

Nevada Test Site Oral History Project
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Interview with
Anne Symens-Bucher

August 6, 2005
Las Vegas, Nevada

Interview Conducted By
Suzanne Becker

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Produced by:

The Nevada Test Site Oral History Project

Departments of History and Sociology
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 89154-5020

Director and Editor

Mary Palevsky

Principal Investigators

Robert Futrell, Dept. of Sociology

Andrew Kirk, Dept. of History

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[00:00:00] Begin Track 2, Disc 1.

Anne Symens-Bucher: My name is Anne Symens-Bucher, and I was born in September of 1957, September 17th, which is significant in that it's the Feast of the Stigmata of Saint Francis of Assisi, so I love that about me. I'd say I was born into a Franciscan family in a Franciscan parish in Oakland, California. I had five priests in my family, growing up, Franciscan priests. So it shaped me, for sure, in a big way. It's also Constitution Day, and I can remember one of my great-uncles, one of the Franciscans, sending me a card when I was a kid, pointing out that I was born on the anniversary of the signing of the Constitution and on the Feast of the Stigmata of Saint Francis, these two traditions, how they came together in my life. And I think it was prophetic in a lot of ways that he would have said that to me. That same great-uncle was—

What was his name?

Victor Bucher. He was one of the earliest subscribers to The Catholic Worker newspaper, which I discovered when I went to the Catholic Worker, in New York City when I was nineteen years old. One of the first jobs I was doing was working on updating the filing system and I found a card, his original card, newspaper subscription in the files, as of 1936, and the Catholic Worker started in 1933. So I used to think that the beginning of my activism was my experience with the New York Catholic Worker, but I really think it was the Franciscan upbringing I had that took me to The Catholic Worker.

Can you talk about that a bit, what that was like, when you talk about a Franciscan upbringing?

Well, for me it was sort of archetypal. With all these priests in the family, there was always, it seemed like, a lot of family gatherings around ordinations or jubilee celebrations. We lived in

California, so a number of those would happen at the missions. So I have these memories of being a young child going to these missions and being in these old churches and the incense and the friar processions. I just loved it. I can remember as a child, I wanted to be a Franciscan, but then I also thought, well, when I get married, I'll have Franciscans as bridesmaids. I mean that was what it looked like. It made a big impact on me. When my uncle was ordained, at the time it was 1964 and my sister and brother and I were the little children who walked up the [aisle]; we were all dressed up and carried something in the front of the procession. I did that when I was like five years old for a cousin who had been ordained. Even as a very young child, I actually loved—

One of my favorite stories is my uncle's first mass. It was pouring rain, I was seven years old and all dressed up, and we were standing out, and in order not to be in the rain, we were inside the friary which is connected to the church. There was a door through the cloister and there was special permission trying to be gotten to allow my sister and I to walk down this hallway so that we wouldn't have to be out in the rain. The sense that I had of that as a child was that, you know, the pope himself was being contacted—and I can just remember, it seemed like it was a big deal to be getting this permission. Then when we finally got the permission, I can remember walking down this hall; it was just this dark hall with all these doors that were shut. And I can remember thinking, what was the big deal? What was that all about? Well, many years later when I was about twenty-four years old, I ended up working in that very same hallway, and it was a while before I realized, made the connection, that as a child that had been the same hallway that I had walked down. And so I was actually the first lay person, first woman to start working in the Provincial Office for the Franciscans. I did that when I came back from The Catholic Worker.

I lived there with Dorothy Day and that was a big mind-opening experience for me. I went to The Catholic Worker because I wanted to give my life in service of the poor. [That] is really what I wanted. I took really literally the notion that the extra coat in my closet belonged to the poor and I just wanted to live that way. I was attracted by those kinds of ideals, and not so much any kind of activist political analysis, which I didn't really have. So it was a very eye-opening experience to be there. And we went down to [00:05:00] D.C. and were part of a protest in front of the White House when President Carter was entertaining the Latin American dictators. I remember that vividly. My first demonstration before that was actually at Shoreham, Long Island nuclear power plant that they were putting in. That opened up all that world for me, and when I came back to Oakland to start a Catholic Worker, I had way more of a consciousness about it. So it was what was going on in the world.

Then in, I guess it was in 1981, [I] got to be friends with Michael Affleck. Now, I was wondering, have you talked with him?

No.

I mean he's another person that would be great to talk with.

I would love to.

Yes. By the way, he is going to come out here for our twenty-fifth Lenten Desert Experience [LDE] in March of 2006.

OK. Good. Good to know.

Yes, I called him up and I said, OK, it's LDE 25. You've got to come back. So he said he would. Anyway, we were friends, and he had approached Louis Vitale to do this eight hundredth anniversary of the birth of Saint Francis, Instruments of Peace project. I was just captivated by

the whole idea of the Lenten Desert Experience, which is what it was called, this going out into the desert for this forty-day vigil.

And this is out at the [Nevada] test site [NTS] that you do this.

Right.

Had you been familiar with the test site? Had you really known much about it before?

I knew about it. When I started working for Louis—Louis became the Provincial of the Franciscans right about the same time that I moved back from New York City to start a Catholic Worker in Oakland. And I wanted to support the house by the work of my hands, not just donations, which is the traditional way Catholic Workers are supported. So it just worked out for me to start working for him. It was very part-time and I was like a part-time secretary. As I got to know Louis, I got to know [about the NTS] because he had just come from Las Vegas, so hearing the stories.

But I hadn't known anything about it. I had been involved with a group called Pacific Life Community prior to going to the New York Catholic Worker. We were focused more on Lockheed Missile and Space. That was where I did my first civil disobedience. But I was very much at that point in my life looking seriously at civil disobedience as something I felt called to, and so the Nevada Test Site seemed like a place where I would want to be open to that. And we certainly had a story that nothing had happened there since the late fifties in terms of civil disobedience or any big kind of demonstrations, and was out in the middle of a very conservative part of the country, very remote part of the country, and that anything we did would probably have some pretty serious consequences.

There were a group of us who were actually being invited, as people who were planning to go, to have a reflection process beforehand. There was a number of us, mostly Franciscan men

and women who met on a regular basis to study, pray, discern about whether or not we wanted to act and do civil disobedience at the test site. So I was in that process leading up to going down for Holy Week of 1982. But I mean it took one time out there and I just was just blown away by the place.

“Blown away” how?

Well, first of all, I had a notion of the desert as a place that I would not sort of enjoy esthetically, so I was *really* struck by the beauty of the place. I wasn't expecting it to be a place that I would consider beautiful. So that was a large part of it. But over the period of that week, of going out every morning, just the rhythm of getting up early, going out there, the vigil, something about the *vastness* of the desert and being at the mercy of the elements and the wind and the cold and how it could change from one day to the next. It was profound for me to be in that kind of a ecological environment. And then just to *think* about what was going on, out of sight but close to where we were standing.

