THE PUBLIC SANCTUARY MOVEMENT

An Historical Basis of Hope

ORAL HISTORIES

BOOK I

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THE PUBLIC SANCTUARY MOVEMENT
An Historical Basis of Hope

A NOTE ON THE TRANSCRIPTS

INTRODUCTION

THE INTERVIEWS
Bob Fitch
Rev. Gus Schultz
Rev. Robert McKenzie
Rev. Marilyn Chilcote
Rev. Bill O'Donnell
Bernie Mazel

A Note on the Transcripts

Like most academic disciplines, the oral history tradition enjoys many schools of thought when it comes to the transcription of tapes. I subscribe to the school of thought that seeks to maintain the integrity and flavor of the spoken word even in the written transcript. Thus, in transcribing the taped interviews that follow, I sought to be as faithful to the oral word as possible. Editorial and/or grammatical corrections were kept to a minimum.

Each transcript was reviewed, edited and gifted to me for publication by the person interviewed. Each transcript is preceded by an index of themes and proper names. The numbers on the index represent the place on the tape recorder that corresponds to the particular theme or name.

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INTRODUCTION

On March 24, 1982 five congregations in Berkeley, California and one congregation in Tucson, Arizona publicly declared their commitment to *"protect, defend and advocate for"* Salvadoran and Guatemalan men, women and children fleeing their war ravaged countries of Central America. Conditions in El Salvador and Guatemala pushed people to leave their lands, their families, their professions and their plans behind, often with little more than the clothes on their back. As thousands of refugees fled the wars in El Salvador and Guatemala, U.S. church groups were called to respond.[1]

The "*Sanctuary Movement*," as it became known, was born, and in just a few years grew from six congregations to more than five hundred congregations across the United States.[2]

Out of the hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing Central America, hundreds of Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees entering the United States risked apprehension and deportation by publicly sharing their stories of war, repression, flight and the search for safe haven in public. Thousands of religious and lay men and women listened to the refugees' stories and opened our churches, synagogues and temples, our homes, rectories and convents, our schools and hospitals in defiance of U.S. immigration policy which many of us viewed as immoral as well as illegal. We fought side by side with the refugees to change U.S. immigration and foreign policies in the United States. We journeyed to El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua to stand in solidarity with the people and historical churches there.[3]

As a young community organizer with the Archdiocese of San Francisco, I was privileged to work with many of the Salvadoran refugees and the pastors and congregations of the first five communities to declare public sanctuary in the San Francisco Bay Area beginning in 1979.

Today, twenty-five years later, though the armed conflicts have ended, the ravages of war, and failed domestic and international economic and trade policies -- many of them fashioned in the United States -- have forced a whole new wave of political and economic refugees to search for safe haven and work in the United States in order to survive and to helped loved ones survive. Immigrants – documented and undocumented – cultivate our food, clean our office buildings, nurse our elderly and care for our children. They pay taxes and social security here and subsidize their families abroad. They provide an irreplaceable work force and economic and cultural base that has long represented the backbone of America. And yet they are demonized, criminalized and denied access to permanent residency let alone citizenship in a timely or affordable way. In the post 9-11 context, immigrants are vilified and suspect. In response, a "*New Sanctuary Movement*" is being born to defend, protect and advocate for immigrant families' rights – lifting up their humanity and spotlighting the immoral and, some would argue, illegal immigration policies that rip families apart. The *New Sanctuary Movement* is part of a much larger movement calling for comprehensive immigration reform for the

12 million undocumented immigrants in the United States and rejecting the myths perpetuated by the anti-immigrant discourse built on fear and insecurity, as well as bigotry and hate. Just as the Sanctuary Movement for Central American refugees challenged U.S. immigration and foreign policy in the 1980s, the *New Sanctuary Movement* is challenging current U.S. immigration and foreign policy and demanding the recognition of the human and civil rights of all in the 21st century's global economy.

The Roots of the Sanctuary Movement
Vietnam & the Sailors of the Coral Sea
1971

The roots of the Sanctuary Movement with Central America are many and deep. They stretch from the Hebrew Scriptures to the social gospels. They stem from the days of slavery, the Abolitionists and the Underground Railroad to the Civil Rights Movement. The movement was inspired by the accompaniment of (and *failure to accompany*) Jewish refugees during World War II and the accompaniment of conscientious objectors during the Vietnam War.[4]

In 1971 during the Vietnam War, the anti-war leader David Harris, community organizer Bob Fitch, and some local Jesuits and Vietnam Veterans at a local parish in San Diego, California, opened the church doors to provide refuge for sailors from the *U.S.S. Constitution* who did not want to return to the theatre of war. They called their action *sanctuary.*[5]

Shortly thereafter, Bob Fitch returned to the Bay Area and sought out Gus Schultz., pastor of the University Lutheran Chapel (ULC) in Berkeley, California. Bob propounded organizing a group of parishes who might offer sanctuary to sailors from the *Coral Sea*. Gus, Bob and some local attorneys, designed a series of workshops and led the congregation in a study of the moral, political, legal and historical issues presented by the Vietnam War. They invited experts to share a variety of perspectives. They examined the theological dictates of their faith tradition and applied them to the historical context in which they were living.[6]

At the end of the educational process, the congregation elected to declare itself a sanctuary for military personnel struggling with the decision of whether or not to return to Vietnam. Members of the congregation drafted a written covenant, organized a press conference with the young soldiers, and welcomed many more over a period of weeks.

The congregation and many supporters provided shelter, food, legal counseling and moral support as the soldiers discerned what actions to take. They were joined by singer and peace activist, Joan Baez, Catholic Worker Dorothy Day, local elected leaders, and numerous other celebrities and rank and file from the Peace Movement. Up to eighteen congregations joined ULC by declaring sanctuary or provided offers of support short of becoming sanctuary congregations themselves. The press coverage was extensive.[7]

What began as a symbolic gesture, evolved into a rich ministry of accompaniment and became the template for the Sanctuary Covenant with Central American refugees in 1982. The ULC's Sanctuary Covenant for the Sailors of the Coral Sea in 1971 was later reaffirmed and extended in 1988, in the early 1990s during the Persian Gulf War, and most recently in March, 2006, in response to rising anti-immigrant legislation as reflected in the passage of House Resolution 4437.[8]

What distinguished *sanctuary* from other acts of solidarity with military personnel -- of which there were many -- was the educational and decision-making process that engaged entire faith communities and led to a *corporate* and *public* declaration of sanctuary. When congregations concluded they could not adopt the sanctuary covenant, they identified other ways to support the movement.[9]

Chilean & Argentinean Political Refugees 1970s

In the mid 1970s during U.S. President Jimmy Carter's tenure and before the wars in Central America, many religious congregations sponsored political refugees from around the world. Religious institutions had honed their refugee resettlement skills in the aftermath of World War II, often working in partnership with government agencies and funded by the federal government. Catholic Charities, Church World Services, Lutheran Immigration and Refuge Services were among some of the major church institutions heavily invested in U.S.refugee resettlement in the United States.[10] In some instances, political prisoners were flown directly from jail to their new homes in the United States under the U.S. government-sponsored political asylum program which was part of President Carters' commitment to human rights. Many of the political refugees who came to the San Francisco Bay Area were from Chile and Argentina.[11]

These Chilean and Argentinean professors, students, labor and human rights activists were welcomed by congregations and invited to share their experiences in living rooms and from the pulpit. In the case of Chile, U.S. congregations heard accounts of the 1973 U.S.-supported military coup that overthrew the democratically elected government of President Salvador Allende. The refugees shared first hand accounts of incarceration, torture and, in some instances, assassination of thousands of political dissidents. In the case of Argentina, they told stories of the "*Dirty War*," in which thousands were "*disappeared*." They described the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo faithfully marching each week and demanding the return of their disappeared children. [12]

The Chilean and Argentinean refugees contributed to a growing awareness of the social revolutions sweeping Latin America along with a critique of the pantheon of human rights abuses. They raised questions about the role of the United States and built vibrant solidarity movements. In addition to providing a political education, they gave the congregations practical experience in helping refugees resettle and restart their uprooted lives.

Rev. Gus Schultz's University Lutheran Chapel and Rev. Bob McKenzie's St. John's Presbyterian Church were two of the congregations that sponsored Argentinean and Chilean political refugees.

Gus, Bob and their congregations did more than welcome the refugees. They introduced them to their Lectionary Group, a group of local pastors which met (and still meets) every Tuesday to reflect on the biblical readings of the week in the context of every day life in preparation for weekly services. The Lectionary Group became an important anchor in building the base of support for public sanctuary.

Sanctuary and Central America
1980s-1990s

In 1979 Nicaraguan Sandinistas successfully overthrew the U.S.-supported government of Anastasio Somoza. The eyes of the world and many churches were fixed on Nicaragua. Thousands of lay and religious flocked to support the experiment in social justice. In 1980 with the election of President Ronald Reagan, the United States government began a sustained campaign to discredit and overthrow the Sandinista government.[13]

Similarly in El Salvador and Guatemala, there was increasing social and political upheaval. Popular movements and flourishing base Christian Communities challenged the entrenched economic and political elites and oligarchy, demanding reforms. They were met with harsh governmental repression.[14]

As more and more campesinos, labor leaders, priests and sisters were killed and thousands more displaced, Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero emerged as a leading advocate for human rights and economic and social justice. The "*voice of the voiceless*," he denounced the repression and the structural sources of violence. He announced a vision of God's love and justice on earth and articulated God's "*preferential option for the poor.*" He appealed to the United States to end all military aid. On March 23, 1980, Romero addressed the soldiers of the Salvadoran Armed Forces during his Sunday homily and said, "*in the name of this suffering people whose laments rise to heaven each day more tumultuous, I beg you, I ask you, I order you in the name of God: stop the repression*!"[15]

The next day, March 24, 1980, Archbishop Romero was assassinated while celebrating Mass at the chapel of the Divina Providencia. According to the 1992-1993 United Nations' Truth Commission Report, Roberto D'Abuisson, a former military officer trained by the United States at the School of the Americas, was the mastermind of the assassination.[16] Eight months later, four U.S. missionary women were abducted, raped and shot at point blank by Salvadoran soldiers. Their deaths telegraphed state-sponsored terror on the one hand and the vision of a prophetic, thriving church committed to social and economic justice on the other. They galvanized world opinion and international solidarity. They bore witness to the repression the poor and marginalized had faced for years and forecast the brutality of the twelve year civil war which ensued,

claiming more than 75,000 lives. [17]

The wholesale persecution of the Salvadoran and Guatemalan people and churches precipitated one of the largest mass exodus of refugees in the Western Hemisphere in recent history. Yet, unlike their Chilean and Argentinean counterparts, Salvadorans and Guatemalans were neither aided in their flight nor granted refugee status by the United States government. Instead, they faced harrowing and perilous journeys north only to meet a systematic, U.S. governmental policy of exclusion, arrest and summary deportation, often with no due process once they arrived in the United States. By its own admission, between 1980 and 1990, the U.S. government denied 97% of Salvadoran political asylum applications and 99% of Guatemalan applications.[18]

In late 1979 and early 1980, religious leaders from across the denominational spectrum joined national and international human rights advocates and immigration lawyers to question the U.S. government's failure to uphold the United Nations protocols which recognized Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees as "*prima facie*" refugees.[19]

From the outset of the wars, the Central American community in San Francisco Bay Area opened their homes to their sisters and brothers pouring into the area.[20] Local parishes and church agencies developed strong legal and social service programs. Catholic Social Service and the Social Justice Commission Latin America Task Force of the San Francisco Archdiocese joined forces to build support for refugees. Other mainline denominations' social service arms did as well. We organized networks of pro bono lawyers, healthcare providers, social workers, teachers, and lay men and women who transported, housed, employed and supported the refugees. These efforts would later be dubbed "*private sanctuary*" and "*the underground railroad*." [21]

At the same time we sought to tackle the root causes of the problem. For more than two decades in the aftermath of Vatican II, the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) and the National Council of Churches (NCC) and their local counterparts had been in relationship with the Latin American Church and the flourishing Base Ecclesiastical Christian Community movement. Returning missionaries testified to the emerging popular movement on the one hand, and government repression on the other. As early as 1980, the Archdiocese of San Francisco sponsored visits of leading human rights advocates from El Salvador to San Francisco. In March of 1980, Archbishop John Quinn – the President of the USCCB -- attended the funeral Mass of Archbishop Oscar Romero and witnessed military assault against the peaceful throng gathered in front of the national cathedral. In the summer of 1980, the Archdiocesan Social Justice Commission sent a three-person fact finding delegation to El Salvador to learn first hand why people were fleeing the country. I was privileged to participate in the delegation.[22] Upon returning, we created the Ad Hoc Committee to Stop the Deportations and launched a broad educational campaign about U.S. immigration and foreign policies. This, in turn, led to an organizing drive that challenged the deportations and the U.S. policies that compelled refugees to flee their homelands in the first place. We maintained that the United States government was in violation of the 1980 Refugee Act which sought to align U.S. immigration law with international law.[23]

The refugees, themselves, organized strong, local self-help organizations. They shared their stories, fasted, marched, participated in legal challenges in U.S. Immigration Courts and held press conferences.[24]

But efforts to change U.S. immigration and foreign policies failed. By 1982, the wars were intensifying and the refugee crisis deepening. And U.S. policy makers clung to a discriminatory policy of summary exclusion.

In the face of these realities, the ULC's pastor, Gus Schultz, proposed upping the ante by declaring *public* sanctuary. After profound soul searching with Salvadoran refugees from Casa Salvador Farabundo Marti and the Lectionary Group, it was agreed the congregations would consider entering a *corporate* and *public* sanctuary covenant with Central American refugees.

We adopted the educational method ULC had modeled in 1971, bringing refugees, lawyers, theologians and historians to share their stories and perspectives to inform the congregations' decision whether or not to declare sanctuary.

After intensive, congregation-wide educational processes and congregational votes, five congregations in Berkeley, California, and Southside Presbyterian Church in Tucson, Arizona, simultaneously held press conferences and publicly declared Sanctuary. A lay member of St. John's Presbyterian Church, Steve Knapp, drafted a new, written Sanctuary Covenant that pledged to "*protect, defend and advocate for*" Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees in the face of U.S. governmental repression. It became the prototype for local congregations across the country.[25]

Though originally symbolic, the Sanctuary Covenant caught the imagination of faith communities across the United States. It became a vehicle to address the concrete humanitarian needs of refugees and to educate and organize opposition to the wars in the region. It caught the attention of local and national media and provided a public platform for Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees and their religious supporters to share their stories and challenge U.S. immigration and foreign policies. [26]

The Sanctuary Movement fostered a new set of relationships that cut across denominations, class, political party lines, race and national borders.[27]

It drew on deeply held faith convictions, the power of community and a long tradition of prophetic witness reaching back to the abolitionists, World War II, Martin Luther King, the Civil Rights Movement, and the peace movement. We were profoundly inspired by the living faith and courage of the refugees in the United States and the Christian communities, popular movements and prophetic leadership of the historical churches in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Their witness infused us with hope and courage.

In response, the United States government infiltrated sanctuary congregations and

social service agencies, indicted and prosecuted sanctuary leaders, and sent some to jail.[28]

The U.S. government's crack down on U.S. religious accompanying refugees, paralleled the U.S.-sponsored Salvadoran and Guatemalan governments' brutal crack down on the people and religious accompanying the poor and displaced in the region. Yet the greater the government's efforts to intimidate and thwart the Sanctuary Movement, the larger the movement grew, and the stronger its ties with our counterparts in Central America became. [29]

By 1986 what started in six congregations had grown to include hundreds of congregations, national denominational offices, dozens of "*Cities of Refuge*" or "*Sanctuary Cities*," and hundreds of thousands of individuals. Local sanctuary workers joined together to form the National Sanctuary Defense Fund (NSDF) which raised millions of dollars through direct mail appeals for legal defense. NSDF supported local sanctuary covenants' educational outreach and high impact litigation challenging U.S. immigration policies -- including the successful *American Baptist Church et al. vs. Thornburgh* case, which reopened hundreds of thousands of political asylum cases in 1992. [30] Thousands of religious and lay people visited El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, establishing ties to communities that endure to this day.

The Sanctuary Oral History Project
1997-present

In anticipation of the twentieth anniversary of the death of Oscar Romero, I began the Sanctuary Oral History Project in 1997. My hope was to collect some of the stories of the women and men of sanctuary, starting with the original five congregations. I aimed to record the perspective of the refugees, the religious leaders and lay men and women who accompanied them. I was and remain particularly interested in the perspective of the local community organizers, many of whom were women, who anchored the movement.

I had also intended to seek interviews with some of the people who opposed the public Sanctuary Movement, including David Ilchert, the regional director of the Northern California Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), and congregations which pursued the educational process but declined to adopt the sanctuary covenant. Finally, I hoped to travel to El Salvador to record the memories of religious leaders and communities who worked with Sanctuary congregations.

I was supported in this endeavor by Ann Lage at the Regional Office of Oral History at the University of California at Berkeley and Lucinda Glen Rand at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) Library. I received training from Columbia University's Oral History Department and at a three day workshop by Oral Historian Charles Morrison The SHARE Foundation and the U.S. based Romero Foundation served as fiscal sponsors of the project. From late 1997 to 1999, I recorded more than thirty hours of interviews with lay and religious leaders of the Bay Area's sanctuary

movement, including some of the original refugees who participated in March, 1982.

In 2000, the project was cut short by an unexpected diagnosis of cancer, and remains unfinished. A box of tapes was lost during my illness, regrettably, the one with refugee voices, including two of the original refugees who participated in the first declaration of public sanctuary at ULC, Jose Artiga and Jose Cartajena, and Sylvia Rosales- Fike. The longest interview, the one with Gus Schultz which consists of over eleven tapes, was interrupted by Gus's own healthcare battles, though we successfully recorded a wonderful segment on the origins of Sanctuary at University Lutheran Chapel in 1971. I had just begun reaching out to more women – refugees, organizers and women religious and lay movers and shakers – when I was forced to put the project on hold.

In this collection, I have included interviews with Bob Fitch, Rev. Gus Schultz, Rev. Bob McKenzie and Rev. Marilyn Chilcote. Bob and Gus are two of the original organizers in 1971. Gus, Bob and Marilyn are three of the original pastors whose congregations declared public sanctuary for Central Americans in 1982. I have also included an interview with Rev. Bill O'Donnell, a Catholic pastor who joined the Sanctuary Movement in Berkeley shortly after the first set of declarations, and Bernie Mazel.

The interviews include stories about sanctuary and brief sketches of the personal and professional background of the interviewees.

Bob Fitch and Gus Schultz give us a wonderful picture of the Sanctuary Movement in response to Veterans in 1971 -- a story which is not widely known.

Presbyterian pastors Bob McKenzie and Marilyn Chilcote trace Sanctuary with Central Americans in the 1980s. Father Bill O'Donnell, who recently died, shares his own memories of the movement as an early supporter. Bernie Mazel offers a unique perspective as a veteran fundraiser who donated his services to bring the stories of Salvadorans and Guatemalans and those of us who accompanied them into millions of homes across the United States through direct mail appeals on behalf of NSDF, Medical Aid to El Salvador, the NEST Foundation and the SHARE Foundation.

Though incomplete, these stories offer us a precious window into the times and lives of people who launched the public sanctuary movement in 1971 and 1982. They testify to the power of extraordinary, ordinary people crossing borders, making covenants, exercising the right to dissent and to challenge seemingly impervious power structures through non violent, direct action rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition. They are all the more relevant as our nation falls prey to growing militarism and rising anti-immigrant sentiment.

I am greatly indebted to each of these friends, colleagues and mentors for the trust and treasure they imparted. I am equally indebted to the countless unnamed women and men who dedicated themselves to the cause, and without whom the Sanctuary Movement could not have blossomed as it did. They are part of a powerful prophetic tradition and a

testament to the "*Beloved Community*" of which Martin Luther King spoke. They strengthen and grant us courage as we face the daunting challenges of the 21st century.

May these stories nourish and inspire our spirits and fortify our courage and resolve as we seek to be light in the darkness in these times. May they encourage the emerging "*New Sanctuary Movement*" to stand with the new generation of immigrants – families pushed out of their homelands by failed economic, political, and trade policies, and pulled by the hope of work and opportunity. And may they strengthen us as we challenge as immoral and illegal current U.S. immigration policies that tear families apart and criminalize whole classes of people for the simple pursuit of life, liberty and happiness.

Eileen M. Purcell
Fall, 2007

Sanctuary Oral History Project
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Sanctuary Oral History Project
Interview with Bob Fitch
March 25, 1998

Introduction: This is an interview with Bob Fitch...Bob was...instrumental in the development of sanctuary during the Vietnam War...first in 1971 in San Diego, California where he worked on behalf of sailors of the *U.S.S. Constellation*, a navy ship headed back to the theater of war in Vietnam. Later <that same year> Bob came to San Francisco Bay Area where he was instrumental in developing sanctuary for sailors of the *U.S.S. Coral Sea* and other military personnel reassessing their conscientious position vis a vis the war in Vietnam. Bob worked very closely with Rev. Gus Schultz of the University Lutheran Chapel...Bob is an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ. He is also a renowned photojournalist, perhaps best known for his photography of Martin Luther King, Cesar Chavez, Dorothy Day, and the Berrigan Brothers with whom he traveled during their time underground. This interview is being conducted at Bob's home in Kensington, California by myself, Eileen Purcell, on behalf of the Sanctuary Oral History Project.

Eileen: Good morning, Bob. Thank you for this time. Can we start with you sharing your full name, where you were born, when you were born, and a bit about your background?

Bob: My full name is Robert DeWitt Fitch. DeWitt is my mother's maiden name.

Eileen: Any relationship to General DeWitt?

Bob: I don't know. They were Dutch engineers who came to upstate New York and continued to be road builders, etc.

I was born in Los Angeles, California in 1939, July 20, and lived there until I was ten years old. My father, at that time, was the Dean of Occidental College, and we lived in the Dean's home, which was palatial. It's now an all women's dorm. So I was kind of a campus mascot. My mother was a homemaker. And I had an older brother, seven years older, and, eventually, a sister, seven years younger. They tried to birth us closer, but we got spaced like that.

One of my most significant memories of that childhood: I was about five or six years old, sitting on the steps looking out -- we were on a slight hill -- over Eagle Rock and composing a prayer as we were instructed to do at the Presbyterian Church: Give thanks for that for which we were thankful. And my prayer was, "*I'm thankful I'm a boy, that I'm white, and that I was born in the United Stats, and that I was in Eagle Rock which is near Hollywood*." So I had a very, very clearly keen sense of my endowment as a white male when I was a little boy. It was very clear. Fortunately, all of those have been shattered, and life is much more interesting! <robust laughter>

But that was kind of the route I was headed on. This was the 1940's. My life has

changed pretty dramatically since then.

Eileen: So you grew up in the L.A. area, Presbyterian.

Bob: Yes. My father was a college professor and clergyman in the Congregational Church.

Eileen: Oh, your father was a clergyman?

Bob: Yes. And a professor of Christian Ethics. Very conservative.

Eileen: And in your own educational pursuits, you became an ordained minister yourself, did you not?

Bob: Well, key to this is that when I was ten years old, we moved to Berkeley, California. This is 1950, before Berkeley is well known. This is 1950. It's an era. Berkeley didn't become well known until the FSM, the Free Speech Movement in the sixties. But it was a community to which many disenchanted Communist Party members came as they realized the totalitarian nature of the American Communist Party. So you had a lot of Red Diaper Babies. I grew up with those babes. At least they were part of Berkeley. And that's when COOP and PACIFICA <radio station> were started. And I actually worked at PACIFICA, early KPFA, during my high school years. And while my parents were a pretty conservative family, I found my nest in that wonderful, warm, caring, interesting, immensely interesting left network that was growing quietly during that era and doing very practical and logical and progressive things. So there was a lot of folk music which I'd loved and which led me into an entirely different history of the United States than that which I was being taught at home and at school. And that much more truthful version of history was more interesting, and kind of set the groundwork, set the platform for my progressive political leaning.

My father was a man who loved books. And gained most of his life through books. And I decided I was a person who wanted to experience things *directly*. And here were all these glorious options being laid out. So then I went to graduate. I went to college at Lewis and Clark, a Presbyterian college in Portland, Oregon. Came back. Did graduate school in the Pacific School of Religion, the Protestant Seminary, mostly because I had a free scholarship and because the field work was great. I went on to be ordained, but never <took> a parish which probably would have been not a good thing for me.

Eileen: And in which tradition did you get ordained?

Bob: The Congregational Church, the United Church of Christ. Pivotal. Very key to all of this was in my senior year were the early years of the new Glide Foundation. A huge pot of money which had been previously used to support a very conservative, evangelical church in midtown San Francisco, had developed a new board and became a community organizing entity for community outreach. This was even five or six years before Cecil Williams was there. Louie Durham was the key figure there. I worked in

the Mission District, worked and lived. Began to do photography at that time.

Eileen: This was in the sixties?

Bob: This would be about '63 or '64. And had a very strong feeling for what was then -- I don't hear it too much any more now -- the Christian Social Gospel. It was very ecumenical. They were pretty interdenominational, those of us who were engaged in what quickly became demonstrations on auto row and in the hotels to integrate the work forces. And during those last years in seminary I was also raising funds for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) of which King was the President. Eventually, I went to work for them for a couple of years as a photojournalist.

Eileen: And those connections came through graduate school?

Bob: They principally came through my field work at graduate school.

Eileen: And where was your field work?

Bob: Well, it was in juvenile halls, in the Mission District, in rural parishes.

Eileen: So you were quite mobile. It wasn't a stationery thing up on "*Holy Hill."*

Bob: No, "*Holy Hill*" we used to call it, where the seminaries are in Berkeley. So, and it was that work, that human services work that I loved. And it was effective. So, those are root years. And after seminary, I went on and was a photojournalist for ten, twelve years.

Eileen: How did you get involved in photojournalism?

Bob: I had a vision. I read <James> Baldwin's *Fire Next Time*. And this was about a year and a half before graduation. I read it late at night. I couldn't put it down. He's very visual, very potent writer. Recently I was reading a Thomas Merton book. Merton refers to Baldwin as one of two or three pivotal literary people in the country. It fascinated me. I couldn't agree more. And the vision was that I would portray aesthetically the great visual image I was reading in the *Fire Next Time*. This image was as far from my reality as you can imagine. And I sat after that and wondered what that "*aesthetic medium*" would be. This was late, in the morning, three or four. And shortly after that I bought a quality camera, single lens reflex and two lenses.

When I got out of seminary a year and a half later, I'd pretty much forgotten that vision. But I was tired of words. I really was tired of words, and I wanted to follow through on that experiential side. I started to photograph. So, over a period of the next ten or twelve years as a photographer, even though I was taking photographs that are now historic and some were very good, I was really apprenticing to some of the best organizers in the United States. I was sitting in. It's like in the old days, if you wanted to be a bank president, you were the president's secretary for a long time. So I sat in on all these private strategy sessions with King, with Chavez, sometimes with the Berrigans, with

Dorothy Day and some of the Catholic Worker people, with Ron Dellums here in the Bay Area.

Eileen: And your formal capacity was as a photographer?

Bob: Yes. I was the photographer. And, you know, as I pulled out of this, I was quite captivated and enjoyed the strategic part of organizing. And I just kind of through osmosis picked up those skills. It was nice. As a photographer, I kept my mouth shut. I wasn't empowered, so I wasn't a threat to anybody. So they let my little white but hang around and listen. So I got pretty close to some of the best organizers. Diverse -- from very aggressive to non violent, mostly on the non violent side. There are some I got slightly close to, like the Black Panthers, when I was living in Oakland, and chose not to align with them, personally; not to attack it, but not to put my energy there. But I learned that strategy too. All that kind of leads up to the sanctuary church business, because I'd sorted out a lot of the … day-to-day, nitty gritty about how to organize.

Eileen: Well as I shared with you by phone, Rev. Gus Schultz says you probably the single most influential person in his life who led him to consider and eventually become a sanctuary congregation in 1971 for sailors from the (U.S.S.) *Coral Sea* and later for other military personnel who had reconsidered their position vis a vis the Vietnam War. How did you conceptually define sanctuary when you first met Gus?

Bob: Well, definition precedes that meeting. Nothing comes out of a clam shell, really, at the beach. David Harris had gotten out of prison. We were still in the Vietnam War. And I had photographed David and Joan and the moments when he was carted off to prison, and we kept up an acquaintance. And when he got out, he had some organizing ideas. And the first thing he wanted to do was raise some money so he could buy a printing press and get it down to San Diego and start a public awareness campaign in the *"heart of the beast*." San Diego is where all the, every military entity has one or two or several major bases. And the idea was to have a public vote on whether an aircraft carrier should return to Vietnam. This sounds silly, but it worked!

I liked working with David. He is a very innovative and sharp organizer. We took down thirty people from the Bay Area. We had another thirty from San Diego. We bought a printing press since no one would print anything for us. And we essentially leafleted that city every single day for sixty days. And the leaflets taught people about what an aircraft carrier really is, what it really does, and how many men die from accidents even before it gets to its destination. How much it really costs the tax payer. What kind of damages. And there was about sixty days of this. And our despised presence made us all the more prominent. And there were two workers in this peace group who were ex-aircraft carrier pilots. Eventually, as this movement grew, sailors were coming to us saying, "*How can I get off this thing*?" And these aircraft carriers were, just taking the bombs over and dropping them, big holes, a wasteland in Southeast Asia.

So we brainstormed on how these fellows could get out of the military. Actually, all of them had applied for CO <conscientious objector> status.

Eileen: After having been drafted or signing up?

Bob: After having been drafted, after having signed up, after having been trained. Many of them applied for CO status during their training. And the navy at that time was stonewalling CO's who were in the military, and sometimes they'd do three or four tours of duty. Even though they applied for CO status! Even though it was logical, "*Why would we want this person over there, let's leave him doing office duty back home."* They would reassign them to these tours of duty. Fellows came to us individually, and we had a group down there <in San Diego> who wanted to go AWOL. And we said, "*You can't just do that. If you do that these are the consequences."* And we had them really examine this whole context, examine the consequences. And finally, one of the local churches - I can't remember the name, we'll have to get that - said, "*They can come and take sanctuary."*

Eileen: Was it Christ the King, a Jesuit parish?

Bob: It may have been. It was a Roman Catholic parish. So that's what happened. And this church was very socially active, the pastor was. And I just kind of watched this process. I stayed close to it. I was doing a lot of media work. But I watched this process, sat in on their meetings and watched this parish function. I was astonished by their commitment in the middle of this massively military region. But they did it. And all these fellows went in. And we were there day and night with them. And one night, the military came and picked them all up. And, strategically, very shrewdly, scattered them all over the state in various military compounds.

Eileen: In brigs all over the state?

Bob: In brigs. So the question then - and this is a very keen question on the left. At that time there were significant numbers of groups that were asking military men to take the AWOL action. And then, when they got out, when they did their AWOL, organizations weren't following through with them in helping through the continuing battle with the courts, their continuing struggle with their own souls and families. But they were doing it, particularly some of them, well, frankly, militant underground, they were abandoning them. Once they'd made the media point, which was the primary objective, they were abandoning these guys. We did not want to do that.

The "*Connie Vote*" took place in San Diego. It was a street ballot. It was kind of a kick. I think sanctuary took place after that vote. And the vote from the populace of San Diego was "*Don't let the Connie go back*." It was on the same day as the mayoral election. So our project was over but these kids were scattered around the state. And a significant number of them were in the Bay Area in Treasure Island. Some of them, I think, were over in Fort Mason. The Bay Area was home for myself at that time. And I came up, and we tried to interest a few churches in just being connected with them and assisting them through the existing conscientious objector movement. And that got us just kind of talking to churches about providing sanctuary.

And, I was very active in that. I had pretty much put the cameras down. I was very active in keeping track of these young men and getting them help, making sure they weren't abandoned.

Eileen: Did you do this independently or with a group? Were your subsidized or financed?

Bob: No, I wasn't financed. I was making a living through the photography at that time.

Eileen: So you kind of adopted this mission on your own.

Bob: Pretty much. I was in contact with David. I was in contact with some of the other people who had moved up here. But we weren't a tight group at that time. And I don't know when the transition took place. I don't recollect what happened. But through the, we were working with...There were a number of conscientious objectors organizations and then there was the resistance, the Draft Resistance that David Harris was with. And suddenly I was getting calls from people who wanted to take *"sanctuary*" and get out of the navy.

Eileen: And they were using that language?

Bob: Yes. And I kind of went, "*Oh, shit! What do we do now?"* I think Gus was the first church. And,

Eileen: Did you know Gus?

Bob: I knew Gus nominally, I didn't know him well. I don't know how we got connected. This is a point we've got to clear up.

Eileen: Gus's recollection is that you came by his Church one day and introduced yourself and said, "*Have you ever considered sanctuary?"*

Bob: Well, God knows, I'm like that!! (robust laughter) I'm sure I'd heard of them. They were widely known as a, very supportive of social issues. Also, popular, middle class beliefs were changing.

The anti-war movement had moved out of the traditional youth organization and campus. There were two issues that were very prominent in the middle class consciousness. One, their children were dying in this war. And two, it was costing an humongous amount of money. It, perhaps, isn't a, I think it's a bit of a negative comment that we don't bother about things until they cost us money, but, those issues were out there. The middle class is the proletariat in the United States. It's the largest body. I'm talking about anyone who has a job and at least an apartment and a car. They needed a means to express their discomfort about the war. This was particularly true in the Bay Area which tends to have a large body of liberal to progressive people, or even, I would call it progressive

conservatives. Old fashion conservatives. People who know you don't shit in your own water source. <They> began to see we were polluting our own economy and cultural soul with this war. This sentiment needed a method.

So there are two issues for the peace movement. It was principally after talking with Gus and bringing in a couple of other people, but it was principally with Gus and some of his members, and we said, *"Okay, if we're going to do sanctuary, how do we do it responsibly?"*

We had excellent legal counsel. And none of us were heavy duty peace activists. We were thinking about the kids, we were thinking about the church. And very quickly we set up. By the time Gus and his congregation had said yes, we had developed a set of ground rules that to me were very critical. I don't know if I remember all of them, but I remember the majors.

The key one is whoever takes the consequences makes the decision. Now, this means for a young man who is going to go AWOL, our responsibility was to provide that person with every bit of information we could about the actual risk, results that might occur: What's a marine brig like for ten years? What might go on your personal record and you have to live with (it) for the rest of your life? But also the soulful sides. You know, what's happening in your soul? Where do you want or what's happening to your psychic, your stress, what's happening to your conscience?

So we developed a style of providing any kid who wanted to come and talk to us with a very thorough examination of the consequences, from the positive to the negative. And that surprised <them>. They sent some military spies. That really surprised them. They thought we were just bringing them in and saying, "*Hey, come on do this, kid. Hey it's really cool, kick ass and be in the media*!" It was never like that. And we always told the young person what I've just told you. "*You will endure the consequences. And you, then, will make the decision. You will make all of them on strategy. Nothing will occur. And all through process, we will keep you informed*."

Eileen: Where was that lesson learned that led you to make it such a crystal clear guideline?

Bob: Well I mostly got that in its fullest extent in the peace movement where people would bait others into a failing strategy. It's an old organizing strategy. You create a trauma so that everybody loses, and then they're horrified by the loss and that organizes them more. I'd seen the damage that can do. It was very evident to me in my experience that people don't grow by being repeatedly beaten down and losing. They grow by little win, little win, little win, big win, little win, couple losses. They grow by wins. And so, it was key to us that we had limited goals, a clean understanding of what would be achieved or not, and that we go for, well it was up to ...

So, we did the same thing with the church. And it had been my experience that people were using churches. They'd come in and say, "*Hey you ought to be on the side of this,*

this is God's will, this is the right thing, and if you're not, you're assholes!" (slapping of knee for emphasis) and force or bait the congregation into a deliberate failure in sanctuary without substance.

And instead of doing that, we'd go in. We knew we had, we kind of knew we had sympathetic congregations, but we'd sit down and say, "*Well, if this kid comes in, what really happens. Where's he going to be? Where do we get the money for the phone bill and the printing? Will he stay at the church? Will he stay at a home? What if he's at a home secretly and the people don't get along? Sometimes that happens. Well, we have a backup. How will we know this young person is really getting an opportunity to say what they need to say?"* Well, we'll let each person pick one or two kind of counselors aside from the whole work gang that they can always talk to and hash over anything. "*What happens if they take the church to court? What if they send military into the church? What's our liabilities? (laughter, slapping of knee!) What's our fiscal liability? Insurance wise, all these people coming to the church! "* All these questions. We put them all on the table, put them all on the table.

And then, the whole congregation votes. And the congregation decides in advance how much of a vote makes a sanctuary church. And because we did this, and really when they realized how little risk there was -- the real risk was to the kid - and the key, the real key was will this congregation stick with their person all the way through the military and court processing. That was critical. *So they didn't have just a person or an organization, they had a constituency that was thinking of them every day*. This was the demand on the congregation.

It isn't just that kid coming through the doors. It's: *will you follow through with that person all the way. Okay, what's in place? Do we have an attorney, a good one? Do we have someone to coach on media, someone good? Do we have people who are really CO experienced through the military process? Okay. Do we have a backup so there's always somebody on call for an emergency, regardless, for the church, for the kid*. Very thorough. Very, very thorough.

For me, thoroughness is a form of love. It's a way of saying, *"I care enough about this to be willing to try to examine the wholeness and all the parts and to stay with it in that mode."* A lot of people hate administrative work. I don't like it. But it's part of real life. And it means paying bills. It means all kinds of diddly legal shit. And it doesn't matter whether we're in ancient Israel or contemporary United States - they had contracts, all kinds of tedium. So we surrounded this person with not only a caring community but a community who was willing to do the tedium, committed to it for as long as it took.

Eileen: Well, you're describing "*responsible love*."

Bob: Yes.

Eileen: And a long term relationship.

Bob: Yes.

Eileen: With the ground rule being - the central, foremost ground rule being - whoever suffers the consequences is the decision-maker.

Bob: Now this had some beautiful results. Not only when the kids hit a crisis, like what are we going to do if the courts turn against you or this way or that way. Some of them backed off and picked a place that felt strong and okay with them. So we didn't get into these tangles. We didn't have people later saying, *"You used us, you fucked up with us."* You know, "*I chose this."* It's the same with any interpersonal relationship, actually. And when they made decisions, they were strong. By the time they made a decision they were ready to go. They knew what was ahead of them, and we did very well, we predicted consequences very well. We had a top rate attorney. I know someone who knows his name.

Eileen: Was it Whithey?

Bob: Whithey, yes. He was pivotal. He was a brilliant, young attorney. Brilliant. I'm really indebted to him. Available, and sharp. He knew that whole CO process. Do you know him personally?

Eileen: I haven't met him yet. Were these pro bono services?

Bob: Pro Bono, all the way. I'm just indebted to him.

Eileen: Bob, come back for a second. You talked about ground rules and the number one ground rule. Were there any other ground rules?

Bob: That was the primary one. And I just believe in it (laughter) as a general rule of relating and being a person with myself and with others. But it was ironically kind of novel in the movement because there was a lot of manipulation at that time. "*Hey what can we do to get press.*" But we got plenty of press! Not only, there was kind of a positive and negative side, well, all of it was positive as far as I'm concerned.

For instance, one of the groups that showed up with a lot of money and a lot of people were Jim Jones' people. And in that area they were pretty deeply committed to a lot of social service, social action projects. But they also wanted to be part of the decision-making. And based on our ground rule, they couldn't be. And we just told them. *"This is the situation. We'd like your support. We can use the bucks. If it's okay with you, please stay with us. If it isn't, thank you very much."* And they stayed. But they weren't in there hustling the kid. And they weren't in there hustling the congregation.

There's another kind of positive side of this. Congregations, when they voted, could vote on any level of support they wanted. Cesar Chavez used to have an old admonition. He said, "*So you don't join the union, so you don't boycott, so you still need to go in the store, go in the store and shake hands with some grapes. ie. you go over there and you*

squash some!" (laughter) Those were non union grapes. Start people where they'll commit.

So we had, there was a Baptist Church, I remember, that didn't want to do sanctuary, but they committed to pray for the fellows who were in sanctuary. And we had a number of churches, actually we had a sanctuary network, a number of churches in the Bay Area that would do or had committed to or were doing sanctuary. And one of the things I would sometimes do on Sunday afternoons was call up the churches, ask if they'd said a prayer, and ask how many people had attended. And our media release would be that 1,587 people had prayed in these different churches (laughter) which was immensely powerful!

There was a tendency in the left movement that if you aren't with us you are against us. And I believe that real organizing, the Chavez model, takes people in where they want to begin, and you can have enormous breadth doing that, where they will make a commitment, and they participate, and usually it escalates; usually you say, you feel their spirit and their strength, and they bite off a little more and a little more. So once again, that's an example. They're the ones that take the consequences for their denomination. Let them bite off what they will do, and it still has value.

I think one of the reasons people don't like this methodology is because it is more work. Thoroughness is more work. And organizers are as lazy as anyone. And also, we're understaffed.

Eileen: Well it also sounds like it has to do with control. The model encourages independent thinking, soul searching and decision making that's much more consensual.

Bob: Tighter organization, keeping bonds. I think that's true. You don't have the feeling of control. However, the great irony is we knew we had control. Because we knew each element of the team was fully committed where they said they were. And the sense of security in that is immense. It's way beyond telling someone something to do, they go ahead to do it, but you can't be sure they're motivated to finish it.

Eileen: Now, what part of the methodology engendered that kind of commitment? Here you had lawyers giving their services pro bono, you had people willing to be on 24 hour call, to be back up whatever might happen.

Bob: Well, no one was...well here's another side. When you get into this sort of solo leadership mode, where there's one or two people calling the shots and giving the orders, ha!, of course they burn out. And we didn't have the burn out phenomena. Because people, everybody who made a commitment did it. So neither Gus nor I nor anybody else had to worry, *"Oh, well they won't do this well, so I'll have to do it,"* which is living hell in most organizations. We delegated. When we delegated, we delegated based on commitment, true commitment and capacity. So we always had backups. I knew that if I wasn't there, I didn't have to be there.

So we avoided some key blunders which most organizations make, which was: authoritarian decisions. Well, authoritarian decision is just pretty key. It doesn't work. It burns out the body. It leaves the organization without organizational bonds, and it leaves the workers without a role.

The style of organizing we used is very hard to do, but it's worth every effort.

I've used that system in many, many kinds of community organizing efforts. … There's kind of a general rule in organizing which is broken all the time. Never go beyond your constituency's commitment. Never do it. … the only time I've ever done that was when I knew I was going to risk the possibility of losing it completely. I wasn't even like a leader, leader. I was a processor. I made sure that role was kept. And then everything I did, I made sure I did it. And everything other people committed to, I didn't interfere with it. So I've seen that in organizing very rural communities to take on environmental issues, and to take on school boards very successfully. …

Eileen: A key element was good research, knowing what you were dealing with.

Bob: Yes. Good research, expert assistance. Actually, I learned research in the south. It's kind of a myth that all these Civil Rights activities just flowed out on the streets. One of my jobs working on (Martin Luther) King's staff, on my off time when I wasn't photographing, was to go over to the southern ... I don't know, there was a particular organization that kept data. And before we went into a community we knew who the leadership was, what the land patterns were, what the census data was, where the schools were, how they were integrated, desegregated, budgets. And (Saul) Alinsky talks about that. This is not Alinsky's confrontative style, but a lot of these tools are Alinsky's. You just have every bit of information you can before you go in the door. Anyone who's lazy on that is out. Actually, his discipline, the discipline for his organizers is well worth digesting and ingesting for any organizer. Every day you write your daily report. (laughter) Were you trained?

Eileen: I was. By Alinskytes.

Bob: By the man?

Eileen: Not by Alinsky himself, but by his successors.

Bob: So we had that discipline. We were very meticulous with that.

Eileen: You shared earlier that you had very clear and incisive goals and objectives. And you used the word *"limited."* When you started, what were your objectives? What did you hope to achieve? What did you expect to achieve?

Bob: Well, the goal was to -- I think there were twenty-two or twenty-six overall fellows we dealt with -- the goal was, overall to get these young men out of the military with no punitive action on the part of the military. To get honorable discharges, honorable

discharges from the military, and as far as I recollect that happened to every single one of them.

With the military - I haven't talked about the military - we used the hassle principle. Anybody who knows anything about bureaucracies knows that they *hate* extra extra clerical processing work. Anybody who's a bureaucrat just hates that shit. And if something isn't really valuable, just get it out of there. So we encouraged everybody we could to write or pray or call or hassle the navy in any way they could think of, non violently. Just...and the old trick of you don't even call your congressmen. You don't call him and say, "*Call him up and tell them to let him go*." You call him and ask one of the aids to tell the navy, "*I wish to be personally briefed on every activity that occurs in relationship to this case."* So that they had this burdensome reporting activity. And that's essentially, eventually the Navy (laughter) just let these guys go. It wasn't worth it to keep them. What was the famous film, the first one, THX, a sci-fi film.

Eileen: I don't remember the name.

Bob: But you remember the man who is escaping the sci-fi community. As they chase him, he's using up these "*credits,"* literally. And he's only worth so many credits. And finally, when they're about to catch him, he's about to emerge from the hatch into the sunlight, he's not worth it anymore. So the cops turn around, and he emerges into the sunlight. Who was that made by? It's a famous, famous director, THX. And that's basically what happened, I think. They just needed a graceful way out. They did not need this hassle from a massive middle class community.

Eileen: Did you expect to have the kind of overwhelming response you received? Not only the media and succeeding to reach that goal, but within congregations and the birth of a methodology?

Bob: No, frankly, I didn't. I didn't. And I don't credit that to myself or our work gang. I credit that to the times. The revelation was that folks are pissed, and they want a way to say something in their own middle class mode.

