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**JLFT 003 Walter Beck LeFlore**  
**John LeFlore Oral History Tapes (JLFT), Acc. 328**  
**Interviewed by John Beebee, Sheila Flanagan, and Davy Cook on October 9, 1996**  
**53 minute audio recording • 18 page transcript**

**Abstract:** In this recording, Dr. W.B. LeFlore is interviewed by John Beebee, Sheila Flanagan, and Davy Cook about his memories of John LeFlore and the Civil Rights Movement in Mobile, Alabama. The interview begins with Dr. LeFlore sharing his early memories of his father, and of the household dynamics he grew up with. He also discusses the civil rights work that his father undertook, and how he fit that work into his home life. Dr. LeFlore recalls some of the threatening phone calls that the family received due to his father's activism, and the bombing of the family home and its aftermath. He also shares his reflections on his father's legacy.

Sheila Flanagan and John Beebee led the interviews for this project, recording the reflections of relatives, friends, and colleagues of Mobile activist John LeFlore for an Alabama Public Television documentary released under the title, "A Quiet Revolution: The Story of John L. LeFlore." The project was funded through an Alabama Humanities Foundation grant.

**Preface:** This is a transcript of an oral history recording archived at the McCall Library of the University of South Alabama. Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, which has been minimally edited for readability.



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**JLFT 003 W.B. LeFlore**  
Interviewed October 9, 1996

This is a verbatim transcript of an oral history interview recording, composed and formatted in accordance with the McCall Library transcription style guide.

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Please note that if any text is **bolded** in the transcript, this indicates uncertainty of either spelling or accuracy of transcription regarding what was said. Italics indicate emphasis, or are applied to titles and similar proper nouns.

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JLFT 003

Interviewee: Walter Beck LeFlore

Interviewer: John Beebee, Sheila Flanagan, Davy Cook

Date: December 9, 1996

B: Are we rolling? Okay, Dr. LeFlore, I'm just curious—this is probably the controversial part of the interview. What does W.B. stand for?

L: Walker Beck.

B: Okay, great. [Laughter] First, tell us a little bit about yourself, Dr. LeFlore. When and where were you born, and—?

L: Well, I was born in Mobile, Alabama. I assume that it was probably within the 50 feet of where we're sitting now. At that time, most of the deliveries were done in the home, and I was delivered by a midwife. So, I'm assuming it was on this site that I was born.

B: How about that.

L: Mhm.

B: What—that's real interesting. Now, when did you start your doctor practice?

L: I started to practice medicine in Mobile in 1965. I had attended Meharry Medical College from 1959 to 1963, and following that, I went to Albert Einstein Medical Center for Internship and Medical Residency, which I completed one year of the medical residency then.

B: What do you—Dr. LeFlore, what do you remember about your father? What do you—and did you call him “Dad,” or “father”—? How'd you refer to him?

L: We always called him “Daddy.”

B: Okay. [Laughter]

L: Daddy.

B: What do you remember about your daddy? What are your earliest memories?

L: Well, frankly I think he was a very dynamic person. Very caring, and—.

[Break in recording]

B: Okay, Dr. LeFlore, what do you remember about your daddy? What were your earliest memories?

L: Well, he was a very caring person. He was generally there when he was needed. He tried to expose us, as children, to the experiences of life, such as banking, working with the postal services that were available, and the like. Those things that he felt that were quite essential, although they were a part of his daily functions; but he wanted to be sure that we had some exposure to those functions that people normally encounter as they grow older.

B: What kind of temperament or personality did he have?

L: It's hard to say. I remember my father never gave us a spanking. My mother was a spanker. My father was a person and he didn't chastise very much. Perhaps he didn't have to, because I think if he spoke, then that was about all that was necessary. He was very dynamic, but then, very soft and tender no matter what he attempted to do.

B: Hm. How important was education to him?

L: Education was very important. He encouraged all of us to pursue education. He made us aware of the fact that because of his childhood circumstances, he had been deprived of being able to pursue his education to the fullest. However, he indicated, then we experienced the fact, that he had gone to night school, or some other—and he had also done some correspondence courses. And in his early—my early years as a child, he had the Overton Hygienic Company, which was a company that dealt with products for the female: powder, stockings, etc. And his office was then at 8 North Warren Street. And this was in addition to his routine job that he had at the postal services.