In that first year, that first Lenten Desert Experience, we actually were up the road.

[00:10:00] I'm sure you've been told this. We weren't very far from the actual entrance to the test site, in a spot that had been cordoned off for us. And so we would wander around in that area and we could still find bits of stakes from the tents that had been part of the place where the atomic soldiers had camped.

Camp Desert Rock.

Yes. And the paths, rock pathways that would've been created as part of that. That was very moving for me. I can remember—can we stop for just a second?

Sure.

[00:10:43] [At this point, the recording is paused and then restarted.]

I don't even remember now the name of it, I used to know, but one of the atmospheric tests was right before I was born in 1957. August, I think [Newton, 09/16/1957].

Several. I can look that up.

Yes. Anyway, but just—

Part of the Plumbbob series [5/08/1957-10/07/1957].

Yes. Thinking about how—I can just remember standing there and just like this just excruciating pain of, I was born into this age, like never a day in my life was there not a nuclear world, you know. That from the point of which I came into—and I had no choice about it. Nobody ever asked me how did I feel about this, you know, just something I was born into. And a profound sense of connection with the soldiers who had been there and, you know. So being in that place was really very powerful and transforming for me.

And then on Good Friday, we started from down the road and walked, did the Stations of the Cross and carried a cross up the road. It was extremely moving in every way I could imagine. I wanted to stay involved and I just wanted to come back again. We never thought that Lenten Desert Experience One was going to be Lenten Desert Experience One. It was just the Lenten Desert Experience. It was a one-time thing, and that was going to be that.

But when it was over, Mike [Affleck] was planning to move back east. He had been the one who organized the year and this was like the culminating event and Louis didn't want to see it end, so he expanded my job from typing letters to taking over the Instruments of Peace project. And largely what that meant was—I mean I was completely inexperienced. I hadn't organized anything ever in my life, any event or anything. So I was blindly learning on the job.

The second year, I was up in Oakland, and with [Sister] Rosemary Lynch and Judy Treichel down here, we created an event that was basically during Holy Week. It might've only

been Good Friday. I'm forgetting. It's amazing how these things used to be so clear in my mind. But in any event, it was a *much* smaller witness. It probably was all of Holy Week, now that I'm thinking about it. I came down here and we had different things each day, but our numbers were quite reduced.

And then at the end of that, really a sense of wow, we want to really turn this into something. Then Mike and Duncan McMurdy who I had been at the New York Catholic Worker with, we got together and said, let's go for another big event. That would have been '84. That became the third Lenten Desert Experience. And at the end of the third Lenten Desert Experience, we had a clear sense that we wanted to create an organization and keep this going, and so it was in August of 1984 that we officially formed Nevada Desert Experience. We chose the name to keep the connection to these first three LDEs so that there'd be some consistency. Then it became NDE, basically, how most people know us.

The first thing we did as NDE was we had a Franciscan Peacemakers event in October. It was to coincide with the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, and we invited [Father] Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest, to come out. He's been out several times since.

He was out last year?

Yes. So that began a style of organizing where we would invite people to come in and be speakers and then, create an event, and then go out to the test site as part of the event. So I've been basically doing that. It'll be the twenty-fifth one coming up here in 2006, I'm working on right now.

[00:15:00] *Wow. Did you have any sense that what you were creating was going to grow into something so huge and have this long of an impact?*

Not at all. I think probably if you had asked me then, I would've said, well, we don't want to keep coming out here because we want to stop this. Whether it was misguided or not, I don't know. We had a sense that if we could stop testing, we could stop everything because of the essential place that testing had in the design, development, and deployment of nuclear weapons. Of course, testing stopped, in theory. I mean underground testing, full-blown underground testing. And it didn't stop, really. Looking back, there was a moment, and the moment was missed; the opportunity was missed, and then the technology just passed the moment. Now the technology is so sophisticated that you don't really even need underground testing.

Right. They've moved on to different types of—

Right. It was sort of like when atmospheric testing ended. Certainly moving testing underground was a lot more safe in terms of health effects. But they also didn't really need to continue to test atmospherically, so when it went underground, it really took the head off the movement, the anti-testing movement which was quite strong, as you know. People were pretty concerned when they were finding strontium-90 in the milk of cows clear across the country.

Right, all the way up to New York.

Yes. So once it was underground, it was out of sight, out of mind.

Right. But there were some pretty big actions out there in the mid-to-late eighties. What were some of those first big actions like?

Well, the seeds of that—I would say that Nevada Desert Experience is like leaven. We've never had really big actions. For us, a big action is four to five hundred people. So the ones that were the *really* big actions, those were the ones organized by American Peace Test [APT] and other—I always forget the actual acronym—

The Freeze [Nuclear Freeze Movement]?

Well, American Peace Test, I'll get back to that in a minute, but there was the doctors' association, American Public Health [Association]—Jackie Cabasso could tell you about it. Have you interviewed her or Andy Lichterman? [Of the Western States Legal Foundation]

No.

There's two more people that would be important to talk to. Yes, the list goes on. Nancy Hale?

Nancy Hale?

Yes, Nancy Hale and Duncan McMurdy are actually married. And so what happened was, twenty years ago in 1985, we officially had been an organization for a year by that time. One of the things we did start to do in 1984, after the Franciscan Peacemakers, was approach Sojourners and Pax Christi and Fellowship of Reconciliation and a couple of other organizations to invite them to co-sponsor an event for the fortieth anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And folks from the Direct Action Task Force of the [Nuclear] Freeze Movement came to that event. Jim Rice was at Sojourners and he was the Sojourners organizer. He was part of helping to make that event happen. We held an August Desert Witness. He was also on the Direct Action Task Force with Freeze, so was Nancy Hale, and I believe Jessie Cox was, as well. She was in it from the start. But for sure Nancy.

So they came out and were captivated by the place, like everybody else who ever comes out, and said, we've got to do something here. That was the impetus for forming the American Peace Test. It grew out of that group of people who were really working within the Freeze Movement but *really* longing for more direct action. So they started this campaign organization at the test site, and then they were the ones who brought in the large numbers.

