U.16 Long Civil Rights Movement: The Women's Movement in the South

Interview U-0490
Helen Matthews Lewis
28 May 2010

ABSTRACT – HELEN LEWIS

Helen Lewis describes growing up in Cumming, Georgia, and her memories of the racial violence and racism in the town. She talks about attending Bessie Tift College and hearing Clarence Jordan give a sermon. She describes her experiences and activism at Georgia State College for Women, especially her involvement in the Campus YWCA. Through the Campus Y, she took a trip to Hartford, Connecticut and participated in a "Students-in-Industry" project. She discusses Georgia politics during the 1940s and describes a time she was arrested for "disorderly conduct" after attending an interracial party. Lewis discusses her decision to marry Judd Lewis as well as expectations of young, college-educated women. She talks about "the long women's movement," her perspective on feminism, the women who influenced her, and how she engaged the women's movement in the 1970s. She also discusses her experiences as a female faculty and the gender discrimination that she faced because she was both a woman and married to another faculty. She describes her involvement in establishing an Appalachian Studies program and how she became involved in social movements in Appalachia. She also discusses her time as staff at the Highlander Research and Education Center and how she contributed to the popular education center.

FIELD NOTES – HELEN MATTHEWS LEWIS

(compiled May 28, 2010)

Interviewee: Helen Matthews Lewis

Interviewer: Jessie Wilkerson

Interview Date: May 28, 2010

Location: Morganton, GA

THE INTERVIEWEE. Helen Lewis grew up in Forsyth County, Georgia. In the 1940s she attended Georgia State College for Women, where she was involved in the campus YWCA and interracial organizing. After graduating in 1946, Lewis entered Duke University, where she met and married Judd Lewis. The two of them moved to Charlottesville, VA to attend the University of Virginia, where Lewis earned her master's in Sociology and wrote the thesis "The Woman Movement and the Negro Movement: Parallel Struggles for Rights." In 1955, Helen Lewis took a job at Clinch Valley College in Wise, VA, where she eventually became involved in the social justice movement to address the oppressive practices of the coal industry. She eventually developed curriculum for an Appalachian Studies program. Lewis left formal academia in 1976 and continued her commitment to democratic education as a staff member at the Highlander Research and Education Center in New Market, TN. There she worked on economic education programs, women's cooperatives, and environmental justice issues.

THE INTERVIEWER. Jessie Wilkerson is a graduate student in the Department of History at UNC-Chapel Hill, currently conducting research for her dissertation which will explore social justice activism in southern Appalachia, with special attention to women's activism, from the late 1960s through the 1990s.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW. Helen was a generous and warm host. When I arrived at her home, she showed me around her house, telling me about the art and objects that she's collected—from family and friends and from her travels. These art objects all had a story and mean a great deal to her. Helen showed me her gardens and explained how she came to be in the house where she now lives. It is next door to the house where her sister and brother-in-law lived, though her sister passed away last year. Her family gave her a couple of acres on which to build her house, and she explained how she drew up floor plans and left them on a tree trunk for the builders because she had to be somewhere. The house is wonderful, with a big community room with a wood stove in the center, with bed and bath on either side. She also has four gorgeous cats that laze around and seem perfectly content. Helen fixed us lunch and then we sat down to get started on the interview. About fifteen minutes into the interview, a thunderstorm rolled through, so we paused for about 30 minutes. The machine

was damaged in the interim. I ended up using my ipod to record the interview. The audio recording is not as clear as it would have been with the other machine. Helen has told her life story in numerous interviews, so her stories are very clear and well-told. Our conversation was interrupted a few times as Helen checked on dinner. Even when we were not recording, Helen continued to talk about her family and her experiences.

CONTENT OF THE INTERVIEW. Helen Lewis describes growing up in Cumming, Georgia, and her memories of the racial violence and racism in the town. She talks about attending Bessie Tift College and hearing Clarence Jordan give a sermon. She describes her experiences and activism at Georgia State College for Women, especially her involvement in the Campus YWCA. Through the Campus Y, she took a trip to Hartford, Connecticut and participated in a "Students-in-Industry" project. She discusses Georgia politics during the 1940s and describes a time she was arrested for "disorderly conduct" after attending an interracial party. Lewis discusses her decision to marry Judd Lewis as well as expectations of young, college-educated women. She talks about "the long women's movement," her perspective on feminism, the women who influenced her, and how she engaged the women's movement in the 1970s. She also discusses her experiences as a female faculty and the gender discrimination that she faced because she was both a woman and married to another faculty. She describes her involvement in establishing an Appalachian Studies program and how she became involved in social movements in Appalachia. She also discusses her time as staff at the Highlander Research and Education Center and how she contributed to the popular education center.

TRANSCRIPT: HELEN LEWIS

Interviewee: Helen Lewis

Interviewer: Jessica Wilkerson

Date: May 28, 2010

Location: Home of Helen Lewis in Morganton, GA

Length: One audio file, approximately 198 minutes

START OF INTERVIEW

Jessie Wilkerson: Now it's on. Okay.

Helen Lewis: Okay, we were talking about when I moved to Forsyth County and discovered that this was a county with no African Americans, no blacks, in the whole county and that some ten or fifteen years before had had this real race riot kind of--not a race riot. They had accused this black of raping a woman, or something, one of those episodes, and they ran every black out of the county, took over their farms and whatever and they had to move. I was told stories about how they hung blacks around the courthouse. I know they at least lynched the guy that they were accusing of this, and I don't know how many others. Some people maybe have done some research on it, but the stories were told. I could just see bodies hanging all around the courthouse in my mind as to what happened. So it was kind of a really [pause] horror. And then blacks coming in through the town on trucks to deliver stuff to the stores were afraid to get out of the truck. They would hide in the back of the truck. I found this to be just horrifying, but somehow I never quite got it connected with doing anything about it or thinking about it in that way.