B: Sounds like a busy man.

L: Yes.

B: [Laughter] What stories do you remember from childhood—specifically, dealing with his work with civil rights? What are some stories you remember about him working at home, and that kind of thing?

L: Well, he was a corresponding reporter for two Black newspapers: The *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *Chicago Defender*. And it was for many years, prior to World War II. So, he covered many of the local events that might've been some interest to the paper. One in particular was the Monroe, Georgia lynching where five negroes were lynched. And he went to Monroe, Georgia to cover that particular story. He maintained, again, a car, which was usually one of the older ones; and he would depend on my mother to do much of the transporting of the children, etc. And my mother was also the instrumental person who dealt with—through him—the financial arrangements involving all of our education. Fortunately, out of five children, four of us completed the BS degree: our brother who completed his PhD in Biology; I did my Master's degree and an MD degree; a sister who did a Master's degree in addition to a Bachelor's degree; and another sister who did a Master's degree in addition to her Bachelor's.

B: Mhm. Tell us about his work habits. What kind of hours did he put in, how was he—you know, tell us about his work habits.

L: Well as a child—I'd say prior to age 14—my dad would come home in the evening after working, and he would rest for about 30 minutes. And during that time, he'd call his favorite masseuse—masseur, I guess you'd say—in, and that was me. And I'd have to massage his legs for about 15, 20 minutes, using alcohol. And believe it or not, I can understand just what he might've been experiencing on a day-to-day basis. And really, retrospectively, I enjoyed those moments that I spent with him there. And sometimes he would drop off to sleep, take a brief nap; then he was up and at it at the typewriter, or either he had a meeting to attend, or generally his—if he went to bed, he would get up and spend several hours reading, or at the typewriter. When I say “reading,” I never saw him read to any extent, anything, for any *long* period of time. He would pick it up, look at it, put it down, and almost seemingly could remember everything that was on that page. So, he didn't spend a lot of time reading.

B: How long did he work into the evening?

L: Oh, it varied. Generally, he could work into the mornings; and many mornings I'd wake up, and there he would be at the typewriter, working. Typing out various documents that would later go to the post office. Of course, sometimes they were also defending his—some of the demerits that he had also received from the postmaster because he might've crossed the street in the middle of the block, for example. So, these were the kinds of things that he also had to work with. And I know that in the mornings, if they would due, he would be up half the night

indicating the statutes and so forth that might've permitted him to cross the street because some inspector was on his tail.

B: Now, were they specifically after him because of his civil rights stance? Why was the—?

L: Oh yes. They were specifically after him because of his activities with civil rights. He also was instrumental in keeping some of his coworkers also in their particular positions, because he was also defending and advising them on certain rights that they might have with regard to their particular job and securing their position. I recall one instance where, as I indicated, that I went to apply to a summer job at the post office. Many of my friends were employed as a summer carrier, and during the course of my application and interview, the postmaster indicated to me that I could just about forget my application, because they had one LeFlore, and they certainly were not going to have two down there. And of course, here I was—a child, 15 years old—having to hear this kind of statement. Here I was trying to get a job so that I could be with my peers, some of my friends; and again, was told that that would not be possible.

B: Hm. That's something. What was—real impressed with all the energy, the drive that he must've had. I see all the papers that he's put through. I hear about the work that he put into. What was driving him? Was there an incident—or was there an incident that just—[snaps]? That just—[snaps]? You know, got him going? Or what was it that instituted that drive that he had?

L: We wonder what was that—that thing that kept him moving, the thing that kept him involved in the Civil Rights Movement; I don't know. I don't know what it was. He states that—he told us once that it involved an incident on the bus—on a streetcar, excuse me; we didn't have buses then. Wherein, he was told to do something—it might've been giving up his seat, or moving to the rear of the streetcar, or something of that nature—and that it developed into a brawl. And that, I think he was arrested, and it was an injustice that he felt that that was not warranted. And I think that was one of the factors that might have started him in that particular direction. However, he would often tell us that when he was a kid, that he was one of five children. His mother was a widow. His father died when he was 9 months old; his mother never remarried. And that he—all of them worked in concert to support the family. These all were factors, I'm sure, that might have added something to his drive, was the fact that it was not an easy life.