And so it was a very exciting time because, you know, you look back on it now. I mean it was a very dangerous time. It was a time of a lot of rhetoric about the Soviet Union. But we

didn't know what the impact would be. We just knew there was a lot of antinuclear fervor in the country, and more and more attention on the test site, which we were really happy about because when we first came out here nobody was, for the most part, doing anything. I mean the Franciscan community here would occasionally go out, small numbers of them. That's how Louis and Rosemary were engaged. But it was out of [00:20:00] sight, out of mind, and chosen for that reason. I don't remember his name. These things go out of my head. I used to go around and give presentations about this and I created a slide show, which I still have sitting on a shelf someplace. But the Atomic Energy Commissioner at the time, he actually said that the desert test site was a good place to throw used razor blades. So there really was this sense of it being a wasteland and not a place that anybody would—

Right. Which is so interesting because it doesn't matter whether I'm talking to, people who are environmentally minded or people that have worked at the test site—I mean the desert always has this image of just being this wasteland, this empty space. But anybody you talk to says it's beautiful out there and that it really is this moving piece of land and people are always amazed.

Yes, and I think for me, being out there, especially in different times of the year, being out there in the spring when the flowers were blooming, there was a sense of—like these flowers, some of them are so tiny that you have to get down on your hands and knees to see them, but they were all the more precious because you had to get down on your hands and knees and see them. And that was like an image for me of the place, that everything was harder, living here for me; the things that I took for granted about my spirituality and my groundedness, I mean it took *way* more focus, *way* more effort, like I *really* had to pay attention to stay on target with who I wanted to be, and sort of getting down on my knees and “where is the flower,” sort of epitomized that for me. *But*, for the effort that I put into it, the reward was also so much more meaningful

than if it had come easy. So you know what I'm trying to say? It was kind of the flavor of those flowers that continued to bloom in the most unexpected places, you know, were more precious to me than bouquets of roses because of what it took for me to see them. And just being out there, certainly several times during actual underground tests, having a real experience of being one with the earth and like a conduit for the pain. I can remember being out there one particular time where we just were weeping with the grief of it as there was a test. That kind of image of a conduit has really been lived with me. That I was a conduit that *we*, not just I, but that to get people out there, and this is largely how I started to see my role as an organizer and how *we* saw our ministry as an organization, was to make this possible; bring people out here, because once out there, there was a way in which the pain of the earth could be released through us and healing released back into the earth. I really hold it that way, that when we go out there, we are instruments of peace. Literally, we are instruments of healing of the earth and the earth of us, that there's *no* distinction. We put our feet on that ground and it's as if our souls open and we're connected into the earth; and there's just this flow of healing and life force. And I truly came to believe that that's what was keeping us from just blowing ourselves up. I remember seeing the movie *Broken Arrow*, you know, about all the near misses. It's like I don't even know how to hold that, except that because of so many acts of love and compassion, the world stays turning. *I think that's a really apt description of the Instruments of Peace, or looking at us, people, as conduits; that's a really apt description.*

So it's a complete physical experience, a whole-body experience, to go out there for me. And it never fails to not be that way for me, no matter how many times I've been there, and I've been there a lot: Twenty-five years, twenty-five events—more than twenty-five events—but just even the twenty-five Lenten Desert Experiences. There were a number of years when we went out

every day, and each time I went it was that experience [00:25:00] for me. It never wasn't. So I go because it changes me every time I go. My husband and I actually got engaged out there.

I wanted to ask you about that. I read about that. Did you meet out there?

Well, we sort of did.

And his name is?

Terry. He's Terry Symens and I was Anne Bucher. He was in the friars, which is how I met him. There was a class of novices who came out here for the first Lenten Desert Experience on Ash Wednesday. The whole class was here on the first day of the Lenten Desert Experience, and that was his class. So we were getting to be friends. He had been in the Air Force Academy and in the Marine Corps. Then when he was in the Marine Corps, a captain in the Marine Corps, he found out about Saint Francis and converted to Catholicism so he could become a friar. So he had sort of a reputation to live down, to say the least. And [he] did a civil disobedience out at [Lawrence] Livermore [National Laboratory] labs in I guess it was—I'm not remembering. Eighty-one or eighty—? Must've been '81 because I think it was before this one. If it matters, I could find out. Anyway, there were three friars. They were all told nothing would happen because at the time nothing was happening, and they all got thirty days in jail. So at that point, he became interesting to me. I was like, oh, hm, I want to know about this guy who would go from the Marine Corps to this.

That is interesting.

But, you know, I was very self-righteous in those days. Way more than now.

How so?

I just had a big attitude about somebody from the military joining the friars. How could they let him in? And I really came to be disabused of my self-righteousness through getting to know him

because really, the same thing that took him to the military, the same values, the same desires, took him to the friars. I could see that as I got to know him. A desire to serve. A desire to protect. A desire to defend. A desire to give one's life really at the deepest level.

Those are very interesting parallels.

Yes. And so we fell in love with each other and he left the friars. I love this story because, as a kid growing up, I always had this romantic fantasy about the big moment of —and of course being pretty much a feminist by the time I was doing all this, I was really tortured by this long, deep thing that I was going to be proposed to, as opposed to—it's not like it comes out of a vacuum, for one thing. I mean you're talking about marriage and all that. We were certainly heading in that direction. But I still wanted [it]; I mean it was just deep in me to want that. If he had said, "let's go out to dinner," I would've been onto him. So it was really perfect that it happened this way. And it was a morning I was cranky. We got out there and it was cold and windy and I was just—because we would go out and vigil when the buses were coming, stand for, I don't know, an hour or an hour-and-a-half, and then at the end of that we would go take quiet time in the desert and then we would come back and we'd have prayer. And just as an aside from that, I'm remembering, you were asking me what was transforming about the experience, when I say it blew my mind. That part of it, too; simply walking alone in the desert. For me, somebody who didn't ever take time to be alone and still doesn't really like it, it's easy for me there. There's just a way that my soul, my contemplative side, can emerge. So this one particular morning, I was in no mood to go for a walk and I wanted to stay in the van and he kept saying, Oh, come on, let's go, let's go for a walk, and finally I [said] OK, fine, and so off we headed. And at a certain point he found some rocks and we sat down and he proposed to me, gave me this little ring. It was totally perfect. I was so *stunned*.

And unexpected, I'm sure.

Yes, right, exactly. Then I thought, OK, this was not the way I had always dreamed of it. And then I immediately thought, it couldn't have been more perfect because so much of our relationship was born out of our time in that place.

That's awesome.

We actually invited Jim [James D.] Merlino to our wedding.

OK, he said that he had been invited to a wedding of two people that had met out there.

He didn't come, but he sent us a gift.

That's great.

Yes. We were pretty moved by that. We just totally fell in love with Jim. I mean that [00:30:00] happened really easily and fast, in probably the first few days of knowing him.

It seems like he, if I'm understanding it correctly, that he sort of had a hand in shaping how the actions, how things went down out there; how the relationship that was developed between, say, the Nevada Desert Experience and consequently other groups that came out and the security that was out there.

Yes, and I would say that was a place where us being a leaven was pretty deep because we just— did you hear my talk the other day, the little presentation I gave?

No, I did not.