Now I've talked very personally here. There was a team and it's important to identify. The attorney, Whithy, and Gus. Gus was, the three of us for sure shared this operative style and this belief about our relationships with people. And we were experienced enough - which was critical - to be tough about it. We would have outside groups saying, "*We'll you're doing this, you're doing that,..."* I'd say, "*Screw off. We don't have to justify this.*" (laughter) So, I remember a guy, but I don't remember his face, in Gus's church who was with that all the way. And on the side was Evan Golder, who was a shrewd media worker, who helped us off and on with media stuff. It was principally Gus, myself, and Whithy. And I was consulting with (David) Harris regularly. He's a very shrewd organizer, but he wasn't part of the key work team. Actually I got a little money, small amounts. I was doing okay with the photography sales.

Eileen: How long did it last?

Bob: God, I don't know. It wasn't real long.

Eileen: A couple of months, a couple of years?

Bob: Oh no, we had ...overall, Evan will have a better record of the number of occasions. I think of three. Gus, then Newman, Palo Alto, and then there was one church in San Francisco. So that's four here, one in Southern California.

Eileen: I think there were eighteen altogether.

Bob: Eighteen sanctuary events?

Eileen: Congregations who signed on.

Bob: Well, I know more congregations signed on, but actual events <were fewer>, actual sanctuary where kids took sanctuary. So those are the sanctuary events I remember.

Eileen: Were those public events, a media event when a soldier would ask for sanctuary?

Bob: It was up to them, once again. And we'd go through that. But the Bay Area Media was hot. Boy, they'd sneak into some place and do anything to get that story. They loved that story! We had tremendous support from the media.

Eileen: What was the most surprising part of this work for you?

Bob: You know, that's interesting. I think the most surprising part was the gutsyness of those fellows (sigh). Imagine, just imagine, imagine you are part of this huge institution that has the greatest number of armaments and armed people on the earth, and you're going to tell them, "*I'm leaving*." And they're saying (laughter), *"Isn't this a joke!*" Not only that, if you leave, you're not leaving the entity. You're going into the culture that is paying for that entity and voting for it. And to me they were just tremendously courageous. I was surprised that so many young men came forth and stuck it out. The rest of us mostly just kind of went about our daily lives with a little plus. But for them, holy shit!

In some ways it wasn't like a shocking surprise because my principle work in the south with the Black Civil Rights movement was not with the leadership. But I was principally in the field a lot taking photographs that were then used again in the field. So I was acquainted, already in my life, with people who literally -- for a vote -- were willing to risk their jobs, their homes, their families and their lives. And I have many, many times in my life been awed by the capacity of people to do that. Those are still my heroes - the black civil rights movement, the people in the field who were organizers and workers. And it continues to be awesome to me. Yes. I was really surprised. Who's going to want to take that risk?

Eileen: You shared earlier that your parents were somewhat conservative, your father was a Christian ethicist, a lover of books. Were they alive at this time, and did you interface with them at all?

Bob: Yes, they knew what was going on. They lived here. My dad never commented on that. Eventually he was proud that I worked with Dr. King. Actually, my dad - it was kind of funny -- he was so old fashioned. (laughter) I remember, let's see, about '75, so I was thirty-six, something like that. Yes, thirty-six. And I had already -- at least in volume -- published more than he had globally; I was an internationally known photographer. I had accomplished a couple of interesting and major, pivotal organizing activities including the sanctuary churches. And I was thirty-six years old. And I was having breakfast with my dad, my mom and my wife at that time. And he said, *"Robin,*" which was my nickname in the family, "*What are you going to do when you grow up?"* (laughter)

And, so, this, for my dad it's such a functional statement! (Slap on the knee) It's just like saying, "*May I have a glass of water?"* or *"Where's the bathroom?"* He didn't have any perspective on it (slap of the knee). It was just a very genuine statement from him. And, photography did not count as a legitimate profession. And all of the organizing activities, certainly not! That was diddling around. So (slap on the knee), big gap. (laughter) Isn't that a great statement! (laughter) Frankly, I felt like I'd already lived two lives and could die. Really, I really believe that. I was just so thankful that my life was so full and rich. And I've actually thought at times, if I had a couple more of those...

Eileen: I found a paper that you wrote called "*Sanctuary as Free Space*" in Gus's files. In that paper you described sanctuary as "*a place where people could go to consider options and create new ones without the threat of intimidation by the powers that be, parents, military, police, whoever."* And you viewed the ability to think through <issues> as essential to American democracy: informed consent.

Bob: What a statement! What a marvelous guy! (laughter) It reminds me...sometimes I look at my photographs and <say> "*Wow, I wonder who took that*!" (laughter)

Tape 2, Side A

Bob: Well, let me keep that on the bulletin board. Somehow, I've talked about the baseline rule: the people who meet the consequences, they make the decisions fully informed. And that means everybody is in the process. Then there is a team of people and there is what I call an "*energy center*."

I've never seen an organization that didn't need someone at the center who watched the whole thing all the time. I was that energy center.

Energy Centers do not have to be dictatorial leaders. They just watch everything, and when something comes up they make sure the right person knows about it. That's often

the role of the secretary. It was a very critical role. And everybody in the organization has to be committed to that essential, to the risk takers goes the decision. Because there are lots of people who want to break that rule. "*It's more expedient to do this. It's more logical to do that. This would help the most people, not the least*." All these arguments.

I think one of the reasons we worked well, was because not only were the essential team and the energy lead person inoculated with that, we inoculated everyone with it as they came up to the organization. So we had an organization where everyone, collectively, was enforcing the key guidelines. Very, very important. And also, it made it simple to do that. We didn't have a rule book. We only had a couple of guidelines, and everything else took shape out of that. You don't get hung up on a personnel policy that way.

But it isn't easy to do that.

I lead song circles now. Song circles work when everyone gets a chance to participate. And if someone who is not next in line hollers across the room, *"Hey, I want to sing..."* and leaves out a kid or an older person who is hesitating, that kid or that older person, that person who's left out, won't be there at the next event. Someone has to have the tact and the shrewdness to say, *"Well we're going around the circle so everyone has a chance."* (slap on the knee) and people have to do it from all parts of the circle, not just one circle cop. So that's really, really important. Everybody has to help enforce the guidelines.

Sanctuary has potential for enormous activity. So, for instance, the heavily focused nuclear family in the United States just goes through hell having to do everything for itself. They have to be counselors, parents, logistics experts for each other. And sometimes people get nuts, and they need a break. And the other members of the family, feel if they take a break and go away, they'll never return.

Eileen: In a nuclear family?

Bob: Yes. It's a "*terror of abandonment*". So why not have safe places where people can go? And I knew this family network that made this commitment to each other. That anyone in the network could go to any of the other houses any time they needed, if they needed a breather, particularly the teenage kids. So why not do that in a church? Why not be a sanctuary for any of the families. Then they'd be places where a group of people who had committed, (slap on the knee), anyone can come here, they'll have a room, they'll have all the food they need. Or you could do it the other way. If someone needs a break now and then, they can pick a couple of families. Someone can check and ask on their behalf, work with them on it, follow through. And then the other families know - whether it's a husband, a wife or a kid, someone who needs to take a break, they know they're okay. They don't have to worry about that. It's not an abandonment. So to just let off the steam and to engage a caring process. It isn't just, someone needs to check on them. There needs to be a backup in case it doesn't work. Some logistics around that. And that was one of the things we thought of. I can't think of some of the others. But, we didn't have to wait long, because very shortly there was El Salvador.

Eileen: Were you related to that work at all?

Bob: No, but I saw it. I knew it was going on. And the tools were out there. And that was handled a lot more -- that was such a powerful movement because it was handled much more democratically generally in the churches. Churches didn't break up over that. Same kind of environment. Middle class people in the United States realized, "*Hey, we're paying the same butchers down there. Let's do something about that."* It happened all over the United States, in all kinds of little communities, not just little lefty communities. Bellingham, Washington, (slap on the knee)I just left, a great sanctuary.

Were you part of that?

Eileen: I was.

Bob: (laughter) Pretty aggressively! I think sanctuary needs to be part of...just churches can start because everybody can see ... who was it that acted that? The Hunchback of Notre Dame, the original film. *"Sanctuary, sanctuary, sanctuary*" (Bob enacting the hunchback's cry for sanctuary) Have you ever seen the original black and white? Who's the actor? I saw it this year and … I mean it's fabulous. As a matter of fact we probably ought to show the film.

Eileen: Well the Disney rendition, even though they've changed the end.

Bob: I didn't want to see it, what happens?

Eileen: Well, at the end everybody lives except for the villainous people, so it's completely adulterated, altered. But, it does invoke "*sanctuary, sanctuary, claim sanctuary."* In fact, in France it was used as an organizing tool by some of the people trying to safeguard the rights of Turkish immigrants.

Bob: (Laughter) Great!! What a kick in the ass! That's wonderful I don't doubt it goes to my primitive center. None of us has a perfect family. But we all wish for this safe place in the arms of God or of whomever. This ought to be part of our culture, not just the churches. There need to be sanctuaries. And in some sense the women's movement has brought that with "*safe houses*" concept. I think it could be expanded considerably.

Eileen: Do you know of Martin Marty, a Lutheran theologian, good friend of Gus from his first parish in <the> Chicago area.

Bob: Yes. I didn't know they were buddies.

Eileen: In a 1972 article in a religious magazine entitled "*Harboring the Objectors*" he says this, and I want your reaction: "*There wasn't much historical analogy for sanctuary and it was legally shaky, but, that in times of terror to conscience, symbolism of supportive community around an alter can protect people spiritually if not physically."*

So he described it in symbolic and soulful terms. Does that match your experience?

Bob: Well, we haven't talked about the legal stuff here, have we! (laughter) We knew that it had no basis in law anywhere. I think that's a very good statement. It's very succinct. I've had this very strange experience, although I'm no longer in any way an institutional church person.

When I was doing the clergy thing, occasionally I'd pop on a collar in a demonstration. Also, I found out they knew I was clergy in the south when I was photographing. They had, just like, state *FBIs* in Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia. They'd grab my little ass sometime and tell me who I was. And they really had all the information. And in our culture, I'm quite convinced, and I would see this in the eyes of the cops as they would press on a line in a demonstration. They would often curse clergy. But it was a specific anger. And it was kind of like, the only way I can imagine it is, "*Well, he's a phony, he's an asshole, he's all of these horrible things, but maybe he is connected to God. I just better be careful!"* (laughter) This residue. "*I'm a cynic, I'm an agnostic, I don't believe in that shit. The church is a bunch of assholes*." Most Americans are very anarchistic about churches, most working folk. *"But just maybe, maybe this guy is connected."* And it's that residue, vague, I'd almost call it a "*vague faith."* (laughter) It puts a check on people. It's amazed me time and time again.

Eileen: The power of the collar?

Bob: No, the vague residue of faith of people.

Eileen: So have you written a new prayer since you the one you wrote when were a little kid?

Bob: (laughter) I give thanks all of that has changed. (laughter!) None of that is true! (laughter) Life would have been so dull. Oh God, it would have been awful. And, all the people who have really taught me things have been people from other ethnic and racial traditions, women, (slap on the knee), helped me grow up a lot. So, all the things I most thought as repugnant were really my own great teachers, companions.

I think, really, the Black Civil Rights movement was just a tiny, little stepping stone into our future. For my Anglo brothers and sisters...I actually have some who will pine back to the old days when it was black and white. But now the whole world is coming to us, and we're dealing with issues that Teilhard de Chardin predicted. We have this new sphere. The issue today is to deal with all that pluralism in its intricate detail and connection. Actually, I think it's terrible and wonderful all at once. All the hard work. Does that make sense to you?

Eileen: Eminently.

Bob: And I'm at kind of a break point. I've had six or seven professions in my life. And I'm retired now, semi-retired from the State of California. But not technically retired, old

person. So I wonder what will happen next.

Eileen: So you have song circles. Do you still take pictures?

Bob: I do some photography. I'm trying to get some assignments. I sell. I have huge photo files only part of which are here to market. I do some photography and retrained to teach ESL. It's not going to be a money maker, but I've done some of that already (slap of knee), I don't know if that's connected in the Bay Area or not. There's a lot of ESL teachers here. I really don't know what's next. Frankly, maybe you have some good ideas! (laughter)

Eileen: I was going to ask you!

Bob: All I know is that vision, that Teilhard's <de Chardin> vision is where it's at. It's somewhere in there. That's a good start.

Eileen: Anything else you want to say?

Bob: Did we cover your questions?

Eileen: We did.

Bob: Well, I am blessed, that's for sure. I feel very blessed and rich. A lot of those, where I put, it was very interesting, those rules I learned that were sharpened during my apprenticeship as a photographer and organizer and later some direct organizing activities, administering a couple of non profits. But a lot of these rules that we've talked about here, guidelines, really slammed home in a positive way in eighteen years of working for the State of California where I became in union organizing with white collar people, principally.

Eileen: What was your job?

Bob: I developed low income housing for the California Department of Housing and Community Development. And I was really thankful … In our department we were using the same kind of delegated, sharing style. We eventually had the largest per employee group of stewards of all the departments in the state. Without everyone of us having to go join the union reform movement that was going on, we spun off officers and people who were involved in the most progressive side of our union activity. And it was all very much the same style. If everybody takes a bite, no one has to take the hit. In some ways that's a key to nonviolence. They're clubbing people. I take a hit, falling on them. So it has a lot of that to do with it. It was surprisingly potent to a lot of people. It was not to me. I knew that we just have to...most organizers don't wait. Timing is everything. Wait. Just wait a little bit...(laughter) things develop! Mmm

Eileen: Thank you Bob.

End of Interview

Interview with Rev. Gus Schultz
Interveiwed by Eileen Purcell
November 25, 1997

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A segment of the next tape was lost. According to my notes, it referenced some of the adults who influenced Gus's decision to pursue, including two of his high school teachers who, according to Gus, were "*liberal, open and free, creative thinkers.*" Their names are Leslie Smith and Mrs. Magruder. It also included a reference to Gus's pastor, Rev. Walter Symank, a more fundamentalist Lutheran who was "*anti-evolutionary theory and anti-dancing*." It included commentary on his two years at the University of Alabama where he began majoring in chemistry and then economics. But then Gus received a "*calling*" and determined to pursue Lutheran seminary in Springfield, Illinois, a five year program which included a one year internship in California. The California internship brought Gus to two parishes. He was based in King City, a church that had a sanctuary but no parsonage. After King City, he moved to Atascadero, a church that had a parsonage but no sanctuary. Tape 3 begins with part of a story about Gus oversleeping in the sacristy at King City the morning of Sunday Services, and being awakened by parishioners when it came time for the Eucharist during services. (The interviewer inadvertently began on Side B of Tape 3 and finished on Side A.)

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Sanctuary Oral History Project
Interview with Rev. Gustav H. Schultz
November 25, 1997 at
his home in Berkeley, CA

This is an interview with Reverend Gus Schultz, pastor emeritus of the University Lutheran Chapel in Berkeley at the University of California in Berkeley. Gus is one of the co-founders of the "Sanctuary Movement," starting first in the 1970s when he opened his congregation to conscientious objectors in the context of the Vietnam War. More recently he is recognized as the co-founder of the "Public Sanctuary Movement" of the 1980s along with four other congregations in Berkeley and the Southside Presbyterian Church in Tucson, Arizona in response to the unprecedented exodus of Central American refugees in particular from El Salvador and Guatemala.

During the 1980s, Gus served as president of the SHARE Foundation which provided humanitarian aid to displaced persons in El Salvador. He also co-founded and served as the President of the National Sanctuary Defense Fund, (NSDF), which raised funds to educate and support the sanctuary movement at the local level across the United States and to provide legal defense for Sanctuary workers and refugees involved in high impact litigation.

This interview is being conducted on Tuesday, November 25, 1997 at Gus's home on Woolsey Street in Berkeley, California, Eileen Purcell, for the Sanctuary Oral History Project.

Eileen: Let's begin with your familial background ...

Gus Schultz: My father was born in Germany. (His name is Gustav Hobart Schultz, Sr.) He came to this country when he was three years old. His family moved from Germany to Illinois. (In Germany) my grandfather was a coal miner. He was also a coal miner in Illinois. My father and his family, after having seen an advertisement for farm land, moved from Illinois to Foley, Alabama where he grew up …

(The) advertisement in the Chicago area papers … said that people here can go to southern Alabama and find new farmland, rich farmland; and why would you want to stay up in northern Illinois where the weather is rotten, and you can go down and participate in this venture of people from Chicago taking advantage for of the opportunities that are there for people who are willing to move! ...

… my father grew up in Foley, Alabama. He was a member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church. There was also a St. Paul's Episcopal Church one block away. My father went to high school. His father tried to tell him that he didn't need to go to school. He needed to work in the farm and my father said, *"No."* He was going to go to school. And they had an argument, and my father went to school … He went for two years to the University of Alabama. (At that point in his life he moved) from being a farmer to

working for the railroad. Then, later on, he went on to work at the bank. People told him he was crazy then because (if) you worked at the bank you wouldn't make nearly the money you'd make at the railroad. But he decided that he wanted to be a banker. And I think he worked a total of seventy years in the bank.

His first job was as a janitor. After working as a janitor for a while he was able … to work as a teller … (He) eventually worked his way up to be the President of the Bank and after being President of the Bank, he (became) chairman of the Board. He was still working at the Bank when he was eighty years old. He started, I think, when he was eighteen or nineteen ... And when he quit working at the bank he was eighty-five. He finally retired. I think most of the people around him … including his grandchildren, thought it would have been probably more fun for him if he had spent more time in retirement. But others felt that if he had retired he would have died, because my mother, too, had preceded him in death.

My mother was from -- was born and grew up in -- southern Alabama. Her name was Hasseltine Coaker, Ann Hasseltine Coaker. That was the name of a Baptist missionary to India. And her mother, my grandmother, wanted to name her after this Baptist missionary. And so, she was. She and my father were married. They decided to join together in the Lutheran Church. That was a decision that they made. They decided they would be a part of the Lutheran Church.

(My mother) was born in a small town north of Foley called Milry … One of the things that I find interesting is that my great great great grandmother was Creek Indian. And it was during the period when the government was making reparations to the Indians for the land that the Federal Government had taken away from them. I asked my mother if she was within that generation where she could receive reparations … And she said "*We don't talk about that*." And I asked her, *"What do you mean we don't talk about that."* "*Well there are other people who would be receiving that money who needed it. And we didn't need it."* And they would be people receiving the money because in addition to us not needing it there were people who really did and besides that, we wouldn't want anyone to really know that we were Indian because that would be very embarrassing. So you can see the cultural racism involved in that. This would have been in the 1950s or 1940s, somewhere in there.

It's interesting, because today, I notice in my own children, they would be very proud that they have an ancestor who was Indian, and it would be just the opposite from what it was when my mother experienced that …

Eileen: How old were your mother and father when they got married?

Gus: My mother was twenty. That's an easy thing to remember … because she's twenty years older than I am, which was not unusual for people of that age and that class … Early marriage was common to most people.

Eileen: Did your mom work outside the house?

Gus: No, she was a housekeeper. She didn't (work outside the house), not to my knowledge. She was only sixty-eight years old when she died. …

Eileen: Did you have brothers and sisters?

Gus: I have a brother and a sister, both of them younger than I. My brother was in the navy. He was, as I said, younger than me.

Tape 2, Side B
Eileen: Describe your Mom a little bit to me. What was she like?

Gus: Well, when I was in the first grade, second grade, the age of six or seven, six, my mother was what we called a Home Room Mother. You had one of the students in that particular grade had their parent be the Home Room Mother. That meant that person would come and participate in some of the things in the classroom and bring snacks for kids to eat, cookies and so on. And I remember, still, one of the people, one of students, a fellow student in the second grade, told me that I had the most beautiful mother in the whole school. And I'm sure he was right.

Eileen: What did she look like?

Gus: Oh, she was kind of stocky. I think she looks a lot like Locke (Gus' daughter). But Flora doesn't. She was a happy person. Well, she was somebody that was a very loving, caring, effervescent kind of person. There's a picture of her that Bart found and had it etched. Let me get it. So. It's easier to see somebody like that than it is to describe them.

Eileen: So, is she the source of your sense of humor and love of limericks and poetry?

Gus: Probably, yeah. More so than my father. My father was more serious. He was someone who played with us. We lived only ten miles from the Gulf of Mexico … I remember my father frequently being involved with me and my brother both, I shouldn't say fighting in the water. We weren't fighting, but struggling, wrestling, that kind of thing. I'm sure that was something that was young men's way of playing with their fathers in a socially acceptable way. You felt able to wrestle with them in the water, doing things that you would be able to struggle with your father as a male figure in the family.

But, my mother, I think, she would be the kind of person who would come to you and say, "*Now look, you're not going to get what you want if you just come right out and ask for it. You've got to know how to do these things. You've got to know how to approach your father. You don't argue with him. You have to learn how to be able to come to him and find out how you're going to be able to ask him these questions* …" I found that to be a very valuable piece of information.

Eileen: Your siblings, who are they, where are they are you the oldest ...

Gus: There are two. One brother and one sister. My brother is Kenneth, Ken and in early days even it was Kenny. So he moved from being Kenny to being Kenneth. He graduated from Auburn University, and then did graduate work at the University of Alabama where he met his wife who was the Assistant Dean of Students there, the Assistant Dean of Women at the University of Alabama.

My brother was in the navy. <He> served for four or five years in the navy, and then he came back. What he really wanted to do was not stay on in Tuscaloosa and not be an academic. But he did his graduate work in Business. It seemed the logical thing for him to do -- since I was not going to do it -- was for him to be the Banker in the family. And he was encouraged to do that and eventually did. But that was not his first choice. His first choice was to be the basket ball coach in Foley, Alabama.

Eileen: At the high school?

Gus: At the high school. That was what he really wanted to do … But he … did become a banker, and he was the President of the Bank and still worked with a consulting firm on organizing banks …

… My brother has three children, two of them twins.

My sister, Kathryn Ann, she has three children …

Eileen: Are you close to your siblings?

Gus: Yes. I talk to my sister probably every other week. … We communicate regularly ...

Tape 2, Side A

Gus: … Interestingly … Flora has a sister who lives in Foley also.

Eileen: Flora your wife? …

Eileen: So you were born in Foley.

Gus: I was born and raised in Foley in 1935.

Eileen: What was the population?

Gus: Probably not too different from what it is now but probably then it was five hundred (500) or a thousand (1000) and now it's probably two thousand (2,000).

Eileen: So you were born in the middle of the Depression.

Gus: Yes, a little on the edge of it …

Eileen: What was your birthday?

Gus: My birth date, September 23, 1935. I was born at home, and the bed in which I was born is in my father's house. And, so, that bed is still there, and I think that I will be the one that will have to take that bed whether I want it or not …

The first thing that comes to mind when you say describe growing up in Foley is, the first thing that just pops into my head is when did I meet Flora, because we met each other in front of the grammar school when we were in the seventh grade ... I can't think back much beyond seventh grade when I think back, because that is when Flora and I met, and being acquainted with each from such an early age you think that's life ...

She was one of those people that was, I wouldn't say involved in everything, but pretty much so. And she was a hard worker. As we were moving on through Foley High School … we were both officers of our senior class … I was the President of the class, and Flora was the Secretary of the class. She was the one who applied herself more exactly than I did. And she was very much, oh, she did things like, she learned to type very early so she could type her own papers. It's interesting. I didn't learn to type, but my father could. My father would type papers for me … It just occurred to me, you know, here I am still not able to do the typing that I needed to do. I just learned early how to get other people to do things.

Eileen: Delegate!

Gus: Delegate is right! So, that was one of those things. Then we both -- both meaning me and Flora -- went to the University of Alabama … Flora, finished … oh she and her sister, her twin sister (Lallie) … Just… before their senior year, the Navy was opening a new naval aviation training program that was just outside of Foley. And Flora's father and mother were trying to decide what …<to> do when you have several thousand sailors coming into your town and you had a daughter, two daughters in fact, who were just graduation age. So they decided to send them to the University of Southern Mississippi for a summer program. And Lallie, Flora's sister, figured once she was there and already in school at Mississippi why should one go back and go to high school again … So she just stayed there …<But>Flora … came back to Foley to finish up high school. She came back to Foley.

Eileen: When did you and Flora know that you were going to get married, be together for the rest of your life?

Gus: Mmmm. That's too far back to remember.

Eileen: Did you date all through high school?

Gus: Probably more with her sister.

Eileen: You were dating her sister?

Gus: Yeah. (*laughter*) And then, this friend of ours, well its really them and my, eventually, Flora was bringing this up the other day, the first thing I ever, the first date I ever took her on, I had a friend of mine ask her if she would go with me. And he said, "*Well, I think you ought to do it yourself, but ok*." And what I took her to was a stock car race.

Eileen: Stock car race?

Gus: That's car racing, you know around the track. (*laughter*) It was the last automobile race she ever wanted to see. And, the person whom I asked to do that was named Billy Boller. And Billy was one of those, he was just a really good friend. We would get up and go out and play tennis. We'd get up at like five in the morning. It's really hot in the morning in Alabama during the summer. And, Billy was one of those people that, he would say "*Let's get up at 5:00 this week every day and play tennis*." And I'd say, "O*k, good*." I remember that when I was confirmed, Billy gave me a recording of *Slaughter on Fifth Avenue*. He was one of those people who was on top of things like that. How many people get Gershwin for confirmation?

And then we would get together, and we'd be together Sunday afternoon or Sunday night, and we would listen to the City Service Band of America, and we would listen to it every Sunday night. We'd listen to this band playing on the radio. And then we also had one of the few televisions in Foley. Maybe once a week or once every two weeks you'd get a good enough picture to watch a program … So that was part of growing up in Foley.

We'd listen to the news, that was the thing. And I remember another thing that my father would do when we were growing up … On Sunday, he would cook the meal. He would usually cook fried chicken. My father and my mother both did, but my father would fix the chicken, and he would make white gravey. And then during the meal we would listen to the "*Longine Witten Hour Symphony with Evelyn and Her Magic Violins*." Have you ever heard that? (*laughter)* And so my father would turn it to the *Longine Witten Hour Symphony*, and we would listen to that while we ate or after we ate.

… My father, he would cook and he would do his appointed rounds and so, that was

Eileen: growing up in Foley.

Gus: Yeah. Well those were things you'd do at night. And it was interesting, I was just down in Foley …

Tape Two, Side B
Gus: … And it's one of those things … Billy was one of those kind of friends that you make in high school that when you go back and see him fifty years later or forty years later and you pick up your conversation … in the middle of a sentence from what it was

whenever it was you saw each other last. And it doesn't matter, time, like that, you just move on to the next thing. … Billy was one of the people that took the initiative too, for intellectual challenges. Another friend was Buddy Helton. Buddy Helton was one who … was really into <classical> Greek literature, historic, classical Greece <and Rome.> … It was the kind of thing where each one of us had certain things we were interested in. Mine, I was more interested in poetry. My aunt (Floride Coaker, my mother's sister) … was a school teacher. <She> supplied me with books, especially with <poetry books.> … One of them was the "*Best Loved Poems of the American People*."

Eileen: How old were you when she gave you those books?

Gus: I was probably a junior or senior in high school … I would listen <to the radio> after I would go to bed at night, and I would listen to the New Orleans Loyola University Radio Station and listen to somebody … reading from the "*Best Loved Poems of the American People."*

… another thing … Billy Boller and I, we got a really interesting job. We got a job cleaning the bank at night. This was not a huge bank, and we could go in at 5:00 o'clock in the morning. And we would clean up the bank, and then we'd go home. And remember, the navy moved in. So on Sundays we'd go in and clean the bank up. We'd do it on Sunday instead of getting up early Monday morning, because we were able to do it then. Sunday the bank was closed. And we were walking down one day, and we were going into clean the bank. … We took some keys and threw them up in front of us. And then we saw these sailors standing on the corner, and we walked up within their earshot. And we said, "*Hey, look I found some keys*." And we said it loud enough so that the people, these guys standing on the corner, thought that we had really found these keys. So we went into the bank, we pulled the shades down, and we started cleaning. And then we could see as we peeked out the windows, we could see these guys speaking animatedly and saying, "*Wow, what do you think we ought to do?"* And so we pulled it down and went on and cleaned the building, and we heard a knock on the door. Bang, bang bang. *"Alright, come out, we've got you surrounded."* (laughter) And so, Billy and I walk out with our brooms, and they say, "*What are you doing in there?"* And we say "*We're cleaning up, it's time to get the bank cleaned up for Monday morning."* Then they said, well, the sheriff was there, the local policeman. And we told them that oh, these guys must have, we lost our keys but we found them. So, that was one of the little adventures that Billy Boller and I had.

Eileen: I can see we need a tape on Billy Boller and Gus Schultz stories!

Gus: So, that was fun. And my father, I think, tried to act serious about that one. He couldn't *(laughter*), He couldn't do it. And my mother was just, she thought it was pretty funny.

Eileen: So, you went to grade school, you went to high school, you went to college in Alabama. You met Flora in seventh grade. You dated her sister. But then sometime in high school you started dating Flora. When did you two get married or decide to get

married?

Gus: I don't remember when we decided to get married. But, oh, I missed one thing. In the ninth grade I … had a next door neighbor, Harold Hermits. And Harold went off to school, to prep school, and began his studies for the ministry … His father had died of tuberculosis. And Harold had gone on to go to this prep school which was in the branch of the Lutheran Church that I was in. If you were going into the ministry, they started in the ninth grade. And the purpose was to begin your study of German, and then the next year, your study of Latin, and then the next year, Greek, and then you kind of added it up. So, Harold went off to Concordia College and High School, to prep school … Now its Concordia University in Austin, Texas. And I went. My mother was not real happy, but she was supportive …

Eileen: Now wait, you were talking about Harold. Did you follow his path and leave to go to prep school as well?

Gus: Yes. He was a couple of years ahead of me, and so I thought, "*It sounds like an interesting thing to do."* I gave some thought to … going into the ministry.

Eileen: Was this in high school?

Gus: Yea, ninth grade. So I went to Austin, Texas.

Eileen: For ninth and tenth grade?

Gus: Ninth grade only. And then I like to say that the school and I had a mutually supportive understanding … We both agreed that I should not be there. I really felt like, as I told my mother, I was too young for that. I shouldn't have been off at that age going to a prep school. And so I went back <to Alabama.> The school also agreed that I should not be there ... One of them told me the story about the guy who was out plowing, working in the field, and he saw the sign in the sky that said *"PC."* And he knew that meant "*Preach Christ.*" And then he went to school, and after he got there he found out that it really meant "*Plow Corn*." So I found that … I had fallen into bad company, people who were not taking their academic pursuits with enough seriousness. But I played basketball with the basketball team. That was fun. And I was, well, that was that year.

I went back home to Foley High School and finished school there … My sister would say that I was one of those people that she's always feared that her son was going to be like … I think I mentioned that. She still reminds me of that periodically.

Eileen: Why, because you're adventuresome, because you're unorthodox, because you're unconventional? What?

Gus: I don't know, you'd have to ask her. But it's, it was a fun time. But I thought … that I could still go into the ministry. I still was interested in that. But I didn't feel like I

had to pursue all the various languages and so on …

Eileen: Did your father expect you to pursue banking as a career?

Gus: No. … He didn't communicate his expectations for us if he had any. It was whatever you want to do. You want to do that, then, okay.

Eileen: What drew you into the ministry, in addition to your neighbor going?

Gus: I think one of the things -- <coming> from a place like the Bay Area where you grew up you probably wouldn't even understand it -- but I think that if you were looking for something that was going to be helpful to other people … and … this was still in early high school that I was thinking about that, and, let's see …

I grew up in a place that I think can be symbolized by the first town that I had my parish in Rome, Georgia. In Rome, Georgia, there was one Episcopal Church, one Lutheran Church, about ten Methodist Churches and seventy-three Baptist Churches. And to me, the Baptist Church was a symbol of anti-intellectualism …
To be in a church that had a respect for intellect was something that was important to me. So that was one thing.

Tape 3, Side A

…
Gus Schultz: Well, the congregation (in Rome, Georgia) was all white people. … One of the things I did while I was in Rome, Georgia was to read. And I subscribed to almost every magazine I could possibly get … my hands on. And I did it with the intention of eliminating the ones I did not want to continue to receive. And so I did that. I got rid of those, and then I would continue to read the ones that I thought were important. In much of what I was reading I found to be the kind of positions that I thought the church ought to be in. And that we ought to be able to adapt and listen to some of the things that were going on.

That was in the middle of the March on Selma, Martin Luther King, the Birmingham March. And as I read, one of the things that really struck me was that there were people involved in the Civil Rights Movement, and what was being said by them was being lost because it was being said by people who were, who could be written off as "*carpetbaggers,"* as people who were from the north. They were Yankees, and there needed to be the voices of people who struggled with whether or not they should participate.

I felt that there were people who were in three categories. There were some who felt like they said, "*No, I shouldn't be participating in this*." And there were others who just took it for granted, "*Well of course we're going to be involved in this."* And that left the group in the middle who struggled with the question on both sides. And some came to the conclusion that … regardless of what conclusion they arrived at, they could say, "*We struggled through this together and we came out at different places."* But some just

never struggled with it.

And that was one of the things that was very significant in the march on Selma, the Montgomery March -- I've lost track of which ones came when. But the important thing is that was the period of the Civil Rights Movement. That was the period of Martin Luther King. That was a man who had given such direction … so much influence to that effort that people like, I read about a man who was asked, "*What does your Bishop think about you being here in this?"* And he said, "*Martin Luther King is my Bishop."* And also there were people who, well, that, who influenced me enough that later when I was in Illinois and in a graduate program … I wrote my thesis on Martin Luther King as a theologian. And I think most people didn't really think of him that much as an academic, a theologian. He was *just* a Civil Rights leader, but he was so much more than that.

So, that was really, well, that was something that left a trail. There were things like Martin Luther King's "*Letter from the Birmingham Jail*." And I just heard somebody saying the other day that perhaps the Sixties should just be wiped out, and we shouldn't have to deal with it one way or another. And that was just about as far from the truth as anything could be.

So, Martin Luther King, Ralph Abernathy,

This was the period that Bob Fitch was writing, taking his pictures. … And you wondered, "*Where can you trace back the earliest involvement in this area with Sanctuary?*" It's back to those days, those early days of the Civil Rights Movement. That's when it started. In the Sixties. And the number of people that really were able to pick up and move on.

People in the Civil Rights Movement also attracted people who struggled and suffered. There were a lot of martyrs that were not unlike the traditional martyrs of the Christian church. And one of the people that really knew this intellectually …was Max Schaible. … Max was someone who really provided a kind of leadership in that area in southeast Georgia. He was someone who responded to the needs of that particular time.

I think I told you about when my collar, when I had an automobile accident. I had hit this tree, and I had one of those celluloid collars on, and I couldn't talk. … I'd been out visiting some people who lived at the top of a mountain just outside of Rome, Georgia … I visited with this couple, a gay couple incidentally, … one of them was the representative for the Wall Street Journal of northern Georgia; and the other was the housekeeper. And I think a lot of people who don't know the south, would say, "*Ah, I wouldn't have expected to see that in the south."* … Anyway, I'd just been to see Bill Deeter and Dave, and they were at the top of the mountain.

I started down the mountain … I'm telling you all of this because it was one of those pivotal things for me. So I was going down the mountain. And it was a rainy night. And I didn't see this hair pin turn coming on this mountain road. So as I was turning, I turned my wheels too sharply thinking, *"I can still make it."* But then I didn't see this tree stub

there. And I hit the stump. And once I hit the stump, it threw me into the windshield, and then broke off the windshield and the post and the wheel, the steering wheel … and so …I got out … I started back up the mountain, and there was a house about a quarter of a mile back. So I left the car running and started walking back up the hill, and came to the house and knocked on the door. This woman comes to the door and she opens the little peep hole like that (*Gus gestures*), and she looks at me, and she said, *"Oh my God!"* And she slammed the door shut. And I said, I was going to say I had a wreck but I said, *"mmmhssbmmmumbl.*" I couldn't speak. I had broken every bone in my face except my bottom jaw. And so … this woman came back with her husband, and he took me to the hospital. … When they took me in I couldn't speak. And they saw this purple ring around my neck, and it was from the pressure of that celluloid collar. But people thought and word was going around that some group had tried to hang me.

Eileen: Because of your (Civil Rights) work?

Gus Schultz: Yea! And so there were people who said …"*They must have tried to hang him."*

Eileen: Who would've tried to hang you?

Gus Schultz: The White Citizens' Council, because our group, the Rome Human Relations Committee, which Max and Barbara (Schaible) were also a part of. We had had a meeting in a … a black Presbyterian church in Rome. And there was this big, black man, I can't remember his name now, but he came and stood (to block the view of the camera). There were these people who were taking our picture when we came out of church, and they said that they were coming (to get us). This one guy was taking my picture, and I was already sitting in my car. And this one big black man who was at the meeting -- who was just a wonderful person -- he came and he just stood facing out and blocked the way of all the White Citizens' Council people. And then the following week, the White Citizen's Council had a meeting, and they had a big poster board and pictures of people that they had taken at that meeting and elsewhere. And Max was one of those that was taken, and so was I. And that was why they thought maybe somebody had tried to hang me …

There was just so much going on that particular decade, and the Civil Rights Movement, the Human Relations …

End of Tape 3, Side A

Tape 3, Side B

…

Eileen: Now you and Flora got married in 1958 when you were midway through your seminary career. Before you talk about your ministry, will you quickly tell me about your children? (You started having them) while you were still in seminary, correct?

Gus Schultz: That's correct. Our first child was Bart, and I was in seminary at the time.

… Gustav Hobart Schultz III. … Bart was born in '59, I guess it was. And there were a number of students at the seminary … who were friends of ours. We'd get together, babysit with each others' children, that kind of thing. And Bart was born in Sanamon County, which is in Springfield, Illinois, which is the capital of Illinois. It was also near New Salem which was where Abraham Lincoln …was born. …

… Bart was born in Illinois. Locke and Tim were born in Rome, Georgia.

… We went from there, then, to where we were going to spend the next five years and that was Riverside, Illinois. So we took a call to a church in suburban Chicago. And it was an interesting town or village. It was definitely a village in current terminology. We were there for five years. I was the assistant pastor and responsible for youth work. And it was at that point, '61 through '69, … well, the decade of the sixties was the decade I began my ministry. And so when people talk about the sixties, I know exactly what they mean. The sixties were where I first opened myself up to what was going on around me. And there were people involved in civil rights activities. But down there we didn't call it "*civil rights*." We called it "*human relations*," as a way of distinguishing from some of the more radical kind of positions that were taken by some people …

December 5, 1997

Tape 4, side A

Eileen: … So, when we last met, Gus, we talked about your early childhood, your parents, your siblings, growing up in Foley and life in the seminary. And I inadvertently erased part of a tape in which you talked about your decision to pursue the ministry. And I wanted to revisit that question and ask you if you could recall and describe who or what led you to pursue the seminary, especially after that ninth grade experience in the Lutheran Seminary Prep school that was, that led you to return home and not pursue seminary in the ninth grade. You described (receiving) a "*call*" (to vocation), and I would like to you to talk a bit about the call to become a Lutheran minister and what, who and which incidents led to that persistent decision to which you returned as a young adult.

Gus: First of all, the idea of a "*call*" was not so much related to the ninth grade experience. It was kind of like, *"this looks like an adventure*;" it was one of the things I saw my neighbor do, Harold Hermits… He was going to Austin, Texas to Concordia College prep school. And so I thought I would take a look at that experience …

I remember the first time I went home to visit my parents from Texas in the ninth grade, I got off the plane after having *"peroxided*" my hair which turned it orange (laughter). And I think, oh me, some things just keep coming around! So, that was the going to Austin, Texas to Concordia prep school. I was not really strongly disciplined to do well academically … I was there to have new experiences and find new interests. Some of the things that I did there, I gave them a try, like playing the piano. But that didn't last long. (At) the prep school, the high school, the first year you started with German, then the next year with Latin, then the next year with Greek. … We tried all those things out, and I realized that piano wasn't my forte nor was my, nor was languages, especially classical languages. … But I also felt … that … it was not a place for a thirteen year old to be

away from parents, and I decided that I didn't want to go back there. And I told the Dean, and he said that he thought that was a very good decision. He didn't think I belonged there either…

Eileen: So what led you to revisit seminary after high school?

Gus: Well I was like any number of others then and now who are looking at what are you going to do with your life. And I think that one of the things that was a factor in that was when I went … to the University of Alabama. The pastor there was a man who's name was Norman Widiger, and I would go and, I just had a lot of questions about a lot of things. And I remember going and asking him, "*If somebody came to you and asked this kind of question, what would you say?"* I didn't have the courage just to go up to him and say, "*Look, ..., I'd like to ask this question for myself*." So I took the opportunities to go and visit him, sit with him. And I found that that was a place where I was getting answers, and it was something that made me appreciate the role of the church and the role of the campus pastor in relation to the church.

… I remember going out one night, going and visiting in the Church, and there was nobody there. And those were the days when churches were kept open so you could go in. You didn't encounter locked doors at churches. And after I had had the opportunity to talk to people, had the opportunity to be there on my own, to be there with my questions ...Well, something happened in the way in which I was reading the Bible. And some of the things that took place right then, interestingly, are things that I would not really give that much credence to. I felt like, as I look back upon that experience, it looked more like superstition, the kind of *"call"* that people, a lot of people that you hear today, having a *"call*," and it's a mystical experience. I guess at that time, I felt that way. But when I look upon my own experience from this vantage point to when I was there, then, I think that this is what it means to be called. I don't think that necessarily today. I think it comes in many … and various ways,

… Words that were really meaningful (to me) that came out of that reading of the scripture were the words of St. Paul in First Corinthians where he talks about *"(Many) are called, not many are chosen,*" but you're called, you're chosen. And you find that the kind of call that was being talked about there was one that said, "*Yes, people who have the opportunity to hear the voice that they want to hear."*

So … I thought that I had gone through some of these things. I'd talked to the pastor there, and I found that seemed to be a place for me to be, and to hear those words even though you don't have much going for you. There are a lot of people that are really more capable, a lot of people who are, many people who can do - I'm trying to think of how to put it - I didn't feel like I was someone that was imminently well prepared for the kind of thing that I thought was ministry. I didn't … have the answers, I didn't have the abilities and I didn't have the, and then that's when you come across those words in First Corinthians … St. Paul tries to get across in First Corinthians … (that the) Foolishness of God is wiser than man and the wisdom of God is wiser than, The foolishness of God is wiser than humanities. … What is God's foolishness or what is God's wisdom appears to

us to be foolish. … And … I think what I would call an insight today, I would have called a *"call*" then.

Eileen: Did you talk about this with Flora?

Gus: I don't remember. We were both there at the University of Alabama at the time. … There were times that I know she was not particularly eager to be identified with me. I remember one time we were standing out on the street … it was a football game weekend. When I say we, I don't mean her and me … I was standing out on the sidewalk. There were people, there was a parade, it got nasty and people started throwing things. I was just standing on the side of the street like many others were, and I was holding a beer in my hand like many others would in those circumstances. But unlike what happened to others, I got arrested and thought, "*Well, certainly they'll recognize that I wasn't doing anything.*" But there were about three people arrested, and I was one of them.

Eileen: Was this your first arrest?

Gus: Yes, I think so. Yea. Yea. … They took us out, they took us to the jail, and we spent the night there. … I remember I called.

Tape 4, side B
Gus: Yea, I called my parents, … (They said) *"What's happening, what did you call for?"* And I knew that there had been a report of this on the radio. So I said, "*Oh, I don't need to beat around the bush, you probably know already that I got arrested yesterday."* And my father said, "*Actually, no we didn't. We just happened to, I was going to call you up to tell you to put anti-freeze in your car. It was going to get cold at night."* And so we talked about it. I told them. They were very accepting, very supportive. It didn't bother them. It may have bothered them, but not visibly.

Eileen: We were discussing revisiting the idea of seminary and you mentioned that something happened in the way you were reading the Bible and St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Describe when you were reading the Bible, was that in the context of your campus ministry, at home?

Gus: At home, in my room.

Eileen: Was that a tradition that you brought with you from home?

Gus: Probably, I don't remember. I mean … it was not the kind of thing I did every day, … Not an everyday experience but not an irregular one.

Eileen: Alright. Let's pick up another theme that you talked about in our first session. After seminary, after the University you went to Lutheran Seminary in Chicago and you also worked in a suburb while you were studying theology and you described the decade of the Sixties as the beginning of your ministry. You'd been in Rome, Georgia, then graduate school, then Chicago. You named Martin Luther King, Ralph Abernathy, Bob

Fitch, Max Schaible some of the influential people in that circle and in those times. You also mentioned the White Citizens Council.

Gus: I wouldn't really, I didn't know and I didn't know about Ralph Abernathy really … just for accuracy's sake.

Eileen: OK. Well I'd like to invite you to talk about the seminal events, people or incidents that opened you up to the activism of the Sixties. Here you were, a young man from the deep south. Your congregation was an all white congregation. And all of a sudden you were in a context where you met, head on, the Civil Rights Movement, and you had to make some choices about your relationship to it. So, using your words of the sixties being the beginning of your ministry, I'd like to invite you to share some of the stories or incidents that opened you up to that activism and those movements.

Gus: I was what I called a "*brainwashed Souterner."* I found that there were a lot of people who came from up north who could come in and create a lot of problems. And some of them were creating problems, some were helping to solve problems, but there were many people who came down from the north and ignored the struggle of people in the south who were trying to their own part, and trying to be a part of the struggle.

And I read enough and listened to enough people like Martin Luther King … that I joined ranks with those people who were from the south. Those people who were able to stand up to the Klu Klux Klan which was, in the area where we lived, called the White Citizens Council.

… In Rome, Georgia … my parish was … Holy Trinity Lutheran Church … The person that we bought our office supplies from was the Grand Dragon of the Klu Klux Klan. And, I don't remember his last name now, but I remember his first name. It was Tommy. And I remember answering my phone in the middle of the night and having threats too. People who (said they) were going to blow up our house, people who were going to do various things. And … I was talking on the telephone, and this person on the other end of the line was saying, you know "*You shouldn't be doing this, supporting the niggers,"* and that kind of thing. And then I said to him, *"Oh come on, Tommy, if you keep this up I'm not going to buy office supplies for you any more."* And he said, "*Oh, okay."* So there was a difference in the way in which these things were dealt with in the south and with the north.