B: What was the streetcar incident? What was that? Do you remember?

L: That was during the, I think he was in about his—he was about 20 or 21 at that time. I don't know his exact age.

B: That would be in the what? [19]40s, somewhere around there?

L: No, that would have to be in the [19]30s.

B: [19]30s.

L: [19]30s.

B: Okay.

L: Yeah, mmhm.

B: What—describe your dad's relationship with you as a family, with you in particular. Describe your relationship with y'all.

L: Well, I feel that he was a—we were pretty tight, pretty close. Good father. I don't know if I was a good son or not, but I don't think I gave him any trouble per se. We knew *not* to. And again, as I said before, he was not a scolding person, but I think he taught the matter of self-respect and respect for authority, and we just felt good about being a part of this family.

B: What price do you feel like he paid for his civil rights work? I'm just imagining he took a lot of time away from his family. Was it—tell us about that.

L: It was a lot of time, of course. We—I don't recall ever going to a ballgame with my father, or a picnic. My mother normally would take us to most of the affairs. But we didn't miss very much. And I think it's basically because of the moral and financial support that he would give. And even realizing that there were things that had to be pursued, and even there he would still make an effort to attend the major events in our lives—that might've occurred in our lives—like graduation, et cetera. But not every little event that might've occurred. But certainly, he was there for the major things. Not sure that I'm answering your question, but—.

B: How many hours was he putting in, do you think?

L: Well, in a course of a day?

B: Uh-huh.

L: I'd say 18, 16 to 18 hours a day. He was not a person who slept excessively. He would get a little nap here and a little nap here, and maybe four hours at the most was his evening.

B: Wow. Hm. What do you remember about the danger surrounding your father and your family? What do you remember about that?

L: Well, I saw my father as the breadwinner in this family. As a child, I felt threatened very often by the exposure that he had. My mother was a housewife. She did not work outside of the home while we were children. And anytime there was any threat—for example, for the demerits that he received from the post office, or from the postmaster; or the—I think they call them “demerits,” or “citations” I guess—for, quote, “violations,” we felt—I felt threatened as a child. I felt threatened whenever I would hear some of his friends—or even my friends—state that, “Man, he’s—either he’s crazy, or he doesn’t know what he’s sticking his neck out to do, or what injuries he might sustain as a result of the things that he’s doing. Or how someone may even harm you children, those of you who are here in the household.” I remember once or twice—on several occasions, as I said before, he would always involve us in many of the things that he had to do to expedite his day. For example, picking up his mail: he had a post office box. The post office box was Post Office Box 1091. He would give us the key and say, “Well, you go down and pick up my mail for me.” And many times, we would pick it up. And often there would be threats on postal cards. For example, I remember one that stated, “The objectionables like you will be dealt with after the big job is completed.” This was during World War II. And there were several others that were—that came across, or came to my attention, as a result of my picking up his mail. I can’t remember all of them. But every now and then, there would be something of this nature appearing in his mail that we might’ve picked up. Some of it he probably never showed us. But these were postal cards. these were just there where you could read them. And certainly as a child, being exposed to this, it was a tremendous threat.

B: Can we take a break for a little bit?

[Break in recording]

B: Okay, just tell me when you’re rolling.



S: Do you need some water Dr. LeFlore?

L: No, I'm fine, thank you.

B: Okay. Now, how old were you about this time? You said you were in your teens? Is that right, or—?

L: 13, 14. 12 to 13, 14.

B: Now, he did a lot of—from what I'm picking up here—he did a lot of civil rights—actually was interested in civil rights, even during World War II or before—?