I'm only asking because I would be repeating some of what I said.

Please repeat it for the tape. [That] would be great.

The flavor of what I was saying is we had a lot of ideas about how we wanted the campaign to be. We were really excited about Jim and Shelley Douglass and what they were doing at Ground Zero in Washington State, and the flavor of that was what we wanted to create here. Mike,

Duncan, and I were all Catholic Workers and had been shaped by that tradition, and we placed ourselves solidly in the tradition of Gandhi, Francis of Assisi, Jesus, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King and Cesar Chavez. That was what we were wanting to be about, and sort of in opposition to what we weren't enjoying about some of the other large-scale civil disobedience actions that were going on in places like Livermore. I had certainly had a lot of right-wrong thinking about that and I wanted to be in a place where I could be part of shaping and creating something that was different. So having said that, though, we still saw ourselves as—we saw that there were sides, you know, we were on one side, there was the other side, we wanted to be respectful and engage in dialogue. We had no idea where that was going to lead us, but we certainly saw that there were sides. And the closest contact we had in terms of a dialogue was with the police officers. We did do some coffee-and-doughnuts at places in Vegas where workers were getting on buses. We only did that, I think, once or twice.

Were you able to engage with them at that time?

I'm remembering one time specifically, some people would engage with us but I mean it would've been something we would've had to have kept up over a period of time. And I'm not really sure, you know, like why we stopped. I don't think it was a conscious "let's not do this." It was more—it just kind of fell by the wayside and then we just never picked it back up. During the first Lenten Desert Experience, because of where we were located at Camp Desert Rock, people were having to slow down their cars as they approached the gate, and so there was more ability for us to have exchanges. And we *did* have some. Somebody dropped off doughnuts one morning, coffee and doughnuts, and there was somebody who would throw rocks out the window with notes on it.

What kind of notes?

I think of support. I'm forgetting now exactly. Mike might be able to—

I was just wondering if they were hostile notes.

No, I'm not remembering it that way.

That's really interesting.

I mean what I'm remembering is that, wow, we're having a dialogue. We were very excited about it because we had been used to—I mean not that any of us had a whole lot of experience, but the stuff that I had done at Lockheed and Livermore was just *way* more confrontational. You wouldn't even *dream* of trying to have a conversation with somebody. It was not part of the role you played. So we were like, wow, look at this; this is starting to happen. And like I say, we didn't have any idea other than what Jim and Shelley were trying to do up at Ground Zero because they were engaged in the same kind of thing. They were trying to build relationships. So it was very quickly that these lines started to blur—the I'm on one side and I'm right and you're on the other side and you're wrong but I'm going to be respectful of that. We would've said, and I know I would've said, I have a part of the truth, they have a part of the truth. Because we were trying to be Gandhian and we saw it as experiments in truth, but we still believed that nuclear testing was wrong and it needed to stop. So it would have been interesting to ask me then. I don't know what I would have said. you know, well, how can you still hold that there's truth there or, you know, what does that mean to hold that? I don't know what I [00:35:00] would've said. I don't think it was very well thought out. It became very confounding and confusing to start to love these people, especially Jim.

Is that something that you ever expected?

No. Like I said, I had never had an experience of a security officer or police officer who was anything but unapproachable. He was *not* unapproachable, so we started approaching him. We

would talk to each other. He'd be out there with his coffee, and at first, we weren't talking. It was sort of like, I'm not going to talk to him about what he's doing here. Eventually it got to, OK, that's your position and here's mine and we can still have respect for each other, and then starting to have real deep affection for each other. I remember one time when Jim was, I think, really, really disappointed, and it hurt for me to see it. We had brought Jim Wallis out here, and we went on a test site tour. It was Louis, Mike, Duncan, Jim Wallis—do you know who Jim Wallis is, from Sojourners Community?

I've heard the name but I'm not completely familiar.

Anyway, so there were, Duncan, Mike, Louis, Jim, and me. Five of us. We came back from this tour of the test site. Have you ever been on a tour of the test site? Yes. So you know what I'm describing. I mean we were so just blown away, once again, like I'm using that term, but just to see the craters. So we came back from that, and the sun was going down, just a gorgeous sunset. We were all very shaken by what we had seen, and we decided we were going to just turn around and cross the line. And Jim was quite, quite upset. I remember he was saying, *How can you do this now?* It was the sense of, they've just shown you around and offered you hospitality, and now you're turning around, in this moment. How could you do this? That was probably one of the hardest times for me to ever cross the line. And so from that experience, I mean really just starting to ask myself, what does it mean to think that I'm right and how am I holding that? A lot of my ideas started to melt away; like I have to really rethink this or re-envision this. What does this mean? Because it was in these relationships that I was starting to be changed.

Now, I guess I have a couple of questions, and they all revolve around the same thing. I'm curious, what does it mean for you to cross the line? Because I think for people I've talked to, it holds different meanings for them.

It's interesting you would ask that because I'm trying to decide if I'm going to tonight. I'm kind of going back and forth and I'm wondering. It certainly had a lot of meaning for me then. Like I said, the first year, we thought we were going to be doing some serious jail time and I was really up for that. If you've read Ken's book [Ken Butigan, *Pilgrimage through a Burning World*, SUNY 2003], you saw the letter that I wrote to my parents. I mean I came down here, I was finishing up an eighteen-unit semester and I had three papers to write. I had all the books in my backpack and I was hoping they were going to let me take the books with me. That was the sense we had of it. So it was a complete surprise to find ourselves being kicked out of the courthouse. We couldn't get them to keep us.

They didn't want to book you or anything?

Well, we got down there and then had this incredible dialogue with the judge, Judge [William] Sullivan. Did you get a chance to talk to him before he died?

No.

Too bad.

And actually I just found out, only through talking to Rosemary, that he would've been a really interesting person to talk to.

Oh, yeah. He, over the years, I think really transformed. Something changed in him, but right from the first, you know, he wasn't going to keep us. And we had Daniel Ellsberg with us. That was really sweet for me because I had been at the Catholic Worker with his son Robert, who was here this weekend. I actually hadn't seen him since '78 or something. We were able to have breakfast this morning and I really enjoyed reconnecting with him.

So I mean the nineteen of us who did that first action, we thought we were doing something pretty serious and then we ended up not even having anything happen from it. But

then of course you probably know that after I think it was the third Lenten Desert Experience, I got arrested a number of times during that event. That was when they [00:40:00] started having, for your second offense you got two days, for your third, etc. So we were starting to do some jail time, two days, three days, five days. A number of us were doing that and it was starting to look like it was going to keep going that way.

