

**Interview with Lester Frazin,  
Rabbi of Temple Beth-el, Rockford, IL, 1961-1974**

**Interviewed on 12/19/17  
by David J. Byrnes at Frazin's home in the Chicago area**

David Byrnes: Okay, go ahead.

Lester Frazin: I was born in Chicago, of parents who were born in Chicago, and of grand fathers who were born in Chicago all along the south side.

DB: Okay.

LF: I went to rabbinical school in Cincinnati. All right, which was the Hebrew Union College. I was in St Louis. I finished school early, seminary early. Now seminary follows a bachelor's degree, so it's five years. And uh, as my oldest son, I was bored with school so I finished in four and a half. College three years, and you know, four and a half. I came, uh, I started as a, a assistant in St Louis in 1959. What had occurred was the rabbi had a breakdown, and since I was finished with school early, they sent me to a 1200 family congregation, which I, I knew nothing about and I ran it for six months until they hired a senior.

LF: And my wife at that time, you want all this background?

DB: Sure.

LF: My wife at that time was pregnant, with our second child who we lost. Um, and the rabbi's wife was jealous, they couldn't get rid of me fast enough. We were buddies until he married the second wife. I left in '61. Um, I interviewed Rockford at the Standard Club in Chicago, um, which still exists and had an argument with the cochair of the search committee, which sealed the deal because nobody argued with him. He later became a very close friend.

DB: Do you remember who that was?

LF: Bill Daniel. He was the, he worked for Behr company, Iron and Steel, and he was the man who moved the metal around. He was a key man in the organization. Prior to that I was always interested in integration. We had a fraternity in high school, which was illegal. And as the president of my graduating class, I was told to quit the fraternity, which I did not do. And we integrated it.

DB: Which high school was this?

LF: Hyde Park High School. We had a few black students who became part of the fraternity. The population of the temple at that time when I arrived in Rockford was about 175 people.

DB: This was Temple Beth-el?

LF: Yeah.

DB: Okay.

LF: All right. It was located on Main street.

DB: Oh, downtown?

LF: Downtown. In a very old building, which was a basic model for temples in small towns. You could find the same temple in Champaign. That same design. You could find the same temple in Mattoon, the same design. You could find the temple in Decatur, Illinois. The same design.

DB: And this is 1961?

LF: Right. The congregation wanted to move to the east side, but they didn't want to move until the previous rabbi left. And as soon as I came, the plans for moving began.

DB: Okay.

LF: And we broke ground in '63 on Comanche Drive.

DB: Let me just stop.

[new audio track is begun]

LF: Whenever. And I believe, um, the temple was finished in '64. The architect for the temple just died [circa 2017]. Ninety five years old.

DB: Who was, who was that?

LF: He was out of Chicago and I don't remember his name. Okay? The window was done by an artist. If you've ever been to the temple, you'll see this magnificent window on the southwest corner. And it was done by an artist in St Louis. And I went to the, with the architect to look at the floor with stained glass all over it. And he could see it. I couldn't. But it's a magnificent, uh, window. Now stop.

[recording pauses]

LF: The population at the temple was about 175. We had one displaced person after World War 2, a Frenchman, and he was, um, in the French underground.

DB: Okay.

LF: All right. And he taught French at Rockford College. You can dig up his name and tragically he committed suicide.

DB: Ooh.

LF: And my big battle at that time was to get him buried in the Jewish cemetery because suicides are not supposed to be buried in a Jewish cemetery. And I quoted a text that said suicides are not in their right mind and therefore cannot be blamed. So he was buried in the Jewish cemetery. Alright? He was the only one. Now most of the members were sons of immigrants and daughters of immigrants. Yeah. I was really the only, one of the few native Chicagoans. But he was a member of the temple and had a fascinating story to tell. He was with the [Maquis.] What did he notice in his move to Rockford about the community's feeling about racism and race? It was interesting that when I announced that I was going to march in Washington in 1963 with Alan Deale, my wife was frightened. Um, and uh, my oldest said, "go dad, go, go." He was five. The youngest one was nine months old about that time. The middle one. And the attitude toward race, about '63, I became the chairman of the human relations committee appointed by Mayor Schleicher. And I investigated slum housing, which was embarrassing, as I told you on the phone, because it was owned by a Jewish family that belonged to the other synagogue. There were two.

DB: What was the other one?

LF: Ohave-- O-H-A-V-E -- Shalom.

DB: Okay.

LF: They've since dispersed and they've joined Bethel. Okay? And there are two services at Bethel, one on Friday night for the reformed, one on Saturday morning for the Orthodox.