My father came home from the mail route one day, and he said he saw this old black man bicycling through town and he was on his way to Gainesville. And he said, "I'm worried he's got to go through Chestatee because that's where the--." The young Chestatee boys were the ones that started the riot. They threw all the blacks out, the rowdy boys of Chestatee. He said, "He'll never make it to Gainesville," so he gets in his car and he said, "I'm going to go find him." So he goes and picks him up and takes him to Gainesville and comes back, so there was that little bit of episode.

Then this teacher comes to town--and I was telling that story when the storm hit--who had this black woman who was a companion, maid, person who'd always been in their family. And she taught music and the woman lived with her, and the boys from Chestatee came with torches and surrounded her house and made her get up in the middle of the night and take the black woman back to Alabama.

JW: Oh, goodness.

HL: That's when I was in high school. So those were my experiences in Forsyth County. There was a sense of horror, but I had not connected it with religion or anything. My sister and I had gone through the regular ceremony of being saved in the Baptist church and going to the mourner's bench and joining the church. And so I ended up going to a little Baptist college, Bessie Tift College, in Forsyth, Georgia, which is not Forsyth County [Laughs] but on down further south. At that particular time I had this Bible class that made me begin to think more critically about religion and about the Bible. That was when Clarence Jordan came to do a chapel service, and I had never heard of him. Chapel was required and I'm sitting in chapel, paying no attention, and this young man who had just graduated from Southern Seminary told how [Jordan] had

bought this farm in south Georgia, and he was going to have an integrated communal farm with blacks and whites working together. [Clarence Jordan] had re-written all the gospels, the *Cotton Patch* versions of the gospel, which he had written them as if they were talking about today. He told the story of the Good Samaritan in which the Good Samaritan is a black man, and he tells it in a Southern dialect, almost, is the way he talked. He says here's this preacher running down the road in his Model-A Ford getting ready to go to church and he's singing "Brighten the Corner Where You Are" [Laughs]--he acts it out--and he says, "Oh, look at that poor fellow over there. Well, I don't have time; I've got to get there and open up the church and see how many people I can get saved today," that kind of stuff. And the Good Samaritan ends up being this old black man in a wagon who treats the guy and then at the end it's like, who is the Good Samaritan? So it was like [Laughs] a flash of light or something. I call it a conversion experience. I said, "My God, that's what religion's all about. That's what it's all about." [Telephone rings] And so it was from then on that I became an activist. [Answering telephone]

[Break in recording]

HL: That was my experiences there. I ended up not having enough money to come back to college, so I worked for a year as a secretary to the county school superintendent in Cumming and the two of us ran the whole school system. [Laughs] Now they have about fifty people.

Of course Cumming has changed. It was a real backwoods little town at that time. It was really mountainous. It was our first move to what I call the mountains. Now Appalachia legally includes Jackson County, but we were more like hill country.

We were not--. The hillbillies lived up here, [Laughs] you know, more in the Blue Ridge area or something. But when we got to Cumming there was a lot more country or mountain culture there. Even though it's just forty miles from Atlanta, in my classes [in the fifth grade] very few people had even been to Atlanta, and they took us on a field trip. We'd go to the cyclorama and the zoo and that sort of stuff and see the city. So it was quite a real country town, I mean there were not even sidewalks. One year they did sidewalks and all the kids in town got skates [Laughs] and it was not safe for anybody to walk on the sidewalks because we were all skating. We even skated in the middle of the highway, all the way up toward Dawsonville. It was also a period where these--. Dawsonville was the moonshine capital of Georgia at that time, and all of these people who became race car drivers were running liquor every night down that one--. It was the only paved highway in north Georgia at that time, was the road between Atlanta and Dahlonega, which came through Cumming. And so the state police would be chasing these rum runners every night, so that was our sport, was to say, "Oh, there goes Parker C.," or "There goes--." We knew them all by name, the drivers of the cars. [Laughs]

JW: [Laughs]

HL: Let me check this and see if this [08:12]. [Break in recording]

JW: Okay.

HL: Okay. After a year back at home I went to Georgia State College for Women, so I was there between 1942 and '46 when I graduated, and there I became involved both with the Baptist Student Union and with the YWCA. The student YWCA was at that time pushing for integration, that was the mission of the student Y, and they would take you to integrated meetings and integrated conferences. They would have

these conferences at Paine College, the black college. So I got involved in going to integrated meetings. I spent a weekend at Atlanta University living in a dormitory with black students and had some really interesting experiences, changing all my views. [Laughs] Though I didn't have the real problem that other students did whose parents were real racist because my father, even though he was not an activist, was this gentle caring person, and they had no objections to my doing these things.

At one point after--. Well, I had three really great experiences. One was the conferences, the other was one summer another student and I did a student in industry project, which the YWCA sponsored, at Hartford Theological Seminary in Hartford, Connecticut. And we rode a Greyhound bus all the way from Atlanta to Hartford, Connecticut. It took three days to do it in those days. This was of course during the war and there were lots of problems with transportation and a lot of servicemen on the bus, and two nights you were on the bus. [Laughs] On the way we had this experience where the bus driver pulled off the road and left us all, left the bus, and somebody finally discovers the bus driver's not coming back and calls for somebody to come and get us and send a driver. We're late and they transferred our baggage and stuff and our bags got lost, and we end up in New York City in the middle of the night with no baggage and no place to stay and we've missed our transportation to Connecticut. So I said, "Well I've heard of Traveler's Aid. Let's find Traveler's Aid." [Laughs] So we stay at the YWCA downtown in New York City, and the next morning we don't know how to get back to the bus station except that I said, well, I know we just came straight down this street, so we walked fifty blocks back [Laughs] to the bus station and made it to Hartford.