So for me in those days, you know, I was really wanting to put my body on the line in that way and willing to go to jail and seeing it as redemptive, I guess. Now, I think it has a lot of meaning for people who come here and it's their first arrest, because I don't underestimate what it calls forth in somebody to decide to break the law. We are raised to respect the law and to fear the law. There's still a lot that has to be overcome to just be willing to do that. Even if you could be 95 percent sure that there aren't going to be any legal consequences to it, it's still a big step. So I'm not sure what meaning it holds for me here. If I *do* cross the line tonight, it'll probably be for the companionship of being with whoever else goes across. It doesn't hold the same kind of meaning for me now, in this place, because I know that for the most part probably nothing is going to come from it. I don't have any judgments about other people doing it. It's just for me personally, I'm wanting to figure out—I'm trying to be in a place in my life where I'm connecting to what I'm feeling and needing, and not just acting because it's the thing to do or other people are doing it. But that's really to figure out what need of mine would be met.

Well, that makes sense, you know, and I think for a lot of people, it seems that that crossing-over is very personal, you know, connected personally to what's going on.

And I guess for me, then, using that image of feelings and needs, it met *very* big needs for me for integrity and for meaning in my life at the time that I was doing it a lot.

Right. Right. And did it have a spiritual place, as well?

Oh, sure. My father was a district attorney, so I grew up in a family where law was certainly respected, and it was a big deal for me to explain that to my parents. But what was, I think, so compelling for them was basically what I was saying to them was, You raised me with these values and it's these values that are taking me to this place, and they're the values of the Gospel.

Was your family supportive with your involvement?

If I had to answer yes or no, then I would say yes. For sure, they were scared and worried about me, but never once did they try to talk me out of it or tell me they didn't want me to do it or that they didn't approve or anything. It was more sort of through tears of OK, you know, and then just once again I think it was very moving for them to be told, it's how you raised me and the values you've given me and this is how I'm trying to live out the faith that you've gifted me with.

My dad has a first cousin who worked at Lawrence Livermore labs for his whole career. And I actually got arrested there in the same time frame that Terry did the thirty days. They were giving out stiff sentences. I got a twenty-four-day sentence there and went to Santa Rita to serve that time. And sometime soon after that, I guess we had a family picnic or something and this cousin was there and there was kind of everyone holding their breath when we both arrived. But, you know, there was never anything but a lot of love between us. *That* relationship taught me more about nonviolence than anything I had ever done at the Nevada Test Site. Even more than with Jim because here was my *cousin*, my own flesh and blood, who was actually designing these weapons and *doing* it; firmly believing he was called to it by God, and that was really intense for me. I mean I don't think Jim Merlino had the sense of divine call to be out there doing what he was doing, and he was not actually designing the weapons. But I remember taking a walk with my cousin at that picnic and [thinking] once again, [00:45:00] how do I hold this?

Here I have this sense that I'm being called to this by God, and so does he. How do I make sense of this? How can I hold on to this anchor of righteousness and rightness when other people have the same clear sense and they're doing just the opposite?

You just have touched on what I think is one of the major, I guess if you want to say themes of this whole era, of this whole thing, and particularly you talked earlier about clearly there are two sides. Even though people were friendly, there was the workers or the security and then there were the folks protesting. But the thing is, is exactly what you just said. Both sides, for the most part, feel very strongly and are fiercely dedicated to what they believe.

To upholding their positions. Right. It got very clear to me pretty early on in this experiment with truth that the experiment was going to take me to places I didn't expect to go, and one of them was, what would it look like to let go of my right position? So I started to be willing to do that. And it was very scary because I think right-wrong thinking meets needs for predictability and order, and those are big needs, you know. Integrity. Meaning. Holding onto those things really gives us a sense of purpose and identity.

[Checks telephone] Let me just catch it.

Sure. Let me just pause this.

I say that with tongue in cheek. So yeah, it's hard for me to get back into it. I'm solidly in a different place now, so I'm trying to—it's easier for me to see this, these two spectrums, than how it shifted. But I would say it shifted because of relationships, one relationship at a time. Jim Merlino was a big piece of that. Bob Nelson was a big piece of that. Have you interviewed him?

Yes.

General [Mahlon] Gates was a piece of that. During the first Lenten Desert Experience, we invited him over for—I made cookies and lemonade, and he came to our office [on] the Westside

of Las Vegas. It was Mike and Duncan and I. We sat with him and he talked to us about how—I mean it was very, very instructive for me. I came away from that really getting that his life had been informed by World War II and mine had been informed by Vietnam. And he grew up with a faith in our country, our country do or die, our country always right, the rightness of our position. I grew up during Watergate, the Vietnam War. I have never had an experience of blind trust of the government. I'm blown away that people have it. I don't know how one has that, because to me, growing up when I did and everything that I've seen since, I have to be convinced that there's a reason to trust, not the opposite way. Yet so many people, in *spite* of all that, continue to trust. So it was very helpful for me to realize that he was shaped by one paradigm, I was shaped by another, and we were looking at the world in very, very different ways.

I think that's great, though, that you were able to see that. Some people are so fervently bonded to their positions, they're not going to budge. So I think that's a really interesting thing that you were able to recognize that, and also that people like perhaps Merlino and Mahlon Gates were able to understand where you guys were.

Well, and you realize rarely we even engage in these kind of dialogues. We just follow the party line and you just don't talk to people. There are things you don't talk about. Everybody has family members. I mean we're not that removed. Everybody has family members on one [side], if you're going to use the line image again, but we learned you don't bring it up. I mean in some families people don't speak to each other, even, maybe because the conflict is too painful. But if you do speak, there are certain things you speak about and certain things you don't. And we don't have models for how to have a dialogue. And so once we started trying to have [00:50:00] one, these relationships—I would say we only met with General Gates the one time but it made a

big impression on me. For sure, Jim. My cousin. And then my best friend, growing up—have you ever heard of Elizabeth Clare Prophet?

I haven't.

Well, at the time that her name was being flung around, she was sort of—it was kind of the time of the cults kind of thing. And right out of high school she hooked up, or in college, and joined this, and she's still connected to it to this day. It's the Church of Something or Other [Church Universal and Triumphant]. It has probably has changed over the years. I look at it now and I don't know; were our fears grounded or not? But I loved her and I could not let go of that relationship. We hung in there with each other in spite of *very* different political views and very different world views, and some stuff that could have torn us apart. Same thing with my cousin. Same thing with Jim Merlino. So I mean those experiences of relationship were, when I say the two sides, where I started and where I am now, that's what's in the middle. It was engaging—staying in relationship. And so what we were learning was, that's what it was about. Let's get in there and be in a dialogue. Be in relationship. And we took a lot of flak for it from people who said we were soft

From other groups?