DB: Wow, Okay.

LF: Okay? Um, the attitude toward race was such that I felt that Rockford was a little to the right of Ghangis Khan.

The blacks were on the west side. The whites on the east side and the two rarely met. Well, from the march on, Alan and I became the speakers of black churches.

DB: Wow. This is 1963?

LF: Yeah.

DB: Okay.

LF: Now, interestingly enough, in 1960 in St Louis, Reverend Martin Luther King Junior was supposed to speak.

DB: Okay.

LF: And the board vetoed it because quote unquote, according to Hoover, he was a communist. And the rabbi backed out. No guts. Alright? But I did hear him speak in '63. As I told you, I had a friend in the print, press that . . . now Alan and I and the other Catholic layman, who drove, who had the van that we all came in. We drove all night, um, to Washington, slept during the day, um, made a date with John Anderson.

DB: Who was Congressman at that time.

LF: Whose loss I mourned when I read about it last week. He was a decent human being. Now, very conservative. Are you recording?

DB: Yes, but let's take a pause.

DB: Let's talk about John Anderson.

LF: John welcomed us. Which was probably not to his constituents' liking. And we had a picture taken together with John, the freedom marchers and John on the steps of the Capitol, which I'm sure you'll find in the August of 1963 edition of the register republic in the morgue. Front page.

DB: Okay.

LF: Later an evangelical preacher ran against him and lost. You know. And then in 1980 when he ran for president, I went to his rally and he looked out and saw me. "Rabbi Frazin come on up here!"

DB: Oh.

LF: And it was friendly that he remembered, but he was such a gentleman. Are we recording?

DB: Yes, we're recording.

LF: He was, as we say in Yiddish, a mensch. I may not have agreed with his politics. But the, the, the members of the congregation sent me off to Washington and Bill Daniel, the one with whom I had the fight . . .

DB: Right.

LF: . . . said I bought a tie for you to wear during the march. Bill was a refugee and his wife Lonnie, from Germany. Now Bill got out before all of the Hitler rules, his father was a banker and he got them out.

DB: Okay.

LF: Right. So you can't say he was a holocaust survivor, but on the other hand you can. He was the only one to give me something to take to Washington.

DB: What kind of tie was it?

LF: A very thin tie.

DB: So this was just a regular thin tie?

LF: A regular thin tie. Now all of us dressed up for the March on Washington, which we did not have to do because everybody there, the million people there, were very informal. So we started at the back after taking the picture with John, and worked our way to the front. If ever I felt claustrophobic, it was walking through that crowd.

DB: Really. . .

LF: I mean, it was a huge crowd and, yeah there were people having picnics. It was a delightful crowd and everybody was enjoying themselves. Very respectful. Um, and that's why I went. Um. . .

DB: You went, you went because...

LF: I went because I realized that black people in this country have a right to be here and have equal rights. I, I've always fought for equal rights. In college, I belonged to a fraternity and we inducted a black student.

DB: Okay.

LF: Um, and this is Cincinnati, which is a little bit southern.

DB: Right.

LF: All right. Um,

DB: Now you were talking before about the press tent?

LF: Um, yeah, I was, I managed to get up to the press tent with Alan, although we had lost each other in the crowd. We met at the press tent. So I was standing at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial, which was, I was standing immediately to the left of the Lincoln Memorial when Martin Luther King spoke.

DB: To the left you're saying as you're facing the memorial?

LF: As you're facing the memorial. And, of course, it was an awesome experience.

DB: So you had a clear view of. . .

LF: Oh I had a clear view of him speaking and of all the people who were involved at that point in whatever organization, SNCC and you know, NAACP. M'kay? Interestingly enough... And this is a digression.

DB: Okay hold on. . . [recording paused] . . . Alright, go ahead.

LF: Interestingly enough, my daughter-in-law is a Rosenwald.

DB: Okay.

LF: Now Julius Rosenwald built 500 schools for black children in the south. That was his major philanthropy. Besides being the biggest philanthropist in the history of Chicago. Now of course he owns Sears Roebuck, and she's a Rosenwald. It was her great uncle. Okay. And I learned all, my father worked at Sears, a luggage salesman, until he became a photographer full time.

DB: Okay.

LF: My parents, well they had a bad experience. They were robbed by a black couple. In their studio, bound hand and foot. There was a young woman there and all of his equipment was gone and they turned very negative. One bad

experience. And I remember when Martin Luther King was assassinated, my father called to apologize.