We all had to find jobs, and it was a great group. It was about eighteen of us. There was one black student and one Japanese student who had--. Well he was American Japanese, but he'd been in one of the concentration camps until that summer and then he'd been released to go to MIT, and so my friend and I--. We lived in this co-op house and lived together and cooked together. The black student was from Harvard and came from a very upper class family who did not want him to participate because there were going to be these two young girls from the South there, whom they thought would mistreat their son. As it turned out he became one of our very best friends, and he and the Japanese guy and my friend Mackie and I hung out together the whole time and did all sorts of things together.

But we all had to find jobs, and I got a job with a plant that made something for this Norton bomb, for bombs for the war, and they also made these timing devices--which is like that I guess that just went off in the kitchen--timing devices for sunlamps and stoves and all that sort of stuff. They hired me mostly because of my Southern accent. They thought it would be funny to have this Southern girl running around being an expediter, and they would give me these things to find that didn't exist, like left-handed monkey wrenches and stuff, so that I would amuse people. But finally the guy who was the production manager looked at my little resume and saw that I had worked in the library, because I worked my way through college in the library. And he put me in this room with all of their patents, and I was to file and figure out all those things. He was married to--oh, gosh, who was it? Okay, that's another story.

Let me get my stuff out of the oven.

JW: Can I ask you how you ended up getting involved in the YWCA in the interracial work? How did you learn about that, because I imagine not everyone was open to doing that?

HL: Well, the Y at that time was a very important part of the whole college. The woman who was the Y secretary was on the staff, and they were given the job of doing the religious emphasis week, all the speakers for chapel, so they brought in all of these radical speakers, mostly from labor unions, and ministers who were really preaching social gospel. This was the time of the social gospel, which was pretty radical. Then people like Clarence Jordan came and he would do workshops, he'd speak in chapel. Frank McAllister from the CIO would come, Lucy Randolph Mason, who was this wonderful woman organizer, labor organizer, she would come speak. Everybody was part of the Y. They had three major student organizations, the YWCA, the sports recreation, and the student government, and they were equal in importance. Now later the schools got rid of the YWCA because it was so radical, but it was really radicalizing students. Now not everybody attended these things, but I just happened to be one of the ones that did, [Laughs] you know. And the YWCA secretary had an apartment, a sort of open place, where we would go for breakfast and pancakes and discussion. And every speaker we had afterwards we would have meetings with them and ask questions and sit around on the floor.

So everybody was influenced in some way through the chapel, because everybody had to go to chapel. And the religious emphasis week we would have these radical preachers: Charlie Jones, who was a Presbyterian minister at Chapel Hill who got thrown out of his church because of racial attitudes and what was going on in an attempt to

integrate the church at that time. This is the [19]40s, and at that particular point the segregationists in government had not quite caught onto what was happening, but they had already made the president of GSCW fire the YWCA secretary in the ’30s because she had taken students to interracial meetings. So what President Guy Wells, who was a pretty--. He was one of the Southern liberals--but he was not a real radical--but he wanted the students to go to these interracial meetings. He said they needed to meet and talk to educated black folks and talk to them about the problems because the problems would not be solved without them working together. So he told the Y secretary, you do it but don’t tell me, because he almost got fired. And he had to fire the Y secretary in the ’30s, and that’s part of this book that we’re working on now. But by the ’50s he was gone. [Laughs] The segregationist politicians had really taken over the government.

We had a little safe period in Georgia because a progressive governor had been elected for four years, from ’42 to ’46, the time that I was there. So there was a little bit of an openness there. As a matter of fact Ellis Arnold, the progressive governor, allowed eighteen-year-olds to vote, so we formed this big, Students for Good Government. And I worked in the campaign headquarters in the summer of ’46 for Ellis Arnold’s successor, because he couldn’t succeed himself according to the Georgia law, and it was another progressive. At that time they had something called the county unit system which was like our electoral college is. The popular vote doesn’t win; [Laughs] it’s the number of votes from each county. Since eighteen-year-olds could vote they had a whole campaign office with me and this guy from the University of Georgia heading that up, and we had students from all over the state dropping leaflets, doing speeches at Kiwanis, going out to get the vote, and we brought in this incredible popular vote and won the popular vote. But

we lost the county unit system and Eugene Talmadge, the racist governor, came back in and that was the beginning of another racist time. What had happened and the reason we got a progressive governor in Georgia was because Talmadge was the governor, and he had been trying to fire all the radicals and the integrationists in the colleges. And he did get people fired, both from GSCW and from the University of Georgia, so the whole college system in Georgia got discredited so you were not accredited any longer. So Ellis Arnold ran on that ticket and won.

JW: You were discredited if you had integrationists and progressives?

HL: No, the accreditation authorities over the colleges discredited all of us because the governor had fired the liberals,--

JW: Oh, okay.

HL: --because of his messing with the system.

JW: Right.

HL: And he had insisted on firing all the communists and socialists and integrationists who were preaching this and saying this, so by that time--. I mean people were afraid, and they had threatened to take all the money away from GSCW in 1935 because the YWCA had taken this group of students to Fort Valley College, which was a black college, and they had a discussion group going. So it's pretty hard to believe how really repressive it was at that particular time. And it's a wonder we were able to do what we did, and we were fearless. We didn't tell anybody we were going to these--. We couldn't tell and we'd almost like slip off, but there were some faculty that would take us. There was this guy in town who was a trustee. He would take some of the groups to these meetings, and all of these speakers--. The local paper in town did jump on us.

