

## **Transcript of interview with Milton Jordan, by Mandy Shelton, November 4, 2008**

(Recorded at the Georgetown Public Library, 402 W. 8<sup>th</sup> Street) This interview will become part of the Georgetown Public Library's oral history collection. This project focuses on people's memories of Marshall and Carver Schools and the issues and events of the 1950s and '60s that led to desegregation. My name is Mandy Shelton. It is November 4, and it is approximately 5:00 p.m. Your name, sir?

MILTON JORDAN: Milton Jordan.

MANDY SHELTON: Do you have any nicknames?

MILTON JORDAN: No.

MANDY SHELTON: And what is your birthdate?

MILTON JORDAN: March 7, 1940.

MANDY SHELTON: How long have you lived in Georgetown?

MILTON JORDAN: I've lived in Georgetown now for three years. I moved here after I retired, at the beginning of 2006.

MANDY SHELTON: And then you lived here a little before that as well?

MILTON JORDAN: I was a student at Southwestern from 1958 to 1962 and I lived here through 1963.

MANDY SHELTON: So you stayed one more year after you graduated?

MILTON JORDAN: Yes.

MANDY SHELTON: When you lived here the first time, did you live on campus?

MILTON JORDAN: I lived on campus for three years and for the last two years I lived in Hutto and commuted to Georgetown.

MANDY SHELTON: I imagine Hutto was a lot smaller...

MILTON JORDAN: Hutto was tiny.

MANDY SHELTON: Was there a reason you lived in Hutto?

MILTON JORDAN: I was serving the Methodist Church in Hutto as a student pastor. I was a student pastor for two years. One year I was at Southwestern, the following year I was at Episcopal Theological Seminary in Austin, in graduate school.

MANDY SHELTON: And those two years you were also in Hutto as a minister?

MILTON JORDAN: Uh huh.

MANDY SHELTON: And where do you live now in Georgetown?

MILTON JORDAN: Katy Crossing. It's off 971, on the road to Weir.

MANDY SHELTON: Where did you originally come from, before you were a student at Southwestern?

MILTON JORDAN: Ahh, Houston.

MANDY SHELTON: Houston area?

MILTON JORDAN: Yes.

MANDY SHELTON: And then where have you lived in the interim?

MILTON JORDAN: Oh, goodness. Ahh...I have lived in Idaho Falls, Idaho; Ontario, Oregon; Boise, Idaho; Oberlin, Ohio; Jefferson, Texas; Marshall, Texas; Port Arthur, Texas; Buffalo, Texas; and Houston, again. And I lived in a lot of other places before that, but mostly those are the places.

MANDY SHELTON: Were you moving for your career?

MILTON JORDAN: Methodist preachers move. That's what happens to Methodist preachers. That's the nature of the beast.

MANDY SHELTON: What finally brought you back to Georgetown?

MILTON JORDAN: Ah, I would have come back as soon as I possibly could. I was one of the students who loved Georgetown, loved being at Southwestern, and hated it when it was over. There was a group of us like that. There was also a group of students at Southwestern when I was here—this is probably still true--those of us who really liked the place and like everything about it and would have stayed here if we could and those who couldn't wait to get out of this dump. You know, just the sooner we get gone from here the better. I was in the group that really liked it, so when I retired I came back.

MANDY SHELTON: Did you...so you went to Southwestern, you got a bachelor's...

MILTON JORDAN: I got my BA at Southwestern.

MANDY SHELTON: Did you major in religion?

MILTON JORDAN: I majored in history, to tell you the truth.

MANDY SHELTON: Did you have a minor?

MILTON JORDAN: I minored in English.

MANDY SHELTON: Were you part of any groups? Any organizations?

MILTON JORDAN: Yes, I was part of several groups on campus. I was in the Young Democrats, I was in the Mask and Wig, which was the performance group, it's like the Seraphim School now. We were the ones that put on plays during the year and did various performances and that sort of thing. I was in a fraternity—Phi Delta Theta—and in the History Club. I was sort of in the Student Christian Association, but I wasn't really very active in that.

MANDY SHELTON: Did you...were you active in organizations all four years or did you have to cut back...?