L: During World War II and before, because there was no one else on the scene at that time for any civil rights activities. These included Pullman car accommodations; railroad accommodations—that is, dining car accommodations; the seating arrangements on the trains. And one of the things that we *did* do—and even today I have a great interest in railroads—we met almost every train that came in. That's one of the things that we did do together. I remember he would never—very often, he would meet the train, and he would be inspecting the train. So, inspecting the facilities, who might be sitting where, whether there might've been people of color in the Pullman cars, and what accommodations they might have been offered. So, he would interview some people that might talk with him in that regard. So, we met most of the trains, especially on the weekends. Mmhm.

B: Hm. Was that a part of the test-in program or was that something different?

L: Pardon?

B: The test-ins, tell us about the test-ins—

L: No, this was before that time. This was during World War II; before and during World War II. Before and during, and some after. But this was generally—we were kids then. We were 10 years, 11 years, 12 years old.

B: If he discovered some kind of discrimination, how did he deal with it?

L: He generally worked through the railroad company, and he would file a complaint to the authorities. I think usually it was through the federal government and so forth.

B: Did he get any action on that, or—?

L: I think so, yes. Mmhm. I think it was the—he felt that that was the way in which it could be done. And he would also work through the national office of the NAACP in New York. So, he and Walter White were very, very close at that time; and Thurgood Marshall also worked with him quite—.

B: What was his relationship with Mr. Marshall?

L: With—?

B: With Mr. Marshall? Thurgood Marshall.

L: Very good. It was an excellent relationship, as far as I know. Of course, I was, again, not as knowledgeable about some of the things that might have transpired, but Walter White would often come *here*. Walter White was executive secretary, I guess, of the national office; and Thurgood Marshall was, I don't know what position he was holding at that time. But they would communicate quite frequently.

B: That's great.

B: Back to the feel of danger and that kind of thing. Do you remember any phone calls, or any—?

L: Oh yes. Phone calls were—when we had a telephone, sometimes; we didn't have one all the time, of course. There were times, there were some brief times when there was no telephone, but—and then, there was party lines. You didn't have a private line, there were party lines. And we'd get them. Yes, we'd get quite a few phone calls.

D: Do you remember what they would s—?

L: But normally, they would speak to him directly. They would speak with him directly, and of course, many times we did not know what might've transpired. He didn't tell us much about those kind of calls. You could see the distress that he might've experienced as a result of these conversations, and his demeanor after that.

B: So, you knew it was a threatening call just by—

L: Oh yes, yes.

B: —his demeanor?

L: Of course.

B: I'm just impressed. What kept the man going through all that?

L: Well it was, I think it was—he was a brave man; let's say that. I think he was a very brave man.

B: Tell us about the night the bomb went off. What do you remember about that night?

L: Well, I—we were together, my family and I—my immediate family. We were at home. And the bomb went off, I think it was early in the morning. And we immediately came around and found that they were okay. They were shaken up quite a bit, but they were okay, and we were very happy to find that out. Of course, it was a very distressing event for all of us. My children were very upset because they had never seen anything like this before, and it was very upsetting. It's something that you don't get over very readily. I think the—again, the thing that we were happiest about was the fact that they were okay and without visible injury. I'm sure there was a lot of injury from a mental and emotional standpoint, but they did not display that much. I think they were both very strong people. And didn't talk about it too much; were ready to move on with trying to get the house rebuilt, and finding out what would be the next step and so forth, and how we might prevent this from happening again.

B: Now, how did you hear about it?

L: I don't—well, I think we heard it, if I recall; we didn't live too far from here. We heard it. But we didn't know what it was. But we didn't know *what* it was, and someone called—I can't remember all of the events—or someone came by. And we immediately responded.

[Brief technical exchange about lighting for the recording]

B: Okay. You ready?

L: Mmhm.

B: Okay. Dr. LeFlore, what's kind of neat about this—this is the actual site. I mean, this was the home. I mean, this is—.

L: Well, the home was—at that time, at the time of the bombing, it was a frame building, built more on the same plan, more or less. It was where I was born, and had grown up. And it was a very meaningful structure to those of us who had very fond memories, and some that were not too fond that we had experienced them in that particular structure. So, it's—we realized, retrospectively, that that was a very meaningful home. It was home. And it did carry a lot of memories. And with the bombing, the house was—could not be restructured. So, it was torn down and the present house was built.