I remember Dick Gregory saying, "*In the south, the white people didn't mind if you got too close as long as you didn't get too big. But on the other hand, in the north, they don't care how big you get as long as you don't get too close."*

And that was true. People lived close together. People were like, more like family. There were things like the … Ministerial Association that was biracial and had been biracial since before the Civil War. That was something that a lot of people who were not a part of that wouldn't believe it. They refused to accept that there were people struggling in their own way and in their own context.

Well ... during Lent we would have midweek services at the First Baptist Church in Rome, Georgia. There, when there would be, say a black preacher, there would be a white choir. If there was white choir, a black preacher. The choir and the preacher were always of the opposite race, black and white. And that was something that had been carried on … since before I went there. And there was an organization called the Human Relations Council. And this was made up of white and black. …

The Human Relations Council, as I said, that really was civil rights activities. But you didn't use those words. And the other one was the Human, the, what do you call it, oh, the White Citizens Council … That was the Klu Klux Klan. They would come. We were having a meeting of the Human Relations Group and it was people, both black and white, and we would go into one of the churches.

And I still remember going to one of those and there was a man, too bad Barbara Schaible isn't here, because she knows the names of all these people. We came out of that meeting and there was this one man who was a great, huge black man. And he saw that there were these white White Citizens' Council people who were coming up and standing in front of our car and taking pictures of us. So as they took pictures of us, they took the pictures, and stood in front of, well this man came and stood in front of the car and held his arms up like that which was, you know, that could have meant death by a hair trigger. But he stood there so that we'd be able to leave …

Eileen: This was in Rome, Georgia, your first parish.

Gus: Right, this was in Rome, Georgia. And the thing that they did with the pictures was that they took them and the White Citizen's Council was having a big gathering of the Klan. And so they were having this meeting in one of the City's buildings, auditoriums, and sure enough they had a big bulletin board up there with our pictures on it at the White Citizen's Council, the Klan meeting. And, Barbara was telling me the other day when we were together that she had, she said that … Max, her husband, was looking at pictures and this one man said, *"Do you know who that man is y'all?"* And Max said, *"Yea, that's me."* And sure enough, it was. And so some of the people at the White Citizen's Council meeting knew us, and we knew them. And we actually could stand there and point each other out, who were these people at various places.

Eileen: What was it that caused the White Citizen's League to view you as a threat? What was it that caused Tommy to call you and threaten originally that they were going to blow up your house? What were you doing?

Gus: Oh, just being part of the supporting group. Being part of the organization that was helping to bring down segregation.

Tape 5, Side A
Eileen: … Gus, you were just sharing some of your experiences that were part of your awakening and introduction to activism and the Civil Rights Movement in Rome,

Georgia. You talked about bomb threats, you talked about dealing with Klu Klux Klan. You acknowledged a different context of being from the south and working in the south and the dialogue you were able to establish with people on all sides of the issue. I want to revisit the question, How do you account for the fact that here you were, a white southerner who embraced the Civil Rights Movement which you referred to as the Human Relations Council in that context? What led you to take these risks?

Gus: Well, I think that what led (me to take risks) was the recognition … that this was an issue of justice, and as a Christian and as a member of a Christian Church we had our responsibilities to take our place, to make our stand, and that it wasn't as though, it was something that everybody had a need to deal with the question: *Are you or are you not going to be a part of this?*

I think one of the things that a lot of people … -- educated people, people who knew something about history -- could not escape what had happened to Nazi Germany. And say, *"We're going to be called upon to take that stand. Did we or did we not have a responsibility? Can we go on with a Church that did, would be a Church that didn't take its stand with people who were being victimized and destroyed?"*

So, it wasn't something that was individual thing. It was something that people were doing with each other. To ask the question, "*Is this something that we together have a responsibility for?"* And that's, that was one of the things. That, plus the fact that there were many people in the south. I used to think about it when I was in seminary and people would talk about *"red necks*" in the south, people who were not taking on their own responsibility. And I thought …"*They are "red necks" to some people, but to me they were aunts and uncles and cousin.".* And people who had not been a part of that, to know that this is what was going on. That was part of the issue.

The other thing is I don't think that people who were up from places other than the south, they didn't, well, they just didn't understand that relationship. And it was the people, I noticed especially in the Lutheran Church, that the people in the Lutheran Church who took the strongest stands in the Civil Rights Movement were people who had been born and raised in the south. I think of people like Will Campbell who wrote *Brother to a Dragon Fly*; the kind of study materials that had come out of the World Council of Churches. There were places like that for us to take and use those materials that were a part of that struggle.

Eileen: Did the Lutheran Church take a strong public stand early on?

Gus: No.

Eileen: So you were kind of pioneering this within the Lutheran Church and the hierarchy followed your work.

Gus: Yea, I would say that it was something that you certainly wanted to do something, being Lutheran, because the Lutheran (Church) was just not that strong a witness. …

Eileen: You're describing family, and the question I would have is here you were taking a strong stance, and a public stance in favor of Civil Rights. And you are describing your family that included people who others described as *"red necks."* How did you dialogue with your family? What was their reaction to your work?

Gus: Well, I think my parents, they took their own stance in ways that was, it made me realize that they did what they could do.

My mother was … obviously affected by what was going on. But I can remember her telling us the reasons for the Civil Rights Movement and why people were doing what they were doing, that they had to do that because of the way people in our family had been treated. And when they said *"our family*" that included black and white. …

My father, … well he was a banker. And he would make loans to people who didn't have collateral, mostly black (people). A lot of his work in the bank was with people that in some other place may have not been receptive … he was much more willing to lend money to people than a lot of people. My father … can't walk right now. He's eighty-eight (years old). And one of the people who helps to care for him is a man, a black man who worked at the hospital. And … this man told me that he would stay and care for my father if he needed it, (even if) he didn't have any money or anything. Whatever he needed, he would care for my father. And you can see the kind of respect that goes on from that. So it's kind of … back to Dick Gregory's thing. One side says they don't care if you get to big if you don't get too strong and vice versa. But my father never did talk about that. Maybe in recent times. He had people who would come in. He would help them write a Will. They would make him the beneficiary to care for their children. We knew that. He told us that plenty of times. Because he wanted to make sure that somebody was going to fill in if he dies. …

I remember when my father had been working in the bank for some fifty or sixty or seventy, seventy-five years, and seeing the kind of tribute that people had paid to him. It made me realize the extent to which ministry is something that is not just carried out by people who are ordained ministers. That there are people like my father who have their own ministry … a minister of the laity.

Eileen: When you talk about your mother describing family, one family, black and white, can you talk about that more?

Gus: I should say that I have another (notion of family). I'm thinking of family also in terms of my uncle and aunt, my mother's sister and her husband. And they did not have children. And I was their child, and they were my mother and father as well. And I was thinking about them this morning.

My Uncle was a farmer … My Uncle had this young man that worked for him who was the same age that I was. And we pretty much grew up together. And I was just telling someone he (my uncle) was the type of person who never really got excited about

anything …

One time we were taking a gallon -- I mean a fifty-five gallon drum that had gasoline that had gotten water in it. And I poured it out, and the water with the gasoline in it was trickling down the hillside by (my uncle's) house, and sure enough I thought, "*Well, it might have a little umph left in it so, let's light a fire!"* So I struck a match and threw it in and it went "*shhhhhhhh.*" And I started running to try to get to the drum before it exploded. And I grabbed it, and I threw it like that and let go. And it blew both ends out of it, a fifty-five gallon drum. And my uncle came out … came out of the house, and he looked, and flames were licking up in the tops of the pine trees. … My uncle looked at us and he said, "*My God, what have you boys done now?"* And he said, "*You're going to burn the whole place down*!" (laughter)

… There was a man whose name was Drill. He was a black man in his, probably in his seventies. Wore overalls.

I should have said that Charles, Charles Jones who was a young black man...

Eileen: This is the man who worked for your uncle and joined you in the escapade?

Gus: Yea.

Tape 5 Side B
Eileen: Charles Jones was your companion at your Uncles. He was African American. Now you're going on to two other people you want to talk about?

Gus: Yes, because these three worked together. It was kind of like, it didn't matter what the crop was or what the work that needed to be done. There were these three people that worked all of the time. (To) my uncle, they were part of the family.

There was Charles Jones. And Drill. We got in a conversation one day. Charles and Drill. Somebody said to somebody else, *"Have you ever been to Mississippi?"* You've got to remember they're in Alabama. And somebody said, "*Have you ever been to Mississippi?"* And Drill, who's this older man who's probably in his seventies at least, says, *"I've never been there and if a rattle snake was chasin' me, and I would run away from it. And if it was running me toward Mississippi, I'd turn around and let him bite me. You don't ever want to go to Mississippi."* Because it was, he was just saying that segregation in Mississippi was much worse than in Alabama.

I mean these are things that I remember … They're out of that period of time.

Then, Bertha.

Bertha. She thought that Charles and I were sent by the Devil to torment her.

Eileen: Who was Bertha?

Gus: Bertha was this black woman … she worked for my Aunt and Uncle. And there was a cart being pulled down the road … pulling ears of corn we'd put in the cart. And we went out and we'd be going along. And Charles took a corn stalk and he reached with his corn stalk underneath (the cart) and touched Bertha's leg with the corn stalk and then he yelled *"Snake!."* And she was, she's never let me forget that. And when, oh, it must have been thirty years after I graduated from seminary …she always made it a point that she was going to be at my ordination so that she could pray for my soul. (laughter) She was there!

Eileen: (This) was your family. Your family was black and white in your growing up experience.

Gus: I don't think anybody really, people didn't really talk that way, that much, I mean being part of the family. But if it's questioned, there are people that you have obligations to.

… Well I think that moving to Chicago from Rome, Georgia was really a good example of what I considered to be the "*brainwashed southerner*." I'd been reading all these things. I'd been readying *Christian Century*, I'd been reading *Christianity Today*. … And I felt like … I was going to be moving up north where people are *"civilized*," and people treat each other...and instead of White Citizen's Councils we were going to be able to talk about Civil Rights. And it was going to be a different thing. And it was just, that was not the way it was.

We moved up there, and we were able to raise those issues, and we realized that was much more segregated.

Eileen: Chicago.

… I remember Martin Marty was a member of the Church when I came. He was the pastor, and he said that when he looked at my resume, coming from Riverside, that he thought it was what people would consider a "*safe person*". That I had come <originally from George Wallace's Alabama and the University of Alabama> and from Rome, Georgia … I was a member of the Chamber of Commerce, of the Rotary Club. And that was when he said, *"That's what's considered a safe background*."

And then we moved into the middle of integrated housing. Housing was the big issue. That was '65. '65?

Eileen: '64.

Gus: I moved here in '69. So that was

Eileen: 5 years (prior).

Gus: Yea, '64, that's right. So things seemed different, being with all these "*enlightened*" people, they're going to accept up with open arms, and they'll give us new leadership and show us places to go. We moved to Riverside … two weeks before Martin Luther King led his march on Cicero. And people were just really, it was a terrible thing. That was when Dick Gregory made the comment and he wrote a piece in Esquire Magazine called, "Nigger, Go South." And I thought, *"Hmmmm, now I know what he meant."* It was something you didn't approach lightly. They were pretty difficult times. …

Cicero was made up of eastern European peoples, Slovakian. If you stood in Chicago in the Loop and you faced directly west, the first suburb you would go through is Cicero, and then the next one would be Berwyn, and the next one would be Riverside.

Riverside …, had seven Frank Lloyd Wright houses. It was (designed by) the father of landscape architecture, Frederick Law Holmsted. And the people in Riverside --in Riverside on half of it had beautiful houses. And the other half was a point at which somebody spread the rumor that malaria had broken out ..and people moved away.

But, we started. We participated. We helped to build a Human Relations Committee … in Riverside, and that was going to be the first effort from people in our community to reach out and try to deal with the whole issue of housing. And we decided that we … might get six or eight people to come out. And, well, lo and behold. There were not six or eight people. There were 150 people, and they were all hostile.

Eileen: Against you?

Gus: Yea. And we said, "*This is not what we expected!"* Martin Marty lives in that town, so we asked him to be the first speaker. And that was not what he was expecting either. And, so anyway, we decided we'd do it the next month, doing it on a monthly basis. And since we had 150 the previous time, we said, "*We'll have maybe that many this time."* And we had 250. And it was all hostile. The entire way. You know, maybe ten or fifteen people who were from some of the churches.

Eileen: Leadership?

Gus: No, leadership of the people in those churches, they didn't want to touch that.

Eileen: So it was yourself and rank and file members?

Gus: Well, there were, you know, some of us came together. People from the Roman Catholic Church there, the Lutheran Church and the Episcopal Church. And a number of these people were seminary professors (from) down around the Loop or people who were on the faculty at seminaries, universities, that kind of thing. And, then there was one man, I kind of won the, not affection, but the trust of this one man who lived in Cicero. And we talked, and I just opened up the conversation. And he'd just kind of give me a yes or no answer to questions, but he wasn't really going to say much. And he said, he

wanted to let me know that we were in danger.

… at that point … this man, whose confidence I had somehow elicited, told me that, he said he was from Cicero and that … that he was with some of the other people from Cicero, and that they were stockpiling ammunition and guns, and that they were going to bomb my house. And I realized then that for a brainwashed Southerner, that was the kind of thing that really didn't happen there. There were people who died and people who gave their lives but it was not something that …

Tape 6, Side A
Eileen: This is tape 6 of my interview with Rev. Gus Schultz who is just finishing up telling about being in Chicago area and winning the trust one man who lived in Cicero, the site of Martin Luther King's march (in 1964), wanting to let Gus know that he was in danger.

Gus: … the way that the Minute Men would do their work. They would send you a card and the return address would be an organization like the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). And, so you would see that you got something in the mail from the NAACP. And then you open it and you realize that it's *not* from the NAACP, it is from the Minute Men or one of these other paramilitary groups. The one that was sent out and that I received from the Minute Men read something like this: *"Traitor, Beware! You're ..."* I can look it up, I've got it, I can show it to you later. But … it said *"Beware, traitor beware, the person who works on booby traps is the mechanic who works on your car. The milk man is putting poison in the milk that's delivered to your house. The man who sells you your newspapers carries a silencer-equipped pistol under his coat."* And there are a couple of other examples like that. And it said, *"Even now, the cross hairs are on the back of your neck*." And then it has a target, the cross hairs like this …

Now, that was something, the way in which they made their threats. You know, also some of those threats were being carried out. Somebody else that I came to know, although not as intimately, was Fred Hampton, who later, it was confirmed, was killed by the FBI in the COINTELPRO Program.

By this time we were dealing not so much with racial issues, but also with the Vietnam War. And some of us started a draft counseling organization …

Eileen: You were just talking, Gus, about starting the Draft Counseling and how the race issue, the agenda began to grow to include not only the race issue and housing but also the Vietnam War.

Gus: Yea, and Martin Luther King was very good in his own theological interpretation of what was happening. You couldn't talk about evil in one place without talking about evil in other places. And it was our responsibility to respond to the Vietnam War as well as to the Civil Rights movement in the U.S. So there was a group of clergy in the East Bay who started a draft counseling center.

Eileen: Now, you're here in Berkeley, or is this back in Chicago area?

Gus: This is in Chicago.

Eileen: You just said East Bay. (laughter) So a group of clergy in Chicago…

Gus: In Chicago. And there was a place where we wanted to put the office where people could come in Maywood. And so … we tried to rent this office space and were told by the Black Panther Party that (it) was their space and that we shouldn't have that. But then we had a conversation with Fred Hampton. And Fred Hampton was a really outstanding, committed. It's hard to find the adjectives that describe the kind of person he is. I had a friend, Joan Elbert, who was involved with a lot of this, and it happened that we remembered that Joan and Fred Hampton were good friends, because he had told Joan when he was in prison at one point that he wanted a bible. And so she was going to visit him regularly in the jail. And so she had told him that we wanted that place for draft counseling. And he said,"*Fine, I'll see that it's done."* And he did! And they said that he was going to be, that he takes responsibility for seeing that that facility was made available for draft counseling, especially for people who opposed the Vietnam War.

And then, I don't remember when, but you remember he was killed by the FBI. And I mean it wasn't something that is just conjecture. … It really did happen…It really did happen to him, and it really was the FBI.

Eileen: What was your reaction to that? Were you still in Chicago when it happened?

Gus: I think I was out here, but I don't remember. I don't remember when that took place. When some of the things took place. The Black Panthers, you know, they started here, so it gets mixed up in my mind.

Eileen: How did things like the death of Fred Hampton, the threat to bomb your family, to kill you, how did that affect you? What was your reaction, your gut level reaction and also your intellectual reaction?

Gus: Well, I think that those were times and places that required a response …When you asked the question earlier about taking risks, I think that over those years, there was an acceleration of risk. And I think that those were the years that people who more and more saw responsibility and more and more took on that responsibility.

Eileen: What would you say to a child today, a 13 year old say, who would be incredulous and ask why would you put yourself in that position over and over again?

Gus: I think that probably the incredulous part, you don't really think those things are going to happen. And I know, thinking of Medardo Gomez -- the Lutheran Bishop from Central America -- years later, after we moved, we've just been skimming the surface of a couple of decades now -- but Medardo Gomez was here, what two or three years ago?

And in an interview with … one of the journalists from one of the newspapers. And … he was there talking about how he was with the people here who had risked their lives for him. And then he talked about me and you and people. And I thought, "*This is interesting, it's kind of a turn about."* Anyway, we thought you were going to be talking about him, the Bishop, and he says "*No, we're talking about people here who risked their lives."* And I think that those, those were the things that caused people to respond. Taking risks, taking risks would be something that caused more people to respond. That people, people did not want to be involved in things that didn't have some sense of risk in it. Because that is what the Church has done, and the way the Churches operated over the centuries.

So, where are we?

Eileen: Risk taking. The Chicago Experience. Is there more you want to say about Chicago or are you ready to talk about the journey to Berkeley? …

Gus: I find that Berkeley is a lot more like Alabama than Illinois is. Berkeley is small town. Berkeley tends to be a whole town of people whereas in previous places you found enclaves. Here you find an openness that's, so it was a place, a good place for people from Alabama to be, especially those who had been in Illinois and find it more difficult to be there.

Eileen: How did your journey to Berkeley come about?

Gus: When I was in Rome, Georgia, I decided that I wanted to go into campus ministry or a parish that's related to campus ministry. And so I decided that's where I'd put my name in. And when I was still in Rome, Georgia, and this is a different usage of the word "*call*", this is institutional church call, I received a call from Mussel Shoals, Alabama. I received one from Macon, Georgia.

January 13, 1998

Tape 7, Side A

Eileen: … Today we're going to pick up on your journey to Berkeley. You arrived with your family -- Flora and your 3 kids -- in the fall of 1969, after having received and accepted a call at the University Lutheran Chapel at Berkeley at the University of California. Tell us how you got here and what you found!

Gus: Well I had made the decision back when I was in Georgia that I wanted to be in campus ministry or I should say a campus parish, a congregation of people who were in the proximity of a university. And so when I went to Chicago it was with that in mind, to do some graduate work that would better qualify me for the work that I wanted to do.

So I had received information that people that I knew had put my name on the *"call"* list to move from Chicago to Berkeley, California. At first I didn't know if I really wanted to come all the way out to California. I had been in Georgia, and I … planned to go back to (the south). And (I) wasn't sure that … Berkeley was the place for me. I received some other calls while I was in Chicago.

One, I received a call to (a) downtown Chicago (parish) and another one, I received a call from a congregation in Duluth, Minnesota. And I thought, "*That cold climate's no place for an Alabama boy!"* … I also received this particular call. And there were people who were supporting me. When I had first been notified that there was a possibility that I would receive this call, then two years transpired. And I thought, "*Well, if anything is going to happen it would have already happened."* So then, by the time two years were over, I was already prepared … to go somewhere else. So then, I decided, "*Is this really where I should be and what I should be doing?"*

And then I heard that the Bishop had been opposed to my coming here because I had been a member of an organization called the Lutheran Action Committee. The Lutheran Action Committee was a committee made up of people in the Lutheran Church who (supported) Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement, opposed the Vietnam War, and then were very much supportive of idea of people from different Lutheran groups who would receive Holy Communion together.

Eileen: You meant to say "supported Martin Luther King, opposed the Vietnam War,

Gus: Right. Yes, thank you.

And so, the Lutheran Action Committee was referred to as LAC (L-A-C) and it was composed of all those people who supported the Civil Rights Movement and opposed the Vietnam War … But there weren't many people in those categories. And we received the word that on the national level in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod at least, which is what I was a member of, on the national level, no one in that Church body who supported the Lutheran Action Committee was supposed to receive a call that was in anyway considered a promotion. So, we realized that.

And I went to the Bishop. This was after he agreed that I would be called, be the pastor there at the University Lutheran Chapel. …His name was Paul Jacobs. He died a few years ago from cancer. But, he left my name on the list and said, *"Okay, there's support here."* So later on, I asked him, *"Remember if I asked you if you had been opposed to my coming here?"* And he said, *"Yes."* And *"You told me that you were not opposed."* And he said, *"Yes, that's right."* I said, *"So then, you really were lying to me, weren't you."* And he smiled and said, *"Yes. But I took my objections off and you were called."*

And so in the fall of 1969 we arrived here in Berkeley. There's a brochure that the congregation prepared, just to give you a little idea of the kind of people who were in this congregation … (when the) Civil Rights Movement was at its peak, the anti war movement was at its peak, and the people in the congregation wanted me to know what kind of people they were. They were serious about those issues, but they also had a great sense of humor.

They sent out a questionnaire which was designed, as they described it, *"to help participate in the orientation of the Rev. Schultz and his family to the Bay Area scene.*

Your answers will be confidential." And that might not seem funny unless you know the people. So it says, "*Please check one*." And then you would read those from which you had to choose. So, one was,

"The new pastor should wear: ___a beard and side burns, ___clothes, ___an Edwardian double breasted suit, ___flower print silk shirt, ___Italian boots, ___bell bottom pants, ___a wide leather belt, and ___clerical collar or ___nothing, only on Sundays, ___other.

His sermons should be: relevant, irrelevant, intellectual, 5 minutes long

His politics should be: Maoist, Marxist-Leninist, Stalinist, revolutionary, radical, liberal, OR moderate, conservative, counter-revolutionary, fascist, none (a preacher shouldn't have any politics) or other.

His theology should be: Christ-centered, Guevarra- centered, Luther-centered, Preuss-centered, other. " Preuss is an inside joke. That was the president of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod at the time.

"Pressing theological topics I would like to take up in Bible Study: Did Adam and Eve have navels? When did God die? Did Jonah really swallow the whale? Does the ALC (that's the American Lutheran Church) practice liberal theology? Other."

You'll notice that every one concludes with *"other.*"

"His ministry shall be directed toward: the intellectual community, the avaricious business men, the demagogic politicians, the military-industrial complex, the people, all of the above, other.

His children should be: loud during services, cute little angels, seen but not heard, other."

The next one was, *"He should spend most of his time: in his office, in the streets, in jail only for good causes, in the pulpit where he belongs, practicing what he preaches, preaching what he practices, other."*

His wife should be a model preacher's wife: flowered hat, the church babysitter, the organist, the choir director, the coffee maker, the typist, the emergency mimeograph operator, always smiling, sweet and pleasant, etc. etc. etc. ad infinitum, seen but not heard a liberated woman doing her own thing.

The chapel should be named: Liberation Lutheran Church, University Lutheran Chapel and Student Center-Missouri Synod, the People's Church, All Sinners Lutheran Church, Yippee Yahweh's God Squad Pad.

Our pastor should be most like: Adam Clayton Powell, Billy Graham, Camilo Torres,

Maharishi Mahish Yogi.

and we are glad to have the new pastor here, relieved to have anyone at last, overjoyed, over-stimulated. If pastor Schultz does not follow this advise I will quit the church, have him impeached, join the Campus Crusade and/or Scientology, pray for him, other, other questions, other answers."

This little questionnaire made the rounds. It was actually printed in the Christian Century after that and the person who had a strong hand in drawing that up was someone who went to Boalt Hall to Law School and later became the Insurance Commissioner for the state of Michigan or something like that. So. It was somebody who was a part of the congregation and it gives you a good flavor, a sense of the flavor of what was going on there. So.

The other thing that happened in 1969, was the bombing of Cambodia … I still have hanging from the top of the church a little tear gas canister that was a reminder of the position that our congregation took … with an issue that's continuing to this day, which is the whole question of the use of pepper gas. Our congregation strongly opposed the use of such pepper gas. And I remember what it was like to feel this pepper gas seeping under the floors of the building. I think that that's something that's going to be with us yet for a while.

There were other things that the congregation introduced me to, and things that they asked me to do that I was not always sure I was ready to do. But they were ready, and they led me.

I remember the Sunday that I was installed and was introduced to the congregation, and the president of the congregation introduced me to the congregation, to the people in the congregation … The person who did that introduction, was Jerry McCallum. And Jerry also chose that occasion to announce to the congregation that he was gay. And he thought that was going to create some reaction. And it did not. That was not even a big issue for them. But it did introduce me to the role of the church and the whole issue of homophobia and the work that the church was called to work with on this particular issue.

In 1970 I received a visit from one of the priests from Newman Hall, one block down, and his name was Dick Callanan. And Dick Callanan came to talk with me one day and said, "*We're having a program at Newman Hall and the leadership in our Church has said that we cannot use our church for this program because it is entitled, 'The Emerging Homosexual.'*" This was 1970. So we were asked by Newman Hall if we could have this program in 1970, if they could use our facility for this program. And I thought that probably the most likely reaction from our congregation was going to be that we wouldn't be able to do that, because we knew what kind of reaction it was going to create in our church around us and in Northern California. But we presented it to the Church council, and the Church council said, "*Well, we'd do it on one condition, that they'd allow us to jointly sponsor it with them!*" So, sure enough, they went back and said we'll have it there, and it was sponsored by Newman Hall and the...I was just thinking I have a

brochure from that program. It was a six week program and it was called, "*The Emerging Homosexual."* One of the people they had to chair that was from Newman Hall. There was a person from the Police Department in San Francisco named Elliot Blackstone. He was the director of public relations or something like that.

Then there were unlikely people who participated in leadership on that. People that I didn't really know, but it was through them and through the introduction to people like them, I learned a lot. I learned how I was afraid of what was going to happen, but was ready to follow the example and direction of some of the people who were setting that out.

I remember there was a group called the Daughters of Bolitas. These were lesbians who had come out and were trying to move beyond the kind of homophobia that was afflicting most of the churches at that time and still does. And we had parents of gay people. It was the first time I had ever been to a program like that. But then when you think about the scarcity of support for something like that and then it kind of stops me and makes me think of being back in Rome, Georgia and having a gay couple as members of our congregation in Rome, Georgia, and realizing that they were accepted there probably as much if not more so than in California, at least at that time. Certainly, that's something that's changed from day to day, from area to area. In fact, I remember Bill and Dave. They were the members of our congregation in Rome, Georgia.

Well, that was something. One of the things that shows you some of the areas where our congregation was led by some of the people there. I remember, also, Jerry McCallum who was trying to defend the actions of other people who had thrown rocks through the windows of buildings on Telegraph Avenue. Jerry was talking to me about the way in which this was bringing the issues of the Vietnam War to the consciousness of people. People look at what was being destroyed. There it was only property, and in other places it was the lives of people and the war. And we said that was going to be, had to be one of the concerns of our congregation. …

Oh, I'm missing one of the major themes which is why I brought that up. I was standing talking to Jerry McCallum, and he was trying to make the defense of the people who had broken the windows. And while we were talking a rock came sailing through the window and alighted on the floor between us. And we just looked at each other not knowing who brought what kind of issue to whose attention. But it was just a feeling of the pressure and the kind of thing that was taking place in the atmosphere. We had the whole issue of homophobia and gay rights; you had the war and what was taking place with the war. Another thing was when, well, I'm not sure what year this was.

Shortly after that the congregation wanted to take its place beside those who were opposing the Vietnam War. And I was with a group of people in the early ‘70s who were working to close the military Draft Board in Berkeley. There was a Berkeley Draft Board that was just for the city of Berkeley. Remind me about George Recknable.

So the other thing that brought some of us to meet with each other was the work we were

doing to oppose the war and trying to close the Draft Board, and we had a few people at a time who would go and stand and sit down in front of the Draft Board and refuse to be moved.

I remember it was on a Good Friday. And there were about 20 people that had chosen to do nonviolent direct action at the Draft Board. So they picked us up and hauled us away. We were booked at the Berkeley City Jail. Then we were given the choice of a $50 fine or 5 days in jail. About everybody but two or three chose to take the 5 days in jail. And one of your mentors was one of the people in that group for that day, Robert McAfee Brown. I had just really met Bob Brown in passing. While he was part of that group on Good Friday, we had an opportunity to get to know each other. It was more like a retreat.

There was the Dean of Students from Stanford, Robert McAffee Brown, a number of people from the Graduate Theological Union, a visiting professor of Biology from Michigan, a man who had been in the Air Force and who had to go down and assess the damage that had been inflicted by a helicopter on a little village. And he told us that ever since that had happened he has these dreams in which he goes and sees this pregnant woman with a child half born protruding from her body. And he has, daily practically, visions of that taking place. And (he) would wake up in the middle of the night screaming. So, he was one of the people. It was kind of a group of people who developed a loose alumni club. And we stayed in Santa Rita (County Jail) for 5 days. That was Santa Rita, I think Santa Rita is the traditional saint for "*hopeless causes*." (laughter) I'm pretty sure that's part of the hagiography, the study of saints.

There was one of the poems, actually it was a play by T.S. Elliot which talked about the martyrdom of Thomas (Becket). That was something that he was wanting to talk about: about martyrdom and what martyrdom means. …

Tape 7, Side B
Eileen: This is side B of Tape 7 of an interview with Rev. Gus Schultz. Gus you were just describing a T.S. Elliot excerpt that you've used in the context of your congregation.

Gus: Yea, that came from Jim Luguri who was an expert on the poetry of T.S. Elliot. Jim died a few years ago at the age of 38. He was a fine poet, a fine writer. … from the book you can get the exact quote. But it was something like: *"Wherever a saint has dwelt, wherever a martyr has shed his blood for the blood of Christ there is holy ground and the sanctity shall not depart from it. Though armies trample over it, though tourists with guidebooks come to step all over it...for from this springs that .... "* I don't know how I knew it then. But, anyway, you can get that. The idea was that from it flows that which is forever....I'll remember it by the end of the day.

<The quote reads: *For wherever a saint has dwelt, wherever a martyr has given his blood for the blood of Christ, There is holy ground, and the sanctity shall not depart from it. Though armies trample over it, though sightseers come with guide-books looking over it; …From such ground springs that which forever renews the earth Though it is forever denied. Therefore, O god, we thank Thee."* From the *Complete Poems & Plays of TS Eliot 1909-1950*, Harcourt, Brace & Company, NY, 1958, page 221>

I told you earlier it was like being on a retreat with the people who went to demonstrate before the draft board. One of the people was Robert McAffee Brown, a professor of religion at Stanford, one of your mentors, Eileen. When we were at Santa Rita, the prison for the county, Alameda County, and I was in the top bunk, and Robert McAfee Brown was in the bottom bunk. I felt like I couldn't have had a better front row seat for a real weekend of stimulating and inspiring time.

Another person that was with us besides Tom, the person who I mentioned earlier who was to get out and check on people and see how much damage had been done by the helicopters there. And another person who was there was Jim Luguri. And Jim was able to write some of his feelings into his journal and into his poetry. He was able to incorporate his feelings in some of his poetry. Jim carried the weight and sorrow of so many people around so many issues that he was able to communicate that through the "*sacred imagination"* as he would put it. Well, it would be fun to sit down sometime and talk about Jim and his poetry. But that's not the main thing your talking about today.

Eileen: Well, we'll come back to Jim! Gus, you've talked about arriving at this congregation and how the congregation led you to real awareness and understanding on many issues. Homophobia was one; the retreat at Santa Rita as you fought the Draft Board in Berkeley. Were there other issues that they introduced you to? What were the issues, and how did you lead them?

Gus: Oh, I think that it wasn't so much a matter of who came first and who came next. I think that, when I say that they led me … it was a dialogical process. There were things the people in the congregation were ready to respond to, but didn't have the leadership to do it at that time. And so it was a matter of waiting for, to be able to respond to their own requests. And, I think the poem that Jim wrote for me here is an indication of how he perceived my role of leadership in the congregation and to these issues and in the community. So, I felt like I was inspired when I understood what leadership meant in places like this and issues like this. This is one that Jim wrote for me. It begins with a quotation from *"The Wasteland*" by T.S. Elliot. It says:

"For Gus

Son of man, you can not say or guess
for you know only a heap of broken images
where the sun beats and the dead tree gives no shelter
The cricket no relief
And the dry stone no sound of water.

And then Jim writes:
From somewhere he had been, he had learned the secrets of the source
And how to feel the buried pulse that never disturbed the dust
He knew in abundance while we all stood watching the water
where to hold his hands to cup the flood so we could drink

And even in the driest time, when the heat became silence around us
Caking over the last traces of drink and what others had said
He could coax a few drops to his lips while we cursed and wondered
Where to move and when."

This was 1972.

March 10, 1998

Tape 8, Side A

…

Eileen: Good morning, Gus. In our last interview you shared your recollections of arriving to Berkeley as the new pastor of University Lutheran Chapel in 1969. You shared that your congregation was engulfed in the issues and movements of the day which included the Civil Rights Movement, the anti-war movement vis a vis Vietnam, and gay and lesbian rights. You mentioned the profound impact the bombing of Cambodia had on you and your congregation and noted that a tear gas canister still hangs in your sanctuary as a reminder of the ravages of war. You described your efforts to close down the Berkeley Draft Board on a Good Friday and spent five days in the Santa Rita jail with other friends and colleagues who engaged in non-violent, direct action. You noted that is was like a retreat and included mentors like Robert McAffee Brown, the world famous liberation theologian.

With this as a backdrop, Gus, I'd like to move our conversation to the specific event that led to the declaration of sanctuary for military personnel who did not want to return to the Vietnam War. And specifically, the University Lutheran Chapel's actions vis a vis the *Coral Sea*. *The Coral Sea* was a naval ship that was set to sail from the Alameda Shipyard and return to Vietnam.

And before we move to that, you recall that on October 1, 1971, in San Diego, California nine crewman from the navy's aircraft carrier, the U.S.S. Constellation, refused to board ship and were offered sanctuary in local churches, one of which was a local catholic church. The nine were arrested the very next day by the navy and flown to the ship and later were transferred to Treasure Island where they were detained while their discharges were processed. These actions, vis a vis the Constellation were part of a larger effort to stop the ship from returning to Vietnam. And that effort, I'm told, was led by David Harris, a long time conscientious objector who spent time in jail for his beliefs, and after being released on probation joined with other ex cons who had spent time with him and lay and religious and put together a campaign to stop the return of navy ships to Vietnam.

Among others, David Harris was working with Norm Berryessa of San Francisco, Sister Clair Morris, Roman Catholic, members of American Friends Service Committee, and the larger action included petition drives on the ship, polling in San Diego, and all in all took about two weeks.

About a month and a half later in the Bay Area, the *Coral Sea* action began to take shape. And according to local newspapers, on November 10 and 11, l971, more than one quarter

of the 4,500 crew of the Navy Aircraft carrier, the *Coral Sea* signed petitions protesting the ship's return to Vietnam. Now according to the local paper, The Chronicle, the petition, *"did not urge crewmen to refuse to go to Vietnam but stated that the signers do not believe in the Vietnam War and that the Coral Sea should not go to Vietnam."* Now, the *Coral Sea* did go to Vietnam. It did set sail. But twelve sailors took advantage of local churches' offer to provide them sanctuary. The City of Berkeley also got involved. You and your congregation were one of the ten Bay Area churches who offered sanctuary.

I'd like to invite you to share your recollections of the events that led you and your congregation to offer sanctuary to the sailors of the *Coral Sea*.

Gus: Let me start with a correction … We did not offer to have them take part in sanctuary, but they requested that, and we responded to their request. It is a necessary distinction, because otherwise we might be enticing people to do actions that are illegal, and they may have not known that that was illegal.

So there were those who had sought sanctuary in San Diego from the *U.S. S. Constellation.* And it was later, but by that example, the sailors from the *U.S.S.Coral Sea* wanted to explore the possibilities of taking sanctuary in the Bay Area from the *Coral Sea.* I think there is a document which I came across from 1971 that (captures) some of those themes. I can read these to you and those you don't want you can strike out.

This is a resolution of University Lutheran Chapel.

1. It is hereby resolved that Sanctuary has defined below shall be made available by this church.

2. The term Sanctuary as used in this resolution means the availability of shelter and sustenance to military personnel who are conscientiously unable to continue their participation in the armed forces or in combat duties. Sanctuary is viewed as an acceptance of the responsibility of a religious community to honor and support the demands of personal conscience and moral decisions.

And then a subtitle *"(a)":*

(a) by providing physical and emotional support for individual military personnel who are attempting to examine, clarify or implement their beliefs, and to facilitate their access to counseling and legal assistance;

(b) by attempting to interject a humanizing element into the relationship between individual military personnel and the military structure;

(c) by supporting efforts to obtain reclassification or discharge by service persons who are conscientiously unable to continue their present military relationship or duties;

(d) by attempting to create, for the discussion of relevant moral issues, an atmosphere which is humane, open, and free from excessive tension or hostility.

Then, number
3. It is to be understood by this congregation and by any individuals availing themselves of sanctuary :

(a) that all laws shall be obeyed and lawful procedures followed, by all persons involved to the fullest extent which is consistent with the requirements of individual conscience. On the part of the individuals availing themselves of sanctuary, this shall generally include filing with the proper authorities of their request for appropriate reclassification or discharge, of their reasons for taking sanctuary, and of their intent to return from it;

(b) that the congregation does not advise or solicit the taking of sanctuary, and can neither make decisions for individuals nor protect them from the consequences of such decisions;

(c) that no individual shall participate in, encourage, or support violence or the destruction of property;

(d) that no public statements, other than by the congregation or by individuals availing themselves of sanctuary, shall be made on church property or in its immediate vicinity.

And this is dated November 7, 1971. It was revised and reaffirmed in March 20, 1988, and approved by the University Lutheran Chapel congregation.

Eileen: The resolution is the culmination of work in your congregation. What led up to the resolution? How did you become aware of sanctuary as a response to the sailors and other military personnel who didn't want to go back to Vietnam?

Gus: I would jump back to my time in Illinois before I even came to the Bay Area, because I participated in some of the anti-war activity that was taking place in suburban Chicago. And that made me aware of what was happening in Vietnam, and that there were people taking a stance against the war itself. So I naturally sought out and responded to people out here who were of a kindred spirit with the people in Chicago.

And among the people that I became aware of and was introduced to was Bob Fitch, a seminary graduate and someone who was an outstanding photographer. So, I worked with Bob. And one of the things he did was to help put together a training program. I remember his asking us if we had participated in any activities that would be helpful to show to other congregations. And I said yes, and we set up these workshops with four different sessions. And one was the "*Theology of Sanctuary*." Another was "*The History of Sanctuary,"* and another was the "*Legal Aspects*" of it. And finally, the utility, "*how do you organize it?*" What's it really for? And this was something Bob helped work up an outline for. And we went to different congregations.

The first congregation we had a workshop for was St. Benedicts in San Francisco. St. Benedicts the Moore. We were able to get somebody from the Jesuit School of Theology to talk about the history of Sanctuary. And we had people from some other sanctuary efforts around the Bay Area.

Eileen: Can I interrupt you. You put together a series of workshops on sanctuary together with Bob Fitch and offered them in congregations. Was this before your congregation offered sanctuary to the sailors of the *Coral Sea* and before the Churches in San Diego offered sanctuary to the sailors of the *Constellation?*

Gus: It was before the *Coral Sea* but after the *Constellation*, would be my memory of it. And we had a lot of people from other places that came and they expressed support at some point or other. Dorothy Day came. Joan Baez came and participated in a Sunday morning service. Different people from around, not just the Bay Area but from the West Coast came to express their support. And as it turned out, those four sailors from the *Coral Sea* did not take sanctuary. They did what we had said, which was, *"enter into a process of discernment, make your own decision, and we will support you in whatever your decision is."* And we certainly (believed) that that was the correct position to take. We did not coerce people into any kind of illegal activity. We did support them, though, in the actions that they took.

I think Bob Fitch put together a little notebook of about ten pages that laid out those four points, offered a speakers' program made up of people willing to go to other congregations and talk about what had taken place.

As far as our own congregation was concerned, we were primarily trying to have people think through what was going on in Vietnam, what was their responsibility for it, not just as individuals but as congregations. And that is what we did. And the response by congregations - there were approximately, let's see, I think there were twenty eight congregations that asked for workshops and took positions. I remember one was in Marin County, several in San Francisco, and some were not just churches but individual people who wanted to express their own objections to the war. We were able to tie them into existing communities or existing congregations. That was one of the things, too, that became a very significant point. We wanted people to be in community when they were making those decisions, both for the sake of the community and the sake of the individual. And that was something that continued to grow. It was something that we saw the potential for being a growing community.

Eileen: How did you meet Bob Fitch?

Gus: I think I met Bob Fitch when he came by my church one day. And he said, *"Have you ever thought about doing sanctuary?"* And we said, *"Yes."* And he said, *"Well I have too. Let's put together one of these workshops and see what other congregations would be willing to participate."* So Bob Fitch who had done photography for the Civil Rights Movement, and then photography for Dorothy Day - I'm trying to think of the

names of other people he had done photography for.

Eileen: King?

Gus: Martin Luther King, right, Cesar Chavez, Ron Dellums, the Berrigan Brothers, people, many of whom, he had traveled with when they were traveling underground and he was taking pictures during that time and documenting the work that they were dong.

Eileen: Now you said to Bob when he asked you, "*Have you thought about doing sanctuary,"* you said to Bob, "*Yes*." Had you been familiar with sanctuary as a result of the San Diego or prior to the San Diego experience?

Gus: Actually, I saw the first efforts that I knew about involving sanctuary was two young men who were in the navy and who were in Hawaii. And they indicated they were not going to go to Vietnam. And it was not a very organized effort, not the kind that immediately brought people on board saying that "*This is good."* They weren't sure how far they were willing to go. They weren't sure what they had taken on as a responsibility. So I think that was one of the times. There were some other discussions about sanctuary, again, going back to Chicago days. There were discussions about that and about sanctuary. And it was probably a lot less likely to occur in Chicago than it was here in the Bay Area.

Eileen: And why was that?

Gus: I think there was greater diversity here and a willingness to take a position on the part of some of those congregations. But I think really I would have to say that the person or event which most influenced me in doing something about that probably was Bob Fitch. He just was able to move ahead. He was able to bring people into the picture, and move into a more organized effort rather than kind of half hazard. The organizational aspect was crucial. And it made a lot of people realize that organizing didn't mean something negative. Organizing meant something very positive and something capable of bringing about some change. And so the beginning of organizing those congregations for the workshops, that was the next best thing that happened. …

Eileen: Bob Fitch came to you with an idea. You developed a set of workshops to introduce the concept to congregations. Twenty-eight congregations in the Bay Area ascribed to opening their doors and inviting people who wanted to pursue this option and invited them to take advantage of their support. What happened, after people began coming to your congregation?

Gus: What happened is that people responded. Churches are always looking for programs. And sometimes they're capable of pulling an organization together. There were people who responded. There were people who said, "*We want to have a program on sanctuary in our own congregation. We want to do that either one time, or a period of four weeks."* We wanted to have as many congregations as we could and that were capable of continuing to expand the idea. You realize that it was something that people

started to contribute their own thoughts. People started to contribute their own organizing efforts seeing this come together. But we didn't really know that much about how people in other parts of the country were responding. We were going to find that out later. But at that point we really just knew what was going on in the Bay Area.

Eileen: Now according to the news reports at that time, twelve people from the *Coral Sea* did not board the ship when it took off. And according to those reports those people disappeared for twenty-eight days and then later, after a discernment process, voluntarily turned themselves in, surrendered to the navy, and their discharge process began. What was your relationship to those sailors who, for reasons of conscience, decided not to go back aboard the ship?

Gus: We helped them to get to the point that said there are many ways to protest against the war. Some of them which you may seek may be illegal. Others may have strong opposition. But others may have simply felt they made their statement and they were ready to try and remove themselves from participation in the military service.

Speaking as churches and religious groups, we thought that one thing we could do was to express our conscientious objection to that war. I speak out of a Lutheran tradition. And out of that tradition we could say, "*We would support you in whatever you do because we feel that anything you do against conscience is wrong. So you must follow your own conscience."* But then the government would say, *"Yes, but you're not a conscientious objector unless you object to all war."* And coming again out of the Lutheran tradition -- which is that of most people of the Christian church -- we were able to say we think we can take a position against an individual war. That's what's called *"selective conscientious objection*." And we were selective conscientious objectors. And therefore, with all the strength of our community and our theology would choose to say, "*We think it is wrong for this war to continue."* We could specifically say *this war* because we are selective conscientious objectors. And we supported those people who were *not* selective <as well> but wanted (to go) on record as against all war.

Eileen: So you were really facilitating military personnel's discernment process about their moral position on the war in Vietnam and what options were available to them.

Gus: Right.

Eileen: What was the reaction of the government?

Gus: Well, let's see. First of all you have different governments. You have the city government, you have the state government, and you have the federal government. The City of Berkeley passed a resolution expressing support for sanctuary as it was defined by University Lutheran Chapel in Berkeley. And they even went a step further and said that in facilitating support for the churches who had taken sanctuary, we will support them and we will put at their disposal buildings owned by the city of Berkeley.

Side B, Tape 8

Introduction: … Gus you were just describing the government's reaction to your provision of sanctuary to military personnel during the Vietnam War. You were describing the City of Berkeley's position and their supporting the University Lutheran Chapel's definition of sanctuary and offering buildings. And you just talking about banner headlines.