DB: Called you?

LF: And uh, I really railed at him about his prejudice. Now living on the south side of Chicago, we were part of the white flight.

DB: Okay.

LF: Although my parents moved to a building on 51st street, where, Ralph Metcalfe and Jesse Owens lived and I met them both in the elevator. Meeting Jesse Owens in the elevator and even Ralph Metcalfe was quite an experience.

DB: I imagine.

LF: Okay. Back to the list.

DB: All right. Hold on. . . [recording paused]

. . . go ahead

LF: What spurred you to take an active role? [reading from a list of questions] I think it was my faith.

DB: Okay.

LF: I remember that. We formed a quartet from our confirmation class and Sunday school and we would practice Christmas carols in the library of the temple until the rabbi threw us out. And we went to Hines Hospital to entertain the vets.

DB: Okay.

LF: And they couldn't believe that four Jewish kids would come and sing Christmas carols. That

DB: Very nice.

LF: It, it was something you did in 1947. It was after World War 2. I lost two cousins in the war. And um, we, uh, we are extremely patriotic, but on the other hand I felt an urge to do more.

DB: Okay.



LF: And I have never had a bad experience with an African American.

DB: Hmm. So how about how old were you in 1947?

LF: I was 15. Okay?

DB: 15. And were you thinking about studying to become a rabbi at that point?

LF: I, I decided to become a rabbi when I was a junior in high school. My mother was very opposed to it primarily because she knew the politics of the pulpit. Which are ugly. If you belong to a church, you know what they are.

DB: Right.

LF: So she was opposed to it. In fact, the president of the Hebrew Union College came to install a new rabbi and my mother went up to him and said, my son is planning on becoming a rabbi, and with his wet fish hand he shook my hand and said "Congratulations." And my mother responded "Over my dead body."

DB: [laughing] Okay.

LF: Both my brother and I became rabbis. I have one sibling.

DB: Okay. So, that's very interesting that both of you became rabbis while your mother opposed the idea of becoming a rabbi.

LF: Yeah, but never actively. Okay. We were temple people. We were there every Friday night. It was our community. It was our faith. It was. . . and we had a lot of faith because my mother was quite ill after my brother was born. She had [an ileostomy at age 27. The reason? I can only assume it was cancer. She lived to 82.

DB: Oh wow.

LF: Okay? And I'm talking to my daughter the other night. It was the memorial of my wife's death and my daughter said, "you know who I really miss? Grandma Janice," my mother.

DB: So your, your faith lead you to become interested in becoming a rabbi, but it also led you to believe in equal rights.

LF: Absolutely. Absolutely. I mean, what faith, what faith should not believe in equal rights? I mean, all men were created equal. If you take the Bible literally,

then God created one man and we're all descendants of that one man. I have a, I had a friend from, um, uh, what was it . . . not Northern Illinois. It was a college up in Marysville, California who was a sociologist and went to [Ajobe] in Africa where the human race began and we were all black. Where we lived, changed our skin tones.

DB: Right.

LF: You know, and the black community is the majority community in the world. So, I mean, I, I saw no difference. None.

DB: All right. Let me just . . . [recording paused]

LF: In 1965, after I marched in Washington in '63, I went to Selma for the march. I got hit once by a guy on a horse, sheriff on a horse.

DB: Okay.

LF: And then by and large, we all retreated back to the black church where we're staying. You know. . .

DB: Right. What did you, what did you witness when you were on the March?

LF: Horror. Horror. I mean, it was a brutal, horrible situation. In the front row was an Orthodox rabbi. Standing with Martin Luther King. They were both, of course beaten and jailed. You know? I did not go to Montgomery.

DB: Okay.

LF: A friend of mine who lives here in Chicago went to Montgomery and was jailed in Montgomery, a, overnight. Uh, you know, we have lunch together, a couple of colleagues. Alright? But Selma, really scared my wife.

DB: I imagine, yeah.

LF: But from then on I was active in civil rights in the community and the congregation supported me.

DB: Okay.

LF: I never received a negative comment from any member of my congregation. Um, that they didn't go to the black church when I spoke, that was their choice.

And speaking in a black church is a fantastic experience. Um, first of all, they build a rhythm.

DB: Okay.

LF: Which basically is Gospel and you as a speaker fall into that rhythm and the amens and the Hallelujahs, I mean, it is a magnificent experience, and I loved it. You don't get that response in a synagogue or church.

DB: No.