MILTON JORDAN: Well, my senior year I wasn't all that active because I was preaching in Hutto at the time. I was...so I wasn't as active then...my senior year, which was the fall of '61 through the spring of '62. And I worked on the *Megaphone* for two years, also. The *Megaphone* is the campus newspaper.

MANDY SHELTON: You wrote for it?

MILTON JORDAN: I did.

MANDY SHELTON: What did you write?

MILTON JORDAN: I wrote sports, actually. I was the...a friend of mine was the sports editor my sophomore year and I wrote sports then and I was the sports editor my junior year. And...but...the staff of the Megaphone, in those days, most of us did a little of everything.

MANDY SHELTON: And so you weren't part of it your freshman year?

MILTON JORDAN: No.

MANDY SHELTON: What caused you to join? Your friend on the staff, or...you just became interested?

MILTON JORDAN: Well, I was interested my freshman year, I just didn't write anything for them. The people that got to do it when I was a sophomore were all friends of mine, so I was able to be more involved.

MANDY SHELTON: Did you take any journalism courses, or...?

MILTON JORDAN: No, we didn't really do that at Southwestern. I don't remember that we had such a thing as a journalism class. That may have been, but I didn't know about it.

MANDY SHELTON: You just learned on the job?

MILTON JORDAN: Well, sort of, yeah.

MANDY SHELTON: And did you cover all of the sports at Southwestern?

MILTON JORDAN: Yeah, I covered intramurals as well as intercollegiate and I covered...I mean there were a couple of other people that wrote stories as well.

MANDY SHELTON: And after Southwestern you went on to the ministry?

MILTON JORDAN: I went to graduate school in Austin for a year and I finished my Master's degree at SMU in Dallas.

MANDY SHELTON: When did you finish?

MILTON JORDAN: 1966.

MANDY SHELTON: 1966...and it was a..?

MILTON JORDAN: At the time it was actually called a second Bachelor's—it was called a Bachelor of Divinity when I got it, but they changed the name of it later to a...Master's...so it's a Master's of Theology, is what it is.

MANDY SHELTON: Which high school did you go to in Houston?

MILTON JORDAN: I went to Baytown-Lee. It's a suburb...it's in east Harris County. I don't know how much you know about Harris County, but Baytown is a refinery town east of Houston. I would have said, in those days it's about 30 miles east of Houston, but it's pretty much part of all of that down there.

M; So, moving from Houston to Georgetown as an 18-, 17- year old...

MILTON JORDAN: Eighteen

MANDY SHELTON: Eighteen-year-old. Did you...were you introduced to sort of a different racial atmosphere, the way the races worked together? Or,...

MILTON JORDAN: No. Segregation was a absolute reality, in fact, such a reality that most of us didn't even realize it. At least most of us white boys didn't realize it. It was just a reality, and it was a reality in Baytown and Houston. We had moved to Houston in the summertime before I actually came to Southwestern. We had moved into town, to pretty much downtown Houston now...but, the situation was the same, this was just a smaller town, with a much smaller school and Southwestern was a VERY small college when I came, I mean much, much smaller than it is now.

MANDY SHELTON: Do you know how many people...?

MILTON JORDAN: Well, actually, I think my freshman year...we ended my freshman year with less than 500 students total.

MANDY SHELTON: Total?

MILTON JORDAN: Total students, all four grades... four classes. And it's now 1200 or 1300 students. Now, it grew a little bit while I was here so that when I left it was maybe 600 students or so. It's double the size it was at its largest when I was there now. And the City of Georgetown was MUCH smaller than it is...I mean, LOTS smaller.

MANDY SHELTON: Can you kind of tell me about the layout of the town back then? Was it...Southwestern, I'm guessing, was at the edge of town?

MILTON JORDAN: The town...the university campus...that was called 12<sup>th</sup> Street, they did not call that University Avenue in those days, that was just 12<sup>th</sup> Street.

MANDY SHELTON: So it wasn't four-lane?