Gus: Yes, one morning there was a headline that took that position that the city had defined support for Sanctuary. The headline <read>, *"Berkeley is a Sanctuary."* And we thought that was real progress, to say that Berkeley, itself, is a sanctuary, and it is a sanctuary because churches and religious groups within the city limits have defined themselves as such. <It represented> support for the people in the city of Berkeley. And it was one of the things that has continued to be a source of support of that position - when the city, itself, came aboard and said we're supporting.

The federal government, I think it was the U.S. Office of the prosecutor.

Eileen: The Justice Department?

Gus: The Justice Department. Right. I guess … the Federal government (claimed) … that the city shouldn't be doing things like that and if they aren't careful they'll be taking a position against the federal government. And we said, "*Yes that was true."* But one thing we said consistently through (out the process) … was that we were not doing an act of civil disobedience, but that the government, itself, was acting in disobedience. So we were not involved in civil disobedience. That was a very key thing for us. And we go back and look at the original <resolution>. The way in which we defined it, we would prevent ourselves from giving people encouragement to disobey the law.

Eileen: What were the legal issues?

Gus: Well, they were mainly around the effort of the congregations around the area of taking a position opposing the war. The opposition to the Vietnam War. And that was during a time when people were still being drafted. And so there was an effort on the part of some to close down the Draft Board. That took place. And in fact the Draft Board was moved from Berkeley to Oakland.

Eileen: So the critical legal issues from the government's standpoint was your intervention in impeding the process of the draft of young men.

Gus: Right. And there were those who felt like the government was carrying on a war in which they needed young men to go and kill and be killed. But that was one of the things that we had to encourage people or to support people in that.

Eileen: Now you stated that the view of the Sanctuary congregations was that it was the government who was breaking the law. Which laws did you see the government breaking?

Gus: Oh, I don't remember now. That was what, twenty years ago? I think that, I would just presume that it would be the...well, I'm not a lawyer and I sure can't dig up those things out of my past.

Eileen: From a religious point of view, as you were first beginning your foray into the notion of sanctuary, what was your definition of the religious roots of sanctuary, coming from the Lutheran tradition?

Gus: As I mentioned earlier, I think that one of the things about sanctuary that was out of the Lutheran context, was that we had an obligation to support people in military service who were pursuing conscientious objector discharges from the military. …

There was a law that said you could be released from military service if you were a conscientious objector. It was also true that you could not just be released, but prevented from going into the military service. And that was the one that was usually used as the example that people could -- for reasons of conscientious objector status -- not go into the military.

But most people didn't know that you could get out of the military after you were already in it. And that was one of the things that we helped people to do. We also assisted them with our efforts to get congress(al) support, to have lawyers. We had a community of lawyers that who was willing to take on the responsibility of assisting these young people. And so it was the whole point of having an opportunity to say, *"I'm not going,"* and to turn to us and say, "*Will you help us?"* And we did that.

Eileen: So people turned to the religious community for help. You clearly had to do research to put together the workshop on the legal issues, to put together the workshop on the religious history of sanctuary. How did you structure that? Was it a one-person operation - Bob Fitch took the lead? Was it a committee, a group within your congregation? How did that look?

Gus: We began to put together a network. In that network there were attorneys, there were theologians, there were organizers, there were political organizers. And it brought together people who, under other circumstances, probably wouldn't have come together.

Eileen: Who instigated the network?

Gus: It just evolved. Each of us knew attorneys. Each of us knew other clergy who were willing to be part of that. I remember names like Todd Whithy. Todd was a military attorney, an attorney for the people with military issues. Lee Halterman was in Congressman Dellums office, a very key person. Lee Halterman later went back and finished law school and, I think, is a good friend of Bob Fitch. And Bob Fitch recently married Lee Halterman and his wife. I saw Lee somewhere, and he informed me that they had stayed in touch in fact. They were at the wedding. I think there was a Jesuit historian -- Hennessey? I don't remember his name …

Eileen: Father Bill O'Donnell, from St. Joseph the Worker, referred to the fact that you presented the concept of sanctuary to the Lectionary group vis a vis Vietnam before you would again present to the Lectionary group again vis a vis Central America. Can you describe how the Lectionary group came to be and what it consisted of?

Gus: Well it's been going for eighteen, nineteen years. The Lectionary is a collection of writings from the Scriptures that are read to congregations on Sunday mornings. And each of those lections has ... well for the most part, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Methodists, different denominations have that one thing which continues to hold them together. And that is that they use the same Bible readings. And at one point we were together for a weekly Bible Study, the Lectionary study.

Eileen: And the *"we"* was?

Gus: The *"we"* varied from time to time. Probably Ron Parker, Bill O'Donnell, Bob McKenzie, Marilyn Chilcote.

Eileen: And these were pastors from other churches?

Gus: Yes. And ...

Eileen: So you would meet weekly to review the lectionary for the upcoming Sunday … So Gus, who originated the Lectionary group and who comprised it in the beginning?

Gus: Well, it might be apocryphal, there are different versions, different people, different places. But the names of the people that I remember are: Phil Goetchl, Ron Parker, Bill O'Donnell, Bob McKenzie, myself.

Eileen: Did you help create that when you first came here?

Gus: I did.

Eileen: Had you done that before in Chicago?

Gus: Yes. I was one of the five. But each one of those, there would be a way of saying, Sanctuary would be something that would arise. It would have a life, a period of life span, then it would collapse again. But the lectionary group, unlike sanctuary, would continue. It had a life of its own. Some did sanctuary for military personnel. There was sanctuary for refugees. There was some more conservative sanctuary and more radical sanctuary. There was local - like Bay Area - and Chicago and the East Coast. And then it would grow and then, kind of collapse for a period of time. And then something would happen. The Persian Gulf was invaded and the churches would renew our offer of sanctuary. There was the Argentinean refugee program which produced Argentinean refugees, there was the sanctuary program....that was when we saw there was an opportunity to say there were people...now, I have to think that through. There were people who were looking at refugee programs and saying, *"Here's a case where nobody's*

broken any laws. Here's a case where people have been responsible for bringing people into a new and positive kind of relationship."

Eileen: To your knowledge did congregations in other parts of the United States offer sanctuary to military personnel besides the Bay Area and San Diego?

Gus: I think there was some effort in the Baptist Church in Cambridge - this was later.

Eileen: But vis a vis Vietnam?

Gus: I'm not sure.

Eileen: Your purview during the early 1970s when you all did it vis a vis the folks who were choosing not to return to Vietnam was limited to the Bay Area, principally. Is that correct?

Gus: Yes.

Eileen: You mentioned that it sprang up, it lasted for a month, maybe two months, and then the project was over for then, and later reemerged. What occurred after those two months, say, of the focus being on people taking sanctuary?

Gus: It was sanctuary that went up and down, but it was the Lectionary Group out of which sanctuary continued.

Eileen: In your congregation was there unanimity in taking this direction? …

Gus: … It was one of those situations in which our congregation said we would seek to have an 80% vote.

Eileen: So you had a process of education in your congregation. And then you had an election and sought 80% approval?

Gus: Yes. And we also encouraged other congregations to seek an 80% in support.

Eileen: How would you organize your congregation to get educated and take the vote? Did you create a committee? Was there a peace and justice committee that led that process?

Gus: Yes. We had a committee, a group of people who wanted to support that. They were people who were volunteers. And we were probably one of the few congregations in the Bay Area who had young students who supported the war in Vietnam. And even when they were not supporting it, and other people were, we still stuck to the 80-20%. <We> felt you had to have that kind of support, because that made it possible to say that this is something the congregation is supporting.

Eileen: What was the reaction of the people who voted against adopting this stance? Did they stay in the congregation?

Gus: They stayed.

Eileen: Did they change their position or did they just agree to stay even though they were dissenting?

Gus: No <they didn't change their position.>In fact one of the members of our congregation was the student representative to the Republican State Committee; he stayed as a member of the congregation.

Eileen: What was the response of your Synod, the Missouri Synod, when you engaged in these kinds of activities?

Gus: I remember telling the Bishop we were going to be involved in an effort in opposition to the Vietnam War. And he said, *"Okay, let me know*." And I said, *"And we're going to have a press conference about it tomorrow."* And he said, "A *press conference*!!! *What do you have to have a press conference for?"* And I said, *"Well, we've got to let everybody know what's happening."* He said, *"Well, I'm going out of town; and when I get back, let me know what's taken place."* Well, we had letters and cards that came to him. And they were about equally divided: those who supported and those who didn't, <who> were against. So he came back, and I called him up … and he said, "*Well, what do you think you're accomplishing by this?"* And so we told him about our opposition to the war in Vietnam. And he went through a whole list of things, his criticisms and so on, and then he said, "*Well, I realize after seeing this that a large part of our congregation, if Hitler were here today, he'd have them in his back pocket."* And he said, "*Keep up the good work*." And that was it.

Eileen: What was the name of this Bishop?

Gus: Paul Jacobs. He said he saw his job as keeping people off our backs so we could do our ministry. He thought that was the role of the bishop - not to do everything but to make it possible for groups like that to work.

Eileen: You mentioned that the Bishop asked you what you hoped to accomplish. What were the objectives of this ministry, Gus?

Gus: To bring a close to the Vietnam War and to support those who had taken a stand against the war. So it removed us one step. We were not going to be the ones who did the work. We were going to what needed to be done to support other people. And that was primarily people within the anti-war movement.

Eileen: Do you feel you succeeded, that you fulfilled your objectives?

Gus: Oh no. I don't think you ever fulfill those kinds of objectives. … Jim Luguri, who

was one of our writers in residence at that time and a member of our congregation at that time, he shared something from T.S. Elliot. He <said> *"There's no such thing as a lost cause, because there is no such thing as a gained cause. We continue to struggle not in the expectation that something will triumph but in the hope that something can be kept alive."* And I think that was good instruction from Jim - a blessed memory. He died at the age of 38.

Eileen: Was he quoting T.S. Elliot or were those Jim's words?

Gus: He was quoting T.S.Elliot…

Eileen: … Given all the available choices to you, are there choices you could have pursued that you didn't as you look back on the Vietnam years.

Gus: No.

Eileen: And, my last question for you today, when you were back in Santa Rita having your retreat with Robert McAfee Brown and the others who had been arrested when you engaged in civil disobedience to protest the draft board, you mentioned that you were incarcerated in Santa Rita and you said in your last interview, *"the Saint of Hopeless Causes."* At that moment, how did you see your opposition to the Vietnam War, to the Berkeley Draft Board, did you see it as a hopeless cause?

Gus: No, it's back to T.S. Elliot saying that there is no such thing as a lost cause because there is no such thing as a gained cause.

March 11, 1998

Tape 9, Side A

Eileen: … So, Gus, in our interview yesterday you shared that the person who influenced you most in first considering the provision of sanctuary for military personnel was a man named Bob Fitch. Bob approached you and inquired if you'd considered offering sanctuary to military personnel. At the same time you were emphatic that the decision to declare sanctuary was in response to a request from the military personnel, themselves - men who were soul searching if they wanted to go to Vietnam or return to Vietnam. My question is how was the relationship with the military personnel sought, how was it established?

Gus: Well, there were people all around us who were doing what was called military organizing. And they were organizing people who were involved with the military. And so in one sense Bob Fitch was my bridge with people in military organizing and in another sense there were people who were seeking out people who were trying to find a way to make their voice heard in protest against the war. So those connections were made. Bob knew a lot of people that I didn't know, and I knew a lot of people that he didn't know. So it was a good relationship and made it possible to reach out to those people and to begin putting together a network that hadn't existed prior to that time.

Eileen: Were those people affiliated with specific organizations that were participating in the anti-war movement?

Gus: Well, of course one of the organizations that comes immediately to mind is the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors. Their reason for being was to raise conscience and make a voice heard against the war in Vietnam.

Eileen: Was that a committee based at UC Berkeley?

Gus: No, actually, the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors was in San Francisco, but it's also a national organization that existed before the Vietnam War and existed after the protests had begun, and after the war ended.

Eileen: What was your relationship to David Harris, the articulate, fervent anti-war leader who spent time in jail for refusing to participate in the draft who's been mentioned by others as having been instrumental in the efforts around the U.S. navy ship, the U.S.S.Constellation in San Diego which resulted in the first public declarations of Sanctuary?

Gus: I didn't know David Harris, myself; we just met in passing. And that was it. Any connection with people in the San Francisco area, Bob Fitch was making those connections. I had to also remember that that was a connection being made. That wasn't my full time job. I was pastor of a church. And it was important that I communicate to other people that this was what I was doing, and it was not something separate. It was not something that had no relationship to my congregation and to me. It was part and parcel of that relationship. So that was something that was important to communicate to the public generally, so that other people who were involved in different ways in day to day life were people who'd have an opportunity to make their voices heard and not do it at the risk of losing their own jobs, their own livelihood.

Eileen: Do you recall how many people came through your congregation in search of sanctuary?

Gus: It was over two hundred. And when I say over two hundred that means that some of them came to us, and they asked if we could provide them with some help. What they meant by help - and what others would think of as being help - that was something that may have been people who were experiencing family problems. And they heard about sanctuary, and they heard that this is something that maybe could provide help to them. People with drug problems. And so we would refer these people to other sources of help. We would refer them to attorneys; we would refer them to medical personnel. And gradually we whittled down the number of people we considered to be legitimate people looking for sanctuary and who had a definition of sanctuary similar to that of our own. So after a considerable length of time and many interviews, we whittled down the number of people to about 18 or 19 that were considered to be legitimate people involved with congregations involved in sanctuary. …

For instance I remember there was a young man who was from Grosspoint, Michigan. … And we felt like, *"Here is a young man who is from a community, Grosspoint, Michigan, that sounds to us like it was similar to the Palo Alto.*" So they were referred to First Presbyterian Church in Palo Alto, and the congregation there had an interview with him, and he was taken into sanctuary. I don't remember the first name of the pastor in Palo Alto, but I think Wilson was his last name. And we met with Rev. Wilson and we met with Robert McAfee Brown who was also (a member of the congregation). And as we met with them and went through the process of screening people, referring people, we took Eric Larsen over from the East Bay over to Palo Alto. And he went into sanctuary. He was introduced to the members of the congregation. There was a pot luck supper to welcome him, and that was one of the things, it was kind of one of the chapters in the story of sanctuary for people.

There were others. There was one young man who went to Newman Hall in Berkeley. John Powers was his name. And John went with a procession down to the City Hall. And the Mayor welcomed him, and then he came back and spent some time over a night or two. He spent some time in City Hall and then was taken in by Newman Hall as a place that seemed appropriate for him. Well there were different ones like that, but one of the things that you tried to do was to match up congregations and individuals, make sure that there were people who were not just self-serving in their taking positions on sanctuary in their congregations.

The number went down to 16 people, I think. Of those 16, one of them dropped out. He said that his father was an admiral in the navy and he felt that he could not maintain a relationship with his family and still maintain a support for sanctuary.

There was another one - I don't remember all the details - but I do remember there was one young man who took a position. They <the Navy> took him and put him on a ship and said, *"Off to Vietnam you go*." And it was considered by us and by legal personnel to be an illegal thing to send someone, to take them and assign them to a dangerous post as punishment. So they took him back, and he came back and was put in the brig on Treasure Island.

Eileen: How did you succeed in getting the Navy to return him?

Gus: Congressman Dellum's Office was the instrumental factor in getting that to take place. And the person in Congressman Dellum's Office was Lee Halterman who was our connection with Congressional assistance.

Eileen: Do you have records/files on each of the people who went into sanctuary?

Gus: Yes. They are in the archives in the GTU.

Eileen: And in your recollection, what happened to these people after this chapter of their life was over? Did you keep track of them? Did they move on?

Gus: Yes. Different times. These weren't all in sequence, together. There were others. There was, for instance, a young woman. We had Leanne Mobile. Leanne was objecting to the Gulf War.

Eileen: The Gulf War in the 1990s?

Gus: Yes.

Eileen: So clearly your resolution to provide sanctuary spanned from the Vietnam War to Central America to the Persian Gulf War and onward.

Gus: Yes.

Eileen: The part vis a vis Vietnam - how long was that an active ministry? Did it last a couple of months? You declared in 1971 and the War ended in 1975. In that window, how active was the sanctuary ministry?

Gus: Well, I think as far as most of those original congregations, it's not over. This was not something, this was not an event, but a process. It was not an event, but something that the congregations committed themselves to. It's kind of like Baptism. You don't get rid of it. It's always there and when the time comes that it's needed … and that was something and you just proceeded with it. And you didn't have to reinvent it, like the wheel.

Eileen: Who wrote your original resolution, the one you shared with me yesterday?

Gus: It was a joint project involving a number of different people at different periods.

Eileen: The original one.

Gus: The original one, I think, probably, if I were to try to really conjure up where did it come from, the outline of it came from Bob Fitch and the fuller explanation of it came, some from me, some from, I know that at one point, a young woman who was the President of our congregation was someone who helped put some of that together. Her name was Barbara Grosh.

She's now, I think, at Tufts University teaching African economics.

Eileen: Yesterday you described the Federal government's reaction to your participation in sanctuary, namely the Justice Department's perception that the city of Berkeley was declaring itself a sanctuary, thereby undercutting if not in direct opposition to the federal government's policy. You didn't discuss any retaliation or intrusion of the government in your affairs. But was there any? Did you have any experience with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) or any other government agencies tapping your phones, breaking into your offices? Any other tactics of intimidation that tried to stop you from what you were doing?

Gus: Yes. Again, there are some isolated incidents and some continuing. Probably the earliest effort at that that I remember was ... I remember someone coming into our Church … They said they were responding ... There were people who came from the phone company and knocked on the door. And I asked them what they wanted. And they said they were here to respond to the trouble on the telephone line. And I said, "*Okay,"* and just assumed that somebody must have done something to the phone. And so then a telephone repair man came, and he knocked on the door. And I went to the door. And he said, *"We're here to repair your telephone."* And I said, *"Well somebody was just here. Let me see your identification."* And he said, *"Sure all of us FBIs have these things."* And I said, "*Well there was somebody already here."* And he said, *"Yes, that's quite possible. Sometimes I go out in the morning to get my truck and find out that the phone company has already loaned my truck out to somebody else, usually it's a law enforcement agency. It's quite common to have your truck taken out over a day or two."* I actually have some pages that I received from the FBI when I requested my <file>. Probably that's in the GTU files, too. So that's available. That's the kind of thing that's available from those materials. There are five big boxes. The person who's in charge of it. I forgot her name. *(narrator's note: Lucinda Glen-Rand)*

Eileen: The Vietnam War ended in 1975, April. Your response to it was multi-faceted and highly public. Some people I've interviewed have described the impact of the war on their families and their communities as "*having ravaged*" them because it was so divisive. What was the impact of your work and your involvement in the anti-war movement vis a vis your family and your congregation?

Gus: Well, I think it was something that was certainly anxiety producing. You didn't know what was going to be the result of the positions that you took. One person in the Lutheran Church office in Chicago wrote me a letter and said, "*You have my support, but I must say you are going to encounter a lot of difficulty, and it's not going to come from the government. It's going to come from your brothers and sisters in the Church because they're the ones who are going to say you ought to obey the government in all things."* But I dont' think it was quite as significant and intensive as anticipated. That was Ruben Baerwald who was in charge of Campus Ministry who said that.

I think that when I say it was anxiety producing, I was thinking specifically of one of my own kids coming in from a neighborhood playground and (saying) that *"Some guy had been asking questions about you,"* meaning me. And they told me that this person asked questions like, *"What does your dad think about the war, and what does your dad do..."* And this was when my kids were in grade school and junior high school. And there would be people who would come. And when you have people like that....Anyway, there was an impact on the kids on the playground. You wondered who's going to be out that there asking what kinds of questions. And there were the logs of telephone taps. Those were things that we were also concerned about.

But I think the overall impression, the overall impact was very positive, especially when you are living in a community like Berkeley. You could feel the depth and breadth of the

support, and that meant you would feel that impact. You would feel that there were people in your community willing to accept your work, your position and feel that they had really made it possible for you to do things like that. They might not do some of those things themselves, but they made it possible for it to be done. And I was one of those who was willing to do that.

I think, overall, in a community like Berkeley, overall in the churches, the key factor for a lot of them around those kind of issues was <that> people or churches or organizations were willing to take risks. The whole thing of risk taking was something that was appropriate in the Christian tradition, in the Jewish tradition. It was something that we felt like, *"This was a legitimate part of your work."*

Eileen: Alright, shifting gears a bit. Parallel to your involvement in the anti-war movement, you began an involvement with Human Rights in Korea that led to a longstanding relationship to both the South and North. You advocated for the human rights of Korean political prisoners and also helped spark, if I'm not mistaken, the dialogue about North-South reunification over a series of years. Can you share how your involvement in Korea came about and who some of your touchstones were?

Gus: I can. In 1973 I was the chaplain to the Lutheran Student Movement Annual Assembly which took place in Golden, Colorado. As the Chaplain of the Lutheran Student Movement Assembly in Golden, I was rooming with the North American Secretary of the World Student Christian Federation. And while we were there, we received word that one of the pastors who was a sponsor of the Student Christian Movement had been arrested, tried and convicted and was going to receive the sentence of either life, or life in prison, or death. And the reason for that was that he had spoken out in criticism of the government and in support of democracy in South Korea. And so, he's someone I've since come to know. He's retired now. He was a Presbyterian minister. Park Kyun Yu is his name. And I just saw him recently, when I was in South Korea for the inauguration of Kim Dai Jung. I also had another person who was a student then, and was also involved with the Student Christian Movement. His name was Ahn Jae Wong. So Mr.Park and Mr. Wong were people who were involved in 1973 in that work with the Student Christian Movement.

And, following that, I was asked to go on a delegation to South Korea to express support for those people who had been arrested. Not only to express support, but to bring back word on their welfare, what was taking place with them, so that we could make this kind of information available to people around the world. Because one of the things that keeps people honest is good information. So we thought we would do our part.

Eileen: Who sponsored that delegation?

Gus: That delegation was sponsored by the World Student Christian Federation.

Eileen: Was Amnesty International involved?

Gus: At some points along the way.

Tape 9, Side B

Gus: … Yes, this was my first delegation. But this was to South Korea. The first time I went was at the behest of the World Student Christian Federation. I'm trying to get my dates and so on in my head here. In 1973 I'd been in Golden, Colorado. In 1974 was the Student Christian Movement-sponsored delegation. There were five us in that delegation. One from Australia, one from Japan, another from Germany, myself, one from the office headquarters of the World Student Christian Federation, a man whose position was the Associate General Secretary of the World Student Christian Federation. And he had been chosen to lead the delegation. He was the World Student Christian Federation General Assembly Leader. His name was James Aporia Equaro. ... He came from Uganda. Actually, we've maintained a relationship over the years. He came here to Berkeley and went to school with our kids and taught them African work songs. And went to school and visited the fifth grade with one of our kids. He later became the Ugandan Ambassador to the People's Republic of China and Vietnam, too, and North Korea. So they had one person for those three countries.

And I mention him because I have run into him on other occasions in other places.

So … after we formed the delegation and prepared ourselves to go, we remembered -- this is important but it's not going to be in the right sequence -- when we were first there in 1974 and were in South Korea, we were told by one of the Cabinet Ministers of the South Korean government said to us, "*You're being very critical of South Korea because you think we're doing evil things. But I suggest that if you think that, you ought to go to North Korea and see what things are like there*."

… And so he said, *"See what things are like there and you'll find that they're much more difficult, much more authoritarian than any South Korean government."* So then we said, "*We will. We'll see if we can do that*." And we began to try to make inroads and open avenues of discussion and then of visiting. So we came back home. And we were involved ...

There was one group in Berkeley called *Korea Bulletin.* It had people in it who had been to North Korea who had a relationship to North Korea. Then there was the group that was called, *Korea Link*. And it was a group of people who had no connection at all with the North Koreans. And they were quite opposed to anything north. But then, I was initially with the group called, *Korea Link.* And then my friend, Paul Liem, he was the one who one who was able to deal with issues related to both sides. And Ying Kelly who was a member of the Berkeley School Board, and later was a member of … the City Council. These were two groups that worked together. And as I said, some of them from *Korea Bulletin* had been to North Korea. But there were two of us who had not been but wanted to because we had had previous relationships with the South Koreans. That was

something we thought we could pull off. And we did.

We managed to go to North Korea. …

… The other person was Sam Ragent. He's now an attorney of the Appellate Court in San Francisco. And he and I went. It took us four years to be able to obtain the opportunity to go to North Korea.

We started in 1976. Yes. We started trying to go in 1976, and we eventually made it in 1981. And the first two years we communicated. And the North Koreans said, "*Yes, you can go. But wait."* And we said, "*Well, when will it be?"* Well, two years is what it turned out to be. And that was not as easy as we thought it was going to be.

Eileen: What did you see as the primary obstacles?

Gus: The North Koreans asked us if we were to be given a visa and an opportunity to go to North Korea, would we be willing to make speeches at a *"Juche"* Conference. "*Juche"* is the organizing principle beyond Marxism-Leninism. And we said, "*No, we were not willing to make any prior commitments as to what we would say. We would like to go, but we'd like to have no strings attached."* And so they said, *"Okay."* Well, they had been willing to accept us as long as we were willing to make that speech. And when we were not willing to do that, they pulled back and said, *"You'll have to wait then until we have the opportunity."* Well, for two years we'd been really creative, communicating, maintaining contact.

Eileen: And this was with the North Korean government?

Gus: With the North Korean government.

Eileen: Directly?

Gus: Directly.

Eileen: From your offices in Berkeley or through National Church offices?

Gus: No, usually through Europe.

Eileen: And who was brokering this dialogue?

Gus: Well, by that time, we were doing it. I would go to Vienna and have a discussion with them. We had made contacts and so it was a relationship that had been built and continued. So I not only had that relationship for myself, but was able to make relationships, create those for other people.

Eileen: And the original entre to North Korea, did that come through Paul Liem?

Gus: Yes, I think...Probably. Yes.

And so we had the opportunity to go without any strings attached, and to go to North Korea. In 1981 we were privileged to be able to travel to North Korea. And that was something, we were there for one month, and we traveled throughout the country.

Eileen: As guests of the government?

Gus: As guests, right. We paid our own way there. But once we were in the country we were their guests.

Eileen: And who did they see you representing?

Gus: Well, we didn't know. And Sam, who was traveling with me, said, "*I'm sure they must want to talk to me, because I've done some research on the educational system in North Korea. And they'll probably be interested in that work."*

Then they started talking to me about the church and about ... Korean reunification. It was only one day, and Sam said, "*Well it's clear when less than a day it's not me but you that they want to see."* They wanted to know about the church, what were the people like in the Church, especially in Korea.

Eileen: The government wanted to know what the people in their own country were like who were affiliated with churches?

Gus: Yes. But also, the fact that there were many people in the church in South Korea. And they wanted to know, "*Who are these people? What do they do? Are they conservative, liberal?"* And they told us that they had about forty-five people from other parts .... Well, they said they had allowed visas for forty-five people to come to their country that year, and they said that only five of those forty-five were Caucasians. The rest were Koreans.

Eileen: So they gave out forty-five visas and only five were to non Koreans.

Gus: Right.

Eileen: So you were there for a month and then you came back to Berkeley.

Gus: Well, we went to Chongson Ri Cooperative Farm. We visited Mount Packdu, one of the most beautiful places in Korea. We went to Wan San, which was the harbor on the eastern side of the country. We visited lots of museums and art galleries and things like that. We visited a maternity hospital. Just basically toured around the country, saw the kinds of things that they'd been able to pull off and also the kinds of things that now are being destroyed by the famine and the hardships that have descended upon the people of North Korea. Their cries for help have gone out for people who have not been able to raise the kinds of crops and do the work necessary to keep the economy going. It has

been a terrible, terrible time for the past two or three years …

But one of the things that was important is that we were one of the earliest <groups> of people able to go to North Korea and helped to make connections with people in the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. We had just been coincidentally made aware of the privilege which was ours to be communicating with people, with North Korea and in North Korea. People wondered how had we done that. How had we managed to pull off that kind of connection? And we were able to because we had built some trust with each other at that time.

And probably one of the most significant things that took place for us when we were taking that first trip to North Korea, we were given a letter by a Korean business man in this country. And he said, "*I came from North Korea. I don't know whether my family is alive or dead. I haven't seen them for thirty-five years."*

Eileen: This is a man from Berkeley, (California)?

Gus: From Oakland, (California). And he said, "*I'm going to give you a letter and ask you if you can ask the people in North Korea to find out if my parents or brothers and sisters are still alive."* … And we received the letter, gave it to the people in North Korea, and they were able to take the letter and then seek out the possibility that the parents and siblings of this young man (were still alive). And so, sure enough, we gave them the letter. And the last week we were there, we'd given them the letter, and they said, "*Here. Here's a picture of his brothers and sisters."* His father had died but his mother was still alive. We brought the letter back and they said, "*Here's the letter, here's the picture of your family, and any time you want to visit North Korea, you can come and see them."* Well, that made the whole trip worth it. The whole issue of reuniting separated families became one of the major issues between negotiating reunification.

He's been back, taken his family back, tried to help initiate business contacts between North and South. He's been back I don't know how many times. But he did take others.

And, probably one of the most recent things as part of that chain of events, is the way in which I received an invitation (last February, 1998) … from the government of Kim Dae Jung to come to Korea to Seoul and be part of the inauguration of Kim Dae Jung as president. And we received that invitation. I say we, there were three of us from here. One was Herb Mills, who was the Longshoreman who helped to prevent weapons being loaded for Korea, and John Moyer who is the director of the Frontier Intern Mission Program. So the three of us were present for the inaguration of Kim Dae Jung as President.

Eileen: That was just this year, 1998.

Gus: That was two weeks ago.

Eileen: Seventeen years after you first learned about him being held as a political

prisoner.

Gus: Right.

Eileen: So you've had a twenty-five year relationship with Korea, with the Koreans.

Gus: Yes.

Eileen: One of the things that strikes me listening to you, Gus, is whether it's talking about the concept of sanctuary for sailors from the Coral Sea or talking about Korea, it appears that you didn't actively seek out these relationships, but you were open to others who came to you and presented you with opportunities to engage what others might have deemed very controversial, risky undertakings. Is that correct?

Gus: Yes. I think so.

Eileen: What in your background led you to have that kind of openness to undertakings that were controversial and risky?

Gus: Mmmmm. I don't know. Probably my mother. Yes.

Eileen: How so, your mother?

Gus: Well, I can't think of anybody else! (laughter)

Eileen: Was your mom a risk taker?

Gus: She was careful. She did things that needed to be done but she didn't make a big deal about it. Maybe that was it.

Eileen: In your own discernment about your relationship to Korea, did you worry about the fact that North Korea was one of the few remaining countries on the U.S. State Department list that was absolutely condemned, and viewed as isolationist, and the last bulwark of "*hardliners*" … ? And that the government was demonizing this country and alongside that you were opening yourself to this country? …

Gus: Yes, that was a significant thing. I guess I really just wanted to make sure that people didn't let false barriers separate them. And when you talk about demonizing, demonizing is exactly what's done. And it's so transparent, what is taking place, that we ought to be able to cut through that, see that.

Eileen: After your month in Korea did you ever go back to the cabinet officer in South Korea and share your findings?

Gus: No. Well, I have been back to South Korea. I don't even know if that same cabinet officer is still alive or in that position. There were other things.

I was recalling when Sam Ragent and I came back, we found out that our friend, James Aporio Equaro had become the Ambassador of Uganda to the People's Republic of China, Vietnam and North Korea. He was getting ready to go home at that time. But we realized, here we'd gone all the way around the world which, in itself, when I stop to think of it, when I left home on this trip I didn't intend to go around the world! So when my friend James said, "*Well are you going to Beijing*? And I said, "*Oh no, we're just going there to change planes."* And he said, "*You've never been there and you're just going to change planes there?"* And we said, "*Well, we hadn't really thought about that."* And he said, "*Well, you've got to at least spend a few days in Beijing. And I'll be back when you come through there and I'll give you a driver and a car and a guide."* And so here were these two Americans sitting in these black limousines and the Ugandan flags on the fenders of the car. And it was almost as much a twilight zone experience as it had been when we were coming through that way in the other direction. Our trip began in San Francisco...

Tape 10, Side A

Gus: … when we started out, actually we started out with one way tickets because we didn't know where we were going after we got to Vienna. We went from San Francisco to New York to Zurich and then to Moscow. And then, as I say, it was a twilight zone experience. There we were in Moscow, and we stayed in Moscow for three days. And we stayed in the North Korean Embassy in Moscow (laughter). And we thought, "*Are we really doing this!?"* And then we went from Moscow to Povarosk, a Russian Seaport City near Bladovastat. And then we went on down and spent the month in North Korea.

And after we spent a month there, then I called Flora. As I said, we had one way tickets. And that was the way our trip had begun. They said, "*Are you ready for your trip?"* And we said, "*Yes, but*," And they said, "*Do you have your visas*?" And we said, *"Visas for what?"* And they said, "*The Soviet Union*." And we said, "*We didn't know we were going there. We only have one way tickets."* So we were able to do that. And I called Flora when we were in Beijing. And she said, "*Where are you?"* And I said, *"We're in China*." And she said (laughter) "*What are you doing in China?"*

So we were in China and then we went on to Beijing, with the Ugandan flag flying on the black limousine. There were just all kinds of incongruities involved.

Eileen: What was the reaction of your government to you. Here you are, a U.S. citizen traveling in all these prohibited, sacrosanct countries at the height of the Cold War.

Gus: Well, I remember standing on the DMZ, the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea. And I had a...when I was standing there on the borderline between the two Koreas and was taking pictures, motion pictures, and I was scanning the people who were right on the border. And then I looked, and there was a U.S. soldier on the *other* side taking my picture taking his picture, and my hands were shaking. And I was thinking, "*He's taking my picture which is going into the archives on my government's side."* And so then, when he was taking that and my hands were shaking, and the young, North

Korean army officer came over, put his arm around my shoulder, and he said, "*Don't worry, we'll take care of you."* (laughter) Well, that's kind of what I was concerned about.

Anyway, we were to put some film together, and we did take some motion picture film back in the early days when you used Super 8.

Eileen: And did you bring that film back with you?

Gus: Yes. I was just tripping out thinking, "*Where is it now."* I gave it to somebody to put it in a video.

Eileen: How did you process in your own mind the political ramifications of your work: accepting these invitations to tread on un-walked territory, vis a vis your government, vis a vis your church?

Gus: I don't know.

Eileen: At this time in 1981 were you still affiliated with the Missouri Synod, the more conservative arm of the Lutheran Church?

Gus: Yes. But there was more freedom in the Missouri Synod. I think there was more freedom than in these "*liberal"* churches.

Eileen: How so?

Gus: Well, just that. They were willing to let...well, they just had a good heritage. Later on, they lost a lot of that heritage of acting in freedom.

Eileen: What did that heritage stem from?

Gus: Well, I don't know. That's a whole other issue.

Eileen: We can come back to that. Are there any other significant moments in the Korea journey comparable to standing on the border and having your photograph being taken and having the North Korean wrap his arms around you and assure you he'll take care of you? Any other memorable moments?

Gus: Yes. When I realized -- when we were first in North Korea, and I had known that James had become the Ambassador from Uganda, but I hadn't known where he was. I just asked our host. I told him that we had a friend there who was an Ambassador and if he had an opportunity to let us know, we'd like to see if we could find him. And so, oh, about a couple of hours later, he knocked on the door. It was our host and he said, *"I think your friend is here."* And I said, "*Here in North Korea?"* And he said, *"No, I mean here in this hotel."* So we went downstairs, and James comes and opens the door. And he's a very dark, blue black African. And he was standing there, (emphatic) "*Gus Schultz,*

what are you doing here?" (laughter) And I said, "*I was going to ask you that question."* So we got two bottles of beer and we sat up and talked all night. That was another one of those...I think, though, by far the most bizarre situation was being in the North Korean Embassy in Moscow. Well, so much for that.

March 24, 1998

Tape 11, Side A

Introduction: Today is March 24, 1998, the eighteenth anniversary of the declaration of public sanctuary for Central American refugees by the University Lutheran Chapel. I am interviewing Rev. Gus Schultz. This is tape number 11, in a series for the Sanctuary Oral History Project. We are conducting this interview in the library at University Lutheran Chapel in Berkeley, California. My name is Eileen Purcell.

Eileen: Good morning Gus.

Gus: Good morning Eileen.

Eileen: In our last meeting we covered a lot of territory. But our focus was your leadership and the University Lutheran Congregation's declaration of sanctuary for sailors from the USS Coral Sea, military personnel who had reassessed their moral convictions about the Vietnam War. We also spent time talking about your introduction to Korea and your work with and journey to Korea. I'd like to ask a few follow-up questions after having read the transcript. Can we start with sanctuary?

One of the centerpieces of the controversy of your declaration of sanctuary had to do with the legal risks that your congregation took by offering sanctuary in response to a request by military personnel. And my reading of the literature suggests that the primary legal risk was that you could be charged with conspiracy: three or more people discussing ways to subvert or recommend that others not comply with US law, in this case the draft. And the second was the risk of being called before the Grand Jury. My question is to your knowledge or recollection, did anyone of the people with whom you worked ever get arrested <other than the sailors> or indicted or called before a grand jury?

Gus: No one to my knowledge was ever arrested, no. They were informed of the possibility of that. It was something we informed people about, because we told them we did not want to be perceived by or doing manipulating of people toward our own political goals. We wanted to make sure that they knew that and that they understood what was taking place.

Eileen: Why do you think the government declined to pursue legal action against you?

Gus: I think that each time sanctuary was called on to perform its task in a social movement, that every time that that took place -- and it took place in other parts of the country, too, Chicago, Arizona -- and when those things took place we said we wanted to make sure this was taking place...pause.

Eileen: Do you want to back up?

Gus: Yes.

Eileen: You were addressing why you think the government did not in this instance take legal action against religious leaders who were "*harboring*" military personnel who had reassessed their relationship to the military and the Vietnam War and wanted to exercise selective conscientious objection.

Gus: Whenever sanctuary was called on by the need for it, it was done in such a way that it had broad support and deep support in the Bay Area. There were places where sanctuary was called on in Chicago, in Arizona, in Washington State. And these are places where people *were* arrested. And we'd always felt it was because they did not have the kind of support in the community - broad or deep - that we did in the Bay Area. And that's one reason they didn't arrest anyone, they didn't indict anyone, they didn't call anybody before a Grand Jury. None of that happened. And we felt we were eye to eye, nose to nose, and the government, at that point, said, *"If we come up against sanctuary right now, we'll lose."* And we thought, "*They're right. They would lose."* And we continued, then, the work which had begun in the name of sanctuary. So, that was good.

Eileen: As you look back on sanctuary for military personnel during the Vietnam War, you shared that two outcomes that you viewed to be significant outcomes were 1) the fact that your congregation stood together to take a risk -- so risk-taking was a very important outcome <and> 2) the creation of an opportunity and a space for not only the sailors but your congregation to think through moral dilemmas based on their faith convictions.

In other words, "*sacred space*," as you've referred to it in the past, where people could gather and reflect and consider a faithful response independently from the powers that be: the government, the official church or the law. Did you expect those two outcomes? Did you expect your congregations to be able to take these risks and did you expect the quality experience of thoughtfulness, the discernment process to take off as it did, not only in your congregation but in others.

Gus: Yes, I expected that kind of result, that kind of moving ahead on the part of people in the congregation because they had gone through a process of discernment. They knew what was expected of them. They knew what it meant to be a Christian. They knew this is what took place when people became martyrs in the Church - not that you seek martyrdom, but you know that if you do what the church, what the gospel commands, then that's what you do. You knew what's being expected; you know what the consequences are going to be; and so you move. And you do it in a way that will say to those around you, "*We don't want to force you into this, but we want you to know this is something that requires taking a risk on the part of people and people know what those risks are."* So, the risks are they might be arrested, that it could be a matter of life and death in various circumstances. But that was something people knew. It also meant they would lose some of their funding from the church at large and that they had to be prepared to come up with funds that would keep the congregation moving and alive. And

that was also something that was understood by the people.

Eileen: Can you talk more about that? Was that a real risk, a real threat?

Gus: Yes. The church, the diocesan level, the district level, that church said to us, "*If you do this you may lose all your funding from the church at large."*

Eileen: Did the church at large subsidize your congregation?

Gus: It has, it still does.

Eileen: What percentage of your budget is subsidy?

Gus: Well, at that time about 75% came from outside. Now, about 25% does. So it's a big change.

Eileen: Did your Synod move to withdraw your subsidy or did they just indicate that they might?

Gus: The indicated that they might. They did not move to do so. They did, however, say that they might possibly do that. But when we saw that they did not do it, we realized that one reason for that, was that the bishop, himself, was very supportive of what we were doing. And so, he said, "*I see my job as Bishop to be one to keep people off your backs so you can do the work that needs to be done*." And so we continued to do the work that we thought needed to be done, and it needed to be done with people like him saying, "*We'll try and clear the way for you to do that work*."

Eileen: Now I'm aware that your Bishop supported you, Bishop Paul Jacobs. And also, once it became public that the Synod was threatening, was evaluating and calling an executive session to evaluate whether it would continue to subsidize the University Lutheran Chapel, you got a lot of support, did you not, from other Lutheran congregations from around the country who wrote letters to your Bishop and to the District.

Gus: That's right. We got support from him. We got support from people around the country. And we got, oh, I just happened to think of some of the unexpected support, and some that we would just as soon have not had their support, was the people from -- what is it?

Eileen: Jim Jones?

Gus: Yes. People's Temple Christian Church. And the People's Temple Christian Church encouraged their members to write us, which they did. Encouraged them to give us support. And so, Jim Jones and People's Temple Christian Church sent a dollar a person in their letters. And little did we know that those same people that were supporting us then were going to be people who would lose their lives in the mass suicide

of People's Temple Church. But they did. And they made beautiful letters, saying that they supported what we were doing. And they wanted us to know it. And they wanted us to know they supported by the money that they sent.

Eileen: Now, your original vision when you started the sanctuary work during the Vietnam War, when you invoked the word "*sanctuary*," was that symbolic? To what degree was that a short term project and/or to what degree did you see it as a project that had life long ramifications?

Gus: Well, interestingly enough, I thought sanctuary was going to be a week end event. I thought, when we got together and that was on a Wednesday or Thursday and we said, "*Let's do this. I have people who have taken sanctuary go into our churches. They'll make a public statement of sanctuary in support for the political position which we'd taken against the war." "And,"* we said, *"Once that's been done, then we will have a ceremony, a celebration at one of the churches that has been supporting sanctuary and,"* we said, "*We'll do that and then we'll go on about our business."* And little did we know that that sanctuary celebration that began on Thursday was going to continue not only that Thursday through Sunday, but it was going to continue right on through the weekend, and through the following week, and then through the month, and then year, and here we are on which anniversary?

Eileen: The eighteenth anniversary from 1982. So it's over 20 years old if you go back to <the original declaration> in 1971.

Gus: So, from that little acknowledgement that we were going to do this and have an anniversary celebration. But it just kept going. And, I think it will probably arise again from people who have a new vision of what it will be. But it's not something different and totally new. It's something that's there and has been there.

Eileen: In reading the files at the Graduate Theological Union, I read a paper by Bob Fitch, one of the organizers who worked with you at the outset to declare sanctuary at the University Lutheran Chapel. And in his paper, Bob Fitch described three most compelling experiences of sanctuary. He started back in Georgia when civil rights workers gathered together with Black leaders in a church, and outside the church they were surrounded by Klansmen. The second one he noted was when the Berrigan brothers were underground taking sanctuary in middle class homes in a mobile ark after their protests had driven them underground. And the third was sanctuary with Vietnam Vets or soldiers, naval personnel reassessing their relationship to the military.

To your knowledge, was the rubric of sanctuary ever invoked during your experience of the Civil Rights Movement, your experience with the Berrigan brothers?

Gus: Was it invoked?

Eileen: Was the symbolic language used?

Gus: When Bob was involved with that, he did. Ignatius Bau in his book (*This Ground Is Holy: Church, Sanctuary and Central American Refugees*, Paulist Press, NY, 1985) goes back to some of the areas. This is something ancient that goes back to Greek and Roman times. So it was very clearly invoked and it was going to be, do so again.

Eileen: Let's shift our focus to Korea.

When you shared your experiences in Korea you mentioned that in 1981 when you and a colleague visited Korea, you received one of the forty-five visas that had been issued that year by the government of North Korea. And you acknowledged that of those forty-five visas, only five were given to non Koreans. You also discussed your capacity - by having visited Korea - to introduce North Korea to the National Council of Churches (NCC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) who were struck and are struck by your ability to establish these connections. And the question that the NCC and the WCC had for you was, "*How did you manage to develop these ties and get this visa, get this invitation for your month long journey that was unprecedented."*

My question to you is similar. You shared a bit about, you acknowledged that you built trust. And that led to this first trip. Could you spend a little more time talking about how you built the trust that led to the relationship with the North Korean government that allowed you to enter their world as an observer from the Christian tradition? How did you build the trust?

Gus: Earlier on, during the time Pack Jang Hee was dictator in Korea, Dr. Channing Liem was....I've got too many things going on in my head....

Eileen: Let me re-approach the question, Gus. In order for you to go to Korea, a set of relationships had to be put into place. Without the trust you developed through building these relationships, this trip would not have occurred. My question to you is, what were the relationships and the specific actions on your part that led the North Korean government to say, "*We're willing to invite this man to visit us*?"

Gus: I'd just come through a period of four years during which another colleague and I were seeking to go to North Korea. His name was Sam Ragent. We had hoped to do that. We began trying to do that in 1976. And we decided that we would see if we could make arrangements to go to North Korea. We went two years and communicated with people in North Korea.

Eileen: How did you know with whom to communicate?