Yes, like peace people thought we were just getting too soft out here. Once they stopped prosecuting people, the civil disobedience was too easy and you're just doing the same thing over and over. But we really felt that was what we did best. It was our contribution, to bring people out to the desert and then just keep working on this peace around relationships. It's been more removed for me, just being in Oakland. The last many years I've really been more in the capacity of trying to hold the organization together through a lot of fundraising and event organizing and not so much being here on the ground and having the opportunity to engage in

those kind of relationships. But it certainly laid the groundwork for that in my life. As somebody who's really been actively trying to live nonviolently, it's been my main experimenting ground for that in my life. That and, of course, raising kids.

How many kids do you have?

I have five. So I have lots of opportunities to practice my nonviolence.

Are they out here with you?

No. My daughter actually was going to come, my oldest, and I was very excited—none of my kids—they've been to Vegas with me but I've never taken them out to the test site. Mostly they were here when they were little, I would bring them, you know.

Right. Do they know about the test site?

Oh, yeah, they know about it, and it was exciting for me that my daughter actually wanted to come. This was the first time. OK, sorry, I got to take this call.

That's OK.

So what I would like to tell you about is this relationship that is newest in my life with somebody, I spoke about it when I talked. And I discovered this thing called nonviolent communication about two-and-a-half years ago. Are you familiar with it? Marshall Rosenberg?

OK.

I was attracted to it because of the word "nonviolent" because I *have* been continuing to just *want* to live this more deeply. For sure it's been hard for me to be raising my kids and often *not* feeling like my nonviolent values are being lived out, although I'm trying to. Like it's easier for me to be nonviolent in the sort of political-social change context than it is in my own family. So I'm always eager for tools, and I picked up this book and actually started taking some trainings. Marshall came the Bay Area soon after I'd picked up the book. My husband and I signed up for a

couple. He was there for ten days, [and] we ended up, between the two of us, going every day. We could not get enough of it. It was so exciting. And so we have jumped in with it, and we're both in the leadership program this year and have done a lot of trainings. It's like learning a new language. It takes a lot of practice because we're so oriented to speak the way we speak, which is inherently a language of right-wrong thinking and moralistic judgments, retribution, punishment, and reward. And for me, the struggle *always* with the nonviolence is just how to rid myself of my self-righteousness, and this whole piece about I'm right, they're wrong. And I've tried everything I could think of. It's a spiritual practice for sure. And it's not to say I [00:55:00] wasn't making progress, but it was sort of like digging a hole with my fingernails, and now somebody's handed me a shovel. So that's like the difference with what this practice has been.

And I'm telling you this because I think that what *happened* to me in meeting this man that I've been calling Paul [a pseudonym] was proof positive that something had *shifted* in me, because I *totally* do not believe he ever would have even approached me if something hadn't changed in me. What happened was there was a little bio of me in some booklet he was looking at. We were at a conference I had organized. And he approached me and he saw in there something about the Nevada Test Site, so he said to me, *Oh, so you're an activist.* And I turned and I smiled. I was actually setting up for a nonviolent communication workshop at this conference because now everything I do, I bring NVC to it. We had a training here as well. So I was kind of distracted but interested somebody would approach me that way. But also wanting to not be labeled that way, either. I don't really think of myself as an activist. I just want to be a human being. That's just another way of separation.

So he said to me, *Well, I'm the guy who made the hydrogen bomb.*

And I turned and I said, *Wow! I mean I was surprised and I think I said something like, Wow, how do you feel about that?*

And he said to me, Oh, I don't have any regrets. I don't have any regrets about that at all.

But I was immediately curious about why he would share this with me, and delighted to actually have somebody standing in front of me. It was like this experience of, wow! There's no buses zipping past me at the Nevada Test Site. Here's *access*. Here's a *person* who's walked up to me, seems to be OK with the fact that I'm an activist, and we're talking to each other.

So I said to him, I would really love to have a dialogue with you because that's really been the essence of our campaign out at the test site, is to have a dialogue. Would you be willing to have lunch with me?

So we set up a time to talk, and over lunch he shared a lot of the stuff he had worked on, and he did it in a very matter-of-fact way. He was also the guy who made Agent Orange.

That's pretty amazing. What is his name?

Well, I was calling him Paul. Yes. I'd be willing to show you what I wrote about him. I'm being a little careful. I asked him—

Sure, and that's something that can be off the record, as well.

And it may be that he would talk to you at some point. I mean I'm sure he was out at the test site over the years. But I want to give you the flavor of it and then you can decide how you want to pursue it. I did ask him if I could share his story at this conference and he said I could. And I've written it and then somebody—people have actually asked me, because I read my talk, and they have asked me for copies and I want to check with him before I put it out in the world. I'm the only person he's ever—I mean he told me, he said, I've told you more now than I've ever told anyone, including my wife. And over a period of four days, he just started to share with me.

That's really remarkable.

It was incredible. It was incredible. By the end of the week, he asked me to help him share a burden, and then proceeded to talk to me about a specific weapons system that he had developed. He was crying at the time he was telling me, and somebody called him for the keys to the car and it sort of broke the moment. But at our closing liturgy of that conference, I sat with him and we held hands through the whole thing. I had *such* a deep affection for him by the end of this week, and all I had done was really just be present to whatever it was he had to say, and noticed in myself that it wasn't even like I was having to *work* to not have judgments of him. I just didn't have them. And that, to me, was the measure of this two years of nonviolent communication I had been learning. There it was. And I really had a deep sense that it was only because of that, that something in me was so different that he could even approach me. So I offer it because to me, at least at this point in my life which I'm hoping will still continue for many years, the whole practice at the test site and this whole campaign has culminated in this moment right now and in this relationship with this man. And I called him. I had ten minutes on the program to introduce our nonviolence piece and to share about our campaign at the test site, so I called him and I asked him if I could tell his story.

[01:00:00] *Certainly if there is permission, I would love to read that.*

Well, you can read it. I want to show him now what I wrote before I put it out there for anybody to do anything with. But he immediately said yes, if you want to share it, whatever way you want to use it. We talked for another two hours on the phone and he told me more as we talked. So I'm really wanting to continue this relationship with him. By the end of the conversation I said to him, *I love you*, and he said, *I love you, too*, and I do. I mean I have this just deep love for him and for this pain that he's carrying and doesn't think he can face. He's convinced

that if he lets it in, lets in what he's done, he just can't go there. And yet he's going there with me. He is going there. And I want to go there with him.

How is it, do you think, that he even came to approach you? I mean that's really remarkable.