LF: No. Okay? The Rockford Commission on Human Relations was a façade. Nothing was ever done with the poverty, uh, housing. Um, and, um, did I attend. . . uh, some public. . . Well, I, I led that procession. You have the picture now,

DB: Right.

LF: . . . at mlk's assassination. Uh, I went into mourning when I heard about it. And Alan and I got together for lunch to talk about now what's going to happen? They're going to splinter.

DB: Right.

LF: Which they did, you know, and people like Jesse Jackson took over. He wasn't Martin Luther King. Now, Martin Luther King was not the most moral man in the world. All right? Um, he had affair after affair after affair, which has since come out. J. Edgar Hoover had a thing about him that was unbelievable. My uncles, who are all conservative Republicans, okay. My family was the only democratic family in the temp-- in the family. They were all wealthy. We were the poor ones. Okay. All of the tax code that's coming out. Anyway, they were all conservative Republicans. Now they never said a word to me about my involvement in civil rights.

DB: They were silent.

LF: Yep. Cause they knew they wouldn't get anywhere. Alright? Were the marches and demonstrations that I was involved in, [reading from list of questions] . . . they were very peaceful, except for Selma, and that was a riot on behalf of the police.

DB: Right. So when you did the demonstrations in Rockford, other marches in Rockford, what do you think was the result of those marches?

LF: That was the most frightening march I was on. More than Selma because though we were escorted by police, the streets were deserted. Nobody came out. I think a friend of mine came out. Okay. Alright. He owned the pawn shop on State. He and his father. He came out to wave. But nobody came out. And it was silent and we're peering around to see if there's anybody with guns. Now, guns were not that prevalent in those days. But if they had been as prevalent as they are today, I'm certain it wouldn't have been peaceful. It was a very peaceful march. Um, I'm not sure where we ended. We may have ended at the Cathedral.

DB: Okay.

LF: But it was very quiet.

DB: What do you think that says about Rockford that no one came out?

LF: Well, as I said, Rockford is a little to the right of Genghis Khan. It's a downstate community in upstate.

DB: Okay.

LF: And I don't know what the integration rate today is.

DB: Okay.

LF: Is it still West side/East side?

DB: Well from the demographers that I've spoken to, um, most of the population is moving towards the east, except for the African American population, which tends to move up north.

LF: Where? Loves Park?

DB: Well to the northwest part of Rockford.

LF: So it's still segregated? Sad.

DB: But that's just what people have told me. It is interesting though that the most integrated neighborhood, what's considered the most integrated neighborhood in Rockford is this small community, small, bunch of fabricated houses built right behind the Schnucks on East State Street [east of Mulford Rd. on the north side of the street].

LF: Really? I had an interesting experience this summer. Another digression.

DB: Okay, hold on [recording paused and restarted] . . . You had an experience this summer?

LF: Yeah, um... being involved in civil rights, Uh, I wanted to see . . . there's a large black community in Martha's vineyard and I went to Martha's vineyard with my daughter. All right? Glorious place, really. And uh, we spent a week together. My daughter and I are very close. Okay. By the way, we adopted her from Rockford Children's Home, which no longer exists. She was a month old. We had, after we lost our second and third children we adopted two. Our oldest is the only biological child and I have become a great grandfather.

DB: Oh, wonderful.

LF: My granddaughter and her Chinese husband just had a baby five weeks ago.

DB: Congratulations.

LF: I'm too young to be a great grandfather. Oh God! I held her after she was born. tiny, so tiny. My granddaughter, I held her after she was born too. I flew in overnight from Sacramento. But um, it's interesting that Rockford is still segregated. Sad.

Anyway, interesting thing about Martha's Vineyard. There is a lovely park.

DB: Okay.

LF: On one side of the park, are candy cane houses. All white. On the other side of the house [park] are your typical Massachusetts houses. All black.

DB: Okay.

LF: The woman who wrote, um, was it, not To Kill a Mockingbird it's another, a writer, a famous writer, lived two blocks away from Thurgood Marshall.

DB: Okay.

LF: Thurgood Marshall's wife would not associate with this writer because she was too black. So there is racial division within the black community. Now we're the only, we were the first and still friends with a black couple when I retired. Okay. And [son] likes Arizona and we included them in everything. Annie and Jack Hall. And I still speak to them once in a while and she'll send me a Gif or something

and I'll respond to it. Jack was a great golfer. He was a colonel in the Air Force. That doesn't count, but everybody wanted to play golf with him.

DB: Oh really?

