. My cousin Francis used to be their secretary. And we got our products into the stores, and of course we stopped picketing once we got the products in. And we did have a little bit of a problem with the gangs when we picketed Red Rooster. [01:05:00] You remember that?

JT: No, I remember working at Red Rooster off and on.

DR: What was Red Rooster?

JT: It was on the west side. Roosevelt and...

DR: That was a grocery store or something?

JT: Yeah.

AT: The one I'm talking about was off sixty-third.

JT: Well they might've had more than one. The ones I knew were in the west side. But it was family-owned, kind of like a High-Low. You remember High-Low?

AT: He isn't that old.

JT: I think Red Rooster's still around. They were a smaller chain.

AT: But they have a lot of stores like the A and P. They had stores all over in the black community. I was the only woman captain, picket captain, that took on a store. Seventy-first and what was that? Two streets over from Jeffery going this way. Anyhow, because I wanted everybody to feel like they were a part of it, I had about six co-captains so that whoever was there was in charge. There was eight persons. I had a wino, who I let hide his bottle of wine in my car (laughter) and when he needed --

JT: (inaudible)

AT: -- when he needed a drink, he could go sit in that car and get him a taste of his wine. But he was there every day. I talked to some man and said, "Sir, please don't shop at A and P." And he said, "You can't tell me what to do." And wino got to talking to him. He stopped shopping. I had another young man who was there everyday on his bicycle. He's now a Cook County judge. (laughter)

JT: Well he was not a down-and-outer. He was a young kid.

AT: But he came everyday on his bicycle.

JT: What was his last name? I don't remember him.

AT: Jones, Linzey Jones. And he was president of one of the suburbs out there as the mayor before he became a judge. He wanted to be in the film, he said, but he never called. He did come to the filming we had at PUSH.

DR: Oh, OK. He was there with his wife. He was running for judge or running for president of...

AT: No, he was judge.

DR: He was judge? OK.

JT: This was a lot of years in between.

AT: I think we ought to give this a break tonight.

DR: I think so too.

AT: You got more than your hour.

DR: One hour and eight minutes. Good job. I think that's a good pace to do that, so we'll pick this up...

AT: I want to start with the political education classes and how we did that when we come back. But you know what? Would you be interested in looking at some of this stuff?

DR: Yes, I definitely would be.

AT: Just bring it back.

DR: Definitely.

AT: I don't generally lend my stuff out.

DR: I hear you. I understand. Can I make copies of some of it?

AT: You can take it. I trust you.

DR: But I can make copies though and...

JT: Yeah, that should be fine.

AT: All right.

DR: Great.

JT: Some of it's pretty old and fragile so you...

AT: I didn't mean that. Operation Breadbasket started in 1960

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DR: Sixty-eight.

AT: -- eight.

END OF AUDIO FILE