B: The one right behind us right now?

L: Yes. Mmhm.

B: What—do you need me to scoot forward? Are we ready?

D: It's good.

B: Okay. Dr. LeFlore, we're kind of recounting about the bombing and all that. Tell us, what did you see when you came—oh, hold on.

[Background noises]

L: Let him go ahead and cut it.

[Break in recording]

B: Okay. Dr. LeFlore, what do you recall that night you got the news about the bombing, and what was going through your mind, and what did you see when you first walked in?

L: Well, I guess the thing that was bouncing in my mind is, "Why?" Why two innocent people? Secondly, were they both okay? And I think we soon found that out. Thirdly, was the fact that here, all of our memories destroyed. Resentment, anger, helplessness; because there was nothing that we could do to help the situation other than support our family. We saw the total destruction of the house, and it was—ultimately, it was really destroyed. It was—the side where the bomb was gone, and there was some degree of being thankful that your parents were okay.

And the fact that the area that was destroyed, principally, by the bomb was the area where my father spent most of his time at night typing. And the fact that he had just left that area and gone to bed. Perhaps a few minutes—had he stayed there a little bit longer, he would've been killed. I think one could very easily see his activities during that time, because the windows were lower. No one worried about curtains. There were some sheers on the windows and shades and so forth, but we'd never had anything like that. Or never anticipated anything of that nature, you know, occurring. So, there was generally freedom of movement, as one would normally move in a house on a dead-end street without much traffic passing through and so forth; not much foot traffic, even. So, as a matter of fact, we were probably still going to bed with the doors unlocked at that time. Because we didn't have a high crime rate in this area, either.

B: Did they find any evidence or any leads in the case?

L: Not to my knowledge. I don't think—the case was never solved, let's say that. They had nothing concrete on which to work. So, to the best of my knowledge, it has not been something that was solved in terms of who might have planted that particular bombing, that bomb.

B: What'd the police say it was? What kind of bomb was it?

L: They said it was dynamite. That's all I can recall on that.

B: How did this affect him? Did it deter him in any way? What did it do to him? What—how did he respond? What did he say?

L: Well, he was visibly upset, I think, in terms of the fact that this had occurred. But he was not remorseful. He was not—he was busy trying to get things moving. And he was not resentful; I think many times, he felt as though, well, this was a sick mind that was out to destroy property and people. I think he felt some remorse for the person involved, in terms of in more sympathy rather than trying to find out who did it. But what kind of person could this have been? And of course, I think we all felt that way after listening to him and to my mother. Yeah. It was a frightening experience, and of course, one that I think we could all be thankful for that they were both spared of any permanent injury or death.

B: How did your mother react to all this going on? His whole struggle, maybe especially around the bombing and all that, how was—what was her stance on it?

- L: My mother was supportive. She was always supportive of everything that he did and wanted to do. She trusted him. She trusted his judgment. She was as a person whose hand was being held, and they were moving in this endeavor together. She was like a silent partner. Never telling him he shouldn't do this or he shouldn't do that, but it was a matter of support.
- B: That's good. That's good. Do you—what were his goals? What was he after?
- L: I think he was after equal rights for all men. The dignity of mankind. I think those were the basic things: equal rights for all people, regardless as to whether they were Black, white, yellow, brown, red; but equal rights for all people.
- B: Hm. That's good. What—how do—do you think that Mobile's African American community understands his contributions, appreciates them, and—what do you think—is there anything missing there as far as how they appreciate his contribution?
- L: I think there are some people who might've appreciated, and who appreciated his contribution. He's been dead now 20 years, and some of his works might have been overshadowed by some other crusaders in this arena. But we have to remember that his battle started long before many others saw that this might be something that was necessary for them to do. He fought many of these battles alone, prior to the 1960s; and we were quite proud of his accomplishments, and we're still proud of them. I'm not sure as to whether many of the younger people realize what sacrifices and what courage it must have taken for him to have achieved what he did during the time when it was being pursued, and the achievements were made a part of his record. Of *the* record, let's say that, too.
- B: Hm. What—you brought up something about his relationship—. Tell me, what did he think about the people he worked with in the [19]50s and [19]60s, like Robert Gilliard, Noble Beasley; what was his—how did he work with them?
- L: I think he worked, or attempted to work, harmoniously as possible with all people who might have been involved in the civil rights issue. Although, sometimes the philosophies might've differed. The manner in which you achieved the particular goals might have differed. His was one of pursuing it through the courts. And that's what he believed in. And through peaceful negotiations and so forth. So, that was his philosophy.