MILTON JORDAN: No, just like any other of those numbered streets except it...well, it was the highway! It's always been Highway 29. And Southwestern was at the end of 12<sup>th</sup> Street. That's where the town ended, was with Southwestern. The neighborhoods across the street, on, oh, I don't know, Laurel, Olive, what are those streets that have the names of trees, like everything going east from downtown has tree names—I don't think the streets...I don't know this for sure, but in my memory, at least, I don't think the streets *west* of Rock had names at all. I don't think the streets over here (in the current vicinity of the Georgetown Public Library) HAD names. This was where the African-American community lived, in the part of town west of Rock, and I don't think any of those streets had names. What's now called Scenic was just referred to as The Ridge. Or, on that side of town it was referred to by a nastier name that included Ridge...that was just called The Ridge.

MANDY SHELTON: So, Rock Street was kind of the dividing line?

MILTON JORDAN: Rock Street was a dividing line. The black community lived west of Rock and north of 12<sup>th</sup> Street, or maybe north of 9<sup>th</sup>—right out there.

MANDY SHELTON: Did you spend a lot of time within the town of Georgetown, as a student? Or were you really isolated on campus?

MILTON JORDAN: Well, no. We spent a lot of time...some of us...our fraternity did community service projects every year, at least once, and one year we did a fall and a spring community service project and usually they were on The Ridge. We built a porch with a wheelchair ramp for a family over here somewhere. We worked on the church over here one year. I don't remember, a cleanup basically.

MANDY SHELTON: So you volunteered within the black community?

MILTON JORDAN: Right. Well, it was our service project for our chapter, our fraternity.

MANDY SHELTON: Was that unusual?

MILTON JORDAN: No!

MANDY SHELTON: OK.

MILTON JORDAN: No, that wasn't unusual, I didn't think.

MANDY SHELTON: And, did you eat in restaurants in town all the time, or did you stay on campus and go to the cafeteria?

MILTON JORDAN: Well, restaurants...you used plural...I guess that would be true, but there really, there weren't...when I was here there were two restaurants in downtown Georgetown: the King Cole and the L & M. And we ate in them pretty regular.

MANDY SHELTON: And they were segregated?

MILTON JORDAN: Oh, yeah. EVERYTHING in Georgetown was segregated when I was here—EVERYTHING in Georgetown was totally segregated. There was...ah...if people, if African-American people wanted to buy a hamburger at the L&M, they came to the kitchen door and ordered the hamburger, in back of the restaurant, on what was sort of an alley...wasn't even really an alley, just the back of the restaurant. And they got, I mean they could order a hamburger and they could get it.

MANDY SHELTON: They just couldn't eat in the restaurant?

MILTON JORDAN: They couldn't come in the front.

MANDY SHELTON: What was the other restaurant you mentioned?

MILTON JORDAN: King Cole.

MANDY SHELTON: The King Cole. Was it the same way? That blacks could order through a back door?

MILTON JORDAN: Yeah, oh yeah. The only African-Americans that you ever saw in the restaurants were the cooks and the dishwashers, that's all.

MANDY SHELTON: Was there ever a time when you...I mean you said you did service projects in the black community, but was there a time when you were interacting with African-Americans?

MILTON JORDAN: Not really, not really. The thing that I was really involved in, in the spring of 1961, there was some ferment...those were the first years of the sit-ins. Do you know about that? I know you don't remember that, but do you know about that? In Greenville, South Carolina, and in Nashville, Tennessee, and in a couple of other places, organized groups of black, mostly students, began to go to restaurants, places with lunch counters and so forth, and order. They'd go in the front door, and order, so there was the beginning of some civil rights actions taking place elsewhere. Some of us at Southwestern were interested in that. We thought that was a...something that we ought to consider. Southwestern was TOTALLY white. We had no African-American students, we had some Hispanic students, and we had foreign students who came on a special deal, usually arranged, I think by the church, on campus, but we had no African-American students at Southwestern the whole four years that I was there. But we were interested in that. Southwestern was a major employer of African-American people in Georgetown--on the building and grounds crews and in the cafeteria crew. And some of us, particularly one friend of mine named Mark Lett, who was working on the paper that I was working on, had worked in the Commons, it was called...I think it's still called the Commons...worked in the Commons and he knew two or three of the African-American staff in the Commons and was involved in discussions with them about the realities of segregated life in Georgetown and at Southwestern in particular. And, he wrote a column for the paper, which, because of a series of events, the editor of the paper was told we could not run that column...at that time. The editor, another friend of mine, Dan Adamson was the editor, told Mark that we couldn't run it and Mark pitched a fit and we didn't run it...that issue...which is this (shows Mandy a copy of the article)...I made a copy of that, which you can have...this is the issue that did NOT run the column by Mark Lett.