They had an editorial about me and Mackie, saying that we were little lost sheep crying our eye's out because we couldn't be in Father Divine's wedding, and he was a black preacher in New York who had married a white woman, and this was big news. He was Father Divine and he had married a white woman and this was this horror, you know. Anyway--.

JW: But they used that as a chance to call out you and your friend.

HL: Uh huh, said that that was our problem, and we had probably reported on what we had done that summer. We had gone to Hartford and were in this integrated cooperative house that summer.

So anyway, I graduate, I work in the campaign headquarters, we thought we'd won the election; we lost the election, so I was headed for graduate school at Duke. So I take off and go to graduate school at Duke. During that period of time Gene Talmadge got reelected, but he died before he got into office. His son Herman claimed to be governor; Ellis Arnold wouldn't leave until there was a proper governor; the lieutenant governor claimed he was governor; so there were three men in the state capital claiming to be governor. Finally the judge said that the lieutenant governor had to be governor. So at the end of my first year at Duke in graduate school I got a call saying come back and work for the governor, so I headed back to Georgia, because at that particular time I didn't have ambitions in college teaching. I was going to either be a labor organizer or somehow work--. I'd thought about going into politics because I'd gotten real excited working in the campaign headquarters, so I worked in the governor's office for a year, being one of the ghost writers, they say, writing speeches and answering letters and doing stuff.

Okay, one of the things I did that was kind of activist and involved during my college days was I had got very interested in the economics of sharecropping, so I made this big speech and wrote this article on sharecropping. One of the first things I had published--at that time my ambition was to be a journalist, I was going to be a journalist. I made this speech at the Georgia Baptist Student Conference, and it got picked up and published in the *Christian Herald*, which is the Baptist magazine, with my picture. I thought that was great, and then I get these hate letters from farmers, [Laughs] you know. I'm saying what farmers ought to do as Christians, you know, [Laughs] and sharecropping, so that was my big first publication.

JW: Now what did the hate mail say?

HL: Well they said that I was naïve and stupid and sharecroppers were not mistreated and, you know, real conservative stuff, no change. Arthur Raper at that time was writing, he was at Agnes Scott, and he was writing these books about sharecroppers. And I had read those and that was my big thing. I probably just plagiarized something out of his book,--

JW: [Laughs]

HL: --which was what my speech was all about. Anyway, that was the other thing in college. I changed my major from biology to sociology and the sociology professor was very encouraging in terms of all sort of activities. And he did a lot of work with the YWCA. So there were several faculty who were quite progressive and radical in those days. That's where my activism came from, was the YWCA, the Baptist Student Union, Clarence Jordan, Lucy Randolph Mason, those people that I heard speak.

So anyway, I'm back now, writing speeches for the governor of Georgia, and I get married. I had been at Duke and all these servicemen came back and I had been at a women's college all during the World War II and never saw a man and very strict regulations. So the first thing you do is get married, you know. I didn't want to get married actually. He did, very much, and so when I came back to work at the governor's office he followed me and enrolled at Emory. He'd been a graduate student in economics, and then he decided to go into philosophy. So he's in philosophy, and we're living on the campus at Emory in a little old trailer that they had brought down, this trailer village in the middle of campus, for all these veterans and their wives. You didn't have a bathroom in your trailer. There was a common bathroom, a common laundry space, and they were just these small trailers the size of a bed at one end and a sofa at the other and a little kitchen with a pump-up stove. [Laughs] So there we were, and in the morning all these wives were getting up and running up to the bathroom as all these young men students are coming from the cafeteria to the post office. [Laughs] It's a wonder any of them ever wanted to get married. And so many of these veterans and their wives had children, so what we would do in the summer was great. The men would come out of class, and they would take the kids down to a little depot where there was a train that would come in, watch the train come in, bring them back by the laundry room, stick them in these laundry tubs and give them baths and put them on their pajamas, [Laughs] and stuff, take them back to the trailer and put them to bed. And then he and his wife would sleep on the sofabed in the other end of the trailer.

Then we had an electric ice cream maker so we would stick it out in the yard and plug it in and yell and say, "Anybody got anything to put in the ice cream maker?" We

would have these big ice cream parties every night. So it was an interesting experience to be--. But at the time I did not really want to get married, and I was not really happy with the different role that I was playing. But I became sort of a good wife, and he wanted to go on to graduate school at the University of Virginia.

JW: Why did you get married?

HL: It was considered the thing to do. So I'm working in the governor's office, he's at Emory, and he would visit every weekend and of course my family liked him, my sister thought it was great, all my girlfriends thought it was wonderful and they planned what they would be. And so he does this really awful thing at a gathering, a party: He comes up with this ring and [Laughs] proposes, I mean makes a real definite proposal. I mean he'd been talking about it and I just kept saying, no, no, no. I was just caught. I was really caught, and being a nice Southern girl you don't [Laughs] talk back that much, you know. I mean now I think: Why did I do that?

But anyway, it was not bad. It was not bad. It was okay. But he wanted to go to the University of Virginia; that was the philosophy department. I did not want to go to the University of Virginia because I thought, okay, we had decided, we worked up this idea of, okay, we would have this perfect partnership, you know, we would have this partnership marriage and we would both teach in college and find a place where we could both teach. And so I applied to go to the University of Virginia and Floyd Nelson House, who had come out of the Chicago School, was there and he wrote back and said really you ought to go some other place. [Laughs] We don't have that good a program. But if you want to come we'll give you a Stokes Fellowship, which deals with race relations, and you will work on something that will be related to race relations, and so I thought,

okay, that doesn't sound too bad. He said we don't give a PhD, we just give a master's, so maybe we could work out something and maybe you could go somewhere else, so he was not real encouraging. I mean he said we'd love to have you, but.