LF: Nobody really socialized with him, except us. And the reason that occurred is we were taking bridge lessons. You've retired, you play a bridge. Right? Okay. And the tables were all foursomes, except for Annie and Jack.

DB: Oh.

LF: They sat alone. I said to my wife, we're going to sit there and we sat there and we became close and dear friends, and they shared their burdens with us and we shared our burdens with us [them] and we're still in contact.

DB: Very nice.

LF: Jack could never really teach me to play golf well.

DB: [Laughs] Okay,

LF: So it continued.

[recording paused]

LF: You know, even though they are a minority in a majority white community. Um, the ones who are really, um, pushed out are the Indians. And you drive through the reservations and it's horrible. Now Bishop Quinn, God bless him, became a missionary to the Indians. After he retired. And moved to Arizona. I tried to find him, and couldn't. He was going from one reservation to another. Now the reservation should be beautiful because of all the money that Indian gambling is bringing in, but they're not. Why? Because the people who own the casinos are in Vegas and they're skimming. Now the Indian schools are better, but they're still a horribly segregated minority. And if I were at my age to get involved in anything, it'd be Native American.

DB: Hmm. Okay.

LF: Although my, my kids, for example, my congregation goes to the south side to attend a service at a black congregation. They come up here and have a service here.

DB: Okay.

LF: Alright. So we communicate back and forth. There is a black Jewish rabbi who is a member of the Chicago Board of rabbis here in town, who happens to be, what's her name again? Obama's wife?

DB: Michelle.

LF: Michelle's cousin.

DB: Oh, okay.

LF: Alright? And, he's a fully ordained rabbi.

DB: Okay.

LF: Now, one of the places I took, interestingly enough, when I was the rabbi in St Louis, we planned a New York trip.

DB: Okay.

LF: And one of the stops was a black synagogue in Harlem and I brought my confirmants to this, trying to instill in them the sense of the dignity of all people. Now I took the confirmants to that. And they thought it was the highlight of the trip. The people. I mean, were so gracious and the spread was unbelievable after the service. Okay. Here we are. [referring to list of questions.]

DB: Hold on. [pausing and restarting the recording.]

LF: OK, you know the marches. [reading from list of questions] Who else was at the forefront of leading community discussion?

The Catholics were at the forefront. Alright?

DB: Alright. Do any particular individuals...

LF: The Unitarians were at the forefront.

DB: Among the Catholics or the Unitarians... You mentioned Alan Deale. Were there any Catholics that come to mind? Any individuals?

LF: There is a guy whose name is on my computer... Ken Burns.

DB: Okay.

LF: Uh, Ken Burns and I taught a Catholic theological class together at the temple and yeah, I spoke to Ken about integration and he said the church is integrated.

DB: Okay.

LF: Now, whether that's true or not today, I don't know.

DB: Right.

LF: But Ken, who lives in Indianapolis now, um, was the theologian for the Rockford Diocese and he and I were very close. We'd compare notes before the class and I would ask him questions. He said, don't ask me that in class. Yeah. So it was delightful, but the Catholics were.

DB: There were others then besides Ken Burns?

LF: Well, Alan. Maybe it's changed, but certainly to a great extent, the black community kept to itself.

DB: Well, when you said you went to speak at black churches, do you remember any particular churches that you went to speak at?

LF: Well, there was one on South Main. There was one a little further west on State Street. Uh, the one on South Main I think was the big one. And I loved it. I mean, kinder people I couldn't find.

[reading from list of questions] What formalized group did I partner with?

The NAACP. I've been part of that for years. Um, black churches. I spoke about other clergy, you know, we had a couple of baptist ministers with us who went, black baptist ministers who went with us to Washington and we became close. Now I remember the night we drove all night to Washington and because there had been a child had fallen down a well in Pennsylvania and all night long we listened to the attempts to get her up.

DB: Oh, okay.

LF: So you can pinpoint... they got her out alive. Okay. About, well, he became, um, at Rockford college, well my wife taught at Rockford College. I didn't teach at Rockford College. Okay.

[Reading from list of questions] Were there any big wins he saw in local human and civil rights?



Not In Rockford. In Sacramento, yes,

DB: But not in Rockford.

LF: In Sacramento. That community is an integrated community with Asians and blacks and whites all living together. Sure there's a black neighborhood okay. But, uh, we were very much involved in Sacramento and uh, getting homes for the Vietnamese orphans, remember the boat? Um, we brought them food and we raised money for them, my congregation, and got them settled in homes. Um, and so, I mean, the community itself was pretty much of an integrated community. Again, I was closer to the Catholic community than any other community. In fact, interesting story. You maybe not want to tape this.