MANDY SHELTON: So that's Friday, February 17, 1961.

MILTON JORDAN: Right, and in that issue, the only thing that Dan did was to slug the line in the masthead of the paper that says "The Megaphone," Dan slugged below that the words "of the Administration" as a protest that we had been denied the right to print the column. A week later, with some...depends on your point of view...some minor, or perhaps major editing...we were allowed to print Mark's column and we printed that column...there it is, right there...in the paper on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February, 1961. And in that paper we printed this column in which we questioned the practice of paying sub-standard wages to the African-American help on campus at Southwestern. That's what the point was—that our university was not paying adequate wages to some of its help. And the only reason that they weren't paying them adequate wages was that they were black. And so that's what Mark had written about, that's what he'd been denied the right to...we'd been denied the right to publish in the paper...and so it got edited the next week and it was run the next week.

At the same time, the Student Senate was...passed a resolution in support of the sit-ins in Nashville and Greenville. The president (of Southwestern) at the time was Finch, President Finch was the president, and Finch, who was out of town, by the way when THIS issue of the **Megaphone** came out...he returned and made the compromise that resulted in the printing of that column by Mark. Finch also met this same week, after he got back, which is an interesting thing, with the Student Senate about the sit-in policy and said that he was...he thought it was OK for the Student Senate to pass a resolution supporting the sit-in practices in...elsewhere...and the question was raised by some people in that event about whether or not we would be kicked out of school if we did the same thing. And the issue...the distinction that Finch made...he pointed out that the United Methodist Church...or it wasn't the United Methodist Church, pardon me, it was just the Methodist Church in 1960...had passed a resolution at its general meeting supporting the sit-ins. That that had already been done. So he said that, and therefore our resolution was certainly acceptable. But he did say we couldn't do anything that broke the law. Of course, the sit-ins broke the law! There were laws in those towns against integrated eating places. Now, whether there was a law in Williamson County that way or not, I don't know. I doubt it very seriously because it never would have crossed anybody's mind, but in some of these sit-ins laws were broken. So the distinction is fishy. The interesting thing is that Finch had been in Nashville, Tennessee talking to somebody about taking the job as the dean at Vanderbilt and took the job as the dean at Vanderbilt right at about the exact same time that Vanderbilt University expelled Jim Lawson, who was leading, who was a student in the divinity school, the theology school at Vandy, and was leading those sit-ins in Nashville. They expelled him and the dean that Finch replaced, a guy named Bob Nelson, quit! That's the job Finch took when he went there. Now, I never talked to him, to Dr. Finch before he died, it was just a year ago or a year and a half ago that he died, in Nashville, and I never talked to him about these events after he left. I did talk to him a couple of times before he left. But the employees at Southwestern University were paid...well, technically they were paid what the student help was paid. 'Course, the student help didn't get any money—that was work-study and it paid part of your bills...your tuition or room and board. So, there wasn't any money actually exchanged hands where the students were concerned. So, in a sense it was not quite comparable, but the fact was that officially, in some cases the

help that had been there for years, were getting less money than the students were getting credit for against their accounts. Mark talks about some of those things here.

MANDY SHELTON: It says, twenty-two dollars and fifty cents per week and fringe benefits is what they were getting?

MILTON JORDAN: SOME! And some of the fringe benefits were leftovers that they could take home after meals. Now that's SOME of the fringe benefits.

MANDY SHELTON: So, did Mark work with them?

MILTON JORDAN: Mark worked in the Commons, yes.

MANDY SHELTON: So he learned all this talking to those...