So anyway, therefore I end up in that department, and he was quite a good social theorist, but also I had this Stokes Fellowship and I was to do something related to race. So I had read Myrdal, *American Dilemma*, it had just come out, and in the back was a little appendix that talked about the comparison between women and blacks or slavery and how similar it was, so I decided that that was what I would do my thesis on, was on the women's movement. So it's called "The Women's Movement and the Negro Movement: Parallel Struggles for Rights." Well in 1949 that was my thesis, and it was published in a little Phelps Stokes Fellowship paper, a booklet. So in some sense this was in between the suffragette movement, and a lot of my teachers at GSCW came out of that first women to vote, a lot of women teachers who were old suffragettes, and they pushed us really hard on the importance of a women's college, that women can do anything. If you'd been at the University of Georgia, they'd say, you'd be secretary; here you can be president. There you'd be a cheerleader; here you play the sport. I mean they pushed us to be feminists, you know, so I was already an outspoken woman student at that point, but not quite as strong in terms of marriage. [Laughs] It still was not--. I mean it still was the thing you did, and it was before the pill for one thing so if your hormones are raging you got to get married, so there wasn't any such thing as trial marriages or living with somebody or anything like that, so that's what you did. So anyway, we had a good time at the University of Virginia. It was not that bad.

A second research thing that I did was down in Southside, Virginia. In this community there was an organization called the Grand United Order of Moses, Inc., which was a black insurance company and funeral thing, which there were a lot of them in the South at that particular time. So I got acquainted with them, hung out there with that group of black families in the big conferences and things like that, and never finished that research. It ended up that it was a good experience, and I did write up a few little things but I never did what I should have done with that research because I didn't really have to finish it up. I just had to do a little report, and at that point I got a job. We were on the GI Bill and so instead of--. So I got offered the job to be the director of the Bureau of Population and Economic Research, which was a very good job, good paying job, and I would be working in that same community where I was looking at this Grand United Order of Moses, so I ended up doing that and that became such a big job. We were making a study of the impact of an industry that was moving into that community and what impact it was going to have on the transportation and what roads they were going to need and what facilities and resources they were going to need in that community for this factory. So this was when factories were moving to the South instead of moving away so this is like '48, '49.

I missed out something. In '48 before I went--. I'm still living in Atlanta on the Emory campus. I leave the governor's office and take a job for the summer working with the YWCA, and I am in the office and we have this group of seminarians who come down to do service learning jobs, service work, and they're staying out at the black college because there's one black student in the group. The Fellowship of Reconciliation, I think, was sponsoring them, and they asked the Y if we would have a

little reception for them. And so I'm working in the Y that summer and I said, okay, good, and I'll invite all these YWCA girls who are here for the summer. Some of them have just graduated, and they've got jobs and one of them was working with the Girl Scouts and stuff. So we had this reception for this group, and another black couple come with them, and the police raid us and arrest us for disorderly conduct and disturbing the peace. This is in 1948.

JW: They arrest all of you? How many people was that?

HL: About twenty-eight or thirty, with three blacks in the group.

JW: And they took you to jail.

HL: They didn't take us to jail. They pulled us out individually and the policeman said to me, "What would your daddy think if he saw you dancing with a nigger?" We had been doing this little play party game, something like the Virginia Reel or something like that. Then they gave us all a ticket and then we were to go to court. Well the day we were to go to court the Klan marched against us and Herman Talmadge was running this big newspaper, the *Statesman*, at that time so he jumped on the case, so we were getting too much publicity. So finally we had a lawyer, James Mackie from Emory, and he finally got the disturbance of the peace, disorderly conduct, dismissed. Oh, it made the front pages of the paper, the *Atlanta Constitution* and the *Atlanta Journal*, and listed everybody's name and where they lived, so girls lost their housing. Some of them lost their jobs. Their families went into hysterics because it said "arrested at mixed dance." So this was in 1948. That was another experience which was [Laughs] important in my life.

JW: Yeah, so what did that feel like, to know that the stuff you were working on was, that you were coming up against the authorities, against the media?

HL: It made me not trust the police from then on, [Laughs] and I still have a problem with the police, I think, yeah.

JW: But you thought you would keep working at it?

HL: Well I called my father and I said, "Look at the front page of the paper and explain it to your neighbors." [Laughs] He said, "I'm proud of you." My friend, Edie, got this telegram from her parents how ashamed they were, they were so upset, they were disturbed. I mean some of them had no, I mean just deserted their children, so I was lucky. I was really lucky.

Anyway, but at the end of the summer was when we moved to Virginia so I was in the middle of that when I remembered I hadn't told that story, which I felt was pretty important in my life.