Well, he saw my little bio. I think he just saw that I had been involved in a campaign at the test site, and I think he—this was about the second day of the conference. He must have sensed something, sensed in some way I was approachable. Now, twenty years ago, I don't think he would've come up to me because I really had an intellectual idea about each person having the truth. But as I said to you, I had a very definite, clear sense of my truth is more true, or certainly it may not be more true, it's more right. How can you move from a position of the wrongness of these weapons? I mean they're wrong. So I'm not there anymore. And it was huge for me to actually put that out in this gathering. It was very scary for me. Because I think that a lot of solidarity and community is created around the idea of right, we have the right position. And I've been watching that these last few days, just watching how that keeps getting created as people get up. I don't know, have you been in there and been listening to?

Yes. Yes.

So you see, you know. Were you there last night for the man from the Marshall Islands?

Yes, I heard the first part of that.

Or this morning for Dr. [James] Yamazaki. We're so horrified by that, but I think it's easier to go for the more surface way of connecting to it than to really let it penetrate us, because to me when I let it just sink in, all that I have is grief; just profound grief at the deepest level. The way that I see us wanting to connect and create solidarity, I think, is way more surface. Like, how horrible and what a terrible thing—, sort of the way that we jump on and say, yeah, the United States is so bad.

Do you think that some of that goes back to what you were saying and also perhaps what Paul was saying, that when you actually—you said you have a lot of grief and when you actually let that stuff in, when you actually think about the magnitude of it, I think that's something that is really difficult for people to wrap their minds around.

Yes. I mean Joanna Macy, you know, she's—do you know Joanna Macy's work at all?

I've read it.

I was able to attend one of her “From Despair to Empowerment in the Nuclear Age” retreats that she used to do back in the early eighties. There were about fifteen of us at this first retreat. Now all her stuff is big and huge and I actually did an intensive with her a couple of years ago. She's been one of my mentors in the world. But she talks about how we have this idea or this story that our hearts will break, that we just can't let it in because our hearts will break. You know, our hearts are not going to break. In fact, it's the letting it in that transforms the world. I believe that, truly. And I believe that is where we want to go as human beings. I believe that's where Paul wants to go. I believe he wants to be able to let it in, but he can't do it by himself. He's never found anybody in his life who he could trust to go there with him, and I'm sure that's because of just the way that we all function in our communication. If it's painful, we don't talk about it. You know, it was a job, it was a good job, [01:05:00] the world in which he lived, there wouldn't have been anybody saying, what about the costs of it? I mean not only did he make Agent Orange, but his son was one the guys who sprayed it over the jungles. And he said to me, All we knew was that it was toxic. There was just a container and it had a toxic sign on it. We didn't know what the stuff was. They didn't have protective clothing or gear. They were told it was OK to work with and they believed it.

Boy, it just repeats itself.

Yes. And his son, I said, Did he have health problems? And at first he said no. No, no, no, and then he proceeded to tell me, Well, yeah, in the first two years after he came back from Vietnam he had a lot of health problems but he kind of gave up pursuing them, and then he said to me, Now he has Crohn's Disease and we don't know if it's connected to Agent Orange. So just *that*; if he had done nothing but *that*, just imagine what's living in him around the fact that *he made* the substance that has now poisoned his son.

In this relationship with him, if I ever had a doubt—I think intellectually I was there around the idea that we are all human, we all feel the same thing, we all need the same thing, we are all one, we are interdependent, there are no opponents, there are no enemies, there are no sides, there are no lines. This is where this campaign at the test site had brought me before meeting Paul. But *now*, it's *embodied* for me because I *know* that this *grief* lives in him, in spite of all of his denials about it, or in spite of his first couple of days of him telling me the story about how he didn't have regrets. I mean *even* as he was *saying* that to me, even as he's saying to me, I don't have regrets, he's saying to me, I can't let it in. He's telling me he can't let it in, but he's *letting* it in. In the very telling of it to me he's letting it in: If I let myself believe that I have killed hundreds of thousands of people, how could I live with that? And telling me about the people that he's known who have either—he said to me, All my colleagues have either died of cancer, because cancer is the disease of his work, they have lost their minds, or they have taken their lives. And he's about to turn eighty. The day that I talked to him he was on his way to the doctor. And I said, Will you please let me know what happened? So he e-mailed me back—he had bladder cancer at age thirty-three. He's going to have to have surgery, and he has a collapsed lung. He's

been fighting health problems his whole life and he's getting ready to face this round. So, it's all there. It's right there, and it's right on the surface.

I was sitting there this morning just reflecting on what a privilege it is for me to know him. I really have the sense that I never crossed a line again anywhere, and this is I think some of why I'm struggling with where do I want to put my body, you know, does it have the same kind of meaning for me? What needs would it meet? I am *longing* to be in relationship with this man because I really believe that in *this* relationship there is healing and there is love that's transforming the world, and that's what brings peace into the world.

And while I do not have any regrets about our campaign or my part in it, I really see that *even* with all our best intentions to be nonviolent, to be loving, the signs we made—we always were wanting to be careful to let the workers know that we were trying to reach out to them, that we didn't like what they were doing but we loved them; we just didn't like what they were doing. To make that distinction. I see now in such a big way, that's not a distinction that they're going to be able to make, for the most part, most of them. I'm sure they would've preferred that to people out there angrily yelling and calling them Nazis or something, but the bottom line is, just the very act of being out there in opposition to what they were doing is going to set up a resistance in people, a defensiveness in people. And so I'm really thinking a lot about all the ways I could try to, you know, this degree of separation of people who have family members in the military or working in these industries, they're all around us. They're in our churches. They're in our communities. They're our neighbors. To start talking with them because I really am [asking myself], where am I going [01:10:00] to put my energy for the next years of my life? I'm wanting to go in that direction, personally feeling more called to experiment with nonviolence there and see how that unleashes peace in the world.

I don't mean to cut this off. I just need to make a break on the [recording track].

[01:10:25] End Track 2, Disc 1.

[00:00:00] Begin Track 2, Disc 2.

We're just at a little bit over an hour, so we can start wrapping up, if you want.

Yes, if there's something else you want to ask me.

Well, gosh, I have so much more that I want to ask you.

Well, we can also talk again. I mean when are you trying to wrap this up?

This project goes another year.

Because I'm coming down—I'll be here in March for Lent.

OK, great, I would love to sit down with you again. I guess just to wrap it up, in light of the conversation that we just had and some of the things that you just said, I'm curious how you, having been involved with the Nevada Desert Experience from beginning to present, how you see the role that you collectively have played in this story, and particularly with what you just said. What direction do you see it going, or what is its continued role in this story?