B: What was his relationship with Mr. Langan? Joseph Langan. How'd they work with—?

L: I think there was a mutual admiration, on the part of Mr. Langan and John L. LeFlore. I think they respected each other highly. They might have had differences, but yet there was this mutual admiration and mutual respect. I think they were friends, and I think that's the way they worked: as friends.

B: Did he ever come to your house, or did Mr. LeFlore ever go to his house, or anything like that?

L: Oh, I think Mr. Langan visited him frequently, or he might have—at the time, Mr. Langan was, he was at city hall, and I think he visited him frequently at city hall. And I think they visited each other frequently, and depending on the occasion, if it were—if it was an occasion that was at Mr. Langan's home, I think he went. And if there was one here that—or if Mr. Langan, was not available; otherwise, Mr. Langan would come here and visit him here.

B: So, he would come to your house then?

L: I think they felt very relaxed in each other's company.

B: So, he would come to visit you?

L: Yes, definitely.

B: Tell us about—something I didn't hit on is, after the bombing, what happened with the white community? What happened with the city and all that? What was the response?

L: The response was very positive. There was a fund set up to assist with the rebuilding of the J.L. LeFlore home. And many contributions were made from businesses, as well as individuals in both communities—in all communities throughout the city of Mobile. But there was a tremendous response from the people in the—especially the businesses—in the white community.

B: What did you think that said to the—I guess we'll call them "rabble rousers?" What did you think that said?

- L: Well, I think it said that, “We support John L. LeFlore, and we do not uphold wrongdoings, or the breaking of the law by any individual, or imposing or attempting to impose your beliefs or to intimidate any individual. Regardless as to how we may or whether we agree or disagree with that person’s views.”
- B: Do you think he was too—there’re some that charged that he was maybe too willing to work with the white power structure, and he was maybe not militant enough. What’s your opinion on that?
- L: Well, I feel that he worked with people. And during the time that he started his efforts, I don’t think any other—I think he was very militant, would have been considered very militant, to have started back in the [19]20s. When nobody else was doing anything, that’s when John L. LeFlore was out there.
- B: In the 1920s you say?
- L: In the 1920s. I mean, this was even before I was born. And I’m sure he was active at the time of my birth. I can’t remember anything else, other than the fact that he worked with the NAACP or any other organization that might have been concerned with the equal rights of men. And that’s all I can remember; from the first thing that I remember about my father was the fact that I’m sure that he was doing this kind of work. Yep.
- B: That’s something. Well, okay. Dr. LeFlore, did your dad ever meet Cudjoe Lewis? Now, he was one of the last slaves, living slaves—?
- L: I’m not sure if he ever met Cudjoe Lewis or not. I guess those are some of the things—I didn’t know *everything* about him. But I’m not sure. He never mentioned it—to my knowledge anyway.
- B: What about his relationship with Dr. Martin Luther King? What was his relationship there? What kind of—?
- L: I think he had respect for Martin Luther King. I’m not sure as to what their relationship might have been; whether there was any communication, or whether there was any effort on the part of either one of them to discuss any of each other’s work, or whether or not there was any effort to unify or not. That I don’t know.
- B: Did you ever feel compelled yourself to do any work like your dad, or did you ever—was that something that attracted you or not?