Gus: We had contact with people in California and New York who were able to communicate with others, with North Koreans. And we went through those two years and I, usually it was I, went to Europe and met with representatives from the North Koreans. And we said, "*We're willing to go to North Korea. This is something that is important to us as people who are working for peace and justice in the world. And we're anxious to pursue this course of action."*

Well, in 1976 I went to Vienna. And I went to the Embassy of the North Koreans in Vienna and said, *"I've been asked by representatives by various groups in California and have been requested by them to try to make arrangements for two of us to come to North Korea whenever we could. And we'd like to do it with no strings attached."* And so we … pursued the matter and tried to get some connections built that would help us. And we were, oh, I know. And they said, "*Well, you can come*." And we said, "*Well, what are the requirements for this?"* And they said, *"Well, you will come to Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, and you will make a speech condemning the United States aggression and you'll have to make a speech in favor of Juche. And Juche is the organizing principle of the North Korean Communist Party."* And we said, *"No, that wouldn't be no strings attached, we can't accept those strings. We want to be able to do it without any strings."* And they said, "*Well, then, we'll have to make this a longer trip. We can't just say come to Korea. You know we have to have certain requirements. But if you want it to be without strings attached, then we'll have to look at the whole matter again. "* So we looked at that. They said, *"We'll let you know."*

So then another two years passed. And one day they called up from Europe, and said, *"Are you ready to make your trip?"* And we said, "*Well we've just gone through two years with the communication, "no." And then another two years with communication."* And they said to us, "*Well, four years have passed and it's time, that if you want to make your trip, you can.*" So we did.

Eileen: What was the context that led them to invite you several years after your initial inquiry.

Gus: They had heard from other people in Europe, heard about us. And they said that they knew we could be trusted. They knew we were not trying to be destructive, but that we were trying to build peace and justice. They … said we would be invited by the Committee for Peace, Committee for Reunification of the Fatherland was the name of it. And there was another organization that did not have quite the importance that the Committee for the Reunification of the Fatherland -- that was really strong, supportive, organizing organization. …

Eileen: Was the Committee for the Reunification of the Fatherland government sponsored or was it a non governmental organization?

Gus: Yes. It was government-sponsored, as everything was. And they said that, the other one was … the National Committee for ....something for foreign countries, the one that was responsible for relating to people from foreign countries. That was usually the group that had gone. But we were told that was not who we were going with. We were going with the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland, that was the name of it. The Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland. And so we were accepted. And we talked with people in the Committee for Reunification of the Fatherland and, through them, opened up relationships for ourselves and for certain other people and organizations and individuals that wanted to be part of that discussion and

wanted to open up things for us. So that was it. Then in 1981 was the time we went to Europe. …

… After a four year period of discussing this, we got a call that said, *"It's okay, you can come."* And we said, "*Well, what about the details."* And they said, "*They will follow."* And we got a cable and it said, *"Details will follow."* And so we were really going, we went following the words...

Tape 11, Side B

Eileen: Gus you were just addressing, sharing how you built the relationship with the North Korean government that led to your unprecedented journey in 1981. My question to you is what's your understanding of why the formal invitation to visit that was issued in telegram form - why was it shrouded in mystery? Why do you believe the North Koreans felt compelled to take it in short steps. eg. "*Meet us in Vienna, details to follow."* Why was it so open-ended?

Gus: Well, I think they just had to know who this was. And they wanted to be able to build the relationship, take it a little bit at a time. And that was it. They were, they took it, (laughter) Always when I start talking about that first trip, it makes me laugh, because, I think to myself, "*Did I really do that? Was that I who was doing this?"* And I think about going back and spending two nights in the North Korean Embassy in Moscow. And that was just really something.

Eileen: That's interesting. How cognizant were you of the potential political ramifications of engaging this issue. Or did you just sort of set that aside and decide to follow your heart?

Gus: It makes you realize that the volatility of such a thing is not gone. As I tell you about this, it's something that I think, "*Should I be saying this on an archive thing?"* I think that in the long run it was something that we were building the ways in which people can know each other across borders and do things that would build responsiveness, responsibilities across borders.

Eileen: So when you look at the ingredients that built this trust relationship, one ingredient was simply patience, tenacity and time.

Gus: Yes.

Eileen: Waiting the time period the North Korean government requested you wait. Another was credentials. They clearly began to check you out, as you said, talking to your European Colleagues and reference points. To what degree did the political context of the early eighties affect their decision to invite you, do you think? In 1980 President Reagan assumed the Presidency of the United States. The Cold War got chillier, initially anyway, a lot of political rhetoric that was intensely anti-communist and which spoke in terms of *"evil empires*." Do you believe that affected the North's interest in having independent observers come and dialogue with them? … Was that larger political context

influential?

Gus: I don't really think...I don't remember how the sequence of events unfolded there. I'd have to have that on a chart. But I think if that was the time that Reagan was elected, that was also the year that I ran for City Council in Berkeley. And when I think back on one of the reasons why I was not elected, was that that was the year all the Reaganites turned out in Berkeley. So there was something like 15,000 Republicans who usually had not voted in Berkeley. But when an opportunity came to elect Reagan, then, it was a time for Reagan to be elected and for us to be defeated. When I say us, I was running on a slate. ..

Eileen: Great. Is there anything else you want to say about Korea or about Sanctuary during the Vietnam War at this time.

Gus: No.

Eileen: Then can we shift gears again?

Gus: Yes.

Eileen: In 1976 there was a military coup in Argentina that is often times referred to as *"The Process*" by the Government and as the "*Dirty War*" <by the opposition parties and human rights organizations.> Shortly thereafter President Jimmy Carter assumed the presidency and created on Office on Human Rights that was headed up by Patricia Derrian. … thousands of people were disappeared and thousands more were put in jail as political prisoners. Under Carter's Human Rights Policy, the U.S. State Department sponsored political asylum for political prisoners coming directly out of jail to the United States

Your congregation was one of several throughout the States who volunteered to sponsor a political refugee from Argentina. Can you talk about that chapter in the chapel's life?

Gus: It's interesting to hear you say Pat Derrian, because I was just down for the inauguration of Kim Dae Jung as President of Korea. And one of the other people in the group with us was Herb Mills. And Herb came to breakfast one morning with me and John Moyer -- we were the three who were traveling together as a delegation from the U.S. -- and he said he met Pat Derrian. And it was really interesting because Herb could really work a room. Saw Pat Derrian and talked to her son and really got all these insights from him. He met the President of Germany. (laughter) When you said Pat Derrian, it really surprised me the way Herb met everybody who was there. And he explained to us who she was, and how he recognized her and went up and introduced himself. … But anyway.

It was called "*Hemisphere 500*" because they were going to allow in 500 political prisoners. And it was interesting because the Lutheran Church at large and the Roman Catholic Church - those two - had been most involved in helping to find refugee

sponsors, people who would come in. And I received a call from Lutheran Immigration Refugee Service (LIRS) saying, "*Listen, we've got this Argentinean refugee and we need a sponsor for her. Her name is Suzana Paoli."* And she was, we were told, she was going to have received sponsorship. She was sixteen years old. And we thought, when she came, that she was going to be a total basket case. A sixteen year old kid. Well, she came. She was beautiful. She was wonderful. She had been in prison with all of these university professors. And she was able to learn, just like going to school every day. So the people at Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services said, "*If we find a sponsor for her, we'll be able to release her*."

Eileen: Straight from jail?

Gus: Straight from jail. And they said, "*If we find somebody, then we'll put her on a plane and on the next plane out of Buenos Aires. As soon as they were out of Buenos Aires and on their way to San Francisco, she'll be there. You can meet her tomorrow."* And so they said, "*Will you do it?"*

And, we were just thinking in terms of being a representative of LIRS, and we were going to help them find a sponsor. But they were looking at us as being the sponsor. And so, we said, "*Here's someone who's saying, if you will receive her, she'll be out of jail tonight and on her way to San Francisco tomorrow."* So there was really no alternative.

Eileen: They called you the pastor. And what was your process? Did you have to go to an executive committee? Did you make the decision right there on the phone?

Gus: Oh, I just made that (decision) on the phone. I thought, *"There's no one around here who is going to object who knows what the consequences are."* If we didn't receive her, then she was going to back in prison, and she may or may not get out, but she'd continue to be in prison in Argentina. Oh, there were other things we learned in the meantime, like the reason she was in prison at the time. The reason for that was that she had helped to organize some kids for a playground in a community. And she was helping do the organizing and that was what she was about.

Eileen: So you said, "*Yes*," to the Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Services on the phone. What happened next? How quickly did she arrive?

Gus: They called us - let's see if I remember correctly - they called us in a period of hours rather than days. They had organized. They said somebody is taking her to the airplane tomorrow. And she'll be in San Francisco. And so we received a call the next day saying, *"She's on her way."* The flight number. So then we were able to get in touch with people in the congregation and in the community. There was a congregation in Palo Alto. And they were going to help us out with that. We were going to go together. And we were going to help them raise funds. Well, it turned out they were not able to take that quick, decisive action, and we were. So they were not able to and we were. We just moved ahead. And they were not able to. And so, they were going to raise money. They

thought that was something they could do better. They didn't raise much money. But we had refugees in our own congregation at that time.

Eileen: From Argentina?

Gus: Not from Argentina. There had been a Vietnamese family who had been part of the congregation. They'd come in to our congregation after they had come to live with their Vietnamese family. So we were able to be sponsors on some occasions when we didn't have money, we didn't have anything, the only thing you needed was a name that said, "*We are sponsoring this person."* It was interesting because there would be that kind of support to a congregation that had been involved in the sanctuary movement.

But what Suzana did, and what we did in response...actually, one or two members of our congregation was able to be the real sponsor for her. And Suzana moved into her house with them and lived in their house for two years. And continued to live there as part of the congregation. There were other congregations and other denominations like St. John's Presbyterian Church. They were able to take a <refugee>. They had the financial resources to take a refugee. Suzana went and talked to them. I talked to the pastor, Bob McKenzie. And so, then the next thing we went to the Quakers, Strawberry Creek Friends Meeting. So the congregation or the group of Strawberry Creek Friends Meeting said they would take on an Argentinean refugee. They didn't have much money either, but they managed to. So they were, there was the one from Berkeley, University Lutheran Chapel, that was Suzana, and then there was the one from St. John's Presbyterian Church and that was a man who had been a working man. No, the worker came from Strawberry Creek Friends meeting. And the other person who had resources came through St. John's Presbyterian Church. And he was, I think, the Vice President of a University or something like that. Had plenty of money on his own, but was able to help finance some of the fellow refugees.

Eileen: Did you go to the airport to meet Suzana?

Gus: No. Somebody else went. I don't remember who. But she came in. We met her here. We had a group of people who gathered together to meet her.

Eileen: And then she was introduced to the congregation on Sunday? How did she meet the congregation?

Gus: Potluck on the following Sunday.

Eileen: And then after your experience with your Suzana you shared that this was a possible ministry for other congregations and introduced the idea to St. John's Presbyterian, Strawberry Creek?

Gus: Right. It was something...they were very much concerned - they being the refugees - about other refugees. So they were able to educate us and teach us about what was going on. And one of the things that was really significant about that and that really

changed a lot people and which changed the way people thought about refugees was...we thought... In that period after the Argentineans came in, they began to tell us about the fact that the refugees who were coming there were people who were not … necessarily politically active. They were not communists. They were not political refugees. They were economic refugees. They were people who were, really those who had taken up...I'm trying to think of a way to say this that communicates what I want to communicate because it was a turning point in the way in which the Argentinean refugees were received.

I remember somebody telling us, we didn't know these were people who were suffering even though they had not done something *"bad"*. These were people who, how can you take a sixteen year old girl who was responsible for what was taking place and say, *"This person is a legitimate refugee."* We just said, *"How can this be?"* They had jailed her. They had beat her. And people in our congregation would say, "*How can this be."* We thought if somebody was in jail, there must have been a reason for them to be in jail. But we couldn't find any reason why these people should be in jail, should be tortured. And that was one of the things that turned people around, because they felt previously that people who were going to be, well, they felt like they must have done something wrong. And they hadn't. And so that was the message. And when Suzana went to the Presbyterian Church and made a presentation and (we) said to them, *"Here's Suzana Peoli. She's sixteen years old and she's been in jail for three years, she was eighteen years old and had been in jail for three years."* That was something incredulous, I think would be the word, on the part of most of these churches. So then, it was much easier when other people came because you didn't have to convince them that there were people coming as refugees who had done nothing wrong. There must be other people, then, who are suffering for what is good.

And that's what happened.

Eileen: Now, when you sponsored Suzana, did you adopt the rubric of sanctuary for that ministry or, even though it certainly fits in hindsight, was it something separate and apart and self-contained.

Gus: Oh, you know, I don't remember. But I think it was something that we did. We dealt with that whole idea of *"holy place,"* and sanctuary as a holy place. And I think that was something that we called on from time to time.

Eileen: Do you recall the year that Suzana came?

Gus: I think you said ‘81.

Eileen: No, the coup was in 1976. Carter was president from 76-80. So it was somewhere in there that the asylee program <began>. If I were guessing I would say it was probably 1978 or 1979, midway through Carter's presidency.

Gus: Yes.

Eileen: But you have said, that clearly this set a stage in terms of the consciousness about refugees and who is a refugee and the humanistic impulse to serve those who have suffered unjustly. It set the stage for the next chapter of sanctuary that started in 1982 on behalf of Central American refugees. Is that accurate? Well then maybe we can pick that up.

Gus: Yes. Because when you build that relationship of the refugees coming from Central America, the fact that the Argentinean refugees had already come...There also was an organization, by the way, which I'm not sure, BAWAR? Bay Area Committee for Argentinean Refugees.

Eileen: Who made up that committee?

Gus: I don't know. Probably *La Pena* kept some records on that. I think it was La Pena that we came to very early on to meet with the people there.

Eileen: After Suzana came?

Gus: Yes.

Eileen: Do you want to describe what *La Pena* is?

Gus: La Pena was a cultural center, restaurant, place where people got together to sing and dance and eat. And mostly, focusing around the plight of Latin American people who came to this area as refugees.

Eileen: In fact, I think one of the founders of La Pena is Argentinean.

Gus: Yes. I thought he was Chilean, but there were more than one.

Eileen: There were a couple of people

Gus: Eric Leansom was one.

Eileen: He was married to an Argentinean.

Anything else about the Argentineans? There was no risk attached, except for the financial risk you assumed, because these were State Department-sponsored political asylees with full legal sanction. Correct?

Gus: Yes. That's why when you say, "*These are people who are refugees who are good people, they're not communist, they're not this,"* you can just see the change in attitudes take place in people.

Eileen: If they had been political radicals who had been tortured and imprisoned, would

your congregation have been open? I recognize this is hypothetical.

Gus: Oh I think they would have been open, yes. I just think that they did some of the work that we would have otherwise had to do in convincing them that it's those people who are in jail who are refugees and we're trying to get them out, and we don't need to have to go through this whole process.

Eileen: Thank you Gus. Shall we stop there?

Gus: Yes.

End of Inteview

Sanctuary Oral History Project
Interview with Reverend Bob McKenzie
January 21, 1998

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Interview with Rev. Bob McKenzie
Parkview Terrace, Oakland, California
January 21, 1998

Bob: I was born in Jamestown, North Dakota on April 26, 1930 which happened to be the tenth anniversary of my parents wedding anniversary. It was something I didn't learn about until I was almost sixty. Curious, isn't it.

My father grew up on a farm with his parents and was one of six children. The farm was very important in my growing up years. I spent summers there, working. My father left there when World War I began. He fought in World War I. Came home. Was a grain buyer. The depression came in. He went to work for the government in the CCCs and became a janitor at the post office. Joined up for World War II and spent a year at the war in Europe, came back and became a plumber. And that's where he ended up his career. That's Howard McKenzie.

My mother's career was that of a housewife. Her name was Clara Wyatt McKenzie, Clara Bertha Wyatt McKenzie. Let's see, how many kids did we have? I had three brothers and two sisters. There were six of us. And she tended the hearth, that's what she did. She was sickly a good part of life. She died when she was fifty-three when I was only twenty-one. It was not a very happy home. We were very poor. My father worked. We never went on welfare, but my mother kept seven of us on $100 a month. I used to remember we would charge at the local grocery store and she would spend $40 a month on food for all of us. That was supplemented, of course, by a big garden every summer.

Well, in high school I took a scholarship with the Navy and went to the University of Colorado for four years under a navy scholarship. During that time I became very much involved in the Campus Ministry program there. I took a degree in the General Humanities and after being graduated got a commission in the navy and spent three years

in the navy. At that point after college I also got married to Marna Sampson. She spent the navy years with me. We were in Oakland, then San Diego, then back to Long Beach, and then Newport, Rhode Island. I was a supply officer on a ship during all those times and went around the world on a destroyer. Went to Barrel, Alaska. It was a fantastic time to travel and see the world, though I had a wife and a child and missed all of them, of course, very much.

I came from a rock rib Republican family. My father was a born again republican. Who's the senator from New Mexico or Arizona? Barry Goldwater. He was a Goldwater Republican. He thought Barry could do no wrong. And he and I began to have some conflicts about that when I began to wake up.

Let's see. After I got out of the navy, I headed for seminary. By that time we had two children born and one on the way. We had three boys, pop, pop, pop. There were three years separating them, Douglas, Norman and John. And John was born at San Anselmo. Norman was born at Newport, Rhode Island and Doug was born in San Diego. Julia, our fourth, was born in Emporia, Kansas. Got around in those days.

Went to seminary. And, I liked seminary, got along well. I was just sort of an average student in college but when I got to seminary I had grown up a little. Three years of the navy, I had a family, I put my mind seriously to what I was doing. And worked the whole time I was there as well as going to classes. San Anselmo, the San Francisco Theological Seminary in San Anselmo. I went to the University of Colorado, the university I went to.

I spent three years in San Anselmo getting what they called a Bachelor of Divinity Degree in those days. And then stayed on for graduate work. This was 1955-1958. In 1960 I left having done residency for a doctorate, and went back to Emporia, Kansas to teach for a couple of years. Got my doctorate in 1962, having written my dissertation while teaching back at the college of Emporia at Emporia, Kansas. It was a New Testament Study on Christology, Pauline Christology. It shaped my thinking ever since, that dissertation, though I never published it, it was very important to me.

It was then I began to have some social consciousness for the very first time. 1960-62. There were some rumblings in the community of Emporia, Kansas between the blacks and the whites, and had I stayed there longer I probably would have joined the NAACP which was something of a force there. But I began to be aware that the world wasn't all white, and I wasn't there just to be a successful pastor or a teacher.

Anyway, I got fired from the College of Emporia, a story much too long to recite here, and left there. Got my doctorate at San Anselmo and then was hired by Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington, where we stayed for four years. And then I began to get a little restless, and came down here to Berkeley for some lectures and checked in with the local people about jobs and learned that there was an opening at St. John's in Berkeley, and one thing led to another from January to March, in just three months I got the job there as an associate pastor at St. John's. And part of my impetus for wanting to come here was having heard about what was going on at the campus, the Free Speech

Movement. One of our faculty members at Whitman had come back to tell us what was going on. He had spent a sabbatical down here. So I was eager to get into the fray.

At Whitman, in Emporia I began to become conscious of things. At Whitman I actually really began to get my feet wet. The State Prison is in Walla Walla, Washington. And in Washington, capitol punishment is by hanging. And there was a guy who was scheduled to be hanged, and I was faculty advisor to the Campus YMCA/YWCA group, and we began to discuss this issue. … So we organized something to meet the governor of the state who was coming to Walla Walla at the airport to protest the hanging of this guy. The guy's name was Don White. As a result of our protest, the governor commuted his sentence to life imprisonment. It was really extraordinary. And I learned later that he's down here in the Bay Area working with Laura Manati with the AFSC on prison and judicial issues, working with her about these issues. I just learned that by chance. Well, anyway, so that was kind of an awakening, getting involved in prison issues. And then, of course, civil rights was very big in those days. This was '62-'66. … The YMCA/YWCA sponsored a big conference at the campus, the first time anything like that happened in Walla Walla, Washington. And we had a big march in the City Hall. I think it was on the death of the white civil rights workers in Mississippi, maybe. I don't remember the occasion. And did that as well. I began to wake up a little.

Eileen: And then you arrived at St. John's Presbyterian Church in Berkeley

Bob: 1966, July, 1966 as the Associate Pastor. Things were unsettled. The pastor left three years later and I was a candidate for the pastor and, in fact, was called to be the pastor. Well, during those days, things were really in turmoil in the campus. And St. John's got involved, at least I got involved in those activities, working with other churches. We hired a guy to be pastor to the kids, to the "*teenyboppers*" we called them on Telegraph Ave. and supported this ministry. Got involved in the Vietnam War activities. Had a lot of conflict with some members of our church on the Vietnam War activities. Held a big conference on the draft which was a real problem at the church where some of our members. I mean who ever thought that the draft needed to be looked at, this great American institution? But it turns out this was a very revealing time.

Eileen: Describe who your congregation was, Bob.

Bob: … St. John's congregation was in transition. Before I'd gotten there they'd begun a building project to house a Sunday School of six hundred people, kids. And so they had this big building there, this big education building. That was in the early Sixties. By the time I got there, in '66, the Sunday School was down to seventy five kids. By the time I left it was maybe a dozen or fifteen kids. Everybody was fleeing to the suburbs because Berkeley was integrating its schools.

I remember going to an open Board meeting of the School Board and saying, *"I moved to Berkeley because I wanted my kids to have an integrated education. I mean I left white Walla Walla to come down here for that purpose!"* And the whole black community applauded like crazy, but the stoic whites sat there and couldn't believe that anybody

would come to Berkeley to have their kids educated.

Eileen: How large was your congregation at that time?

Bob: When I came in '66, we had one thousand, one hundred people on the books. The tip off was we only had a couple hundred people in worship every Sunday. And over the next three years while my senior pastor was still there, we cleaned the rolls of about five hundred names. In Presbyterian circles we keep a strict accounting of members. You join, your name's on the role. It's a very sort of complex bet. It's not just moving in and out of parishes, but it's strict membership to a particular congregation. So, we cleaned rolls, so by the time he left I guess we maybe had four hundred members on the role, and we finally settled down in the mid '60s to around three hundred fifty members.

There was a period in the seventies when we were into a building project. The Church had inherited a million and a half dollars from a guy in Santa Barbara whose sister was a member of St. Johns. When his sister died, this guy came from Santa Barbara. He was a dentist, and said "*I don't have any place to give my money, so I'd like to give it to St. John's for a building."* So we gladly accepted. And so after the pastor left and I became the pastor, we settled in for several years to build a building, and that sort of consumed us. We also had a lot of healing to get over from the activities of the '60s.

Eileen: What was the healing related to?

Bob: The turmoil, the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights turmoil, everything that had been happening in Berkeley. You remember in Berkeley, the big march, the People's Park issue. I mean Berkeley was really bleeding. So the seventies were kind of healing time after the turmoil of the sixties.

But then, in the late seventies, I can't remember when, maybe early eighties, later seventies, early eighties, ,,, it was when Jimmy Carter was President. The Organization of American States (OAS) had arranged for five hundred political prisoners to be released from Argentina. And there was a group in Berkeley who was working on that. And they went to Gus Schultz first and asked him to take a refugee, a political refugee. And they did, and it was a young woman and we learned about that. Then they approached St. John's. And we said, "*yes,"* we would do that.

Eileen: Who said yes? Was that a pastoral decision?

Bob: (laughter) Actually, it was our youth group! (laughter) The Session at St. John's, the Session is the official decision-making body at a Presbyterian Church. And the Session at St. John's was a very open Session. We said, "*Well, we'd like all the groups at the Church to feel free to do the ministry they want to do."* And so I, as a pastor, was advising the youth group. And I took this to the youth group, and they thought this was really neat.

So, in fact, the youth group raised money, and … my wife and I, took this young man in.

He had been picked up in a round up in Argentina and spent five years in jail. I mean, the only offense he had was that he was picked up at a round up. He appeared at our doorstep, and we took him in. We had lots of room because our kids were leaving. We had a big four-bedroom house. And he was a wonderful young man. I remember taking him to English-speaking classes, and he came home the first day and said, *"No more Spanish, English only!"* And that was his spirit. And he loved the kids, and the kids really loved him. And he made a big impact on the consciousness of the congregation because he was such a winsome guy. I can't remember his name, I'm sorry. Anyway, he stayed with us for several months, and then finally he met a woman from Mexico, and he disappeared into Mexico, and we haven't heard a thing from him since.

So, they came to us about a second person, and this guy was a real political prisoner. His father was a governor of one of the States of Argentina and he was the Attorney General of the state, this guy was. And he had been taken in by the military, and he spent five years in jail. And his roommate in prison was this guy who got the Nobel Prize for peace in Argentina, his name was (Julio) Esquivel. So he came, and he arrived at 2:00 o'clock in the morning from the airport. And here was this huge man about six foot six, wearing a suit that just hung on him like a skeleton, and weighed one hundred eighty pounds. He had really declined in prison. He had big gaunt eyes, and he looked like something out of the holocaust. And they brought him to our house, and we put him into bed, though we didn't have a bed big enough for him to fit into! But after a night's sleep he bounced back, he got up in the morning, and he was just as bright as could be, and it was just a wonderful experience to have Horacio Martinez Bacca. I remember his name because he still lives in the community, and we see him every once in a while.

We kept him for a few days, and then we farmed him off to some members of our congregation. And they became the fastest friends. And he now practices law in San Francisco, international law.

We did this, not because we knew anything about Argentina. We learned about Argentina through this group that sponsored these people. But (we) began to realize the politics of poverty and riches, the politics of Third World and First World, and to realize that there was great turmoil in Argentina over issues like this. We were very unsophisticated in analysis, but it became clear that there was something dreadfully wrong there, and that the United States was somehow implicated in that.

The second guy was sponsored by our deacons. So, our first one was our youth group, and then our deacons got involved. The point of that is to say that it really began to penetrate the consciousness of our congregation. Everybody liked these people, and they began to see and understand and hear the real issues involved there. And St. John's had some money for this kind of ministry, and we put money into it as well.

So that began to awaken the congregation to the issues involved in Latin American politics. The next step was we learned from some place that this priest from Guatemala was in town, and that he had a story to tell. He'd been here for six months and his name was Ron Burke.

Ron Burke was sent to Guatemala as a missionary from the Archdiocese of San Francisco. And we had him over to talk to us. I suppose it had something to do with our having had these two people from Argentina. And he talked to us one night. And I was just terribly, terribly moved by what he had to say.

He talked about his parish in Guatemala, and he talked about how he had to leave because of death threats. And he talked about this list that was pinned to the shirt of a young man of his parish who was their evangelism coordinator with 78 names on it. They found this young man's body in a ditch totally bludgeoned. Of course he was dead, and this list of seventy-eight people attached to his shirt ... since Ron Burke had left over thirty of these people had been killed.

What I did in my mind was relate this parish to our parish. I began to think in terms of our parish through the lens of what he was saying about their parish. I mean, who in our congregation would have been fingered if we had been in Guatemala? And then I got up and preached about it the next Sunday. And I said, you, Marianne Archibald, because you are the head of the Christian Education Department would have been fingered. You, Rod Hamlin, because you are chairman of our personnel committee would have been fingered for death. The congregation was stunned. I was in tears talking that way to the congregation. And I began to realize, you know, that this was a profoundly ecclesiastical, a church issue, an issue of faithfulness in the Church. So … sometime in … January of 1982 … we (began) talking about these things in the Lectionary Group.

The Lectionary Group is a group of pastors who meet every Tuesday, continues to meet to this day, (to) discuss the readings from scripture. We were discussing these issues at the Lectionary Group. Gus Schultz says, *"Have you ever thought about this idea of Sanctuary?"* So he began to unfold it. You already have his story, I guess. So, we learned, I think from you, Eileen, that there was this young couple who had come here from El Salvador. She was pregnant, the baby was born, and they were looking for someplace to land. And so I took it to our Session at St. John's. The Session said, *"Yes, let's take them in."* We had already had experience with taking in people. And so, … Ingrid and Omar came to be a part of our church.

Ingrid and Omar, of course, were here *"illegally*." They had fled El Salvador, they had come across our border illegally. The other two, the Argentine refugees, were here sponsored by our State Department. So there was a legality about that that was not true of the other. But in the minds of the Session, that was an unimportant distinction.

They realized there was some risk involved doing the Ingrid and Omar reception. But it never really became a serious issue. I remember one of (our) members asking about it, and the other members saying, *"These are people in need, these are people fleeing the same repression that the other two were fleeing. And there's no need to make a big fuss about that. If there are illegalities involved in this, we'll deal with them."*

So when the idea of sanctuary came up, we had Omar and Ingrid in our congregation. St.

John's was ready to move on it. So when Gus brought up the idea there was a whole climate of support there. And the other three congregations were very much on board as well.

So as we all know, on March 24, 1982, five congregations declared sanctuary. And the covenant that became sort of the standard covenant around the country was written by one of our Session members, Steve Knapp, and was approved by our Session and was sent to the other four congregations and approved by their decision-making bodies. And so we were on our way. And I remember the day that Gus had the sanctuary in his basement, we had a press conference. And on the following Sunday Gus and a bunch of his members came marching down to St. John's after worship, and we had a little gathering there with a meal, declaring formal sanctuary and we were off running. Wow, we were off running.

You know, at that point, we really didn't have a lot of expectation about where this all was going to lead. We, of course, had Omar and Ingrid.

Marilyn Chilcote, my companera, my assistant minister had come on board in 1981. And had become very much involved in this with me. The two of us were sort of co-conspirators in leading the congregation into all of this though, from the very beginning, the Session was with us. The Session had put money into it. They had voted several thousand dollars to help Ingrid and Omar get settled and so forth. So it was a church effort, but she and I sort of led the way for the congregation in moving deeper and deeper into the issues that were involved here.

One of the first things that I remember after that was, meeting with you, Eileen, and some other young women and Marilyn at your place in San Francisco planning a worship service. And we were there sort of as liturgical experts or advisors. And so we planned this worship service. And at that moment I was very conscious of being a middle aged, even late middle aged male meeting with 25 and 30 year old women who had taken charge of this thing. And feeling a kind of exhilaration about that. Because I had never met with a group of young women to do this sort of thing. My usual gatherings were with men of my age doing things together. This had a different flavor to it altogether, and it was really exhilarating to do that.

Well then there came the formation of the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant, and Marilyn became the director of that. Actually, it had begun before that, smaller, with a woman whose husband was from Guatemala, whose name was what? Argueta. Peggy Argueta had begun it, and they were housed at Holy Spirit Church for a while. Then Marilyn … had gotten a grant from the Ford Foundation for $75,000, and she became the director of the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant, (EBSC). And more and more congregations came on board until there were about thirty-five or forty congregations in Berkeley who had become Sanctuary congregations … Jewish, and Buddhist and Christian.

Tape 1, Side B

Eileen: This is side B of tape 1 in my interview with Rev. Bob McKenzie for the

Sanctuary Oral History Project. Bob, you were just describing the process leading up to a declaration of Sanctuary for St. John's Presbyterian Church and how it began to blossom. Can you describe in more specific terms how you translated your covenant, your sanctuary covenant, what the activities were, how it took on its life inside your congregation and within the larger ecumenical community?

Bob: Well, one of the things we asked the refugee community - we were in touch with the refugee community through Jose Escobar and Eileen Purcell in San Francisco -- and one of the things we learned very early on was that they wanted delegations to go to the refugee camps in Honduras as a way of establishing contact with them, solidarity with them. And so, Marilyn Chilcote, who was my colleague at St. John's and Jean Goetchl, was our first delegation to the camps through EBSC (East Bay Sanctuary Covenant). And they went down there and spent several days learning what life in the camps was all about and to establish a contact with the camps. And that was officially sponsored by our Session, and we had a special Session meeting to send Marilyn as our delegate down there. That was really a kind of a first step.

There was the worship service that we all planned together, Marilyn and I were involved in that and that became an important activity. I mean, celebrating our spirituality around these issues was a very important part of that.

Another thing we did was to have weekly gatherings of people who were interested at the Church. I think they were held on Monday evenings or Monday afternoons. And the covenant was that we would fast that day and then have communion in the evening after an hour's time of meditating and reflecting on the issues around sanctuary. So it became a spiritual discipline in the life of our congregation. And our Session authorized that and said "*Let's do this,"* though few of the Session members ever showed up for these things.

Then I remember going to Los Angeles and organizing caravans. The first one was when John Fife from Tucson, Arizona was leading a caravan with refugees in the caravan going from Tucson, Arizona to Seattle, or Portland someplace. And we met him out in, I guess it was Modesto, and we had a gathering. And we accompanied him all the way to Sacramento. John Fife had this truck, this pick up truck with this big American Flag flying in the breeze, and we went sailing on down highway 5 all the way to Sacramento and stopped at different communities along the way and had rallies. And the second one was we all went to Los Angeles and brought some refugees up to Davis … near Sacramento, and had big signs in our cars. There were about thirty cars in that caravan. And had a big rally in Modesto… and then one in San Jose, and then there was a big rally here in Berkeley, and then on to Davis and probably up to Portland. That was another activity. It was an open defiance of the INS that we had refugees. We wanted to let all the world know what we were doing.

Then we had big rallies around the INS building in San Francisco. Remember those? At least two pr three of them that I remember, and one very big one where we marched around the building for an hour or an hour and a half, and then we had speeches and songs, and then we all went up, several of us went up and met with the INS Director …

David Ilchert. It turns out I debated him on several occasions about the issues surrounding immigration, and he and I sort of became friends. He wasn't a hard nosed INS guy … He had a job to do, and we often debated about the religious issues, because he was a Catholic, a good Catholic, and he couldn't understand how good religious people could possibly be involved in this sort of thing, disobeying the law and so forth.

The issues, from Ilchert's point of view, were that these people were here illegally. They did not qualify under any of the laws of the land or international laws for refugee status. They had to prove with documentation that they were threatened with persecution in their own country in order to qualify. And by documentation I mean letters, written threats and so forth. I mean, these people were, many of them were illiterate. And nobody's going to send them written threats in their country. They just picked them up off the streets and tortured them, and we heard hundreds of stories about that kind of thing happening. But none of this demonstrated conclusively to the mind of the INS that these people were under threat.

And our position was that they were under a threat, that they qualified under international agreements for refugee status, for political asylum and that *we* were, it was *we* who were upholding the law. Our Congress are signatories to international agreements which permitted these people, in fact, made it mandatory upon our government to receive them into our country. And the INS was being very hard nosed about that. And the reason they were doing that was because the Reagan Administration was supporting the governments of El Salvador and Guatemala and Honduras in their repression of the people. In fact, we trained and staffed and bankrolled the establishment of these military machines in order to bring order in this chaotic social situation that existed there. It was our contention that our culpability as a country made it incumbent on us as Church people to resist our government on these issues, and it was clear that the law was on our side from our point of view.

So, I remember going one Sunday when I was in San Francisco, I was invited along with Jim Brosnehan who at that time was defending a Mexican woman in Tucson, Arizona in the courts. She had been arrested and was on trial, and Jim Brosnehan, who was a very high priced San Francisco lawyer, pro bono went to Tucson and spent a year defending this woman. And he and I were invited to a lawyers' meeting in Napa to talk about the issues in Sanctuary. And Jim Brosnehan was very impressed by this Mexican woman and the work she was doing. It was Sunday morning at ll:00. We went up there to talk to this lawyers' group. And I got up to speak first, and I was there defending the legal issues which under-girded the work of sanctuary. And Jim Brosnehan, the attorney, got up and gave a sermon about this woman and the wonderful witness she was, and the wonderful work she was doing and how deeply moved he was about the whole thing. I thought it was a wonderful role reversal.

The legal issues were clearly on our side, we felt, all along. To our minds, we were not doing anything illegal. In fact, it was the INS that was engaged in illegalities and we made that point over and over again. And we cited chapter and verse the agreements that the United States was a part of in supporting the rights of political refugees. So that's

how it all got worked out.

Eileen: How did the government crackdown impact your congregation? Did you experience break-ins, did you experience surveillance? What was your reaction to the indictments of religious workers first in Brownsville, Texas at the Catholic Diocese and then your colleague, Presbyterian John Fife and thirteen other religious leaders who were indicted in Arizona in 1984?

Bob: Well, the congregation followed that with interest. We made it clear to our congregation what was going on. But there was no anxiety on the part of our congregation about that. It was clear that in Northern California things were different than in Tucson, Arizona and that we never expected to be impacted. There was never any evidence that they broke into the church or anything of that sort. There was evidence that they broke into East Bay Sanctuary Covenant Offices. There were phone threats. Gus Schultz got phone threats and the EBSC got phone threats. But other than that … at one point, one of our Session members began to read in the newspaper about this stuff and was beginning to ask some questions about it. But nobody took him seriously. The mood of the Session was, "*We'll deal with that when it comes along. We are clear*." We had attorneys on our Session. It was clear we were in the right and that the INS was playing fast on us with the law in the way they were carrying on their activities.

Early in 1983, no it was the middle of 1983, I moved to San Francisco. I had another ministry there. So San Francisco was beginning to come alive with Sanctuary consciousness at that point. And the church I was associated with, the 7th Avenue Presbyterian Church, declared itself a sanctuary church over there. And we had people in our congregation who had spent time in Central America, who knew the issues and were eager to get on board with that. Valerie somebody, I can't remember her last name, was a shaker and a mover in all that. And then of course, St. Teresa's (Catholic Church) became a sanctuary church, I think that was in ‘84 or ’85, and I was involved in helping them celebrate that occasion. And so we formed the Sanctuary Covenant of San Francisco, and that became a very powerful group. We had a big dinner, we had several hundred people there. We raised enough money to begin hiring staff for sanctuary there. So 7th Avenue and St. Teresa's and St. John of God, and Noe Valley Presbyterian Church, and several others, some Jewish congregations, formed the Sanctuary movement in San Francisco, and we did important work over there. Declaring San Francisco a city of refuge, for instance, which was a big undertaking, leading demonstrations at the INS and at the Federal Building. San Francisco Sanctuary was a key player in all of that.

And then we got together a regional group, the Northern California Sanctuary Covenant. And we'd hold meetings over at the Dominican College of San Rafael. And I was the moderator of that group. And we did strategizing. And then we had national conventions. We had a national convention in Tucson, Arizona at the time of the indictments. And everybody, I mean we had several hundred, maybe even a thousand, I don't remember, two thousand people went to that. It was right at the moment when there was indictments. And before the indictments we had two or three hundred registrants, and suddenly ten times that many people showed up for this big meeting in Tucson where Ellie Weisel

spoke, for instance, and a Rabbi from Argentina, what was the rabbi's name from Argentina? I mean they were just powerful, powerful moments. We had a big meeting in Washington that (you), Eileen, and I conspired to create. We had a planning meeting in Tucson, and we were working on the same group, and we were asking ourselves what should come out of this, and we decided to propose that we have a big gathering in Washington, D.C. and that the Washington people be responsible for putting it together. And that carried, and about nine months later (in the Fall of 1986) we were all in Washington, D.C. with a big sanctuary rally and demonstrations, and it was a great time to be alive.

What else went on? … And the worship services, gathering here, gathering there in Berkeley, Oakland and San Francisco. Just every time we felt the need to gather and to celebrate and to mourn and to grieve and to declare our solidarity we would gather in worship and do all of that.

I guess the last one that is in my mind is at the time of the death of the six Jesuits and their two house keepers (in November 1999) when Jon Sobrino was coming through town. And Jon Sobrino was a housemate of the six Jesuits who had been killed. He had been in Southeast Asia and avoided the massacre but learned about it. And he was coming through San Francisco on his way back to El Salvador, and he stopped, and we spent a night at some church in San Francisco grieving with him, grieving for ourselves, grieving with the Jesuits, grieving for their housekeepers. It was a painful, painful time.

So, what have I learned? What kind of insights do we have here anyway?

Well, it was in very way a conversion experience. I mean, awakening me to the true issues of the gospel.

I read the bible very differently than I used to. I see the world very differently. I read the bible, and I see God's concern for the poor. I see Jesus, the crucified one, not just the resurrected one. I see that Jesus died for a purpose.

And that it was the same purpose for which we were struggling in El Salvador, for justice and a better world, an equitable distribution of the world's goods and equitable opportunities for life in this world. And those are the controlling ideas as I read a scripture. I used to read other stuff. Now I read this stuff. And I get impatient with speculation, with non concrete flirtation of ideas. I just don't have any time for that. It used to be very big in my agenda, you know, sort of the abstract theological reflection.

Now, all of that means nothing much to me, and the concrete, hands on, dealing with people, entering their anguish, dealing with their poverty, with their hopes and their expectations, all of that now means everything as I read scripture, as I deal with the community of faith, as I engage myself with the world. …

Then also the whole business of listening to people whose life experience are so deep. It's just come to me that people who are struggling with life and death issues are people to

be listened to, are people who have an uncommon wisdom, are people who ought to be setting the agenda. It's that kind of solidarity with the poor. I'm not there to minister to them. They minister to me.

Whenever we went to El Salvador, and I suppose we were there at least a half a dozen times and a couple of times in Honduras and Nicaragua, it was such a learning experience. I mean it touches deep stuff inside us to be with those people, to worship with them, to see their courage, to know their faith, to enter deeply into their lives, all of it is so profound. So everywhere I go, I see life in those terms. It's like seeing the world in a different way. It's like experiencing the world in a different way to have been a part of their lives.

Among those, to name some names, Jon de Cortina was a very important person as I was thinking through issues, the way he saw things, his own experience with things. Especially, the poor. I remember him saying once in a meeting -- he was a teacher at the UCA (Central American University) in San Salvador who taught engineering but he was also a priest -- he says, "H*ere at UCA* (we were at the UCA at the time), *here at UCA,"* he says*," I don't know if God's here, I can't find God here at UCA, I mean maybe God's here, but I don't know if God's here or not. But every Friday morning I get up, and I get in my truck, and I drive up to Guarjila and spend the weekend up there with the people. There, it's thick with God, it's dense with God up there."* He says, *"I go up there tired, and worn down and ragged, and I don't want to go. And I have to get through those damn military road blocks, and I get up there and then the road is bad the whole way. But I come back rejuvenated, filled with the spirit of God, renewed."*

That testimony, I know what he's talking about. We spent some time in Guarjila.

We spent a night there. It was before Easter. No, it wasn't before Easter. Well, anyway. Anyway, our delegation had the practice that every evening we would gather, and we would do meditation, and each night a different person was responsible. And when we were up in Guarjila the sun went down at about 6:00. It got dark. And they showed us where we were going to sleep. It was on a concrete floor with some rattan mats (laughter) in the feed bin. And so, we got in there and we had our flashlights. And I was responsible for leading that night. And I decided I was going to use Mark 13 as my meditation for that night. And I read it. And it was about the destruction of Jerusalem and the anguish that the people were going to feel and Christ's call to the people to be faithful in the midst of all this destruction. And as I read it, it occurred to me we were living it that very moment. It needed no translation. It needed no reflection. It was just a matter of reading that story which had always been obscure to me, always been unavailable. I could never figure out what the hell he was talking about until that moment. And then I knew exactly what he was talking about. And it was really an eye opening moment.

And then the day before, well, it was that afternoon, and that old guy, this Delegate of the Word talked to us about being the Magi, having come from distant places to bring gifts to the people. And how we would leave the gifts and return home. But that's how he viewed

us, as the Magi having come to visit from afar.

And then we went to the camps in Honduras for the repopulation, I guess this is the early '90s. Jose was the one who said, *"You guys have to go down there."* We gave up a trip to China to go down there. We had paid our money down to go to China and said, *"I'm sorry, we have something else to do."* So Marilyn and I and Jose Alagas and several other people went down for this repopulation and the Salvadoran government, the Honduran government were dragging their feet. And the people had been given a date, they were determined to leave that date. So even without the trucks being there, they decided to get up and start walking, the refugees in Mesa Grande. We had spent a couple of nights up there. The government, I mean the officials there had lifted our passports and said, *"If you aren't out of there by tonight, you're not going to get your passports back."* So we went up there, and we had a meeting with the governing group, the *"Directiva*." And we said, "*Now, what do you want us to do?"* Here we had this threat. And they said, *" We want you to stay. Passports or no passports, you stay."* So, what's solidarity all about but to do what the *"Directiva"* says!

So we spent two nights up there. And on the third day, they decided to leave. They were going to leave the camp. There was a big march. They had a big rally and a big march down to the local community which is, San Marcos, I think. And there was an INS office, and we marched down there and there was a drenching rain all the way down there! And the rain gave up! And there were three hundred fifty of a thousand people there who went down. And we were part of that. And we got down there, and they met with the INS, with their immigration people, the United Nations (UN) people. And there we are. It is late at night, and all of sudden, what do we do next? And the local Friends church, the Quaker church, opened up their church to these three hundred fifty people and said, *"You come stay here with us."* And so we all went in there, and it was a big, open space with a roof over the top. And these three hundred fifty people just poured in there. We hadn't prepared for anything. There was not food. What about bathroom facilities? There was only about a couple of places to use as bathroom facilities. And people sleeping all over the place, hammocks! And the local priest came in and was going to hold Mass for them. And there were people in the hammocks. And there were women washing clothes. And there were people over here putting babies to sleep. I mean it was just an incredible scene: this priest up there saying Mass. It was just an incredible experience of a Christian Community around the sacrament. It was unforgettable.

And we found a little place to stay for the night, and we learned that very night in (October) 1989, that there had been an earthquake in the Bay Area. We learned on the radio, at 10:00 at night, that there had been an earthquake in San Francisco. The Bay Bridge had fallen down. Oakland was on fire, and that the World Series had been cancelled!! That's all we knew, and it was 10:00 at night and we were miles from any place, no phones of any kind.

So the next morning we got up, and we said, "*We have to go check on our families*." We told the people we were with, "*We from San Francisco have to go and check on our families."* And they gave us their blessing, and we went into San Pedro Sula, made calls

and found out that everything was not as bad as they said it was and that there was nothing we could do. So we went back and the people inside the Church who were gathered there said, "*We need to get word to the television stations in El Salvador about our situation. Who will go?"* And Marilyn had done this before, I don't remember the occasion. So, the Oakland/San Francisco Delegation was chosen to go to El Salvador to deliver a message on television. So we got out. We flew to El Salvador. People were waiting there for us. They had set up the conference. How all of that happened I haven't any idea. And we went down to the plaza outside the Cathedral in San Salvador. It was the only time I ever wore a clerical collar! (laughter) Somebody leant me a clerical collar, and we went down there and held our press conference. All the stations were there. We were telling them what the situation was in the camps and how the government had reneged in providing trucks. We got on an airplane and flew home! (laughter) I mean we got out of there as quickly as we could after holding the government's feet to the fire about that issue. And eventually, they got their trucks and they got across the border.