DB: Okay. [recording paused].

LF: My pet project in Sacramento was unwed mothers. And getting them care and feeding 'em. And I would raise tons of food from my congregation and from the community to feed them. I was chair of that committee for 10 years. The hospital eventually absorbed the organization, promised they would always exist and then closed them and the director called me in hysterics in retirement, uh, about how they broke their word.

But, um, I was involved in the grape boycott from Chile under [Ien Dai] and we approached all the grocery stores, uh, to see if they would boycott the grapes that came out of Chile and um, the Chinese grocery stores agreed. Uh, the majors-- Safeway and [Railey] did not. Albertsons did not. Um, and so, uh, the boycott failed. Um, other than that I was, I'm part of the wic program was part of, I was president of the Church Members Credit Union a, lots and lots. I've got a key to the city hanging in the bathroom. Okay. Alright. Um, I thought that was an appropriate place. Doesn't open any doors. Resolutions from, you know, but the interesting thing happened. Uh, I was the chaplain of the Senate in 1977. All right.

DB: This was the California Senate,

LF: California State Senate. And at that time there was a senator named George Deukmejian, Armenian. And George and I had a battle. He was pro gun. I was anti gun. Now, he was anti abortion. I was pro abortion. Okay. Um, it was a gun issue. And after the vote where they voted to allow it, he comes up to me and he said to me, "I won, You lost" because I preached against it at the all, the Monday and Thursday at the opening session. And I said, "No, you won, God lost."

LF: When he was inaugurated as governor, I got a personal call from him. I want you to do the benediction at my inauguration. So I walk into the Capitol building and his chief of staff was a member of my temple. And he said, "Rabbi, what are you doing here?" So I said, "Ask the governor." Alright? He didn't know. Really what occurred is at that time I was president of the Pacific Association of Reform Rabbis and, a, Blue Cross and Blue Shield had dropped us because of psychiatric costs. Rabbis, um, you know, I guess they used too much. Anyhow, we had to find an insurance policy. That was my major job, but I was to open the convention and do the inauguration the next day. And the governor sent a plane for me. And I had to be out of there my nights third, because the Palm Springs airport closes at 9:30. So. And back to B.T. Collins, I received a call, when B.T. died from diabetes, from *the* anchor man, Stan Atkinson. "Rabbi, would you give the invocation at BT's funeral? He would want you to be.

LF: There I am sitting with Pete Wilson, who was the governor at the time and Jerry Brown, who was the past governor. And um, George Deukmejian, um, who came to my last service . . .

DB: Oh, really.

LF: Drove up from Fresno to my last service. Um, and the reason that we became close was because in a memorial service for the Holocaust, I said, tragically, this is not the first holocaust of the 20th century. There was an Armenian holocaust as well. George, being Armenian, was overwhelmed. That brought us close.

DB: Yeah.

LF: So I did B.T.'s funeral. Uh, actually there's a book called *Unsung Hero*, which is what his sister wrote. And my eulogy is the preface.

DB: Oh really?

LF: Yeah. And there, it was full military, caissons, the whole thing, with the bagpipes. 5,000 people in Capital Park. Funny thing happened. I had to get back to Palm Springs to run the convention. So I had a reservation, Jerry Brown and his girlfriend at that time, Linda Rondstadt, were standing in line waiting to get on the plane to L.A. and they got bumped. I got on. Okay. So as you can see, I'm remained active.

DB: Right.

LF: Okay. Ready? Okay, we're there. [reading from list of questions] Where in the community was there resistance to civil rights?

Everywhere. Anyone who should talk to that led, um, those factions.

No, I talked openly about it. Never got hate mail.

DB: Okay.

LF: Never got threatened. Not like Sacramento. Where the Nazi party was 40 miles away. Um, and the rednecks from northern California firebombed the Temple, shot through my window, until we put in bulletproof glass.

[reading from list of questions] How have Rockford and civil rights changed in the community since that time? You tell me they haven't . . . and my heart's broken.

We thought we made a difference.

DB: Right.

LF: Obviously we didn't.

DB: Yeah.

LF: I don't know whether a civil rights exhibit at the Midway Museum is going to make a difference. You have all those evangelical preachers there.

DB: Yes.

LF: And uh, I don't know how the vote count for Obama was in '10 and '14. You know. I don't want to get into politics about the present moron who leads the country, but uh, he doesn't like black people. And that's why he went after Obama. I hope I was some help, David.

DB: I think you were a lot of help.