MILTON JORDAN: He knew these people because he washed dishes with them, or cleaned tables, or, you know, that was his work-study job. Mark lives in Austin, I mean if you wanted to push the story we could call Mark and he'd...you could talk to him. He knows more about it than I do.

All this same time there were the beginnings of discussions among the African-American community in Georgetown about how are we going to integrate the schools here? Those discussions began at about this same time, in the early-60s. Now, they didn't actually take root, or have a great impact until probably '65 or '66, maybe '64—I was gone. I was in Dallas when some of that happened and knew some of the people that were involved. Norman Spellmann, who's still here in town, was involved in that and was a faculty member at Southwestern, now retired, and he lives here. Doug Benold, who was an M.D. here in town was involved in that, and that had just begun to...maybe it hadn't just begun...but WE had just begun to HEAR about it on the white side of town. We had just begun to hear that there was some talk about integrating the other aspects of Georgetown, particularly the public schools, that was the issue. Because Carver, or...was named for the president...or the principal, or whatever he was called...of that high school. Marshall, I think his name was...which was up at the end of the Ridge, up over here. Sort of overlooked the Blue Hole. It was up on Scenic, up near 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Street—that end of town. And it was a disaster...it was a disaster, the building, I mean. It was just pitiful, and so they had talked about integrating the schools because the conditions up there were...terrible.

MANDY SHELTON: Can I ask, going back to this column...once it did appear in the newspaper, did people think this guy was a complete radical, or what was the...?

MILTON JORDAN: The Southwestern student body was...there were probably...this is totally a guess, 10 or 15 percent, MAYBE 20 percent of the student body would have been pretty supportive of Mark. Another, between 10 and 20, again I'm guessing, would have been WAY opposed to Mark. Most of the student body could have cared less. Didn't matter to them one way or the other. It's just not part of what they were thinking about at the time. There were a group of people on campus in those days who were part of a growing conservative movement on college campuses, some of which was racist. And that was true at Southwestern. Those people—some of them were friends of mine, and some of them were on the paper staff at the time, on the **Megaphone** staff—they would certainly balk at that word,

“racist.” They would say that wasn’t the case, but it was. Anyway, I’d say that’s how the student body was split up. Myron Wicke, who was the dean at the time, left when Finch did. Wicke left when Finch did. Myron Wicke was the dean and he came by our fraternity house and asked a group of us who had been talking about integration of Southwestern, if we would allow African-Americans, of course that’s not the word we used, if we would allow Negroes membership in our fraternity. Well, that wasn’t allowed in our national fraternity. We had an exclusionary national policy, which really put some of us in a bad way, because we couldn’t say, yes we would allow them full access. And he said, well I think if we integrated the school, which I think is a good idea, Dean Wicke said, then we would demand that all of our campus organizations would fully...allowed full integration.

MANDY SHELTON: Do you know when Southwestern was integrated?

MILTON JORDAN: About five years after that. In fact, I believe we’re faced...we’re coming up on the fortieth anniversary of it, right now. I cannot remember the name of the man who was admitted. He was not the first to apply, by the way, but he was the first admitted. I cannot remember his name. If you’re really interested in that, Dr. Schrum’s office...Jake’s office...could let you know that, or the person who’s really organizing the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of integrating the student body is Ron Swain, an assistant to the president at Southwestern.

MANDY SHELTON: They’re going to have a celebration?

MILTON JORDAN: They’re going to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of integration of the school. So that would have been...I finished in ’62, so that would have been ’68. Now that might have been the year he graduated, so maybe he enrolled in ’64? I know that’s about the time that...I believe the man’s name was Mitchell, who organized the integration of the public schools.

MANDY SHELTON: Oh, Harvey Miller?

MILTON JORDAN: Miller, yeah. That’s about the time that they organized the integration of the public schools.

MANDY SHELTON: You had said the fraternity, nationally, would not allow African-Americans in. When the school integrated did that change?

MILTON JORDAN: Yes, the fraternity now does. Primarily because they would have been kicked off every campus in the country by now. The campuses themselves forced almost all fraternities to remove their exclusionary policies or they couldn’t exist any more. And I would think that all...there were in those days four fraternities, which there still are on campus, and there were five sororities, I believe there are only three now, or if...there may be a new one, but there were...and I believe every one of them had exclusionary policies. I can’t be 100% on that, I think they did.