- L: Well, I think it—his work made me aware of what manhood was all about. But in terms of pursuing, and making the sacrifices he made, I was not so inclined. And I think that's not an unusual thing: when you see the sacrifices that a person is making who's very close to you, it's very difficult for you to pick up that cross. And, of course, I would've realized that those would've been some very big shoes for me to fill, and I doubt if I could've ever done it successfully. I think it takes a little bit more than just living with the person and seeing how they do it, but there has to be something that comes from deep from within—drive, a drive that I can't define. I don't know where it comes from. But certainly, I didn't have it, and, again, I would've felt that it would've been some big shoes to fill.
- B: Tell us the story, or tell us some things that your dad was imparting to you regarding just principles of living, how to treat people. What did he tell you, or what are some stories about him working with you?
- L: Oh, he felt that—one was the fact that he always indicated that he would not like for anyone to recognize, or to respond, or to respect him because of the color of his skin, but for what he presented as an individual, even if it was doing business. He said, "You don't do business with an individual because of the color of their skin; the quality of the product that the individual has." And I think that was one of the philosophies that he had.
- B: Hm. That's good. What about as far as treating people? What was his—?
- L: The Golden Rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. And that's the way I felt that he always worked. Never seen him terribly angry with anyone, and I've never seen him be what I thought was unfair to anyone. I thought he was pretty easy to work with—as long as you were dealing aboveboard. And it's one of the things that he—I think honesty was one of the things that he often talked about, was the fact that he would even take money out of his own pockets to defray some of the expenses. And we'd sort of get peeved with him about that, because we always felt that maybe those few cents could've maybe been better spent with his children, or *on* his children and his family; but that was a part of what he did, and we had to respect it.
- B: Hm. Tell us about the day your father died. What do you remember about his passing?

L: Well, I—my father was active up until the time of his death. He died doing the thing—one of the things that he enjoyed: he was taking a bath—he was taking a shower. And I got a call from my mother saying that my father had fallen in the bathtub and she couldn't get him out. So, we went over and assisted, and assisted her with the shock of his death. It was a very sad day. But I felt that if he had to die, that he died the way that he would've wanted to; and that's without a long, lengthy illness, and that it's like a man who died with his boots on. And I think that is my feeling of the satisfaction, if there's any such thing as satisfaction, that he would've wanted the way that it occurred.

B: Was it here at this house? Was that right—was it here at this house?

L: Yes, it was here at this house. Yes.

B: Hm. Describe the—he was about, in his 70s, what is he?

L: Seventy-three years old.

B: Seventy-three. What do you remember about the response from the community?

L: The response from the community was overwhelming. He was referred to during the eulogy as the Moses of his race. There were dignitaries all over the country who came to his funeral, and I think if he was looking down, I think he would've been satisfied. I say, "Looking down"; now of course, naturally I assume he's in Heaven. So, if he was looking down, I think he would've been happy that he had the respect of people, and he was thought about in this particular regard by many of the people that did attend his funeral.

B: How big was the funeral? How—were there a lot—how many people were there would you say?

L: Oh, they all had filled the church. It was Big Zion AME church. I'll say at least a thousand or 1500. Or more; I can't say, really.

B: Tell me—I understand there's some telegrams that came from around the country?

L: Yes. Yes.

B: Tell us a little bit about where'd they come from? Who'd they come from?

L: Well, they came from people in all walks of life. From—I think we had one from, I can't remember all of them. Because I think it was some from Thurgood Marshall, from senators, the Pullman cars, the representatives, and it's just—they were too numerous for me to even think about just who might've sent them.

B: Any state senators or—?

L: State senators. United States senators.

B: Mmhm.

L: And the like.

B: That's good. What do you think John LeFlore should be remembered for?

L: I think he did a tremendous job with the accommodations on the railroads—that's from engineers, firemen, the Pullman cars, dining cars; with our local government, integration of the police department, fire department; hiring of bus drivers here in the city; opening of many jobs for minorities that had previously been closed; to mention just a few of the things.

B: Is there anything that I haven't asked you that I would need to ask to better understand him and better understand his role in civil rights, anything I haven't asked?

L: [Laughter] It's difficult to say. You've asked a lot of questions, and—. I hope I've answered them adequately, and I can't think of anything that you might ask until after we finish this.

U1: Okay! [Laughter]

B: That's great. Sheila, did you have anything else or did—?

F: No. I think you did an excellent job.

B: It was very good. Very good. Dave, you have anything?

C: No.

[End of recording]

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