And Gloria Canas was a part of all of that. And she stayed until they got into El Salvador. That was a big moment. I mean it was an unforgettable moment. The faith of those people was just remarkable.

You know I learned I was still a racist while I was there. It was very interesting. We had a meeting, and we were sitting around talking about things. And over here was a blond woman with her blond child among the refugees. And that distressed me, that there was this Caucasian, this Anglo looking woman sitting there among the refugees as a part of that. And I wanted to rescue her. The rest of them belonged there.

Tape 2, Side A

Bob: … You know, as I've thought about it, the point where I think, at least my point of view, we had a major breakdown was around the trial in Tucson. It seemed to be that we let the government co-opt us there too much. The trial proceeded on terms set by the Court. That is to say, limited evidence, limited scope of law being tested there. The law was, did these people, sanctuary workers, in fact, assist these *"illegals"* coming into Arizona, coming into the United States. And that was the issue being tried there. … We, of course, tried to introduce larger issues into it, but the Court wasn't allowing larger issues to be discussed there.

It seems to me that if we had really been thoughtful about this, what we would have done was to convene some kind of national convention again, to debate the issues that we were willing to be tried on. I mean, are we going to allow ourselves to participate in a trial where this limited notion of what's going on here is to be the focus of the trial? And as I thought more and more about it, the more I came to the conviction, that if the defendants had been willing to do so, what we should have done was not cooperate with the trial at all, because the trial was not about the issues that concerned us. And to pay the consequences for non-cooperation. To be totally uncooperative with the Court about these matters. Not hire, not even have those lawyers there. I mean having all those pro-bono lawyers there proved, in the final analysis, to be futile, is my reading of it. And we should have been totally uncooperative with the law about that and to suffer whatever

consequences came from that. And that would have been a much - it seems to me we lost our focus there. Our focus was on the sanctuary workers, and our focus should have continued to be one those whom we were serving.

And so I think it was a major breakdown at that point. This idea came to me as I was talking with a radical. At the time I was doing coffee houses at the Seventh Avenue Church as part of Network Ministries. And this guy kept coming to these coffee houses. And he was much more radical in his thinking that I was. And he kept challenging me about these issues. He'd been down to Tucson. He'd spent several weeks down in Tucson watching the trial. And he came back and he said, "*You guys got it all wrong. You shouldn't be down there doing that. If you're really radical about these issues, you should be thinking how you can challenge the government's contention about what's going on here. You're not thinking clearly about this,"* he says. And I didn't understand exactly what he was getting at. I mean, we were putting all this money in, we had all these high priced lawyers. It became a lawyers' thing. It ceased to be a sanctuary thing.

Now of course, those who would pay the piper, of course, were the guys who were indicted. Whether they would be willing to spend time in jail for contempt of court, I suppose, had they been willing to cooperate... It seems to me we should have at least convened a national gathering in Tucson to talk about these issues and to see where they might have led. I think that was a major breakdown.

Then, I think in the sort of post war period in El Salvador the energy has evaporated far too fast. I mean, El Salvador is no paradise. El Salvador has not improved a lot. There's a lot of work yet to be done. And there was a lot of work clearly to be done after the Peace Accords were signed. It was clear that the government was not going to capitulate, was not going to give in on all the issues that were raised at the Peace Accords. And it seems to me we, as Sanctuary, should have continued to generate a lot more energy around the issues that arose after the Peace Accords were signed. And we ought to have been as intentional about that as we were about what was going on during the war down there. And I feel fully accountable and culpable on that issue because after the Peace Accords were signed my energy and interest level waned considerably.

I was down there … with Pastors for Peace, drove a caravan down, 1993. It was in the interim. …Yea, the Accords had already been signed. I met with a lot of people down there. And it was clear that things were very vulnerable still. People were very vulnerable. High hope! I mean the hope and expectation was very, very high at that time. I remember contrasting their political situation with the political situation in this country. Clinton had been elected. The contrasting feeling! This is March of '93. … Anyway, the contrast between the cynicism about our political situation and the hopefulness that those people were expressing about their political situation - it was so sharp! But that was sort of a last hurrah. It was an important event in my life to drive that truck to El Salvador full of those goods and to take it to Buena Vista where our house church has a relationship. And to leave the goods there and spend 48 hours there in Buena Vista.

Eileen: How do you account for the shift in energy?

Bob: Well, we'd "*won the war*." (laughter)

Eileen: Any advice?

Bob: Just to get back into it! And we are getting back into it! We just sent this delegation to El Salvador. A three person delegation, one of whom is only 18 months old, but she sort of stole the show! Ernesto, Robin and Coralee. And they just went down and came back a week ago. Visited our community down, found out what's going on. We haven't had much contact with our community for the last three or four years. Occasional communication. But they are in a very vulnerable position now, trying to get some land, establishing themselves. Though there's been some progress. I must say, there's been some progress, and we're happy for that. They've got a clinic. They've got a school. They've got running water in their community. If they get a few more families they'll get electricity. But the government is not happy with any of that. The government, we are told, wants them to move into the city and work in the maquiladoras. They don't want them out there on the land farming. So the future is still very uncertain, as near as I know about what's going on in El Salvador.

Eileen: How did you see success, and did sanctuary as a movement succeed?

Bob: Well, I was talking with Rebecca Rauber two or three years ago (after) she went to San Diego. She was one of the movers and shakers in Sanctuary here in the Bay Area for several years. And we were talking down there. And she said she interviewed for this job and was telling about her sanctuary work. And they said, "*Well, what were signs of success that you had?"* And she thought for a moment. And she says, "*Well, we won a war!"* (laughter) which is pretty wonderful! Signs of success. Politically speaking, our government has acknowledged that they were wrong. Politically in this country things may be better vis a vis issues of political asylum, I don't know?

Eileen: What did the US government acknowledge they were wrong about?

Bob: That these people were suffering at the hands of their government, and they have passed legislation two or three times allowing refugees to stay here, these political refugees to stay here and those who have established themselves to continue to stay here. I'm not really clear about all those issues, but that's my impression.

I think in some ways we've lost big, though. I mean, the imposition of Clinton's economics in El Salvador does not bode well for El Salvador. The imposition of the economic structures, the kind of price that's being paid. I have a sense of people losing control of what was once, at least contested, they were players. I think with the imposition of the maquiladores and economic structures, people are losing more and more control of their situation. And in fact, the carnage has not stopped. Was it you who was telling me, someone was telling me that there are twenty-five deaths a day or something like that down there. And if you play that out over a ten year period, there will

be more deaths in the next ten years than there were in the last ten years. … You know, a friend of ours (says) the violence is still there. It's not as clear, as focused as it was. It's random violence these days. It's gangs who are killing each other and killing innocent people. This couple that just went down were tailed by a car, and they thought for sure that they were going to be pulled over and robbed and maybe even killed because that is so common place. You're never out at night anymore, they said. You never go out at night for anything. I remember when we were down there we were out at night frequently. I mean on the streets. So at least "*the enemy*" is not as well identified as it used to be. So in some ways I think we've lost big. And I don't know why. In some ways these issues are way beyond us! Aren't they.

I was on an airplane in the early '90s, maybe late '80s, I don't know when it was, and going to El Salvador. And this business man was sitting next to me, and we were talking about the economic future of El Salvador, and he was saying he worked for a company in Arkansas, a German company in Arkansas. And he was going down there to get a foothold in what was going to be the economic development of El Salvador. This was before I knew anything about any such plans. And that the expectation was that five billion dollars was going to be invested in El Salvador in the next few years. He was down there to get his piece of the pie in the post war. And that's what's happened, of course. And that's not all good news. That's not all good news.

So I think … the enemy is much more elusive and much less identifiable, we need to be more intentional, more cunning, more sophisticated than we were during the sanctuary days if we intend to see the issues for which the war was fought, bring some benefits to the people we were supporting. And I don't know, it's become a worldwide problem. I mean, El Salvador is just a paradigm for what is happening worldwide.

Well, what does this all mean?

I think people who are concerned for the emerging world and for our grandchildren whose pictures are here on my wall, that we need to strengthen the solidarity between us and people from countries like El Salvador, people from West Oakland, East Oakland. This division between the super rich and the poor, the exploiters and exploited all in the name of economics, we just really need to address those issues with a lot more wisdom than we have up to now, with a lot more passion and a lot more determination.

Things are not going to get better. Things are getting worse. And we have to think on an international scope now. It's not just within Oakland. It's not just between us and El Salvador. It's an international issue. You know, what's happening in Asia and the exploitation of the poor by international corporations? That's somehow got to be our passion. And we have to be aware of how culpable we are in all that. I mean, the pension fund on which I depend for my living has investments in all those places. They make their money that way. I mean my pension fund feeds me and clothes me and houses me and pays for our medical bills at the same time I know where that money is coming from and who is paying the bill.

This young woman who just went down, Robin Dean, who's just went down to El Salvador said, *"I just went down and I bought some clothes and I noticed on the label, "Made in Guatemala"* and she says, *"I didn't want to buy that coat. But what does it mean not to buy that coat?"* What can I do about those kinds of issues? They are the bread and butter, the life and death issues that are now in front of us. It's much easier to take on an enemy who's firing at me, or takes me off to prison and tortures me. You can deal with that in a much more direct way. But how do you deal with an economic system for which buying my coat somehow implicates me in a dreadful act of injustice? What's the answer to those questions? I think those are the ones we need to be dealing with today. If I have any passion for anything, that's where my passion is at this moment. And I think that's what Sanctuary taught me. It dragged me into that world where I can't avoid those kinds of questions anymore.

Thank you dear.

End of Interview

Sanctuary Oral History
Reverend Marilyn Chilcote
January 29, 1998

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The loss of her entire family and community to the Contra War
On Survival: *"I don't know, but I think God has to leave someone to tell the stories."*

There was nothing more important than the telling, providing the forum for these people to tell their stories. It's the way the gospel becomes current. Because it's the same old story. Jesus crucified for speaking truth to power. Same old story. Jesus resurrected for speaking truth to power …"

End of Interview

(The few interruptions on the tape are due to Marilyn's need to shift position in her wheel chair - an accommodation for her multiple sclerosis.)

Sanctuary Oral History Project
Interview with Reverend Marilyn Chilcote
Oakland, California
January 29, 1998

Tape 1, Side A

Introduction: This is an interview with Marilyn Chilcote, Presbyterian minister and one of the founders of the (public) Sanctuary Movement in Berkeley, California in 1982. This interview is being conducted at Marilyn's home in Oakland, California by Eileen Purcell on behalf of the Sanctuary Oral History Project.

Eileen: Thank you for having me, Marilyn. We're going to start with you giving us a quick sense of your biographical background, where you come from!

Marilyn: That will be fun! Oh, no questions? Just go?

I was born in Orange County, California. I'm a native Californian. Rather conservative area by reputation and in actuality. When our family moved into Costa Mesa, which was the town I grew up in, it was called Goat Hill. It had eighteen hundred people. When I

left, twenty years later, it was called Costa Mesa and had eighty-four thousand people. So we saw quite a transition from bean fields and sugar beet fields to a sprawling strip development-kind of southern California town. I used to ride my horse all over what is now the University of California at Irvine.

I grew up with animals. We raised a lot of our own meat. Sheep and chickens and such as that which makes it interesting now that I'm an avid vegetarian. But that kind of rural farming was really deeply in my background. There were Mexican neighbors on one side, and we'd make tortillas with "*la senora"* in her "*camal."* And there were Japanese neighbors on the other side, so we'd have sushi and hot tubs with them. With my Japanese playmates, I'd sit in the tomato fields with a salt and pepper shaker, a salt shaker that was half salt and half pepper, and pick tomatoes and eat them hot off the vines with the juice running down our elbows. Or, alternatively, we'd climb the grapefruit and orange trees and sit up there in that itchy, itchy stuff and peel the grapefruits and eat those with that juice running down our elbows.

I grew up barefoot, hardly wore shoes until I was five. Was proud of the black calluses on my feet, that I could walk on fresh crushed gravel. I was a hearty, exploring kid. It was a good way to grow up!

My dad was a fighter pilot in World War II. And that was very difficult for him. There's a lot of psychological, post traumatic stress, trauma, I think that's still part of his life. I think he was unable to shoot and kill in that kind of setting. Although he did come back and teach flying. Then, later, he was a realtor and a school teacher.
My mother later went back after we girls finished college, and she became a school teacher as well. She's the real teacher in the family and the real nurturer. A wonderful, wonderful woman, this mother of mine. My dad has some serious psychological problems and there was always a stress, still is, around that.

Rather independently, I joined the Methodist Church when I was twelve. Was baptized, with my parents' encouragement, but they were not active participants. I was, though. Joined the choir. Actually, the shaper of my spirituality, the primary influence was the YMCA. I was a YMCA girl, a ragger, a camper, every year going away to YMCA camp from the time I was twelve (years old) to the time I was twenty (years old). That's where I found it. That's where I found God. And, actually, the way my family was raised, while my family were conservative Republicans and, how do I want to say this, bigoted in some painful ways. You know, it was fine to play with the Mexican kids next door, but you certainly wouldn't date them. That was made very clear. There were some lines to be drawn among the races. At the same time … there was an appreciation for everything, just a kind of hunger. We ate every food that there ever was. And we enjoyed tasting new foods. I had rattle snake and chuckwalla and sushi and you name it, I had it, cooked it, and enjoyed it. And in the same way, people of various traditions were appreciated.

We had foreign exchange students through our home from Nigeria and all parts of Europe. So the mix of races and cultures that went through our home … was real broad,

much broader than was normal for the culture in which I grew up. And so, that combined with the YMCA, as I think about it, really gave me a passion and a joy, a pleasure, a great pleasure, in participating with and appreciating people.

I think I started out as a "*helper."* It's in my later years that my spirituality matured and the mutuality of participating with people in other cultures developed. And that's, I think, in large part because of my work with Salvadorans.

I understood faith as one that makes you want to serve in some way or other. So did my sister. That's the reason she went and became a doctor, and I went on to become a teacher and a minister. Jesus calls us to serve, right. How do you do that in real, practical ways?

The Methodist Pastor in my church in Costa Mesa was the one who had the most influence on me. During the Watts Riot, he loaded up the trunk of his car with food and took it up to Watts. Seems like a benign effort. That was the last straw, the one that got him fired in our church. That's how conservative the part of the world we were living in was.

My Sunday School teacher who opened up the prologue of the Book of John for me in the fourth grade, an amazing guy, was also the mayor of our town, the mayor of Costa Mesa and the President of the local chapter of the John Birch Society. Tell you anything?

…

Eileen: So you grew up Methodist, independently from your family?

Marilyn: Well, that was sort of the church that, if they were steering me anywhere, that's where they'd have steered me. They attended occasionally, and they eventually became members. But this was my thing. It really had that sense for me.

Eileen: And you mentioned a sister. How many siblings do you have?

Marilyn: I have a sister and a brother who is eight years younger than I. My sister's a year younger.

Eileen: And when were you born?

Marilyn: I was born in 1944. … When I was twenty in 1964 … I married Paul Chilcote whom I met in college. He had been in the navy, so he was three years older than I. And we took off for him to do graduate work in Portland, Oregon, Corvallis, Oregon actually.

Well, Paul kind of dragged me kicking and screaming into the women's liberation movement. I think it got away from him, actually (laughter). My father was a very dominant man, dominant. He wouldn't touch a dish towel or any other kind of female chore around the house. I think he genuinely feared castration, the loss of his masculinity. Roles were very clearly set, and he could not be crossed. Now part of this

had to do with his mental illness. But, that was real hard for a kid to sort out. So, I knew early on that I didn't want that kind of relationship. I didn't want the kind of relationship I saw between my parents where she was very much under his constant domination and all of her independence had to be exerted under the table or privately or in other ways. She did give us, she did give me permission to be my own self. But I learned that I had to do that separate from my father's influence.

So when I married, I was very lucky to find a young man who wanted a partner, not a subservient woman. And I was very lucky to fall into that kind of pattern. I could easily have slipped had not Paul encouraged me to be myself, to be independent. He made it clear that's not what he wanted. He wanted a strong woman. We had a very good fourteen years of marriage. It helped me develop a real sense of myself. Two beautiful kids. We went to Oregon. And there the political climate was different. At Oregon State University at the time, there was a big hoop-dee-do about whether black basketball players could wear goatees and mustaches because this was part of their black identity. And we got involved in marches and things around that. It was an awakening to the liberation movement. Later on we moved to Seattle where, in 1969, there was a Methodist church and a Presbyterian church sort of across the street from each other. And the Presbyterian church had a better preacher than the Methodist church, so I became Presbyterian! (laughter) And that's all. I had no sense of the difference in polity or theology or nothing, you know! And this Presbyterian church was very liberal theologically. We had a draft counseling center through the '60's. They had a woman's health clinic that had – oh my god – lesbians in it! And that was another really strong awakening. And the pastor who introduced us to liberation theology – at that time out of Africa – well, Native America liberation theology and African liberation theology – so it's Vin de Loria and then North America liberation theologians. This church had a real strong intellectual bent … I was hungry for it. I walked into this church.

Well, we moved into Seattle. I had two tiny babies and didn't know a soul. And for the first five or six months, I spent all my time with little, tiny babies and didn't even have anybody I could talk with on the telephone. We didn't make long distance phone calls in those days! They were far too expensive. So by the end of the day, I was just in tears of frustration and loneliness, and finally, we decided we had to do something about that, this housewife who was home by herself.

So I went to church and joined everything! I joined the choir. I became director of the youth group. I started teaching Sunday School. I got on a couple of committees. I joined everything there was to join! The Women's Society. I started some of these cooperative groups with parents, swapping child care, a mothers' group. And the Church became a real focus of my life and then the study. I began to read a lot of theology and found that I had a knack for it and a passion for it.

Then, then came some tough times in our marriage. Paul and I grew apart in some really painful ways. Our values diverged. It was the '70s. Everybody was encouraged to take off and do their own thing. And then there was this sexual business – this belief that traditional sexual mores were outmoded. And lots of us in our liberal church circles

started giving each other permission. We were reading *Open Marriage* and thinking, *"Wow, golly, gee whiz.*" Well, there are a whole bunch of us who can testify that it didn't work. That didn't work at all. And those stresses and … just the diverging values. Paul was really getting into accumulating stuff around the house, furniture, wanting to live a better life style. And that wasn't where my excitement or energy was. And we just were going in different directions.

But we finally woke up and realized, and we got a divorce. And here I was with two little girls, needing to get my life together. I had teaching credentials, which I had earned early on, secondary credentials, though I'd not used them. I'd been staying home. Paul and I made the decision I would stay home with the children, work part time … I'd done things like work for the local YMCA, and I became a Christian educational consultant. I did a lot of training in Christian education skills, mostly workshops and independent reading. This is while we were in Seattle and before the divorce. I would go around and consult with various denominations in the northwest and with local congregations trying to help them match their theology to their educational style. And I had a consultation that I worked out that I did with different congregations. That was very interesting. We were doing a lot of work with learning communities, experiential learning. I worked in a Methodist church for three years as their church educator; I worked in a Presbyterian church, all (of) this kind of part time. In the Methodist Church … the pastor actually wanted an assistant pastor. So he put me to work at more than Christian education. He had me doing a lot of pastoral calling, a lot of preaching, some counseling. And it was really an excellent way to test out this kind of yen I had to become a clergy person.

See, when I was twelve in the Methodist church in Costa Mesa, I told my pastor I wanted to be a minister when I grew up. And he said, "*Oh, that's nice, honey,"* and kind of patted me on the head … And he said, "*But when you become pastor, I mean when you grow up would you like to marry a minister?"*

And of course, I … didn't know where that came from …I thought about it for a second, and thought, "*Well, if I was a minister it probably would be a good idea to marry a minister."* So I said, "*Well, okay I guess so."* And he said, "*I've got to tell you something about seminary. When I was in seminary, no man, no minister would have anything to do with the women who were at seminary. They were all considered ugly, unmarriageable, 'old maid' kind of. I mean, you wouldn't want to be one of those. Why don't you do something else with your life. Marry a minister and then you can help him!"* Well, I was so malleable at age twelve in that cultural setting, that I let him talk me into that, and I did. I went and became a school teacher. And I liked the few years of teaching I did.

But still, when I was in my late twenties and early thirties, I still had this desire to enter the ministry. Well, what did I do about it? I became a Christian educator and found real satisfaction in that work. Real satisfaction. Found, among the Christian educators, the most progressive, a real effort to be faithful to the gospel and to help people be faithful to the gospel, which I didn't see so much in the clergy. (I) didn't see (it) as much in the clergy who were so much more involved in institutional structures, in the institutional

politics and all that crap. So I became a part of several organizations of Christian educators who saw ourselves as on the forefront of developing the theology that was going to lead the church into the future. These were mostly lay people. But the most progressive of the clergy came to our conferences because they wanted what we were offering.

… I used to put together conferences. We had Doug Hunnecke, who's well known around the Bay Area. We had him do something for us in Portland on the Holocaust as we were thinking about Liberation Theology in Christian education. And that drew people from all over the northwest. That drew clergy from all over the northwest, the best of the clergy. … I'd find a good book, a good book like Neil Hamilton back before he became so conservative … and then I'd put out a flyer saying, "…*we're going to spend a day discussing this book and its implications for the work we're doing, and I invite you to come. We'll give you lunch, you pay $10, and we'll have a seminar on it."*

… See it's not like the Bay Area up there. There just isn't much theological education. People were hungry for it. And they would flock to these courses I'd give. And these were just, no institution behind me, these were just things I was doing because I wanted to learn. So mostly clergy … would come to these conferences. I got hooked up eventually with something called the Pastoral Institute of Washington which was run by a guy named Lyn Walker who was a UCC pastor and a psychologist. And I did a couple of years of part time, clinical training and pastoral counseling with them. And I was hooking up liberation themes in pastoral counseling. …

… So after Seattle, (I) packed up with my seven and eight year old (daughters) and moved down to San Francisco Theological Seminary (SFTS) in San Anselmo. Boom. And this happened real quick, within a matter of months. I couldn't get a job as a school teacher up there, there just were too many school teachers. So I said, "*Well, I always wanted to be a minister.*" Called up the seminary. "*No, no, it's too late to register*." I said, "*Well, I'm coming anyway." "Oh, okay."* And then they gave me a full scholarship too! So I came on down to San Francisco Theological Seminary and did their degree, the MDiv. It was wonderful. 1978. Couldn't believe the Graduate Theological Union and the smorgasbord of courses that were offered. Just too much! Just too much! Delicious, wonderful, wonderful!

We lived in San Anselmo for a couple of years; we lived in Berkeley; got my degree. Now this whole thing is about Sanctuary, right.

Eileen: You're about to arrive at St. John's Presbyterian Church!

Marilyn: No! Before that. In my last year at San Francisco Theological Seminary, just before I was going out to get called, the strangest thing happened. There was this special Saturday program (laughter) where a bunch of nuns and this strange woman called Eileen Purcell came to talk to us about what was happening in El Salvador!

I was pretty ignorant of this whole situation. Knew nothing. It blew me away. My god, what was going on down there? And these nuns told us the story. Actually, I guess they were out of South America somewhere. Argentina. And they told us the story of Vatican II and their whole experience where they realized they needed to be serving the poor rather than the wealthy they had been schooling. This is how I remember it … and this is the way I've told it so many times since that it better be right! (laughter) It was a remarkable story of conversion. Held us seminary students spellbound. And then at the same event, if I'm recalling correctly, this Eileen Purcell brought some Salvadoran refugees who told their story of what was happening in El Salvador. Well, this had a real impact.

Tape 1, Side B

Marilyn: San Francisco Theological Seminary – that time with Joan McCarthy and Eileen Purcell talking about Argentina, Vatican II and the way the Catholic Church had changed, or some people in the Catholic Church had been radically changed by this new thinking. And I'd been reading Liberation Theology in seminary. But this … made it seem so real and really caught my imagination … When a few months later I went to St. John's Presbyterian Church in Berkeley as an assistant pastor, I was really excited to find out how much this congregation had already done.

Bob McKenzie, pastor there, had had several experiences himself, which prepared him for what was about to happen in that congregation in sanctuary. His time in India had been a real eye opener for him as he saw the indigenous church, the church that had been started by missionaries, living with such integrity as he realized that they had so much to teach us – we who thought we'd been the *missionizers*, the colonizers. So his eyes were opened to listening to voices from around the world.

That church had had the experience in the past with an Argentinean man who had been a refugee and which the congregation helped settle. And I know you already have some detail from him about that. So the congregation had heard the voices from people from other parts of the world and recognized the integrity of the gospel in the way other groups were living out … and recognized that the gospel of Jesus Christ has to do with freeing people from oppression, from suffering, from pain. And kind of understanding Jesus' suffering, coming to understand it in the suffering of people's in other parts of the world, or even in our own suffering. So, the congregation was thinking in ways that were new, not part of the common church experience in North America. We're talking about 1981 when I started here.

In the last part of 1981, we began to hear again from this Eileen Purcell person (laughter) and others from the Catholic Church in San Francisco, horror stories about the Salvadorans and Guatemalans who were flocking into San Francisco in increasing numbers, and going, of course, to the Catholic Church for comfort, for aid. They were telling stories of oppression in Central America that curled your toes. And I'm not sure just how we set this up, but I remember we got Eileen to bring some Salvadorans over to St. John's to talk to people in our church and tell their stories. (or maybe the Salvadorans brought Eileen! I know the Salvadorans are proactive in this, wonderfully so!)

And they told of … villagers being driven out of their villages by military force. They told of painful, bloody suffering. We didn't understand the politics and the economics early on. But we did hear the human suffering. And we knew there was injustice. And it was just a simple matter of "*Will you respond or won't you."* And how might you respond, how might we respond.

Our congregation thought, we were challenged by Eileen and by these refugees to do something. And our congregation kind of with not a lot of forethought, not a lot of preparation, decided, "*Well, let's dive in. Let's do something*." And we took under our wing a young couple who had recently arrived from El Salvador.

There was this young couple – Ingrid and Omar Mayorga were the names they were using. They were staying in a rectory in San Francisco, (Father) Cuch Moriarty's rectory, and could no longer be there. They needed a place to stay. And Eileen said, "*Can you take them?"* Well, we learned a little more of their story.

Omar had first come to the United States. They had both been in the University in El Salvador. Omar told us about the time, one of the times, the military came into close down the university. And he remembers lying down on the ground in terror as the tanks were shooting over the heads of these students. And some of the students were killed in that attack. Ingrid remembers watching, coming back from some ballet class and watching students being shot down. And this young couple in love knew they needed to leave the country. They had been involved in some student groups that were being threatened, and for their own safety felt they needed to leave.

Well, Omar, who was a violinist by the way, this very sensitive, beautiful, young man, came across the border into the United States strapped to the bottom of a pick up truck and finally worked his way up to San Francisco. His wife, several months later, was able to come. And she comes seven months pregnant huddled in the trunk of a Volkswagen bug. She tells us how she was so worried about that. Here she was, pregnant, breathing those exhaust fumes, worried about what would happen to the baby when it was born, but fleeing, trying to join her husband. Well, they got together. They finally met up just a week or so before the baby was born in San Francisco. This is how we found them when little – oh, what was the baby's name? When this child was born and about two months old, that's when we ran across them. And I remember Bob McKenzie and his Volvo and I drove across the Bay Bridge to the rectory where we picked up this couple and everything they had – which was a crib, several bags of baby clothes that had been gathered together for them, clothes of their own, and Omar's violin …(we) loaded them into the back of the Volvo and drove across the Bay to settle them into a tiny, little one room apartment in the back of somebody's house where we decided we could hide this couple safely.

This congregation was aware that what we were doing was probably illegal, might be deemed a felony. So the congregation was being very careful about it, trying to protect this young couple from detection by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS),

which was hell bent on taking these refugees to El Salvador, sending them back.

Eileen: This was before your public declaration of sanctuary.

Marilyn: Oh yes. This was not a public declaration. This was a private protection. We thought of it as sanctuary. … Shortly after … this couple came into our midst, we heard that there was this group in Tucson, Arizona that was using the word "*sanctuary*" for their work with Central American refugees.

… Part of the story these refugees in San Francisco were telling us was that after they fled, after they made their way into the United States with these horror stories from the terror they were escaping, they were being rounded up by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and sent back to the very danger they were trying to escape.

Initially, this just struck us as unfair, unjust. We knew that the United States was supposed to be a haven for refugees. In fact, we had been sheltering refugees, *"legal*" refugees from all over the world. Our congregation and many of our congregations have histories of doing this, and were encouraged to do this by the government. Now all of a sudden, the government was saying these other refugees are not the kind, for some reason our government was not accepting these refugees. We didn't understand at the time what that was all about. We had to start doing some research. We had to learn a lot, and we did learn a lot in those next few months.

We began to be educated about the economics and political realities in Central America, and we learned this mostly through church sources: through churches in Central America, the Catholic church especially in the United States, and lawyers who were working with churches who explained that there was a war going on in Latin America, that is was, again, a conflict between the very rich and the very poor.

The politics involved the claim that the very poor, who were fighting for their rights, standing up boldly for their rights – sometimes militarily and sometimes in non-military ways – were being accused of being *communist*. We're still not out of the *Cold War* in these years … the conservative right understand(s) any threat, any move for change as a communist threat. Any move for economic redistribution, reallocation of wealth is a threat to our very borders. I mean it goes on and on and on. When President Reagan talks about a threat coming over the border at Brownsville, Texas…

So we quickly got educated about the political and economic realities in Latin America, in Central America in particular. And we began to feel that we needed to take a stand.

We heard that these people in Tucson, Arizona were using the word "*sanctuary*" to describe their work in protecting the refugees who were crossing there. And we're talking about John Fife in particular, Southside Presbyterian Church and a number of churches who were allied with them.

So I got on the telephone and called John up and said, "*Hey, our congregation in*

Berkeley has just taken a couple in that we are protecting from the Immigration and Naturalization Service," and also, I'm part of a Lectionary Group of clergy. This whole lectionary group … at that time it was: Gus Schultz at University Lutheran Chapel; it was Bill O'Donnell of St .Joseph the Worker Church; it was Ron Parker at Trinity Methodist Church; and Bob McKenzie… and Phil Getchell at the Episcopal Church …

And the five of us in our Lectionary studies had been working together on a lot of these themes. The Lectionary that year was full of liberation themes. And here we were each Tuesday morning as we would gather, and we would look at the text from the Lectionary, and we'd read about Jesus Christ, the one who calls us to live for justice, peace, truth, love. So we'd have the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other! Now, it's 1981, the news is finally coming up from Central America about the assassination of Archbishop Romero. We are paying attention now to reports on pages 8 and 9 and 22 and 36 of the newspaper about the continuing repression in El Salvador and Guatemala. And we're paying attention to occasional reports about refugees and tying this stuff together, and thinking. And then the experience of the refugees, Omar and Ingrid and others that we're hearing from. And thinking, there's got to be something we as communities of faith can do.

And that's the point at which Gus Schultz of University Lutheran Chapel (ULC) says, *"What about this old idea of Sanctuary?"* Because, the ULC had in the early '70s, during the Vietnam War … sheltered some military, some navy guys … who'd gotten off the (*U.S.S.) Coral Sea* – I think it was a destroyer … which was out here in the San Francisco Bay. I think it was a destroyer. … They got off this ship and realized that they simply couldn't go back to Vietnam, that that was immoral. And they sought refuge, sanctuary with the congregation at the University Lutheran Chapel and some other congregations that were allied with them during those years. They declared *sanctuary*, symbolically clung to the altar, threw themselves on the horn of the altar for sanctuary just like in the old "*cities of refuge"* in the Bible. And eventually, the City of Berkeley got involved, and those folks got their conscientious status. They raised some very important issues and were part of the movement that effectively slowed, maybe ended our participation in that war.

That was a pretty exciting model for us, because we were now seeing how the United States, our country which stood for justice and peace – all the ideals we had, I had in my conservative, southern California upbringing, had come to associate with being an American – our country was violating those ideals now.

Hey, you know I forgot to tell you, growing up, I won all the contests in Americanism! I was the America Legion County champion of the debate team, and I wrote essays in the eighth grade and won prizes about Memorial Day. I was your prime patriot! So some of this patriotic idealism was still in me. And I was furious to see it so violated as I saw the way our nation was behaving in Central America …

Eileen: So you made a phone call to John Fife.

Marilyn: I called John and said, "*What are you going to do?"*

Eileen: And in the meantime, or simultaneously, Rev. us Schultz was saying, *"We, too, have an experience in Sanctuary."* And you brought them together in the Lectionary Group. Is that right?

Marilyn: That's right. … The upshot was that in very short order, by March 1982 which was the second anniversary of the death of Oscar Romero, our five congregations in Berkeley and John Fife's congregation in Tucson, Arizona simultaneously, intentionally simultaneously, made public declarations of Sanctuary. We told the United States government and God and everybody that we were going to protect Central American refugees who had a viable claim to legal refugee status. And we were going to protect them from deportation even though we understood this might be deemed a felonious act. Shortly thereafter, we started talking to lawyers ourselves, and learned about international treaties to which the United States were signators that would make these people *"legal"* refugees and would … give us (the) legal right to protect them.

Initially, we believed that we were felons, and we were willing to take the risk of being felons. Then we came to realize, heavens no, we are not felons at all, but what we are doing is legal. And we need to make that case.

So we started getting sophisticated with economics and international politics and law …

In early 1982, we started getting calls from … the refugees here in the United States, the organizations of refugees here who said, "*We want you to go down*." … Casa El Salvador (Farabundo Marti), CARECEN, particularly CRECE … the Central American Refugee Committee. They said, "*Why don't you go down and see*." And again, out of, I don't know, pure bravado! I remember Bob McKenzie saying, "*Yeah, we ought to send somebody down to see. Why don't you go Marilyn?"* And I said, *"What!"* Here I am, this single parent with a couple of young daughters … two years of high school Spanish! Why don't I go down and investigate the situation among the refugees who had fled El Salvador and got as far as Honduras and were living in horrible conditions in these refugee camps in Honduras?!

Well, I thought, "*Okay, that sounds like a good idea.!"* Bob says, "*We'll pay your way, we'll just send you down."* So I started looking for somebody to go with me. We couldn't find anybody. Finally, I was sitting in a restaurant one time in Berkeley having a Japanese lunch, and I saw at a table across the way Jean Getchell, who is the wife of Phil Getchell, the Episcopal rector at St. Mark's Episcopal church at Berkeley. And I knew that Jean spoke Portuguese (laughter). So I went up to her. I knew that she wasn't working at the time and I says, "*Hey Jean, how would you like to go to Honduras with me next month?"* And I told her what was up, and she says, *"Well, I'll think it over*." And in a few days, Jean and I were signed up to go on down. And we got our plane tickets and made our way down to the refugee camp in Mesa Grande, Honduras.

…We went down with backpacks full of whatever we thought the people might need:

some clothes, some simple medicines, and not much more. And the stories we heard, the things we learned!

Tape 2, Side A

Marilyn: Jean and I got off the airplane in Honduras, spent a night in Tegucigalpa, and the next morning got on a bus and took a long bus ride out to Mesa Grande with a couple of changes. We finally ended up on a road, still fifteen or twenty miles from Mesa Grande, waiting around for a truck to come and pick us up, which eventually came.
Two North American women, totally out of their element, fascinated by the adventure and having no idea of what we were getting into. When we got to the Mesa Grande Refugee camp and through the United Nations (UN) check post and were allowed to enter, we found that … in this confined space over a couple of rolling hills, 4,000 refugees on … land almost devoid of vegetation. So many people, so close together, so much noise, absolutely overwhelming the senses. The smells, the sights, the sounds, and the feelings (were overwhelming), but we were welcomed with such love and such gratitude that we could barely take it in. They were so grateful that we had come this distance to understand their situation.

They recognized us as people of faith who were coming to them in their time of need. And we found them to be a profound people of faith in ways, we'll I've got to tell you some of the ways.

Wandering around the camp I had my eyes opened. At one point, I stopped by this tent. And huddled just outside the tent were a group of seven or eight people sitting around … One (of them could read) and many who obviously couldn't read (sat) with a Bible, doing a Bible study, trying to understand their reality in light of the biblical texts. Well, this took me right back to our Lectionary Group. *"Hey, I know about this! This is happening right here!"*

It also awoke in me, with a kind of shock, a notion … a kind of racist notion that came from my childhood. Because I looked at these people – these poor, brown people sitting around clothed in rags compared to the way I lived, and I thought, *"These people are just as intelligent as I am."* That went through my head. That thought went through my head before I could filter it. And then the shock that I actually thought that way, you know, that that kind of racism, that kind of assumption that brown people, Spanish speaking people were ignorant. Well, that was the first thing that bowled me over in the refugee camp.

I still have major racism to deal with, and it's deep in me, it's really there.

But there were lots of shocks to come.

The little girls who came to the tent where they put us and offered to do my laundry. And I realized that these little seven and eight year old girls could do my laundry, and they wanted to do anything for us North American women.

Oh, the other lesson that we learned when Jean and I, who'd brought these big bags of penny candies to give to the children thought, "*Oh, let's go give some to the kids. Let's go do that."* And so we went out by a water spigot that was out there. And we started handing out candies to these little kids … we wanted to be the big North Americans giving away candies … we wanted the pleasure, and it was a great pleasure to see these children so happy! But then what happened when the word spread among these … now of these 4,000 people in the camp, seventy to eighty percent of them were children … we had six hundred or four hundred pieces of candy … that we'd brought for the kids. And word started to spread, and the kids started to come, and they started to go and get their cousins and friends. And pretty soon, there was this audible thunder of little feet as they started to come from everywhere. And they were mobbing us. "*Give me one! Give me one for my sister! Give me one for my cousin! Oh, I want one, I want one!*" And we looked around and there were more children than we could ever ever give this stuff to. And so, some of them were going to go away sad. And some were going to go away gleeful and greedy, cuz they're kids. And I looked around and saw some older women off to the side just sort of "*tsst, tsst, tsst,"* clicking their tongues. And Jean and I felt such profound shame, because it struck us, this was not the way to do it. These gifts should have been given to the elders of the community who could have distributed them in the appropriate way at the appropriate time, and those elders should have had the joy of the distribution, not us, selfish, ignorant North American women. You know, I just wanted to put my tail between my legs and go home at that point.

Well, even with all that, even with all that the people continued to be generous and loving to us.

Okay, I want to go on and tell you about Pablo, and here's the most profound thing that happened to me on this trip to Mesa Grande.

Pablo was a Delegate of the Word, a lay leader in the Catholic Church. I sat one morning through a lecture he gave to a bunch of *catequistas,* young women who were preparing to be educators, Sunday School teachers for the children in the camp. And he said, *"Now in your role as catequista, you've got to be moral leaders for these children. You've got to be examples. So you've got to be gentle and loving, and you must not use cuss words, you can't swear. And you've got to be sexually pure."* And there were giggles about that. *"Now you can get married, but you've got to do it at the proper time and in the proper way."* And he said, "*You must not hate, because to hate is to be caught in the jaws of the tiger."*

Well, that was a powerful image which I didn't fully understand, but I recorded it in my mind and locked it away. And thank heaven I did, because that afternoon in another setting, I asked Pablo, "*Why did you leave El Salvador?"* And he told his story. He said, *"In my community, the military came in one afternoon to our village, and they pulled us all into the town square. And they said, 'You know there are those rebels up in the hills, those communists, those subversives up in the hills who are trying to fight the government.'"* Now we think of these people now as freedom fighters, people who were trying to protect these villagers. And I think these villagers knew full well that was the

role these freedom fighters were playing. "*The military came into my village and said, 'You need to know what is going to happen to any of you who support these freedom fighters, who support these rebels.' And they took at random from our community a sixteen-year-old boy who happened to be my son. And they nailed him."* And he held his arms out in a cross-like fashion. "*They nailed him to a fence …First they took his scalp, and they opened it down across the top of his head; they cut his scalp and they peeled it across his face. And then they cut off his genitals and put them in his mouth."*

And as Pablo told this story we were, all of us, sitting there with tears running down our faces. And I said, "*Wait a minute Pablo, wait. I hear the story you're telling, and I am so full of hate I can hardly stand it. And yet I heard you this morning telling the catequistas they must not hate, because to hate is to be caught in the jaws of the tiger. How can you do that?"*

And he said, "*Well, I've lived in El Salvador, and I've seen what hate does. And Jesus Christ tells us that we must love, and love is the only hope for my people."*

It was that simple.

And when I brought that story back to the United States and told it to the people in the congregation, they knew at a gut level what sanctuary was all about. And I was committed. Boy, I was hooked! That was it.

Eileen: So Sanctuary was more than just a place, it was a loving relationship.

Marilyn: Absolutely, sanctuary was a loving and mutual relationship. It's much more than us giving to them. They gave to us a sense of what it means to be a people of faith. Everybody predicted our churches were going to lose members over this. Our churches grew because people started coming back, looking for a place where faithfulness meant something.

Eileen: And not withstanding the risks -- clearly there was risk in you traveling to Honduras … clearly there was risk in your congregation adopting a public sanctuary that could have had serious legal consequences – how do you reconcile the great risks that were being taken on the one hand and yet this powerful faith conversion and growth of your community on the other?

Marilyn: It had to do with this mutuality. It has to do with this fellowship. The mutuality in sanctuary, it has to do with the fellowship and the relationship with these people, with people like Pablo who I never saw again, but who is still very much alive in my soul. And it had to do with the relationships of the five congregations in Berkeley, the refugees that we came to know through the years. And of course, we grew to many more than five congregations.

Eileen: What happened after you came back from Honduras?

Marilyn: Well, let's see. By that time, it's 1982, we've declared sanctuary. By 1983 – I'm losing track of dates here, and I'm sure we have the records somewhere – it wasn't long before we started forming an alliance of congregations who worked for sanctuary. I started thinking about how we might best put together our sanctuary efforts and keep them going. And I got in touch with some people. I don't know how the initial contact with the Ford Foundation was made, did you have something to do with that Eileen? It wouldn't surprise me at all. … I still think of you as the prime, prime mover in this. We heard somewhere that the Ford Foundation was interested in working with refugees. And … I know that they had been working with CARECEN in Los Angeles. And I got in touch was a very proactive administrator at the Ford Foundation. Her name was – goodness, my memory's bad – Pat! … We ought to dig up that name cuz she's a wonderful woman, and I'd like to know what she's doing these days.

Anyway, the Ford Foundation, Pat, helped me over the phone for about an hour and a half. (She) helped me think about how we might write a grant proposal that would give us funds to organize our work in this area for sanctuary. And they came … through with an enormous grant, I think about $45,000 for the first year. …It was renewed for something like $40,000 the next year to set up an office to do sanctuary.

Now by this time, we had a Sanctuary Covenant. The Sanctuary Covenant which had been written by the five original churches in Berkeley with a similar version adopted in Tucson, Arizona defined sanctuary with three words: *support, protection, advocacy*.

We were going to support the refugees coming into our pat of the world looking for shelter. So support was actually a very legal thing for churches to do. We could provide housing, medical care and food. These are things churches have always done for people in need, and there's no problem with that. Protection was a little more touchy, legally. The government, at least, thought it was illegal that we would try to protect these people from arrest and deportation. But that was a commitment that we made in our sanctuary covenant which … the legal bodies of these congregations signed. And then the third aspect was advocacy: that we would work politically to change the situation, both in Central America from where these people came, and in the United States, to change the laws and the way they were being administered.

So we took these goals of support, protection and advocacy, (and) wrote them into the grant proposal to the Ford Foundation. We were, frankly, amazed that the Ford Foundation supported us in this work. …

We built a little office in my home and then in Trinity Methodist Church. We called ourselves the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant. We began with five churches. And we had this wonderful partner in CRECE, which is the Central America Refugee Group in San Francisco. We would get together with them and talk and be advised.

One of the first things we did was to start to develop a speakers' bureau. We needed people to tell the story. Central American refuges wanted to be heard, and the congregations felt that if we were going to do what we were doing, we needed to do it in

the most public way possible. So our speakers' bureau trained both North American people of faith to tell the stories of our conversion – stories like I've just told you – and Central American refugees to tell the story of their realities. And we started sending these people out in teams all over the place, any place people would listen to them. Initially, to other faith communities. So we went to speak to Christian, to Jewish, to Buddhist faith communities. We'd talk in community centers. We'd go on TV shows where they'd give us that kind of forum. And we would tell the stories and challenge people to participate in whatever way that was appropriate.

If congregations, faith communities would declare sanctuary, wonderful! We invited them to join us. … If that wasn't something they could do, individuals or groups could help. They could provide support: financial support, housing. Oh gee, by the time we got going over the next few years, people were donating cars that we could ferry down to Tucson to help people because the Tucson people kept getting their cars confiscated when they were helping people cross the border. And we would get old junk cars and send them down there so they could use them to cross people at the border. We were collecting food. …Sister Maureen Duignan, who is one of the saints in this movement, came on our staff. She was the first member of our staff, and she's the only one who's still there at the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant. There have been other changes, but not Sister Maureen.

Well, anyway, the next two or three years we grew to a group of thirty congregations in Berkeley, Oakland, and Albany. Thirty-three. Quite a number of faith congregations: Jews and Buddhists and Christians, Catholics and Protestants. Those are congregations who formally signed the sanctuary covenant with many, many other congregations that provided all kinds of support or parts of congregations and a network of individuals that you wouldn't believe.

Our primary fundraising over the next few years was by sending out letters to people who gave small donations. Ten, fifteen, thirty-five dollar donations supported the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant. And this is quite in opposition to your standard fundraising philosophy which says you only go after the big donors. But we didn't have the big donors. This was a movement from the bottom. Really. This was a movement of little people making a difference in the world, not the wealthy.