MANDY SHELTON: Did you have a lot of interaction with Dr. Spellmann while you were a student?

MILTON JORDAN: No, I never had a class from Norman. He came here as a professor at just about the same time I did. When I came as a freshman, that’s about the same year...’58...maybe one year later, or

earlier, either one or the other, that he came. But I never ended up with a class with him. But I know him quite well, and knew him then, but I never had a class from him.

MANDY SHELTON: I want to back up a little and kind of break down what happened here. You said Mark wrote the column...

MILTON JORDAN: Mark wrote the column. The way the paper worked in those days is that we took the...we edited the articles...Dan did...Adamson, usually...the editor...and took 'em to the **Sun** and the **Sun** set the type. And then...because we were printed by the **Williamson County Sun**...then we picked the papers up. Well, the typesetter at the **Williamson County Sun** told Don Scarbrough, who was the publisher/editor/major domo of the **Williamson County Sun** at the time...told Don Scarbrough what was in this column. Scarbrough was concerned about that. It was, you know, a sticky wicket here in Georgetown. There were a lot of implications, in his mind, beyond the campus. And he notified the President's office. Now, I don't think Finch was in town at that time, in fact, Mark swears he wasn't. I've talked to Mark about this since, but whoever was serving then got really upset and told Mark that if he did anything like this again he could be expelled from school. Now, when Finch came back, he said that's not true, but that was some of the talk that was going on that week, when that was pulled. Which is why Dan slugged the masthead with that "of the administration" line—the Megaphone of the Administration.

MANDY SHELTON: Meaning the Southwestern administration?

MILTON JORDAN: Right, meaning the Southwestern administration runs this paper. This isn't a student publication, whatever they might say. So, the Williamson County Sun was involved in getting that pulled. Now, Don Scarbrough was a good guy, you know, he was a good guy. You know, he was what in those days would have been called a moderate Democrat. He wasn't the...Texas was ALL Democrats...you don't remember, but Texas was all Democrats in those years. But Don Scarbrough—and the paper—sort of took a moderate track. They weren't super conservative Democrats—the Allan Shivers part of the party, which are really Republicans, but they just were called Democrats, all over the South in those days. And he wasn't part of the Henry B. Gonzales and Ralph Yarborough...the liberal wing...either. But Jim Wright, Congressman from Ft. Worth, and others, were sort of the middle of the road Democrats. And Don Scarbrough, and the paper, had that position. They weren't really super-bad conservative-type racist paper. But this was scary. This had to do with what everybody in town paid their help. You know, if Southwestern's wages went up then how would the cafes here compete? How would the two motels—there were only two motels—one on the south end and one...the San Gabriel and the Parkway. They're still there. Those were the only two in town. How would they hire their help and, you know, this was a big issue. And the **Sun** had advertisers who might include some people who would be mad about such a thing.

MANDY SHELTON: So it wasn't just social, it was a financial thing.

MILTON JORDAN: Oh, it was economic, it was economic. And it always has to do with the money. Wasn't that the so-called Deep Throat's word in the Pentagon Papers? Follow the money! Well, it always has to do with money. It may have to do with other things, but it's *always* got to do with money. That's the

claim that the school board made. "How can we afford to build a new black high school?" And since they couldn't afford to build a new black high school, that forced them...that's not *exactly* the case...but, that's one of the leading factors in integrating the schools. Because there was no way they were going to provide separate but equal facilities. They just couldn't do it. That Williams Elementary, you may not know this, that was the high school. Yeah.

MANDY SHELTON: I think we should wrap up. Do you have anything else you want to say?

MILTON JORDAN: No, I think it's a story...the Southwestern story...that's just the beginning of the story, but I think it's worth some work on. It's not the kind of thing that gets in the school history books. You can read Bill Jones' history, which is good, for what it is, it's a very good history of Southwestern, and he talks about this issue, but the hard data is not in there about this, I don't think. And about Finch's role and what...you know, I'd really like to know what Finch knew about what was going on in Nashville when he took that job.