JW: Yeah. [Laughs]

HL: Because now I was asked to do a sermon at the church, and I started it out with the first time I got arrested. [Laughs] It was the only thing anybody remembers. But I had used as a scripture this stuff from Exodus about the midwives who refused to kill the infants and they lied to Pharaoh, so they break the law and they lie to Pharaoh and it says that God blessed them, so it's like that thing about civil disobedience. "When Do Christians Do Civil Disobedience?" was my sermon. [Laughs] Anyway, so I started it out with the first time I got arrested so that was an interesting--. [Laughs]

JW: Yeah. [Laughs]

HL: Interesting little way to do that. Anyway, back at the University of Virginia, so we are there, and I'm doing this big research project and so, let's see. At that time Virginia had the first black student in law school, and he and I did several programs together about race problems in the South and the need for integration and stuff, so I didn't do much at that time except to do this--. Probably the most important thing was writing that thesis on women and blacks and the two movements, and they were so very closely connected. Susan B. Anthony [43:17] as abolitionists were walking down the streets of London because they were not allowed. They were made to sit up behind curtains, couldn't participate in the abolitionist conferences, so they said we have got the same problems; let's go back home and organize women. The similarities were so much the same, not voting, not having a voice, not owning property, couldn't own your own children; all that stuff.

JW: How did your department react to that thesis?

HL: Oh, they loved it, yeah. They helped me with it. There was no problem with that. It just kind of got lost in the library. It's interesting that in the '60s some of the students there discovered it, and I got calls from some of the students there about that paper, the thesis that I had written, so it was because then Betty Friedan and all the people were writing that same sort of stuff.

JW: I was going to say. [Laughs] You were ahead of your time.

HL: I was ahead of my time on that. I didn't realize it at the time. Anyway, that's going to be in that reader that the [44:42 UK] is doing. They're not going to do the whole thing but they're going to do portions of that, which will be nice that it gets some attention this late in life. [Laughs]

JW: [Laughs]

HL: So that's where I was. So I became kind of a feminist and integrationist, but what was happening was that I had left--. My husband and I both then get jobs at a new college that's being started, a branch college, by the University of Virginia out in the coal fields. And so in 1955 we go to Wise, Virginia, which is right in the far southwest--you probably know where it is, right in central Appalachia—just as the mines are being mechanized. Half the population is leaving, going to Detroit, Chicago and so forth, and that was one of the reasons for doing the little college out there, was that we were to take the brightest and the best and polish them up a little bit and get them up to the University of Virginia or somewhere out of the coal fields because there was not going to be employment, coal was dead, that kind of thing. I got to looking around and found that coal was not dead. [Laughs] They just were not employing anybody. I was fascinated by the differences between that part of the mountains and the north Georgia part of the mountains [where I had] moved, and the industrialization and the whole coal mining and extractive industries, so that became a real fascination for me and I started--. Also a lot of these coal camps were being destroyed. They started strip mining at that time and people were really beginning to object to strip mining. About sixty percent of my students were from coal mining families, so I started learning about coal mining. I had my students begin to do interviews with their fathers and do--. A lot of those little coal camps were just being destroyed and to collect the history of those camps and what those histories had been.

Then there was another person who was teaching at the college and she was a good liberal thinker. One of the things that we started talking about was that it's not that

coal is gone. The coal is still going out, they're producing more coal than ever before, but half the population is gone and all this unemployment and people have no jobs, and the communities are being destroyed, and they pay very little taxes. One of my students decided to do a paper on how much taxes the coal companies paid, [Laughs] so I had people doing those kinds of papers, looking at the coal companies. So he takes an adding machine--you didn't have computers and stuff like that--down to the courthouse and says he wants to check on how much, [Laughs] and people said, "Boy, you're going to get in trouble." You don't do that. Because the coal companies really came in and ran the courthouse as far as taxes were concerned. So anyway this friend and I decided that we would start something called a severance tax on coal, so we actually found some of the coal operators. There were some small coal operators that had their own little coal mines, and they were all in agreement with it. It would be like a half cent per ton of coal, and we figured out how much coal had gone out of that region in the fifty years that they had been mining coal and how much loss of revenues and loss of coal and that sort of stuff. This one guy who was a representative was going to take the bill, so we started this little movement on a severance tax on coal. So a lot of my work from then on involved the coal mining, anti-strip mining, severance tax on coal. What happened was that the coal companies sent all their big lawyers to Richmond, Virginia, not out to the coal fields, and defeated the bills, of course. Finally, several years later, they got a severance tax on coal and all the states that have coal have a severance tax on coal but we were not successful with our little [Laughs] operation at that time, but later it did happen.

The first project I worked on when I was there was--. I was hired both to teach the sociology and be librarian so I had a double job, but they would not hire me full time.

I was part time temporary. I was not covered by any of the perks because I was married, and the University of Virginia at that time would not employ both a husband and a wife. What they did was exploit the wives by having them work at this stuff but not be full time employees, although I was working full time--I was half time as librarian and half time teaching--so I don't know how they were able to do that. But anyway I started pushing for that. I mean I fought with the University of Virginia for [Laughs] fifteen years. It really wasn't until--. I don't think I was quite divorced, but what I did was I decided well okay, I did not have my PhD but neither did my husband. He had finished up a dissertation and then the department changed and they wanted him to change his dissertation and he said no way, so he did not get issued his [PhD]. I had all these courses but I did not have a PhD; I had a master's. So I decided to go back, and I applied and got a National Science Foundation grant to go for the summer to Berkeley, so I get on a train [Laughs] in West Virginia and ride all the way to California for the summer for this particular workshop for people who taught anthropology but didn't have degrees in anthropology. It was to be a degree program where you could get your PhD, but you had to go three summers and you would go back and do certain things within your class, like how you teach anthropology was what it was all about. So anyway I had this great summer in Berkeley, which is the year before the free speech movement, and every movement, every problem, issue, was being talked about and had booths all over the campus. It was the most exciting, [Laughs] thrilling experience to be in Berkeley at that particular time.