I don't know. I love that question and it's been one I've been thinking about. About four years ago, I guess, we were at a low. We've had some real serious moments in our organizational life where there was no money, and staffing problems. After the underground testing ended, it was really hard to continue, and people were asking us, why are you guys even still out there? It was really this idea that we had to overcome that it was all gone. It's easier for people to understand what we're doing *now*, but it takes a president and an administration to come in where it gets very *clear* for people to turn their attention back to this issue. So at the point at which we were in serious trouble, about three or four years ago, because I still work for the friars and the justice peace office, I can kind of step in with that umbrella and take care of the baby. I'll step in and I'll

do the fundraising, I'll organize the events while we have no staff, and we'll keep this thing going. At that time, I was very aware that, you know, I was nineteen when I went to the New York Catholic Worker and early twenties when I got involved in this and I'm about to turn forty-eight and solidly middle-aged. There's no doubt about it. And while I'm still enjoying the mentoring of people like Joanna Macy and Louis Vitale and others who have gone before me, I'm wanting to—my image is like this. I'm wanting to extend my hand, my arm, because I would've enjoyed more of that when I was a young person. So I consciously have been trying to do that. And in getting some grants, was able to hire first Amy Schultz and then Zach Moon. And Zach I've actually known since he was a little boy. His mom did the twenty-four days in Santa Rita with me.

Oh, really? I'm going to talk to Zach Moon at the end of the summer, so that'll be great.

Yes. Yes. So that's been really sweet. He's moving on from NDE. I don't know if you knew that. He's taken another job, which was one he couldn't turn down and I understand that, but we're going to miss him a lot. It's been a real joy to have him on staff.

So I think one of the visions for me of this organization is to bring young people on board, and we're starting to be able to do that. We've never had this many young people at one of our events. It's really astounding to me how many young people are here, so I'm excited about that. And this immersion experience that I basically created because I knew I could get funding for it. There was a Franciscan group that, you know, I talked to the guy. He said, well, it has to be a new project.

And I said, well, what about this?

And he said, yes, that sounds fundable.

So that's how—but I really love the idea of it, you know, the sort of linking justice, peace, and environmental sustainability issues through the lens of nuclear testing, so—

They link very well, I think.

Right. So that was what Amy was ostensibly hired on to do.

That's interesting.

And it's been rough because most of our energy still keeps going into organizing events at the test site. So we really realized we're going to have to start making some choices. And we're torn because we do see the deep transformation that comes when people go out there and want to be able to continue to do that, but we also would like to be able to put some energy into doing these immersion experiences to link the issues. But you know even as I'm talking to you and it's getting more clear to me in terms of answering this question, I would [00:05:00] say that doing this piece is really more about people. How do I articulate it? It is *not* really doing the work of dialogue and relationship-building with the people at the test site. We've all but abandoned that in some ways. It's really about creating a space. Just now, were you in there when Erik [Thompson] asked, for how many of you is this your first trip to the [test site]? *I was astounded. I really thought this was like folks who've been out here before, with a few new people, but—*

Yes, there was quite a few people.

A lot of people for the first time are going out there, and I know for most of these people it's going to be an incredible experience of transformation and they will take that back into their lives. But does it really change the structures? Or maybe as fast as we might want to see them change. I'm hesitating here to go too deeply into this because it's not that well-thought-out for me, but I do know that after 9/11 I had a clear sense of wanting to collaborate with people that I had not wanted to collaborate with prior to 9/11. For example, parallel organizing all these years with groups like APT, and then APT basically came and went. But Western States Legal Foundation [WSLF], has been around as long as we have. And Jackie Cabasso and Andy were

people for whom I had a lot of respect. But they were doing their piece and we were doing our piece, and our piece was faith-based, and—never the twain shall meet. After 9/11, because I'm in Oakland and they're in Oakland, they put out a call to form an organization that ended up being called People's NonViolent Response Coalition [PNVRC]. And I was there. For the first eighteen months of it, I was at every meeting and really had a sense of, "we can"—not wanting to let anything divide me from anybody ever again. And it really was with a sense of, "let us begin for up to now we have done nothing." Not in a negative way but just wow, I thought one thing and now I think something really different. There was also a piece for me, in that I have something to offer about my own experience that's transferable, it doesn't have to be kept in this little bubble of the faith community. And I also have something to learn; I wanted to be open to that, where I had consciously walked away from it [before]. I don't want to do it that way again. I'm going to go do it a different way. Now I was coming back. I want to know. I want us to work together. It was out of that relationship that I pushed for this event to be, for us, a collaboration across faith lines, to do something with peace groups that were not—

It's really neat.

It has been. And I think in terms of our evolution, ten years ago we did our first big interfaith event, and that was where we were at the time. Now, ten years down the road from that, we're really—I'm excited. You've asked, what is our role? I do see us as leaven, and I like that image.

I think that's a great analogy.

Because it doesn't feel bigger and grandiose. It doesn't feel like trying to take credit for something that we weren't about. But still, I'm wanting to be seen for how we've been here, plugging along all these years, and being the leaven to some of these other things being able to be born. So I'm excited about where that will take us from here. For Jackie Cabasso to come here

and be here for the whole entire event is like hugely moving to me, because I know she could be anywhere in the world, including Japan, center stage right now, and she's here from Thursday to Sunday.

That's pretty amazing.

Yes. So I'm excited about deepening these connections with folks with whom we're working on the same issue. At the same time, in my own personal life, I'm being called in a little bit of a different direction. It's been hard for me at different moments during this event to be in the room with the way that people are getting stirred up around enemy images—is how I'm kind of interpreting. It's my interpretation, and I don't want to be there. I'm wanting to really be in this place of loving George Bush and loving everybody who ever did all the things that I thought were horrible. What would it mean to open my heart there? And that's where I want to be. So I'm wanting to trust that. And I worked past my fears about sharing it in the group. A number of people have come up to me [00:10:00] literally and started to weep over what was moved in them by what they heard me say. I think that we're all walking around wanting to be liberated from our right-wrong thinking.

I'm excited about where that might take me, and I don't know. I was thinking for some months about inviting Paul to come to this event, and I didn't do it. I'm kind of glad now that I didn't because I really want to be patient with this relationship. I'm going to go see him in October and I think I may invite him to come for Lent, maybe come out to one of our things in Lent, and I have a feeling he might come. I'm just wanting to really be present to whatever, wherever that takes me, and I imagine it could take me to some incredible places.

So I'm excited. When I started this journey in 1982, I was a novice and I wanted to learn. And I knew I had a lot to learn and I was really excited to learn. I wanted to get in there and really be transformed. And I still want that. It's one more layer.

That's a good journey. Quite a journey. Well, I thank you so much.

You're so welcome. It's a privilege for me and I really appreciate the opportunity to reflect on it with you. It's helped me get clear.

Great. Anytime.

What I would enjoy doing, if you'd like, is leaving you with my talk, if you want to read it.

I would love to.

You're going to be around, right? You can just give it back to me? It's the only copy I have.

[Paper presented at 2005 August Desert Witness]

OK.

[00:11:51] End Track 2, Disc 2.

[End of interview]