Anyway, we ended up with about thirty congregations who came together. We sent out the speakers … volunteers from all over the place. At one point, Sister Maureen had about two hundred volunteer lawyers who were trained to advocate in the legal system, trying to help people get legal asylum. We had dozens of doctors and dentists and physical therapists and other medical personnel who were volunteering their services once a week. "*I'll give one pair of glasses a month for refugees who need medical care."* We had dozens and dozens of people from our congregations who … would drive people to appointments, drive people to speaking engagements. We had volunteers in the office. We had something like three hundred volunteers at any given time and a staff of about two full time and two part time coordinators. Just an amazing number of person power for a small expenditure of resources.

…East Bay Sanctuary Covenant did a lot of direct services because in our part of the world we had a major concentration of refugees. We also did a lot of political advocacy. Our speakers' bureau was very busy. We sent delegations to Central America. Over the next two years it wasn't just Jean and I who went to those refugee camps. Over four hundred people from our congregations and community, from the staffs of various congress people ,,, (went). Just from the East Bay, we sent over four hundred people to El Salvador, a few to Guatemala, but mostly to El Salvador and Honduras, and all at the request of people of faith, of the Lutheran Church, the Baptist Church, the Catholic Church and the Episcopal Church in El Salvador. And these delegations went to be what we came to call *Accompaniment*: which is to stand beside other people of faith as they take the risks, as they live out the risky business of being faithful in Central America. And again, the stories that these delegations would come back with were always conversion stories.

We were the ones, we North Americans with our white faces who walked into war time's situations, and we were safe. There were very few instances where any of us were in any kind of significant danger. But what the Central Americans told us is that we were a great deal of protection for them. To go and live with (Lutheran Bishop) Medardo Gomez and his wife for a week after they had major death threats, to go and be with Emilio Castro and the Baptist Church. … The Episcopal leaders. We came to know names and faces, and they became part of our families as we made these trips back and forth. I got to go maybe a dozen times to El Salvador with various delegations.

I'll always look at these as high points in my life. Absolutely. Absolutely. I still remember the sights and smells, some of them delicious, like my first pupusa and some of them terrifying, like lying in the Lutheran Guest House and hearing rifle fire and bombs at the nearby National University.

Tape 2, Side B
Eileen: … Marilyn you were just describing the legacy of all the trips.

Marilyn: Yes. Some of those memories (are) so poignant, so powerful, as when we took a delegation into the Jesuit University, the UCA. And this is a trip much later on as we saw the chapel, the memorial chapel for the Jesuits who had been killed there (in November, 1989) and heard those stories. I remember being way up in Chalatenango on another delegation, and the sounds of the women slapping the tortillas … into their beautiful round shapes and giving us the chance to try to make our pathetic little round tortillas, helping us cook and eat our first tortillas. Just the genuine warmth with which we were always welcomed and recognized.

…The first time in the refugee camp when I went and there were 4,000 people there and not a single priest, here I was a Presbyterian minister. And somehow, somebody communicated to them that I, this woman, was of the cloth. So they go into worship and with no warning – and here with my two years of Spanish – tell me that they want me to preach. And they're asking this Protestant pastor to preach on the second something or

other of the sad rosary!

Eileen: The Sorrowful Mystery (laughter).

Marilyn: The second of the sorrowful mystery of some rosary. I don't know what they're talking about! And they want me to get up and preach! Now the thing is, these people are accustomed to that. Their leaders, I've watched them ad lib. They just get up and do it! Hey, I had the wit to say, "*Thank you very much, but I am here to learn and not to teach. I'm very grateful for the offer, and thank you very much."* And I sat down. And thank heavens I had the wit to do that. This was even before I met Pablo, and before I realized how much I had to learn from these folks.

Eileen: So sanctuary begins with Central Americans in the San Francisco Bay Area. It takes you to a refugee camp in Honduras. It takes you back to the Bay Area and you launch what became a national and international movement which included direct service, protection and advocacy that targeted U.S. immigration and foreign policy. And then it brought you back to Central America to visit communities who were living the war there.

Two questions: Did you anticipate or expect or calculate that this would be the outcome of your original declaration of public sanctuary and secondly what was the impact of this work that spans over a decade?

Marilyn: Well, Becky Rauber puts it pretty well, I guess. … We stopped a war. And there's some sense in which we can claim that, truly. I mean there's some sense in which the Sanctuary Movement really did slow it down. There's a personal impact which I think I've described which is that for me, I really came to have some sense of what this faith is all about. And it certainly changed my attitude toward organized religious, toward ecumenism. So there are all those personal impacts. The political, the economic impacts? I wish, I don't know, Eileen.

Does the world change? Our faith is and the faith of those Central American people certainly is that we can change things. And yet you look around and see all the grief and suffering in the world and you wonder, you know. The faith of the gospel is that we can change things. That there is resurrection. And I guess we just have to keep living like that. We have to keep living as if that were true.

I can't imagine doing anything else after this experience. You put it so much better, woman, you should be preaching.

Eileen: So Marilyn, you've talked about believing we can change things, living as if we can change things, that's our faith tradition, yet looking around and seeing the legacy of wars ravaging Central America and the contradictions there. That brings us to the notion of success and how you and the Sanctuary Movement viewed success. What sustained you as you faced what seemed like an uphill battle?

Marilyn: Well, of course, there were always people who told us we couldn't win. We weren't going to be successful at this. And looking around in history, there's some evidence that … we might not be successful, we might not win. But what kept us going was the sense that, well, we weren't about being "*successful*," we were about being *"faithful*." And that's a whole different orientation. It's just a completely different way of looking at things. I'm trying to think of specific examples.

I've got to go back and tell you about Dona Julia. This is a woman in Nicaragua. It was in 1984. Bob (McKenzie) and I were in Nicaragua. We went out with a Witness for Peace Delegation. Witness for Peace was standing on the border, the northern border of Nicaragua, trying to stand between the warring parties …

Well, the Witness for Peace worker took us way off into this little *asentamiento,* this little settlement called Escambray way out in the mountains. I mean we had to backpack two and one half hours crossing a swollen river three times to get to this little place. We had beans and rice on our back; we were hauling them up there to feed a delegation that was going to come in at a later point. And it was just the three of us. And when we got up there, it started to rain. And I mean in Nicaragua it can rain! It was two hours of pouring rain. And during this time, we huddled in this hut with an old, old woman who was our hostess. Her daughter was fixing us some beans and cooking up some raw bananas. That was going to be our meal. They used unripe bananas as a source of protein along with the beans. That was all they had.

While she was cooking this up, we started talking to this old woman about living through the years of the war. And she told us about terrible times of deprivation. And she … was quoting the Prophet Jeremiah and the Book of Job. And she gave us this extended biblical commentary as she described what happened to her community. And she talked about her sons and her daughters and her brothers. She was a Delegate of the Word in her community. There had been six Delegates of the Word … five of them had been killed, and she was the only one … left. And the sons and brothers and daughters that died in the war or disappeared … she had no idea where they were. And the community was utterly decimated.

And here was Dona Julia who was sitting there with a cross in an earring and then a St. Christopher medal that was attached to a Sandinista flag on her chest. And Bob asked her, *"Well, why do you think, how is it that you survived and everybody else died? And how does it feel to be the only one left of your peers, your community?"* And she says, *"I don't know. ... But I think God has to leave someone to tell the stories."* And so when we talk about being faithful, part of being faithful is telling the stories and keeping people around to tell the stories. That's why what we did with our speakers' bureau at EBSC was so important. I think there was nothing more important than the telling, providing the forum for those people to tell their stories. It's the way the gospel becomes current, isn't it. Because it's the same old story. Jesus being crucified for speaking truth to power. Same old story! Jesus being resurrected for speaking truth to power! We've got to keep telling it … I'm feeling enlivened right now in ways I wasn't twenty minutes ago, just rethinking of it … We've got to keep doing that.

Eileen: Anything else you want to say?

Marilyn: No, I'm really excited to see how this whole thing's going to turn out!

Eileen: Dinner! We'll have a dinner with all the people who have shared on tape, and we'll tell stories.

Marilyn: Oh yes! Yes!

Eileen: Thank you Marilyn.

Marilyn: Thank you, Eileen. This has been great fun! Turn it off!

End of Interview

Interview with Rev. Bill O'Donnell
St. Joseph the Worker
February 5, 1998

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Sanctuary Oral History Project
Reverend Bill O'Donnell
St. Joseph the Worker, Berkeley, California
February 5, 1998

Eileen: This is an interview with Father Bill O'Donnell. Father Bill was the pastor of the St. Joseph the Worker in Berkeley, California and one of the co-founders of the public sanctuary movement. … Bill is a leader in the justice ministry and has been working across denominational lines for decades. One of his cherished ministries is as … a chaplain to labor, the farm workers, the janitors, and many other causes for economic justice. This interview is being conducted on February 5, 1998 at St. Joseph the Worker in Berkeley. And it is being conducted by myself, Eileen Purcell, on behalf of the Sanctuary Oral History Project.

Bill: My name is Bill O'Donnell. I was named after my uncle and my grandfather. I was born in Altima, that's no where! That's in the windy hills between Livermore and Tracey. I was born at one, two-thirty at the beginning of the Great Depression. We never knew we were poor, but thinking back we were, you know, one pair of shoes and all that stuff.

My folks are Irish-American. My grandfather's from Sligo, and all the people from my mother's side are Irish-Canadians. My dad was a rancher. We raised cattle, and we used horses to raise wheat, oats and barley. We were Roman Catholic, and my mother would drive us to the little Catholic School in Livermore, ten miles away, every day.

One memory I have of poor people is guys would get off the trains and come to our ranch, and my mother would feed them. And then we had a bunk house, and they would be housed there or they would sleep in the barns. But I remember in Stockton -- I guess we were doing Christmas shopping or something, the family was in Stockton -- a man asked my father for a job, and he pleaded with him. And my dad didn't have any money to hire him. And I felt so sorry that somebody had no place to go. We had a place to live.

My oldest brother precedes me by two years. My mother had four children in 22 months. She had the twins - I'm one of a twin - in January. And she had a *"premie*" the following December, Martin, who was born a hydrocephalic. As kids we used to call it *"water on the brain*." His head grew but that's all that ever grew. My grandmother took care of him essentially, and he lived for sixteen years which is an extraordinarily long time for these kinds of children. Then my sister Mary was born the following November. My mother was helped incredibly well by her mother. They had lost their ranch in the Depression, and her mother and father had come to live with us. So we were a household of sometimes about twelve people.

Then later on, my sister Betty was born in 1934, and my brother Jim was born in l938. So there was seven of us all told.

Eileen: And you went to Catholic School.

Bill: The story of my vocation as I tell it: St. Paul was knocked off his horse, I was behind one in the fields. We were working in the summertime. It was twelve hours; it was hot, dusty and dirty and sweating. And I was behind this horse building a hay stack. That was my job, to lift the derrick. So I prayed, "*Oh Christ, there must be a better life!"* (laughter) Actually, in fact the sisters were very encouraging about the best thing you could do with your life was be a priest. That was the little Catholic school, St. Michael's, in Livermore. So I thought that's a good idea. So at thirteen I took off, and I haven't been home since.

Eileen: Where did you go to seminary?

Bill: St. Joseph's College in Mountain View was a Preparatory Seminary. … six years too, four years of high school and two years of college. And then we'd go over to Menlo Park to St. Patrick's where college was completed, then four years of theology.

I was ordained in 1956, and I was a good parish priest. I was so good that they transferred me to Piedmont because there was a very sick pastor there. So I was doing all this work and coincidentally the Civil Rights Movement was at its height, and they wanted to impress the "*Negro."* So they wanted to assign this *"competent*" priest from Piedmont. And that's when my real education started, when I got experienced with how people had to live. It was shocking. First I couldn't even understand why such a thing as prejudice, bias, and racism. So the people I got involved with began my education, and what it called for was a total revolution, a theological revolution, to social, economic, to political

revolution. And then I began, for the first time, to understand scripture. I thought, actually, those old stories, bible stories, were boring and had little to do with people's lives until people I got involved with struggling: they showed me how the struggles of the past were exactly the same as the struggles of the present, and how people got their power from God, their spirit -- nothing could overcome the spirit even at the risk of their lives. And I finally began to get it.

I was at Corpus Christi in Piedmont. And I was appointed to the Catholic Interracial Council. And through that Council I began to meet black leaders. And then the trip with Jim Kennedy to Selma, Alabama and to Mississippi was terribly enlightening. But because of my involvement in, for example, the open housing issue … and because of Vatican II and because of other reasons, I was thrown out of Piedmont and punished by being sent to Alameda, St. Joseph's there, and I began to punish back. And I was thrown out of there after sixteen months to Hayward.

But it was in Alameda where I first met Cesar Chavez. Out of curiosity I just drove to the valley because what he was, what I was reading in the newspaper and what Martin Luther King was doing seemed so similar. And … having experience of ranch life, I thought organizing farm workers was the most impossible thing ever. And yet to see this farm worker doing it. And the base of it, the heart of it was a spirituality. It influenced me right to my roots.

Struggle. If you find yourself in an oppressive situation where others -- your employer, your politician and your church are oppressing you because of your color and lack of their kind of education and language, how do you turn that around? The spiritual struggle was exactly the way Jesus turned his life around and organized people to fight the sin, the sin of injustice that translated into their economic lives as well as their political lives. And I saw this man, Cesar Chavez doing precisely that. And he introduced me to Our Lady of Guadalupe who I used to think was an ugly, little lndian lady who was repulsive. And I fell in love with her, because she, God came to these beaten down people who were serfs, if not slaves, and she came as one of them and that opened up to me more about how God feels about people who we minimize and marginalize and denigrate. And so these are precious, precious people in God's eyes. And who are we to regard them otherwise.

So in Hayward, at St. Joachim's, I began to picket Safeway stores, and I began to speak publicly. And one Sunday I got up and I said, *"If you know the issue, it would be a sin to shop at Safeway."* That's when the pastor went crazy and reported me to the Bishop that I'd lost $300 from the collection. So I was thrown out of there, and the Bishop called me in and said, *"There's no other pastor in the Diocese that will take you except Father O'Brien at Sacred Heart."* And in my cocky way, I said, *"He's the luckiest man in the world!"*

So I went to Sacred Heart in Oakland and just continued doing the same thing. I got very friendly with the Black Panthers because their headquarters was just up the street. And I also began to get involved in the anti-Vietnam War movement besides the Civil Rights

Movement and the United Farm Worker Movement.

Meantime, I was being passed over, because according to the rules in those days, seniority, we had a system of seniority in becoming pastor. So for four years they had passed me over. I kept writing the Bishop saying, *"Give me your poorest parish."* And I have no religious reason to be a pastor, but I wanted to get into a position where I would be autonomous, and stop having to argue and fight authority. Because I just did things on my own anyway, because I couldn't rely on authority any longer after Corpus Christi days. I saw authority abusing their position so thoroughly, that they weren't for poor people and for people discriminated against. That's where I learned what *"institution"* really is about. It's self-perpetuation instead of existing for the purpose for which they state they exist.

So, anyway, the Bishop called me up and said, "*Would you take St. Joseph's?"* Oh he was getting guilty because he was breaking his own rules. Bishop Begin came in 1962. He's the one I used to go toe to toe all the time with. That was fun. There are individual stories. So he called me up and said, *"I want you to take St. Joseph's in Berkeley."* And I said, *"That's not the poorest parish you have, Bishop."* And he said, *"You know, you're crazy."* And I said, *"Well that's true. But the issue is...I tell you what I'll do. I'll take St. Joseph's in Berkeley, and after a year I'll go to the people and say, I'll give you a choice. You can keep me if you want, or say no to me and I'll resign. And that will put the burden on the Bishop to be very careful who they send out to St. Joseph's in Berkeley.* All of this was going on in 1973. And the Bishop said, *"You're really crazy!"* And I said, "*Yea, I know that. I can't argue with that one."* So I came and I did that after a year, and the people just didn't even want to entertain the issue of taking on the Diocese. So I said, *"You're stuck with me. That's your choice."* And they said, *"Yeah, we're stuck with you."* And I'd go back occasionally with the same offer, but the people didn't want a change.

Eileen: Can you describe your congregation at St. Joseph the Worker? Who were the people who didn't want to take on the Diocese?

Bill: Good question. St. Joseph's in Berkeley which, the name was "*St. Joseph the Workman."* And I thought that was terribly anti-feminist. So I had a big struggle just changing it to the *"Worker"* because so many older people here have this class problem that they didn't want to be associated with workers. And that shocked me; that they saw themselves as better than the workers. Even among the Hispanic community, the Latino community, they use *"obrero"* which I think means *"craftsman"* and I insisted on *"trabajador*" so that I wanted to associate with the lowest of the workers symbolically. Anyway I'm always losing these battles. (laughter) …

The congregation was very conservative! It was shocking. I'd thought that Berkeley was the big, radical town. But older people and white people have the same problems of America. You know, they're prejudiced, they're biased, they're racist. But thank God for this community here. It became very Latino and very Black and very Asian. So we have Chinese and Filipino Catholics, and of course the Latino is the majority of people who come to Church here. And we have the remainder of white people who did not take the

flight to the suburbs, who chose to hang onto their property, but who have had to struggle a lot because the issues here are racial and economic and political. I was just so thankful there was no Republican Party in Berkeley (laughter).

Eileen: What was your introduction to Central America that later led to the Sanctuary Movement.

Bill: Well, it was already going on here before I realized it. Priests and ministers were getting together every Tuesday to talk about next Sunday's Scripture. And I see that as us stealing from each other because Protestants are loaded with Scripture. They are so much better trained in Scripture than we were. I really benefited so much. But something suddenly happened. It wasn't just religious leaders meeting in any formal way. But we became close friends. So suddenly, without any intention a community began to happen, that we became concerned with each other's lives and what was going on in their personal lives as well as their religious lives.

And then there was the great Gus Schultz who told us about the Vietnam Days where he made his church a sanctuary for young recruits in the army who didn't want to kill Vietnamese people. And he started the sanctuary movement for soldiers. And I was part of that. I used to do counseling. I'd come from Oakland during the Vietnam days and counseled these guys on how to do conscientious objection work. And every case -- there were a lot of theologians, and of course, Gus was very prominent in that, theologians from GTU -- so every case we created was refused in Fort Ord but appealed in Washington and passed. So we got a lot of guys out of the situation where they would have been killed or would have had to kill. So that was kind of a proud moment. But see, that set us up. And we were really ready to go with the Central American Sanctuary Movement.

And when Gus said "*Let's start,"* I had no questions about it. We had to do it. We had to open our churches to people fleeing persecution from particularly El Salvador.

So, in my experience as a priest, to put morality to a vote, you're going to lose every time. So I got up one Sunday, and I declared St. Joseph the Worker a sanctuary for Central Americans. And the fan went on, and all kinds of stuff hit that fan. So I just fired back the question, *"What would you do? You going to shut the door to these people who need help?"* And they argued that it was the process that I didn't use. That they objected to the way I did it.

The next door parish, of course, Mary Magdalene's, they were going through a process, and they lost 49 to 51 or some kind of close -- all these issues, when they come to a vote they usually lose by that kind of a percentage.

Eileen: So you unilaterally declared your congregation a sanctuary?

Bill: Yeah. And I was protected by Canon Law because I am boss! (laughter) There's no democracy in the Catholic Church and sometimes I use it.

Eileen: Who supported you at St. Joseph's?

Bill: Wonderful people! Well, because they're my friends I say they're wonderful. But if they weren't my friends they'd be wonderful, wonderful people. People were compassionate, they sensed the pain of the poor, of having been forced to be poor. Do you want names? Well, Davida Coady … Paula Holowell came out of the Civil Rights Movement, a white woman, a social worker, so even professionally she was compassionate. Vivian Hanson, who was to become Mrs. Mario Zalaya. They, they still are, all these people I'm mentioning are still in the fight for justice, against any kind of deprivation or degradation. Bill Joyce and Ron and Judy. I'm gonna be leaving people out, and that's terrible.

Eileen: What did you do as a sanctuary parish?

Bill: Well, then we were open to what (the) SHARE (Foundation) was doing, what Sanctuary was doing. I remember one time there several people from El Salvador came here to the Church on a Sunday afternoon and wore masks because INS was threatening to pick up refugees. So we very boldly challenged the INS to come and take us on. We did that a couple of times. That was most dramatic things we did. But we just quietly had people take people into their homes. Barbara Erickson, for example, was a woman who took a family in. I mean people were on their way, people were going to Sacramento. I knew people who were going to Canada. And so we'd help them in a temporary way. Ironically we kept one man here one night, and he ripped us off. He left. (laughter) I always thought that if I was in his position I'd probably do the same thing. That's what poor people; and I think we owe it to people who have nothing and we have something, it's theirs.

Eileen: How do you describe the education process that this congregation went through after the declaration?

Bill: Well, I encouraged the people to meet refugees and to see if you want to throw them out then. Because it's all in the experience. It's hands on experience. My talking doesn't do any good, because people are believable more than I am. So try turning them away and you be your own judge for your behavior. That's mainly what we did. It was kind of quiet.

Eileen: How important was the role of the refugees, themselves?

Bill: Well, I always saw them as people challenging and converting as we accompanied. Oh that's a big thing in theology I learned, too. This is so simplistic. A Jesuit told me this. He said, "*You know, the Church is always for the poor. But that means crumbs. And now we're trying to become with the poor*." That's a whole theology of accompaniment, of course! You don't do things for people, you do things with people. And then, both are converted or both deepen their sense of God and in life. And then he said something I never forgot. He said, "*In the evolution, the Church is of the poor."* So begin with for,

with and become of the poor. And that explained to me why governments and business are so diametrically opposed to *real* church, and see real church as a terrible threat to their existence. Oh, okay, that's revolution.

Eileen: What was the reaction of the Diocese? Did you get support?

Bill: While I never got support from the Diocese, and I understand that thoroughly. If I committed to the institution, then I wouldn't support me either. But I just learned what you commit yourself to? If you want to commit yourself to an institution, why don't you be a guard in San Quinten, or collect taxes or be a bureaucrat somewhere. But if you commit yourself to people struggling, it changes everything. I happened to be ordained, and therefore I belong to the Catholic Church. So they end up being stuck with me. But if I can use what is offered to find my life and to find something for others, I'll use it. I think that's what it's for. It's kind of a schizophrenic relationship, you know!

… The sin of the Catholic Church is clericalism. It's a really terrible sin I've come to realize. I used to think, "*Why are people anti-clerical because we're such nice guys."* You know. Well, we're not nice guys when it comes to being open to, like women. It's terrible. Our relationship with women is abominable. It's so un-Christ like. It's evil. And we pretend we're nice guys. And that clericalism, the institution comes before people's issues. That's a sin too.

Eileen: What is the impact of Sanctuary today? How did it change you, your congregation? Did it change the policy toward El Salvador?

Bill: I think the overall movement certainly, certainly did. See the United States was very embarrassed. On the one hand the United States was supporting the oligarchy in El Salvador and a million people fled the country, and so many of them came to the United States and Americans were very, very open to receiving, there were enough Americans open to receiving these people. So the US government had a big problem on its hands because of letters to the editor, rallies, people going to jail. It seems to me the U.S. government was very, very scared of the Sanctuary Movement and didn't know really what to do which made their covert operations in El Salvador that much more covert. And then it wasn't until the killing of the Jesuits and the two women that the United States finally said, *"Something's got to be resolved in this thing."* And that's when the truth started to come. Without the Sanctuary Movement there would probably have been an incredible bloodbath in El Salvador and had a couple of thousand, a couple hundred thousand people killed.

Tape 2, Side B

Bill: The Sanctuary Movement was not (only) opening our doors and hearts to people coming in, but it also opened, along with that, we were going to El Salvador. Thousands of Americans were going to El Salvador to accompany poor people in the military zones. I remember witnessing American fighters bombing mountain areas where the guerrillas were holed up in. One kind of funny, very funny, this one plane kept attacking the top of this mountain, and you could see the gunfire. And you could see the impact of bullets

hitting these areas, and this is the top of a mountain. This plane kept attacking, attacking. You heard the gunfire. And the guerrillas were (laughter) were walking the floor of the valley. The U.S. and the military didn't have a clue where the guerrillas were. They thought they were on the top of the mountain. They were with us, just doing their thing, walking around.

Eileen: How did you make those connections? You're describing the personal relationships, thousands of Americans visited El Salvador and had relationships with the people and the churches. Thousands of Americans opened their doors here and had relationships with refugees. They heard a story that was totally different than what the government was describing. How did you make those connections?

Bill: Well, we went there and … took on San Antonio de los Ranchos as a Sister Parish. That's in the province of Chalatenango. So we made forays and delegations made forays there. We would take supplies. Well, we'd accompany people back to San Antonio. And we'd send medicines and money and presence. You know, being with, presence in the sense of being with them. So those are ties that … taught us how people had to live, were forced to live and how insecure their lives were because of the military's presence. And it taught us how to be Christians. It just exposed the two institutions that weren't really for people, as a matter of fact they were against the Indian and the poor people.

Eileen: You described the impact of the Sanctuary Movement. You risked your life over and over again in El Salvador. You were part of a movement that the government was infiltrating, the government was bugging pastor's phones, providing break-ins into people's buildings, offices, the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant. Did the government's reaction, how did that affect you?

Bill: Well, it pissed me off. I thought, "*How dare anybody invade one's privacy."* So the only reaction was, and I tried to keep it as non violent as possible, even in my own thoughts - I fail at that all the time - I took it as a challenge and I thought, *"This is gross. This is gross behavior on the part of my government."*

So, when my Bishop Begin, he even warned me that my phone might be tapped. And I said, *"Oh, I welcome that, because I get to tell those listeners, I get to tell them off."* Because as long as I wouldn't put anyone in danger I didn't care if my phone was tapped or not.

Eileen: How did you engage your opposition in your congregation when the government escalated the attack on your work?

Bill: Well, they were scared. People were always scared. The majority did kind of move away. They did like me, but they think I'm crazy! (laughter) You know, they were more scared than I am. You know, I'm not scared because we're Americans. And the worst thing you can do for America is to injure or arrest or kill an American in a foreign country. I always think Nicaragua fell because one, white ABC reporter was killed. You know, we used to go these countries and really raise hell. We'd do public demonstrations

and the newspapers would come out and attack us. But we always had an airplane ticket in our back pocket. We'd use it or the worse thing that could happen to you is you could always be deported. So I always felt safer in El Salvador, today, in Chiapas than I did in the freeway.

Eileen: Even though they killed four U.S. missionaries.

Bill: Yea, but you know, I'm great at denial! (laughter) It can't happen to me!

Eileen: I know your congregation, I know *you* declared Sanctuary for Haitians. I know the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant still meets and has paid staff. What do you see as the role of Sanctuary today? Post War.

Bill: Gee, I think it's the Mexicans that are forced to come here, the undocumented, these laborers who need protection because of (California) Governor Pete Wilson's racist policies. You know it's okay for them to be our servants, but they don't have equal rights. So, I belong to a little thing called the Instituto Laboral de la Raza, and that tries to protect the legal rights of undocumented workers: the guys who stand on the street, picked up in pick ups and then are cheated, virtually robbed and not paid for the work they do or underpaid. That's the only thing I'm involved in on that level.

Eileen: In the '80s, of course, public sentiment was very sympathetic to refugees - to Salvadorans, Guatemalans and Nicaraguan refugees. Public sentiment is very different today vis a vis immigrants.

Bill: Well, I don't know if it was -- see this country is very racist, extremely racist -- I don't know if the sentiment was really any different. Because the Bay Area is so unique. It's always been open to the problems of people. Always. It's a great place to live. But you go down into the Valley, you go into the Midwest and you're going to get some tough reaction.

The Sanctuary Movement thrived in Northern California, but I don't know if it did very much in the Midwest. It was good in Arizona because the issues were so clear and there were some great people there that made it work. But they paid a big price, the people in Arizona. There were trials and stuff like that. I can't imagine those kinds of things happening in San Francisco or Berkeley. So we have our own sanctuary (laughter), we're our own sanctuary in that sense of people, progressives, very strong.

Eileen: Lessons for the next generation when they hear your voice?

Bill: You poor folks, we're leaving you a mess! But the struggle, life is, you know our grandparents didn't want to leave us the mess we inherited. We don't want young children to receive that we are leaving them. But it's always a mess. There's always inequality, there's always injustice, there's always undemocratic ways. So life becomes a fight, a struggle to make it less unequal and less unjust. And I believe the church has the

potential of doing it. That's why I'm so pro union, because besides community and neighborhood groups and union and church it's the only barriers against capitalism. Everything is done for profit. It's infiltrated into health. Health is now a business and that's why more people are dying and are unhealthy, because health has become a business for profit.

And I don't see any other forces in our society that oppose or have the potential to oppose that kind of movement. You know the "*unabomber"* was right, it was just his way of going about it. (laughter)

Eileen: Your hope? Where do you get your hope?

Bill: Well hope comes from love. And I'm very taken with simple things like, we're really all connected. We really are one. If I forget that, then I'll be lost. I'll be truly, won't have a clue of who I am. But if I can hold on to that mystery of we're all one, brothers, sisters, however you express that, family. And regardless of how different we are in language and dress and gender, transcending that, we're all God's children. And that's very powerful. And that's so much more wonderful than having a big bucket of money, or a big grand house. Those are nice things, but their meaning is pretty limited.

Eileen: Are there any stories you'd like to share before we finish?

Bill: We were protesting Livermore Lab, and John Coleman is an associate theologian or something like that at GTU, and he wanted to know what the experience was. So we all got arrested, and we were lying on cots in jail. There were hundreds of us. And in these movements you attract crazy people, authentically crazy people. And I remember John pulling the cover over his head and saying, *"The trouble with revolution is you can't choose your friends."* (laughter) And that is so true, because there is a lot of toleration that has to go on because of personalities, egos, and that sort of thing, a lot of patience that is so necessary. That's how, I guess that's why they say democracy is a messy process but eventually very powerful.

End of the Interview

Sanctuary Oral History Project
Interview with Bernie Mazel
Columbia University, New York, New York
June 30, 1998

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(After completing interview and turning off the tape, Bernie showed me copies of two certificates of appreciation from the parents of the Kent State University Students who had been killed and from the SHARE Foundation that he has hanging on his office wall. He read them out loud.)

"I don't usually take pride in things..."

"T*o Bernie Mazel, a friend of the aggrieved, an enabler of the weak, a provider for the struggle, and a humanitarian who effectively challenges inhumanity in American Society - with appreciation and affection, the Families*

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New York, New York
June 30, 1998

Eileen Purcell: This is an interview with Bernie Mazel. Today's date is June 30, 1998, and my name is Eileen Purcell. This interview is being conducted at Columbia University's Library of Social Work in New York, New York. Columbia is the largest oral history collection in the United States and also the first collection that was started forty years ago.* Bernie Mazel is a native New Yorker who for years has been a respected publisher and developer of direct mail campaigns for a variety of progressive causes. In the 1980s and 1990s Bernie offered his services to a variety of organizations in the United States fighting United States policies -- both foreign and immigration policies -- vis a vis Central America.

In particular, Bernie was instrumental in beginning the fundraising drive on behalf of the *National Sanctuary Defense Fund*. Also known as NSDF, it sought to provide legal defense funds for religious leaders and workers as well as Central Americans who were brought to trial in the mid eighties for their work. It sought to provide legal funds for high impact litigation such as the American Baptist Case which was eventually settled out of court when the United States government admitted they had discriminated against Salvadorans and Guatemalans in their political asylum application process. And, thirdly, NSDF was created to support efforts for ongoing education about the sanctuary movement.

Through Bernie's efforts, which were largely pro bono, the National Sanctuary Defense Fund raised over a million dollars. (He conducted Direct Mail drives in support of Medical Aid To El Salvador, the SHARE Foundation, and the NEST Foundation.) He not only worked during the intense years of the eighties around Central America, but also in the early nineties on behalf of NSDF's work with Haitian refugees, Chinese refugees from the Golden Venture, and later, the Interfaith Coalition on Immigrant Rights which was a project of the National Sanctuary Defense Fund and which addressed the rising anti-immigrant sentiment throughout California as epitomized by Proposition 187.

**The Federal Writers Project represents the first formal national effort using oral history to record the lived experience of Black Americans in the 1930s, a facet of the Federal Government's response to the Depression. Columbia Oral History Research Office began in 1948.*

Bernie: Gee this will go back to my psychoanalysis years ago! Just let myself talk! Okay, let's go.

Eileen: Bernie, first, thank you for coming all the way from Lexington, Massachusetts.

Bernie: Lexington, Massachusetts which is a suburb of Boston.

Eileen: What we're going to do is I'd like to ask you to start with some biographical background: your full name, the date and place of your birth, something about your family, your parents, your siblings and growing up.

Bernie: Alright, let's go. Born in New York, 1917. Now you know my age. I'll be eighty-one (years old) in August. My god! And you still feel like a kid! Well, luckily I'm eighty-one, and I can fly around and enjoy good food and … great kids and great grand children, and my tennis game isn't bad at all. I play three or four times a week. And I'm working. So I guess I'm a pretty lucky eighty.

Eileen: And what's your full name, Bernie?

Bernie: Bernard Louis Mazel. Born, 1917 in upper Manhattan, Dykeman Street area as it's called, where I lived, I guess, 'til I was one year old. My parents were both immigrants from Russia. Had come over about 1910 or a little earlier. No great education or anything. My father, we moved to the South Bronx, where my father had a small store, a dry good store as it was called then: clothing for the neighborhood, adults and kids. And we lived behind the store at that time. Not exactly what you'd call luxury. But there was the apartment right there, and that's where I was a kid. Things got a little bit better off, still the same store, and we moved up the block to a 147th Street where I grew up.

Had an older brother, five years older, almost, he used to beat me up regularly!

Eileen: What was his name?

Bernie: Martin. He used to beat me up. At the same time he taught me how to play chess, gave me a recording of Beethoven's Ninth on one of my birthdays. He taught me what I know, baseball and such. It's not bad. He died in his fifties, unfortunately, of cancer.

Grew up there. Went to the elementary school right across the street.

Eileen: Public School?

Bernie: Public School. Who had anything else! You didn't think of anything else. And when you graduated you didn't think of going away to college. I mean that didn't happen in those days, not to people who (if they) were lucky they could pay the rent. During the toughest days, (we) had to borrow from a friend, the butcher, to meet the month's rent. I mean it was not easy. And my parents had their store. And my father was a quiet man who went out to open the store at 8:00 in the morning. And was there all day. And my mother helped out there, and she cooked the meals and got my brother and me off to school. Gave me the worst incident of my life, I guess, at that elementary school. It must

have been kindergarten or first grade or something. I go off to school. It was after lunch, I guess. And my mother walks into the classroom carrying the glass of milk I'd forgotten to drink at home!! That was absolutely the low point of my life!

Eileen: What was your mother's name?

Bernie: Molly. My father, Hyman. And I grew up there. And it was mostly an Irish and Italian neighborhood. A few Jews. And it was tough, but it was a different era. There were no drugs, there were no guns or knives. You weren't in fear for your life. You could get a punch in the nose or get hit over the head around Thanksgiving with a sock filled with flour! And we had our block teams with punch ball and stick ball, and it was half a block from St. Mary's Park. We used to go over there. Play baseball. We had a team. We had a football team. It was a football team where you didn't have any protection, or helmets. You played as you were, and you met other block teams. And every team had a few ringers … like a quarterback from a high school team or something like that. Oh, we used to travel around the Bronx up to the Catholic Preparatory, one place where we used to play. I think it was a Fordham Prep School. And those guys were tough up there. I mean we were pretty tough, but they were tough (laughter). And I was pretty undersized. But I managed to play end and stand up under it, catch a few passes. Well, it was growing up. That was a normal life.

However, high school, my life got a little different. I went to, for some reason or other (to Townsend Harris High School) -- I don't know how I got to it -- I guess the teachers from the junior high. Well the junior high school was near there. That's the seventh, eighth and ninth grades. And actually I was on the track team there: broad jump, high jump, and, in fact, got the gold medal when I graduated, the top gold medal for general excellence all around, and such. So I guess they must have led me to Townsend Harris which was the high school run by City College for very bright kids, who, at that time, were mostly Jewish. I like to say you had to take a written exam, and you also had to be able to walk under a five foot bar without bending your knees! Undersized, bright kids!

So I spent three years there. And they were located down on 23rd St. in Manhattan on three floors of the City College School of Business, which is a twenty-five story building … which is still there. It's still there, a school of Business. And Townsend Harris was there for a number of years until they closed it up. And most of the kids went from Townsend Harris right into City College.

Eileen: And is that the course you followed?

Bernie: I followed that course. And that was City College of the '30s which was famous.

Eileen: Why was that, for someone who might not know?

Bernie: It's famous as being probably the best college in the country, barring none, Harvard, Yale, or anything else. It was the City College. It cost nothing at that time.

Now they've got fees up to $3,000 or thereabouts. And, mostly Jewish kids. And that's the school where, well they just made a documentary film about the...who are the four guys who came out, Irving Kristol, Alfred Kazin, a couple of these others. They came out of there. I went to one reunion. I wasn't a great one for reunions. But I went to the fiftieth reunion of the class. They had a luncheon at the UN building. And they had three Nobel Laureates from that class. Actually City College probably had more Nobel Laureates and feeds in more PhDs even now than any other college in the country.

Eileen: What did you study there?

Bernie: Well, I was a language major. First of all (for) a BA in those days you had to study Latin. So I took four years of Latin, and it was so easy you got all A's …and French. I was a French major and went on for four years to French honors and everything, which served me. I was also a history minor. And it served me well, because when I graduated I got the Downer Scholarship in French which sent me -- the kid from the South Bronx -- to Paris and the Sorbonne for a year! This got me out of (laughter) the South Bronx for the first time, aside from traveling downtown on the 3rd Avenue L or the Subway.

Eileen: How old were you?

Bernie: Well, in those days you graduated early because, you know, there's a three year high school. I was … going to be twenty in August when I graduated. And in the fall, I went over (to France). … City College, it was not a residential college, no dormitories, it was for … New York City kids. I lived at home. Traveled down by Third Avenue L or subway. Often paying my way by, I lived near the hub, 149th St., where a lot of street car lines and subways and the L (the elevated) came together. So you come along there and you can often pick up a transfer from the ground which will get you on the subway or something, free. Those things were important in those days.

Eileen: What was it like going to Paris?

Bernie: Well, it was great! I went over there by boat. Seasick every minute. A year later I was afraid to come back! That boat was awful for me.

But at City College, you studied. Made some good friends. And it was very left wing.
…
They had the famous alcoves down there in the cafeteria. You had a big cafeteria in the basement. And you had short walls coming out. They were alcoves. And they had a big table in each alcove. So, our alcove was the left wingers and the ping pong players. So that's where I learned to play ping pong. And I'm a pretty good ping pong player still!

Eileen: So tennis and ping pong, among other things!

Bernie: Not bad. In fact I got one trophy which I don't like to talk about because it was for second place. You know in this country being second is worse than anything at all in a

New Rochelle Tournament.

… Actually it wasn't until about the second or third year that I became politically aware with all the leftists there -- the communists and the socialists and the political discussions going on. I was with a more left wing group than Kristol and Kazin. They were the social democrats who hated communists. And I was more with the communists and left wing socialists.

Eileen: Was this in the context of the Depression?

Bernie: Oh sure, '37. I mean '33. '29 was the big market crash. '33 was the depths of the Depression. That's when I went in. My brother graduated in '33. I mean we were poor as could be. But our parents --I don't know whether this is a Jewish, just taken for granted -- took it for granted that we would go to college and could do it because it was City College, and we paid nothing. And actually I couldn't have attended except that I was so smart I got a scholarship which was a loan for $75. Big money in those days, which enabled me to stay in for that year, otherwise I couldn't have. But my brother got out, for some reason he'd wanted to be a dentist. But he couldn't. … Just didn't have the money. And he went to work in social work. … You took Civil Service jobs in those days. And to get a Civil Service job was the height of opportunity. And he ended up as a policeman. And he stayed in the police department for twenty years … and became a sergeant, and he studied accounting on the side. And he had some clients. And he could've quit. But he had a wife who was very neurotic and fearful. And she wouldn't let him. You had security, police department, pension, all those things.

Actually, I got out of City College Magnum Cum Laude and the ones who were really smart when they got out, they got jobs in the office, the registrar's office in City College. Now that was a coup! You know, you made like $25 or $35 dollars a week. That City College Registrar's Office had the greatest concentration of brilliant minds -- and communists - in any one spot. I mean you had geniuses there, and guys who did their PhD's while they were working there. One … went on to become a professor at Columbia, actually, one of the most prominent astronomers in the country … Lloyd Motz … A close friend of mine got his PhD at Columbia in history and went on to become chairman of the Department of History at Duke University and one of the most distinguished modern European historians in the country. He's now a professor emeritus down there. Joel Colton. And he's still a good friend. … Well, we were married almost the same month! When they come up here we see them and get together.

Eileen: When you say *"left wing crowd*" what did it mean to be left?

Bernie: If you were young, you were leftist, if you were young and intellectual. I mean it was the depths of the Depression. The country was collapsing, saved by Roosevelt and the New Deal. But (what) really saved the fabric of this country was social security, the bank holiday, the bank, Federal Deposit Insurance. However, they never solved the unemployment problem until the war. It took a war to end unemployment and give everybody a job, and that continued after the war to a large extent because you had

industries which had to replace … the dearth of consumer goods during the war when the auto companies were producing planes and tanks, and Kaiser was producing ships out there. And you were left wing. I don't know how it was in the Midwest or the west coast, but I'm sure they weren't very different. And the Socialist Party and the Communist Party were the ones who were out front. Active for housing, for employment, for all of that. And if you weren't a leftist, … you just were not aware of anything in this country.

Eileen: And that was part of the culture?

Bernie: That *was* the culture. City College was the scene of some famous strikes. A few years before I was in, it had a right wing President -- Frederick G. Robinson -- and there was famous student strike there at the time, long before the sixties! So students haven't changed much. I mean where there are social problems, you're going to have activist students. When you had a Vietnam War, you had the activism on university campuses. So you can't say it was different. It's just the problems and the social setting was different.

Eileen: So you say your brother became a police officer. What did you dream of becoming?

Bernie: You didn't dream of becoming...we'll I guess, you took it for granted you'd be certain things. I guess I was going to be a teacher, maybe a college teacher. But, alright, I was spared the City College Office. I don't know whether I would have even been smart enough against that competition to get a job there. But anyway, I had this fellowship, so I was off to Europe, and I didn't have to look for a job at that time. And it was enough to just carry me along with a minimum. Every once in a while my family would send me twenty dollars or something like that, which would be a lifesaver. And I'd get along by going to Franco-American Friendship teas where, if you got there early, you could wolf a lot of little white sandwiches you know (laughter). Social activities were going on and that would save you a meal!

And they put me into the University City which is a complex built on the edge of Paris. And there were students and buildings for Americans and students of every nationality, which was interesting enough. But I didn't go to Paris to be in a building with a lot of other American students who kept talking about getting a good hamburger or something like that. So I forced them to let me get out, and I found a, a what do you call it? You know, a French, a pension, an apartment. … But it's with a number of apartments, and you take your breakfast and dinner there. And, it's very funny. It was right off … Boulevard San Michel, which was the student quarter, a block or so below the Sorbonne, across the street from the Luxembourg Gardens and the School of Mines. And I was there for six months before, walking into the apartment one day, I noticed a plaque on the wall and discovered that I'd been living in Cesar Frank's apartment. (laughter) Anyway. I had a great experience just a couple of weeks after I arrived.

There was a debate billed. This was the fall of 1937 when the Nazis and Hitler were

building up their power in Germany. And there was going to be a debate with the German Ambassador and some French representative at the School of Ecole de Sciences Politiques - the School of Political Science. And I went there, being still politically conscience, and here's an interesting political debate. And the German representative never showed up. No, no! I'm sorry. It's totally the reverse. The German representative showed up and gave his talk on the beauties of Nazism and how it's doing such wonderful things in Germany.

Eileen: The *beauties* of Nazism?

Bernie: Yes. Well, and the French representatives, they didn't show up. So there he speaks, and then there's nothing, no voices, and I couldn't stand it. I mean, you know, coming from the US and New York and this left wing center you weren't accustomed to hearing somebody talk about how wonderful Hitler was. I mean this was late in 1937. This was after, I think, the invasion, the czar, building up the military. It may have been after Kristalnacht, I'm not sure. And here nobody was saying a word. And I couldn't stand it. I got up. And in my French which -- I could express myself, but it was still halting -- I mean I'd only been there a couple of weeks, and you don't learn to speak too fluently just in college. And I got up there and gave some kind of impassioned speech (laughter) about the horrors of Nazism and the war, as such. And after it was over, you know, a lot of the students came up to me and patted me on the back and said "*It was great you did it."* And I said, *"Look, where were you guys? You're French. You're the ones who are going to suffer with Hitler next door."* I said, *"Why didn't you get up and say something?"* They said, *"What's the use? We're* going *to be at war in a year or so. Nothing can be done about it, so, what's the use of arguing about it?"* Well, the good thing about it is it got me in with a whole bunch of students and a whole group who became almost an informal club. We met at the cafes and argued and talked. And there were French students from the school of law and the school of politics. And from Egypt and French South Pacific, and from China. And you had a terrific group there. And we had parties, arguments and everything. It was a great focus for me.

I was taking certificates. I didn't know I was choosing two of the hardest certificates there in French Philology -- in vulgar Latin, Philology -- Romance Philology, and Romance Literature. And you really didn't go to classes very much. They posted the list of main topics … in each area at the beginning of the year. You could go off and come back at the end of the year, which you usually do, because, to take as an example, there was one famous French Philologist. And of course you went to his lectures. And on the first lecture, you're in a big lecture hall with rows of seats going way up, and this guy is standing there lecturing and talking like this at the table in front with no microphone or anything. You couldn't hear him beyond the first or second row. So by the third week or so, most of the class had disappeared. But you studied on your own and you came back at the end of the year and took your exams.

I had a very funny experience taking the oral. At the French exams you take a written exam and, if you pass the written, you have to take the orals, the Explicacion de Texte. And I passed the written in Philology and come up for the orals. And you're sitting in a

big room with the students there. And one by one, you go up. And the professor, who's head of the Institute of the Phonetique, high and mighty, was up there and each student would go up. And you're sitting there listening to each one being torn apart into bits! (laughter)

Eileen: Waiting your turn?