So I come back all ready to really do this, and the librarian is gone from the college, because I had been the librarian for six years--well actually four years, I guess--

then they had finally gotten a librarian and I was just teaching. So then I come back to teach my anthropology, because I'd already had anthropology, both at Duke and at Virginia, because both departments were a combination of sociology and anthropology. They were not separate departments, so I had had a lot of anthropology. Anyway, I come back ready to do that, and I have to be librarian again because their librarian is gone, and they promise me that they're going to give me a real job. Well they didn't. [Laughs] So then I decide, okay, after that I will go back and get my PhD. So I apply again for a fellowship, and I get a great National Science Foundation grant that pays my salary and tuition and everything. By that time I had gotten really interested in studying the coal companies and the effect on Appalachian culture and Appalachian problems and the history of Appalachia. I'd gotten immersed in the coal field stuff and particularly wanted to do something about the extractive industries and what that did. So I look around, and I could have gone anywhere in the world with that scholarship, [Laughs] it was so great, and what did I do? I go to the University of Kentucky because it's the only place that has anybody teaching anything about Appalachia, but when I get there the two main people who had written all these books about Appalachia, one was away for this year and the other one was dean and wasn't teaching, but I end up getting my degree. I stayed there for a year and a half and do get the PhD, but during that process I decide--. They will not let me do what I want to do, which is look at sort of a colonialism model and what has happened to Appalachia through the coal industry and looking at the coal industry, but I could study coal mining families. That would be okay, to study the families, so I do this dissertation on occupational roles and family roles and its relationship, and if you're working in coal mining--. So there was coal miners and other working and then

professional people. I go to the schools and I have these interviews and surveys with kids in the sixth grade because there were all these little feeder schools at that time, little bitty schools all over the county, so you would catch the whole batch because at the end of that if they went on to the big schools many of them dropped out. So I had all this stuff, but the process of writing that thing was just so--. It was not what I wanted to do, but anyway so I did.

JW: Well why did they force you into one topic and not let you do anything on the colonial model?

HL: It just was not a good topic. I mean I had to make it numerical for one thing. I had to count something. It was like that whole way of--. So I take this real good qualitative data, [Laughs] I had great interviews with families and the stuff with the kids, but I also go and interview husbands and wives about what they do and who is responsible, and is the macho coal miner more domineering, does he make all the decisions. Well it's not true. For one thing he's working at a place where he can't participate as much so his wife has to do everything. You can't call him on the telephone and say stop at the store and get something, plus the fact that he's in such danger that he may be gone at any time, so the wife has to take over more responsibility. But he also, because he is so macho and has this great macho job, he doesn't really have to show off at home. He can get up and cook breakfast for the kids. I just found that the role differences were not at all what I had anticipated, but it was not--. There are some people who find it to be a fairly good dissertation, but I should have been able to have written it up into a book, but I couldn't. I just couldn't go back to it. I hated it so.

JW: But again, you were ahead of your time, weren't you, in kind of complicating those gender roles--

HL: Yeah.

JW: --for working class people?

HL: Yeah, and I should have done more. I did write one or two articles that got published in journals, so that's about all that I ever did, so some of it did get published and some of it did get out. But I really got into then writing up this whole colonialism model and publishing that, because one of the things that happened was that as I was looking for stuff I got in touch with the Bureau of Mines. And I said have you got any studies about mine safety and coal miners and their families and no, they didn't, but they would like to have some, would I be interested in doing it, so I began to get grants from the Bureau of Mines. David Brooks was their head of this research thing at the time, and Lucille Langlois, who I still have as a friend, was there and they were really progressive folks who were very interested in coal mine safety so they had me doing studies of attitudes of miners toward safety and what was wrong with the mines and that sort of stuff, the first time that coal miners had ever really been asked to give their own opinions on coal mine health and safety. So I had these good grants from [the Bureau of Mines]. So I'm back at the college, writing a dissertation, with grants from the Bureau of Mines, and they still won't give me a real full time job. [Laughs]

JW: Because you're still married at that point.

HL: Because I'm still married. So I decided, okay, I will leave and go somewhere else to teach, so I go down to East Tennessee State College and I get a job there. They're starting a new program, a master's program, I can work with that, I'm teaching two

courses in anthropology and working on this grant. I take the grant there, very exciting. There was a young man who was my colleague at the University of Kentucky. He gets the job too because he's on these grants, because at that time I'm still not allowed to go underground and do any of the interviewing there. So I had to have a man to be able to do that part of it, so we collaborated on a good bit of that, studying coal mine safety and interviewing coal miners, and we did one pretty good little booklet on methodology of interviewing and that sort of stuff.

So we're both there doing this grant and teaching, and we have a lot of Vietnam veterans coming back. And they are upset because East Tennessee State University has a compulsory ROTC, so they want to have a survey or a questionnaire of students about how they feel about that. Well there's a new president at the college and at this time the whole student movement had started and people are revolting at different colleges. [Laughs] So they know something's going to be happening here, so what they do is they fire me and Ed Knight because all these students who are doing this, these Vietnam veterans, are in our programs or in the sociology department because we have this new master's program in sociology. We were accused of--. I was not teaching anything radical. I was teaching primitive religion and physical anthropology, [Laughs] but the stories were out that I had framed pictures of Marx and Lenin in my office. It was actually Max Weber and [Émile] Durkheim.

JW: [Laughs]

HL: And that I had a thing that said "Jesus was a hippy too." Well I must say that I had--. We had a march for Martin Luther King. A bunch of my students, we did a program on--. [Laughs] We did a light show and a thing on the music--. It was kind of a

sociology club, so I helped them do a California style [Laughs] light show and an analysis of the new rock music, Bob Dylan and the Beatles and whatever and so forth, and we put the words up there and had the lights going. So anyway, that--.