Bernie: Yes! So it came my turn to go up there. And I started in. It was an explication of the text from Robelais with the old French. And you had to explain every word, derivation, and how it had changed, and the content. And I'm going along. And I'm going along for about five minutes without being interrupted, which was pretty unusual. My French was pretty good. And he stopped me and said, "*What was that you just said?"* And it was the name of a town. I think it was Beaucaire. And it was if you said *New* York instead of New York. I had the accent a little bit wrong. And he said, *"What was that you said?"* I repeated it. He said, *"What's your name?"* I said, "*Bernard Mazel*," which sounds pretty French! (laughter) And he said, *"Aren't you French?"* By that time, at the end of the year, my French was pretty good. And I said, *"No."* He says, *"Where're you from?"* I said, *"New York*." He said, *"What school did you go to?"* I said, *"City College."* He says, *"I taught at City College for a whole summer!"* And from then on he started reminiscing with me about (laughter) City College, with all those students looking on in amazement!

Eileen: What a great story!

Bernie: Anyway, I got out, in fact, got my certificate. I'd like to think I would have got it anyway because I was doing pretty well, but I got it Certificat d'Etudes Superievre de Philologie Francaise (Mencion Bien), which is pretty good. And literature, I didn't make it to the orals. And I knew the subject and everything on it. I believe it probably was because my name was French, because on the written, on an exam like that, and writing on literature, your French, you know how the French are about their language...

Tape 1 Side B
Bernie: So … I didn't make it through the literature. Actually, if I'd gotten both literature and philology certificates, which is rarely done, … I would have been *"Licensie"* which is almost the equivalent of a PhD in this country. So anyway, I spent a great year there, and for a kid from the South Bronx, it really gave me an outlook on the world.

Eileen: What was your parents' reaction to you going to France?

Bernie: Well, they were a little upset and everything. You know, going, leaving home for the first time and going off. But they accepted it. I mean they were very quiet people, uneducated, but they took it for granted, you know, kids went on to college, and whatever. And my father's store, which failed during the worst of the Depression there, and he opened another little store of household wares, goods, you know, can openers, dishes and things like that and carried on. And my brother got married and had two sons,

both of whom are doing very nicely now.

Eileen: What did you do when you came home from France?

Bernie: I came home. I was so innocent of the real world that I didn't know how to look for a job so I put a "*situations wanted*" ad in the *New York Times* in which I said something like, let's see, "*Graduate Student, Phi Beta Kappa, fluent French, looking for a job."* (Laughter) I didn't have any experience! I didn't know what else ... well I got one answer. And it was from the head of a text book publisher, a small text book publisher who did *Regents' Review books* who liked to say good morning in French everyday. That's what captivated him. So I got a job as an editorial assistant (laughter) because of that. I lasted for about six months, because, actually, the editor was a very, very bright guy, a hardworking guy who didn't really need an assistant. And besides, I was not taken with the boss's daughter. If I had been I probably would have been head of the firm. There was an opportunity there. I think that may have been what he had in mind. But I don't know.

So after six months I left, and then I got a job at the New York World's Fair (which had) just opened in 1939. I got a job at the French building working for the French government where I stood in uniform at the entrance and acted as a major domo and directed people. You know, I could do it in French and in English for the French ... directing to the men's room or the ladies' room or to where to go and such.

But I was looking around, and I got a chance at a publishing job at Prentice Hall, a big publisher of text books mainly, and legal and tax services. That was quite an (experience) ...I got interviewed. Had to sit down and write a sales letter on one of their business books. And then I was called back and had to write a sales letter on one of their college books, and then got a telegram I was hired for $18 a week. And this was in 1939. Not too bad a salary. And the CPA's and the attorneys who were hired there to be editors were hired at $15 a week. Somehow, (laughter) the professionals were paid less.

So I worked in the college department and then in the service department for a couple of years. And then moved to another job with another service publishing house, American Research Council at more money. And meanwhile I got married in 1942. I think we were both making about $30 a week.

Eileen: And you two met?

Bernie: Well, I married the logical person to marry. A girl from Hunter College which was the girls' college, pardon me, women's college, of City University at the time. And we had met a little early, and there was a social group with City College Boys and Hunter College Girls who met once a month and very high tone. Someone would give a lecture or talk on some subject they had boned up on like politics or Picasso or Mozart or something like that, and the girls would prepare refreshments. And there would be a little dancing. The guys from City College mostly didn't know how to dance. But they learned

a little. And. So actually, met there, but didn't really hit it off there. She was very shy and retiring, and I was not that outgoing, but...

Eileen: What was her name?

Bernie: Ella. Got married in '42. And fifty-six years later we're still married.

Eileen: And what's Ella's maiden name?

Bernie: Davis. Ella Davis.

Eileen: And how many years together?

Bernie: Fifty-six from when we were married. I guess we got together in '40. I mean I came back. I had some other girl friends. And, actually I was 1A in the draft. Would have been drafted. It was close, except that I came down with TB, early TB, which you might say was unfortunate, or maybe it saved my life. One doesn't know what would have happened. I had to take it easier on occasion. But it didn't stop me from working or anything for two years. We got married, and she worked in books, also, magazines and books. So, came from the same kind of background. Same kind of Russian parents, except hers were more revolutionary parents and came over after the 1905 revolution when they probably had to leave.

Eileen: And how did you relate to the political life of the time?

Bernie: As we were working, we were involved. … And she worked at a place, *Trade Magazines*, and naturally she organized the place, she and the daughter of the owner. So they both got fired. Right. And actually, she won a case with the National Labor Relations Board for being fired for organizing. And I was trying to organize also, with what was a fledgling Book and Magazine Workers' Union which was part of something called the Office and Professional Workers' Union which never got very far, because office workers and book workers were not exactly labor types.

... So we were politically active. And after 1945 you have the Progressive Party and Henry Wallace, Roosevelt's Secretary of Agriculture, who started and ran for President on the Progressive Party ticket, an independent. So there was political activity going on.

So I was steeped in it, steeped in the background and the intellectual kind of background so I never could discuss money, especially with clients. And, like I started with the *New York Review of Books*, as a consultant, helped, started the magazine in 1963 or thereabouts for $500 a month. And twenty-five years later, I'm still promoting all their subscriptions at $500 a month. Of course I'm handling space advertising, too. I was in an agency, got the commission, but I never … made any big money.

The only time I ever made money was by starting a company, a publishing company on the side, and sold it. And then a later publishing company which … Robert Brenner, a

distributer of psychological, psychiatric books, and I bought … and a year later started to publish in it … Brenner/Mazel, after twenty years, was a pretty well known publishing house in psychology, psychiatry. After twenty years, I got tired of it and sold that, but that's the only way you get some money, by selling something. And even though I promoted and built the biggest stock market service in the country, the *Value Line of Estimates Survey*, I really had no interest in the subject and didn't invest in the stock market or anything like that. We had the leftist intellectual's contempt for money. So to do something for money, like invest in stocks, you know, that was inherently shameful. So that's the kind of background that led me to S*anctuary* and doing that for no fees and to other causes.

Eileen: Now before we jump to that, may I come back to one thing you talked about. Your family was a Jewish family from Russia. Your parents migrated from Russia. Did you actively practice Judaism?

Bernie: No, my parents didn't practice. The extent of practice was feeling the tradition so that at Passover you didn't eat bread, you had Maztoh in the house. But, my mother, I don't think, didn't keep a pesadecher house or special dishes. I still have a few words, you know a few words from childhood, the Yiddish, but never could speak it.

Eileen: Could your parents speak Yiddish?

Bernie: They spoke Yiddish and some Russian, but mostly English with us.

Eileen: And before we get to sanctuary, given your political life ...

Bernie: Well, you say religion. Just the surface formalities. Like, of course, it was taken for granted I would be barmitzvahed. So at thirteen or a little before, I went to a little chedah around the corner and trained in reading the Hebrewm … and actually, I was sponsored, one might say, by the landlord of our tenement apartment house on 47th Street who sent me to his synagogue -- a fancy one -- on the East Side in the Eighties where I went to Sunday school, and I got a few little medals for that. And after I was barmitzvahed, nothing ever passed through my head again on religion. I was not religious. I came from the left wing background and Marxist background which thought that religion was one of the plagues on earth, opium of the people and all that kind of thing. So, whether it was Jewish or any other kind of religion, I had nothing to do with it, and considered it one of the problems on earth; people would maintain their ignorance, their beliefs, their supernatural beliefs, their fear of god almighty. These ridiculous beliefs of people thinking that God, that some super power up there is doing nothing but think of them. So I didn't think much of religion.

I got a respect for, not for religion, but for religious people when I encountered and worked with people like the (American) Friends Service Committee and saw the marvelous work they did oversees and … working with the Silkwood Case where we raised all the money, and there was the Christic Institute who were religious based. And the Kent State Case where I raised all the money for that.

Eileen: Now you're describing cases where you were the direct mail producer.

Bernie: Did it all. We'll get to that, how I got into it. But on the religious, the Kent State Case and the Parents' case suing the State of Ohio and the General of the National Guard and the Governor was under the sponsorship of the Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church. And the head of that division was a Rev. John Adams, a marvelous guy. And so I worked with him on that. Actually, I was brought into it by Arthur Krauss, the parent of one of the girls who was killed at Kent State. I think he was sent to me by Stanley Shinebaum. You know Stanley of course, with whom I had worked previously on the Ellsberg Trial, the Pentagon Trial. That's where it all started, shall we say the political direct mail, directly political.

Eileen: You've been described to me as the Grandfather of Direct Mail!

Bernie: Well, let's say I go back pretty far, doing it since 1939, 1940.

Eileen: What was your introduction to direct mail.

Bernie: Well, just on that question of religion, just to get that subject. So there was John Adams, that was the United Methodist Church, there was SHARE, NEST, you people putting your lives on the line there, and out of religious devotion, and Gus Schultz, and Tom Ambrogi, and of course, Bill Coffin who I took to China with me on the Peace Delegation I put together … Tom and Donna Ambrogi went on that trip. So I developed a respect for religious people who did things like this. And so I was not quite so close-minded on religion. Although when John Adams said to me once when I made some critical remarks on religion sitting at the United Methodist Church headquarters (laughter) -- I wasn't struck by lightening or anything -- and he said, *"You know,"* he said, "*Bernie, you're the most religious person I know."* And I said, of course I had to answer that with a flip remark. I said, "*You know, after all I've done for you that's a terrible thing for you to say to me."* But, anyway, I got accustomed to working with religious people who were pretty good people and did some pretty good things. And I could even go into that Catholic Church in San Francisco right behind Tom Ambrogi's apartment.

What's the name of that...

Eileen: St. Mary's Cathedral.

Bernie: Which?

Eileen: St. Mary's Cathedral.

Bernie: St. Mary's. And I go there every time I go to San Francisco. That church is so beautiful! I just go in there and sit there, and you are uplifted. Not to god. But you are uplifted. My soul - if I have a soul - is uplifted. That is so beautiful. I mean it is more

beautiful than all of the Notre Dames, which are beautiful in their way, but in the heavy, medieval, other way. That is so pure, so simple! That cross, which you hardly recognize as a cross, it is just wonderful! I go in there and sit for ten or fifteen minutes and just go out refreshed. So, whether it's a Catholic Church or whatever it is....well, anyway …

After my second job, a direct mail job at this *Research Institute of America*, the war ended and my wife, Ella who had been working at a war supply firm -- which one had to do at that time. … That was over, and I was tired of my job. I never could work on one job more than a year or two. I just got bored with it. We took a little vacation of a month. And before I could look for another job, the head of some investment house in Wall Street called me. He published an annual book on mutual funds. And he said, "*Leo Churner,"* (who)was from the Research Institute where I had worked, "*said that you were free and so maybe you could do this."* So I did this thing for him and before the week was over, his friend, who was head of a fashion service, called me. And before I could find another job, I was too busy, and working on my own, and working from home, and then took an office. And I worked with … books and magazines and organizations.

Eileen: At the Research Institute of America?

Bernie: No, that was after I left there. Now I was through with the jobs. Now I was getting clients like Simon and Schuster. I promoted JK Lasser and his income tax book and other books of his. *Scientific American*, started the new magazine about 1947 or '48 I guess. And I sold every subscription for the first ten years until they were so successful they didn't need me. And I worked with Jerry Peel who was the head of it, which led to other contacts … like the Museum of Natural History and their magazine, *Natural History*. Sold their membership. CARE, I did fundraising for three or five years for them as a client. In fact they gave me a nice bronze plaque which I still have.

Eileen: When did you make the shift?

Bernie: 1946. So, so I worked with those publications and organizations and *Basic Books* and that *Value Line Investment Survey*, which was an investment service which I turned down two or three times but finally agreed to do it. I said I didn't like investments or stocks. However, I had a knack for selling that sort of thing. In fact, I could sell that business in tax that J K Lasser and the investment stuff with no trouble at all. I just tossed the stuff off. But when it came to selling *Scientific American* or CARE or the Museum of Natural History or the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientist*, well, somehow, this was sacred. This was a cause. It would be a struggle to write (laughter) it. … Well, the *Bulletin on Atomic Scientist*, between me and Jerry Peel, the publisher of *Scientific American*, we saved that. They were going out of business. They were broke. Couldn't get any money. This was just a few years after the end of the war. And nuclear science, you know, the atomic bomb was a pretty terrifying thing. And they were about to go under. And Jerry Peel said, "*Can we do anything?"* So he made the subscription list of *Scientific American* available, which they didn't do for anyone else. One hundred thousand subscribers they had at that time. And I wrote a letter which was a terrific letter. Got a ten percent return from the list. So over night they got ten thousand new

subscribers who were on solid ground! And then the foundations, the Ford Foundation, come along and start forcing money on them. You know, when they didn't need it anymore! Well, of course they took it. Well, that saved that, and that's still in existence. So, I did one or two good things. I had to admit, I didn't change the world as we were going to do, and alright, but, for better or for worse, saved that. Helped build *Scientific American.* Helped keep *The Nation* going over a period of thirty years, advice on and off. Helped start the *New York Review of Books* and built that and that is probably the most important publication in this country in the last thirty years. And so I've left a few things.And, along about, I set up a publishing company on the side.

Well, when my biggest client had gotten to be the biggest, the *Value Line Investment Service*, financially, they became a big advertiser, and I had the agency. So I did that. And when we had this breakup, well, that was an interesting story.

The head of it was a very rigid kind of old, I don't know, West Port, Connecticut, Protestant family. But he had liberal tendencies. And he used to give money to *The Nation* and even to the *Irgund* in Israel, for what reason I don't know. He wasn't Jewish.

Eileen: Forgive me, what is the Irgund?

Bernie: Well, they were the armed terrorist wing of the Palestinians fighting against the British. They're the ones who blew up a few hotels and such. So this staid, upright Protestant, I guess, you know, wealthy family, had investments, gave money to that. Well, anyway, he had intellectual liberal.

And then I heard that the *Reader Subscription Book Club* was for sale. And I mentioned it to him. And he was interested in books and everything. So, okay. Well, it was sold to someone else. But the editors didn't want to go along. They wanted to own part. The editors were three very distinguished guys. Jacque Barzun, you may know his name, a lot of very literary books. And he was Provost or something of Columbia University. And Lionel Trilling, the very distinguished professor of literature at Columbia. And the British poet. What's his name? Famous British poet. Auden. They were the three editors of this literary club. So they got together. And it was sold to someone else. They didn't want to go along.

So I suggested, *"Start your own club*." And I got Arnold Barnard of the *Value Line Survey*, and he would back it. And we discuss it and we're ready to go ahead. And Bernard raised the question, he wanted to give me stock, some of his stock and they should give some of theirs, because he wanted me to be interested enough and invested in order to build it, support it. Well, and this is as far as I can see, Trilling was a rabid anti-communist. And he had a young follower, assistant something ... what was his name? Sol Stein. He later started a successful publishing company. He was also rabid. So, as far as I can guess, they didn't like this idea of giving me stock. So they had their friends and proceeded to look (into) me, and the next thing I know, Arnold Bernard calls me and says, "*Well, there's a problem*." I said, "*What kind of problem*?" He said, "*Well some questions have been raised about you."* I said, "*What do you mean questions?"* He

said, "*Well, about some left wing leanings and background*." I said, *"Really?"* I said, "*Who raises questions?" "Well the editors there."*

Apparently this rabid, anti-communist had gone and had the connections to get the file, that's the only thing I can imagine, from the FBI. It must be from there. And, of course, you were a failure. Actually, I was a failure in life, because my biggest disappointment was when friends of mine were on Nixon's enemy list and I wasn't. I mean that, (laughter) it really was a blow. All my work, and I was a failure. (laughter)

Eileen: Because you were not on the Nixon list?

Bernie: Didn't even make it, when friends of mine were on it. Well, anyway, I said, *"What do you mean they raised questions?"* He says, *"What questions?" "Well,"* he says, *"They say you hired a communist as an editor."* I had a publishing company and I had *American Research Council*, at the time or had had it.

End of Tape 1, Side B

Tape 2, Side A

Bernie: So Ray Ginger I hired as an editor. The reason I hired him, first of all, I had a recurrence of the TB, after having three kids, and fifteen years later or something like that, it turns up. And they thought, the doctor said there was a nice little TB place near my home in Weschester, an hour away or less. I had three young kids. And the doctor said, "*Well they have the new drugs but maybe it's good for you*." So I went in, and spent like a vacation for nine...it wasn't easy for Ella with the three young kids. I'm sitting there doing nothing and, in fact, doing work over the phone from there and living a soft life. You're encouraged to do nothing. And I reacted to the drugs that they had, the new drugs. So I was alright. But anyway, I hired Ray Ginger who had been pushed out of Harvard Business School because even though Harvard didn't publicize it and supposedly they didn't have a "*loyalty oath*," they did. And he needed a job, and I needed an editor.

And so I said, *"Look, the guy's an historian, he's an editor. I don't care about his political opinions. He was a good editor for me."* And then they say, *"Well, and your close friend is a communist."* I said, *"Who's that?"* He said, *"Phil Foner."* I said, *"Phil Foner is one of the most prominent American historians in the country. And of course he's a good friend of mine. And, I don't care if he's a communist or a Jesuit!" … "But, whatever, you know, he's a friend of mine."* He said, *"Well,"* he says, *"It also says,"* I mean the way he put it there's obviously a list that must have come from somewhere. *"It also says that you ran for office on the American Labor Party Ticket."* I said, *"Well that's interesting. I'm flattered, but first of all, I never ran for office for anything. And second of all, the American Labor Party is a perfectly legal party."* They ran candidates. In fact, was it Wallace running for President on that? Or was that the Progressive? *"In any event, it's a perfectly legal party, so what's wrong with that?"* He *says "Well, it says also that your wife is a member of the Communist Party."* I said, *"Well, if my wife might or might not be a member of the Communist Party."* I said, *"But that's her business. You*

know, what's that got to do with whatever we're talking about or you and me." Well, I don't know. They had one or two other things. I can't remember.

So at the end of it he says, "*Well,"* he says, "*it'll work out all right*." He says, "*All you have to do, you appear before them, the three editors there, and you explain the way you explained to me."* And I said, "*What do you mean? Me appear before some kind of tribunal and explain myself and what I'm doing?! I'll tell you on a personal basis, you know, whatever I want to tell you...but to appear before them? Who are they? And why should I explain myself to them?"* Well, he tried to persuade me. And the upshot was, he said, *"You know, we have hundreds of millions of dollars in funds, in our mutual funds and our investments earned. And if any kind of scandal came out..."* This is in the fifties, around the McCarthy Period, *"...came out, it would be very bad, it would ruin the business."* So, we had to part. So we parted as a client. So that was my biggest client at the time. And of course the Book Club. He actually went ahead with the club and with them. Called it the *Twentieth Century Book Club* or something like that. A year or two later he called me and asked me to come in and look at the figures on the Club. It had lost about two million dollars. And I looked at it and told him what was wrong … I think there was something ironic...I don't know.

Eileen: Did he ever apologize?

Bernie: He didn't apologize. And, oh, obviously, he felt guilty about it. I mean he gave me a very big check when we parted, big at the time, $10,000 or something. … I said to him, "*You have given money to The Nation. How can you go along with this kind of, what do you call it, the court, jury rigged?"* So obviously, he felt (guilty) about it. And I had built his business from nothing to the biggest thing in the investment field. And he was appreciative, but he could not risk the business. And we parted.

Eileen: Was it after that that you suffered the recurrence of TB?

Bernie: No, I don't think so. Maybe. Yeah, it could have been.

Eileen: So you reconstructed yourself after that parting...

Bernie: Well I had other clients, and I started building this book company I had. And I got this idea for an annual book in investments that would do for investments what Lasser's *Income Tax Guide* did. So it was put out every year, and told you everything you wanted to know about investments.

Eileen: Did you ever start investing?

Bernie: No! Absolutely not!

So we put out this annual book and you had to put out other books, because that's... So I put out books on investing and real estate. A total non interest. A buyer came along, and I sold it for $100 … maybe $200. Anyway I did make an investment at the time. There

was somebody, I had built up a good deal of confidence. I don't know. Very smart. And he comes along with an oil thing, one of these oil partnerships. The company had been very successful and everything. He says, *"Here it is. They're digging this well two feet from where there's a tremendous strike in the Arabian Gulf!"* I put in for, I invested a share. I figured that it's like a poker game. If it hit, I'd be rich beyond any imagination. If it didn't, well, it wouldn't kill me. So it didn't. Lost the whole thing. And my wife laughed. She said, *"Well,"* she says, *"Good! It'll teach you not to go in for investing."*

Eileen: Now, did Ella stay home and raise the kids?

Bernie: Well, we had four kids. She stayed home. Well, no, actually (when) we had one, she did work at book production. But then she worked at home, and she got the idea when our oldest daughter started looking for a college, and she went around and she looked at all the data on different colleges. And the stuff wasn't organized. So Ella is not only an editor but an organizer. She ended up with a system where she had every college in the country on a file card, and worked out a system called *"Colleges at Your Finger Tips,"* where you answer ten basic questions: your SAT level, the competitiveness, your religion or not, location, cost, ten basic questions. And you came out with all the colleges in the country that met your need. And if you didn't have any or there were too few, you had to just adjust one of your requirements and you could turn to a page which was color coded. The top colleges were yellow, and there was blue, pink, etc. … And she did that at home at the dining room table with high school students she got in, neighbors, to help out. And published it first herself. And then McMillan took it over and published it. And then for the last four or five years there was a *New York Times Guide to College Selection*. And then after seven or eight years of doing it, she got tired of it. And, it's a lot of work each year before the days when you could do it now just on a computer instantly. And she gave that up. So she was always busy.

And then she started, I had Brenner/Mazel by that time, the Psychiatric Firm, and we collected rare books. We got into that. And we had quite a collection and built it up over the years. And, so she started a rare book business, but in a field where we didn't collect. In psychology, psychiatry. Figured it would relate to Brenner/Mazel. We could use lists of names, and such, so it was something to build on. So she did that and put out some catalogues for five years or so. And this from home, also. So she was always busy.

And in the last number of years she put out, got very interested in Ann Lindbergh and put together a book of quotes organized by topics from all of her diaries and writings. A beautiful little book, which Harcourt, who owned all the rights to her works, would not give permission to publish or wouldn't publish it themselves because they were reissuing some of the books. But Ella met Reeve Lindbergh, daughter of Ann Lindbergh, and (she) was very taken with it, and showed it to Ann. Ann had already gone over. She wasn't too aware of things, but she had her moments. And then Ella did a similar book on the writings of Mary Wallstonecraft. Have you seen that book? I'll send it to you.

Eileen: So you've both been busy.

Bernie: By the way, give me your card, I don't even have your address. I'll send you the Mary Wallstonecraft. And that, I published, I have a small publishing on the side. And a lovely book. And, now, she has just finished, I mean she's seventy-nine and she's just working away on this. She has to keep busy. We moved up to Lexington after forty years in our house in Weschester, which is still New York really, because of being near the kids and our grandchildren. Our two oldest kids, our daughter and our son, are up right near where we are, all within fifteen minutes and two little girls. Another daughter in North Hampton with her girl, her daughter. I have a son who's in Colorado Springs, and he has two girls, lovely girls. And, so we moved up to Lexington. It was a tough change for me to adjust, but I still have clients. I run down to New York. It's nice having the kids around. And I have a tennis club five minutes from my office. And, so life is pretty pleasant up there.

… So anyway, Ella was just finished a book, … a book called, *And Don't Call Me A Racist*, which is a Treasury of quotations, selections on the black/white divide. So these are short quotes. In fact there are close to over 900 of them in this book. And she's organizing under different topics, the history of racism, the present, the future ... and she has set the whole thing up on her word processor, and now she just made up seventy-five copies and sent it out to people. Is already getting some terrific comments back. And, so she keeps busy. Her aims is really to publish herself so as to give it away to organizations who can use it and distribute to their members and so forth. She figures it as a contribution.
…

Eileen: So the question is how did you get into really supporting political causes through direct mail.

Bernie: Well, I suppose you could say I always had an attitude toward direct mail and the stuff I promoted where I had no respect for things like the *Value Line*, the *Investment Survey*, or the tax thing. But for causes like the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* or CARE, these were worthwhile things. And that extended to stuff like the Museum of Natural History, intellectual stuff like the *New York Review of Books*. So in a sense, it's all related.

But I think the first direct cause I got into was Ellsberg and the *Pentagon Papers* which was about 1971, I guess, and that was because Stanley Shinebaum was managing the Ellsberg case out in L.A. (Los Angeles). In fact the case was going on in L.A. and Stanley was raising funds for it and kind of organizing the whole defense.

Eileen: How did you know Stanley?

Bernie: Now. I cannot remember. I didn't really know him before then. It may be, as happened with other things, it could have been from Jerry Peel who is widely connected. Or maybe it was Art Silvers of the *New York Review of Books*. I don't know specifically. But he called me from L.A., and I started doing the direct mail to raise funds. He was raising the funds in Hollywood with his methods. Like, I think you could have Barbara

Streisand sing you a song over the phone for $10,000. So between us we raised well over a million dollars. I raised about $600,000 on direct mail. He raised about the same through his sources. And then of course the case blew up and was thrown out because of the Nixon break in. And I was left with the legacy of the list of about fifteen or twenty thousand contributors, which provided a basis for promoting other causes as they came along. So I built lists and with Ken, when Ken came along.

Eileen: Ken Coplan?

Bernie: Ken Coplan. As we took on more organizations, we built more lists which helped other organizations and new organizations which didn't have any lists as of yet as when Sanctuary came along. We could draw upon these other lists. So that was really the basis (of the direct mail work).

And then, I was at one of the parties given by a good friend, Dan Bernstein. You may not know the name but Carol Ferrie, you know her, she was Carol Bernstein. And they used to have parties during the summer on their lawn for one organization or another. As you know they were pretty generous people. And Cora Weiss, whom you know, was there at one of them. And she was on the Board of the B'ak Mai Hospital, Medical Aid to Vietnam. This was about 1970, '71 with the war in full swing. And she said, "*Do you think anything could be done by direct mail for this medical aid to Vietnam?"* And I said, *"Why not!"* So I went out, up to Boston where their Board was meeting and I spoke to them and told them what they could do with direct mail. And we went a head, and in the next year or two we raised a good half million dollars or more and rebuilt the B'ak Mai Hospital which had been destroyed. Sent a lot of medical supplies. And Ken had just graduated from college, the University of Pennsylvania and was working there at Medical Aid to Vietnam as a volunteer. In fact, I think he had gotten a legacy from a grandfather of about $15,000 which he gave to them. I mean he was really into the movement, shall we say.

Well, he was so impressed by what we did with direct mail there to raise all that money, that he wanted to learn direct mail. So I gave him the privilege of working with me for nothing, I guess, and learning to write direct mail! And then at some point, we set up, I set up a division called Pro Bono Promotions. Ken was living in North Hampton, and he had a good friend, Tom Davidson, in Boston. And those two ran Pro Bono who took on as clients causes that needed help, that we could raise money for. And we used to joke that in order to be a client you had to be dead, dying, in prison or under indictment! Then you were qualified. Actually, I was so snooty, I turned down the ACLU when the head of the ACLU asked me to promote them, and *The Nation*. I said, *"Well, you're not radical enough. You're not in enough danger."* Well, I advised *The Nation* anyway. Gave them a few ideas that helped them to build up to a hundred thousand.

Eileen: So what was your first contact with Central America, ten years later after Vietnam?

Bernie: Well, there was the Vietnam. And I'm not sure which came first. There was the

Attica Case, the Leavenworth 7, Native Americans in Washington, the Silkwood. That was in '78. And that case went to the Supreme Court and they won it there. And so we raised all of the money for that.

Eileen: And of course during this time, you're not only using the list you created,

Bernie: Yeah, new lists.

Eileen: You're expanding it.

Bernie: Yeah, right. Center for Constitutional Rights. Actually, I'm still doing two or three hundred thousand a year for the last twenty years, some direct mail for them. And Kent State, Izzie Stone and his newsletter. Well, SHARE and NEST. Well, I was on the Board for the Center for Cuban Studies. Carol Ferry got me on that. I think she wanted to get off the Board, so she got me on! In fact she got me on the Board too, or Dan did, of WBAI, you know, the Pacifica Station here in New York. And the SHARE, NEST it wasn't until '87. The GOING HOME? And the Medical Aid to El Salvador.

Eileen: Which was in the earlier 80s.

Bernie: Was maybe a little earlier. Chile Humanitarian Aid. I don't know which, how it started, except of course that Central America was flaming at the time. This was the focus of everything. Well, with all the people I knew, I guess somebody must have suggested my name.

Eileen: What was your connection to Sanctuary? Do you recall?

Bernie: Well, by then, wait a minute. Sanctuary, did that come before the...the first mailing on Sanctuary was in '84. That was before we were on SHARE and NEST. So there wasn't a religious connection, put it that way there. So Sanctuary had to come from Tom Ambrogi or Gus. But how they got to me, I really don't know. I asked Ken about that, and he doesn't remember.

Eileen: I have a vague recollection that you were doing some work with Medical Aid for El Salvador.

Bernie: Oh yes. Absolutely.

Eileen: And that we knew some of the same people. And I think they referred us to you.

Bernie: Well, Ken was doing it and with Zimmerman, Bill Zimmerman. He could have been the one who did.

Eileen: That's my hunch, but I'd have to verify it with Gus (Schultz) or Tom (Ambrogi).

Bernie: It could very well be. So this was in '84. We did a test mailing and it was under

the sponsorship of the Christic Institute because it was under their tax deductibility. After that Sanctuary got it's own arrangement. Or was that through the Franciscans?

Eileen: We got it through the Franciscans.

Bernie: So it was that way for a number of years. So we sent out the first mailing, which we have here. And it, of course, Sanctuary didn't have any money. So we put up the money.

Eileen: Tell us what that means. How large was the mailing, and how much did that cost?

Bernie: Well. Here we are. (Bernie refers to some notes he's written) No. That's not it. Alright, the first mailing was 127,000 (pieces). Obviously we had a nice profitable venture, and you could sell stock on Wall Street. But we put the money, because all that you really had to put up was the postage, in cash, I mean. And I was willing to risk that. I mean, here was a hell of a cause, and I was happy to do it. I mean, this was, I didn't consider I was doing anybody a favor. We were all in it together. So we put up the money. And once we had the test, then we knew it was something where the cost would always come back. Although you can't always be sure of that. Things happen! Earthquakes, just when you've mailed out all your things. Stock Market collapses. So, on the basis of that test, we then sent out larger mailings and in fact, ended up mailing about four million altogether at a cost of about nine hundred forty thousand dollars, income of a million eight (dollars). In other words it made a profit of something like $900,000 and brought in about 38,000 contributors which, in turn, helped other causes.

When the GOING HOME Project (of the SHARE Foundation) started, we went out with a very expensive mailing. I remember 50,000 of a first class mailing. So that was first class postage and we advanced all that money. And we were reasonably confident because we could draw upon the Sanctuary list, the Ellsberg list, and other such things which we had built.

Tape Two, Side B

Bernie: So then, scheduled a mailing of 992,000 pieces. Actually it was over a million, but with *"duplicates received*" or *"moved*" it comes down to that. That was October, '85. Now that was a worry. By the way, in all these mailings, we always put up the postage, but sanctuary got the money in and they were very good about paying us our course, so there was no problem there. Fortunately, the mailings always got enough money in and once you had the list of contributors, then you had the *"house list."* Now when you went back to them, you had not a situation where you may get back a little more than your expense on a prospect mailing, but where you sent out a mailing that cost $10,000 and you got back over $100,000.

Eileen: Is that unusual?

Bernie: Pretty unusual, yes. Very unusual.

Eileen: What made sanctuary so effective in the mail?

Bernie: Because the government is so stupid! First of all of course, you had the whole Central America thing which had people, you know, worked up and involved. And then the government is stupid enough to indict ministers, nuns, religious workers. I mean that (laughter) is just throwing oil on the fire! I mean, crazy! They did some of the same thing with Lou Walker and IFCO on their Friendship into Cuba, that Friendship where they stopped them at the Texas Border but finally let them go through. But the government took over an old yellow school bus. Said it could have military use. So the government prevented that from going over and took it and put it in an enclosed area. Of course the government is stupid again. They didn't bother to take off Lou Walker who is a black priest, a minister; an eighty year old man, a nun or two. So there, sitting there in a hundred and twenty degree heat for about ten, fifteen days on a hunger strike. So the government finally gave in on it an let them go with the bus, and sent them to Cuba (laughter).

… So here's a case. You could send out a mailing as we did...

Eileen: And you wrote all these mailings.

Bernie: I wrote all the mailings, and Ken worked on getting them out. He helped. "*Shall the guests in our house be sent away to certain death?"* You know, and then, *"Do these sanctuary workers seem like criminals to you?"* And then we gave each sanctuary worker. Here's a thirty year old woman who's a religious worker. Here's a woman who's a nun in the School Sisters of St. Francis. I mean do these sound like criminals? I mean so with an approach like that, with a story like that to tell, how could you help but get the response like that.

But when we scheduled a million, that was a big investment. That had us a little worried. And right at that moment we went off to China. I had been over and giving some lectures in China. So Ella and I went over as guests. And some time afterwards the Friendship Society they had there, they've changed the name since, one of their head people was staying at my house. He was in this country on a way to a peace conference. He said, "*Why don't you get together a small peace delegation and come over as our guests."* Of course, to be guests you had to pay your airfare. They didn't have money for that. So I got together a peace delegation, which was Bill Coffin and his new wife, new at the time, and Tom and Donna (Ambrogi), and Cora and Peter Weiss, and Marilyn Clement, who was head of Center for Constitutional Rights then and I threw Ken in. We had about ten or twelve. And we went over as a peace delegation.

I remember we came in Beijing. We visited the Temple of Heaven. Beautiful Temple! Colorful! Surrounded by steps, something like the library, not as many as the library here at Columbia. So Ken and I, we start going up the steps. And I said, *"You know, we ought to offer up a little prayer for that mailing of a million."* So we got down on our knees there and sent up a prayer to the Temple of Heaven for that mailing. So maybe that's why

it was successful!

Eileen: Who knows!

Bernie: You see we were bringing every religion we could think of in on it! So we must have had faith of some kind.

Eileen: And that mailing did very well.

Bernie: That mailing did very well. So the sanctuary, say once you had the first mailings that brought in a contributor list, a *"house list*" as we call it, then you could be making money, you were certain to make money because those contributors give at a rate that you don't get when you just go out to general lists. So that's what carried sanctuary, I guess. That provided most of their funds, I believe. You also got funds from various churches and other organizations. And sanctuary did a terrific job in all that. And the Center for Constitutional Rights helped out on that case, on the political asylum or refugee status.

Eileen: The *American Baptist Case*.

Bernie: So actually all these causes or things I worked on, they all helped each other out.

Eileen: For you, what was the most difficult part of the experience, if there was one?

Bernie: I wouldn't say there was anything difficult. It was a wonderful experience! With wonderful people. I mean how else would I meet people like you, and Tom and Gus?

Eileen: Surprises? Or had you seen it all before?

Bernie: No, no. Well, let's say. Look, it was a gift for me. It gave me a sense of doing something worthwhile, so my life was worthwhile. And you asked me the other day over the phone, you said you might ask questions like, "*What advice do I give my grandchildren?"* You seem to have skipped over the children, but okay, you're taking the longer view. I said, *"No advice*." The advice I gave them was what they grew up seeing or seeing what I was working on or what kids grow up in any family and their parents are involved, as we were, with books, with magazines, with ideas and with causes and the idea of working for things and for other things. If they don't learn from that, then it's just too bad. …

But you're not going to be able to *tell* them what to do or what to think! You better think of that. Your kids are getting to an age where they're going to start rebelling

… So, I guess I've been fortunate. I know I've been fortunate. I've always been able to work on the things I liked and that I felt were important. I always had enough so I could go anywhere in the world when I felt like it. Somehow I managed to make things

symbiotic, like when I got into the book publishing on a larger scale on the Brenner/Mazel psychiatric professional books. I went over to England to make an arrangement, which I managed to make, with a big British publisher to be co-publishing copies for England and the world which was a big help. So as a result of that I went over to England several times a year over a period of years. Let's say I was always able to combine my work with my life as such. People ask, "*When are you going on vacation?"* Oh well, I said, *"I don't take vacations!"* If there happened a conference in Crete, the World Psychiatric Congress, well, naturally I have to go there. So, I guess I haven't had many surprises. And I guess I haven't had too many shocks or disappointments.

I have a great wife, and great kids and great grandchildren. And they're all doing, all my kids are doing what they like to do. None of them followed my example. None of them wanted to take over the book business and be a publisher. They were busy with their own thing.

My eldest daughter, she was working as a scientist. Is married to a scientist. My son is a scientist, an oceanographer, a marine biologist. My daughter in North Hampton did something different. She dropped out of college. Well, I guess maybe if she had picked a better college. She thought she'd like a nice, small liberal arts college. Picked a woman's college, Kirkland, up in upstate New York which was coordinated with Hamilton, a very good...and they didn't have. Small colleges are just not as good as a big college. You don't have the wealth of resources available. She dropped out. Anyway, she ended up going to the -- that's a terrible phrase, I always bring people up on it when they use something like *"ended up;"* nobody ends up; they're a work in progress -- she went to Culinary School of America and after a year decided she wanted to be a baker and apprenticed herself to a baker in North Hampton, which is very tough. And she became a very good pastry and dessert chef. Worked in a restaurant. Was dessert chef for the Lord Chaff Inn in Amherst. She still does cooking for weddings, barmitzvahs, such affairs. So she's done what she liked. And my son in Colorado, he's as smart as the others but applied himself differently.

… He was a star baseball player through college in the Midwest. Awards, went to Washington U. St. Louis, which Ella helped pick out because it was a less competitive college, certainly at that time, than Brandeis or MIT or places like that. And went out to visit a friend after he graduated in Colorado Springs. Loved the place. Settled there. Became a juggler.

… Now, how did he become a juggler? Thanksgiving was always a tradition in Ella's family and then in our family. And everybody would get together. And once we were together there, Carolyn was in Boston at that time. She took a clown course. So here at Thanksgiving in our living room, she's demonstrating juggling. Well, Lenny picks up the balls, starts right in and he never stopped. And became a juggler. Traveled with a tent circus, big tent circus, Big John Circus, throughout the West, Southwest, Southeast. Was a very good juggler. I mean clubs, flaming clubs, balls, hats, five, seven, I mean really good! And was also a jazz aficionado. Got a job in a small public station as a jazz

commentator. Ran disc jockey running jazz. And now is at another small public station at Colorado Springs. Loves it. Runs a couple of jazz programs. Now manages their office. Umpires in the soft ball/base ball leagues. And he's the off beat one. And who is it we talk about? We don't talk about our genius kids, you know, big scientists in computers. No! We talk about the juggler! I mean that's really interesting. Anyone can have a smart kid, a computer genius and whatever. But to have a juggler in the family! That's unique. So these kids have all done what they wanted to do. And we didn't tell them anything.

Eileen: You just lived.

Bernie: And we didn't want them to be doctors, lawyers and other such. No. What they wanted. Actually, this will interest you. Our two sons, the one in Colorado Springs and the one in, up where we are above Boston, are married to Catholic girls. Wonderful girls. Wonderful families. We love them. I was dancing with her aunt, the nun, at their wedding, Charlie and Ellen. She is not religious. I mean she just has...I don't think she hates the Catholic Church like so many Catholics, you know, many are anti-religious, the ones who have been brought up, and in Colorado Springs they're not terribly religious. But my daughter-in-law goes to Mass and the kids were studying catechism. And it doesn't worry me. I mean that there's catechism or Catholic. What really would worry me is just the idea of studying religion, but it doesn't worry me, because I figure it's just as likely that they'll come out hating the stuff (laughter) as following it. And what you tell them now isn't going to make a great deal of difference. It's not like they're being brought up in a community or a small town, narrow minded, far right, gun loving, Christian folk. …So they'll be exposed to enough things so that they're not going to be damaged by catechism or whatever. So, anyway, I have no advice to give, except to be lucky. To be lucky enough to be able to play tennis at eighty, and to work at the things you like all your life, and alright. That's my final advice. Be lucky and be born with the right genes.

Eileen: Thank you Bernie!

(After putting away the microphone and turning off the tape recorder, Bernie pulled out zerox copies of two certificates of appreciation he has: one from the parents whose children were killed at Kent State University and the other from the SHARE Foundation, both of which are on his office wall; with his permission I resumed taping and invited him to share the story):

Bernie: I said I don't usually take pride in things. But this I have on my wall.

Eileen: What is it? You have to read it out loud Bernie.

Bernie: Read it out loud?

Eileen: Yes.

Bernie: Well, after this case settled, the Kent State case, the parents of the kids who had been killed and who were suing, I guess, with John Adam's suggestion, I don't know how, but they made up this Certificate of Appreciation to me. *"To Bernie Mazel, a friend of the aggrieved, an enabler of the weak, a provider for the struggle, and a humanitarian who effectively challenges inhumanity in American Society, with appreciation and affection from the families of the victims of the shooting at Kent State University, May 4, 1970. Signed in the City of Washington, District of Columbia, December 12, 1970."* So that ... and the certificate of *Sembredores*

Eileen: Sembr*edores de la Esperanza*! (Harvesters of Hope)

Bernie: And a picture of the B'ak Mai Hospital that was rebuilt.

Eileen: And those are on your wall?

Bernie: That picture, I don't know where, but the others, yeah.

End of Interview

PRELIMINARY
END NOTES

[1] McGoin, Gary, Sanctuary: A Resource Guide for Understanding & Participating in the Central America Refugees' Struggle, (Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1985) p 14-29 Also see "At Work In the World: Reaffirmation of Sanctuary Policy", (University Lutheran Chapel, Berkeley, CA, March 19, 2006)

[2] Goodman, Amy, "Democracy Now" Interview with Rev. John Fife, 23 April 2007. Online posting. 29 August 2007 www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=07/04/23/135019.

[3] Ibid

[4] Ibid

[5] Oral History Interview with Norman Berryessa, dated March 3, 1998 & Oral History Interview with Rev. Gus Schultz dated March 10, 1998.

[6] Oral History Interview with Robert Fitch, March 25, 1998.

[7] Ibid

[8] "At Work In the World: Reaffirmation of Sanctuary Policy", (University Lutheran Chapel, Berkeley, CA, March 19, 2006)

[9] Oral History Interview with Robert Fitch, March 25, 1998.

[10] See Church World Service "Basic History." Online posting 31 Aug. 2007. www.faithstreams.com/topics/members-and-partners/church. Also see Catholic Charities "Mission

& History," Online posting 31 Aug. 2007 <www.catholiccharitiesinfo.org/mission/history.html

[11] Oral History Interview with Rev. Robert McKenzie, January 21, 1998.
[12] Ibid
[13] Kinzer, Stephen, Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq, (Times Books, New York, 2006) p.99-101. The Reagan Administration enjoyed the support of the Polish Pope John Paul II who was a staunch anti-communist and a sharp critic of the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and the Base Christian Community movement throughout Latin America which he viewed as too closely aligned with secular and Marxist inspired movements. See Bernstein, Carl & Marco Politi, His Holiness: John Paul II and the Hidden History of Our Time, Doubleday, NY, 1996.

[14] LaFeber, Walter, Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America, 2nd Ed (W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1993)
[15] Brockman, James, The Word Still Remains, Orbis Books, 1982

[16] "From Insanity to Hope, the Twelve Year War in El Salvador, Report of the Truth Commission for El Salvador," United Nations, 1993
[17] Brett, Donna Whitson & Edward Brett, Murdered in Central America, (Orbis Press, Maryknoll, NY, 1988)
[18] Bishop, Katherine. "U.S. Adopts New Policy for hearings on Political Asylum for Some Aliens.", New York Times 20 Dec.1990, natl. edition

[19] Purcell, Eileen, "Marc Van Der Hout & the Sanctuary Movement," National Lawyers' Guild San Francisco Bay Area Chapter Testimonial Dinner, April 26, 2003
[20] See KRON TV interview with Sister Ana Maria Pineda, former parish associate at St. Peter's Catholic Parish in the heart of San Francisco's Latino Mission District during the 1980s.
[21] Funding Proposal to the United Church of Christ from Catholic Social Services, Archdiocese of San Francisco, 1984.
[22] See "Report to the Social Justice Commission of the Archdiocese of San Francisco from the Fact Finding Delegation to El Salvador," July 17-August 23, 1980, by Sister Sandra Price, ND, Stella Ampuero & Eileen Purcell.
[23] Ibid.
[24] CRECE, CARECEN and El Rescate are three of the Central American self help groups that were formed in the early 1980s. CARECEN and El Rescate continue to provide services for the Central American community in major U.S. cities.
[25] Oral History Interview of Rev. Gus Schultz, Rev. Bob McKenzie, & Rev. Marilyn Chilcote
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid. Also see McGoin, Gary.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Bishop, Katherine, "US Adopts New Policy for Hearings on Political Asylum for Some Aliens," New York Times 20 Dec.1990, natl. edition