JW: Really radical stuff. [Laughs]

HL: Very radical stuff. [Laughs] So that's the only radical stuff I did, was the Martin Luther King thing and that, but I wasn't teaching it. They said that I had told students to burn their draft cards. This got published in the local paper there in--. Anyway, so what happened was the dean said that I was nurturing radical students, and I was smart aleck enough to say I thought that was what teaching was all about. [Laughs] But anyway, so what happened was when they fired us then the students did rise up. They did a big funeral for the sociology department, because once they did that the rest of the department, except for the two very conservatives in the department, resigned, so they got rid of everybody except these two in the whole sociology department that year. The next year they did the same thing to the political science. I mean the new president was out to clean out any radical stuff. They mocked a funeral, and those Vietnam veterans, and some of them were real bearded and stuff like that, got out and measured with tape measures the administration building, stood around the president's car. I mean they started doing freaky things, you know, just to freak out [Laughs] the president. But they cut off all the money for the sociology department. It was ridiculous.

So anyway, at the end of my two years at East Tennessee State, making my big exit from Clinch Valley, I am back at Clinch Valley and I'm still married and I'm rocking on the porch. They actually had offered me a job. They had gotten a big hunk of money to start a social work program, so they had offered me the job but they were not even

going to pay what I was getting at East Tennessee State. So I had said no. I turned it down, because I still was--. It was before I was [1:06:59 knocked out.] [Laughs] So they had hired this guy and he resigned before the school started, right before school started, so they're stuck with this program and this money and nobody to run it, and I'm at home, rocking on the porch. So they finally give me a job, a real job.

JW: With a real salary.

HL: With a real salary. So I end up with some retirement but not much because they ended up finally getting rid of that program after seven years. But at that point I had decided, okay, if I ever get fired again it will be for something. [Laughs] Before, it was all made up stuff. None of the stuff that they said was true was true. So I said, okay, one of the things I want to do is I want to take part of the money from my salary and have speakers come in, so I wrote up a whole proposal for a social work program, rural social work program in Appalachia, with Appalachian studies as part of it so that you know who you're dealing with and what you're dealing with. So they're caught, I mean they had no--. [Laughs] So I started this really great program. It turned out to be a really interesting, good social work program. I also placed students with United Mine Workers, with the anti-strip mining groups, with the black lung group, with the legal services groups, instead of your usual welfare department type thing. We had these seminars every Wednesday night which the students helped organize and plan but were open to the public, and one of them would be on strip mining, one would be on black lung disease, one would be on all these issues. One year we did the seminar on mountain music and we had all the local musicians come in. We turned it into--. When we had the program on black lung we had so many disabled miners come to hear that, because we had these

two doctors from West Virginia who had started the whole black lung movement come and talk, that we had to move to the gymnasium. We had four hundred and fifty disabled miners with their x-rays in their pockets to learn about black lung, and the students set up a little table at the end and said if you want to join the Virginia Black Lung Association, sign up here. Well there wasn't one but they organized one. This was also when I wrote the first thing on colonialism and said it's not fatalism, it's the coal industry, and that was published.

JW: Did people there read that stuff?

HL: Yeah. The coal company got really upset and they kept saying that I was a communist or something like that and trying to get--. But the chancellor stood by him. He said, no, she's just a shoutin' Baptist. [Laughs] She's not a communist. So, yeah, they were on my case and on my students' case, and finally they were able--. I thought we had a pretty good program going, and it was doing well so I got this grant to go to Wales for a year and live in a coalmining community and make a comparison between Welsh mining. John Gaventa, who had decided to do his research on Clairfield, he wanted to use the colonialism model, he comes to see me as a student at Vanderbilt. So we work out this deal where he's going to go to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, and if I could get a grant to come over we would work out a deal to bring some miners from the United States there and some miners from there here and try to make this connection, make an international movement of coal miners. That was our plan, so we start working on that at that particular time. So I go to Wales for a year. I come back and they'd done away with the program, fired everybody.

JW: Did they say why, or was it pretty obvious?

HL: The reason they said was that--. See the undergraduate programs in social work had never had an accreditation process because they were new. It used to be it was mostly just a graduate program. So they had started this accreditation thing, and so they came to accredit the program and we didn't get accredited, so they said it was because we didn't get accredited. The reason we didn't get accredited was because the college would not put any money into it, and they had to participate and put money into it. They were only using the soft money from the grant. But they were able to do away with the program, they said, because I hadn't gotten it accredited, but they put me in business and public administration, and I was not to take any students off campus, and I was not to have any outside speakers come.

See I had people like Harry Caudill coming to speak and all these people coming to speak and students doing all these things and we ended up going to hear Yablonski talk and also I took students--. I taught an urban sociology course, and we had to deal with urban problems, and so we go to New York and we stay and we study the Puerto Rican immigration to New York, and while we're up there the Young Lords had taken over this church, and they were like the Black Panthers. So they let us into the church where they were taking over before the police had busted them and they said, well, you know we probably will be busted by the police pretty soon and probably killed, anybody that tries to do any change gets killed, and of course there was Martin Luther King, there was the Kennedys, all that had happened by then. We leave there and the students are really--. [Laughs] And we get up to Times Square and we go into this record shop, and they're playing "Oh, Death," which is a Dock Boggs piece, and Dock is one of our neighbors, and he had been in my classes some and been interviewed by the class about his

coalmining and his coalmining songs. Then we walk out and the news was that Yablonski and his wife and daughter had been killed. And it looked like the assassins probably had come from our district, because it was a big Boyle district, so because I had taken students up to hear Yablonski speak--. I mean the students and I sat up all night long in the Y where we were staying, talking about it that night. If you had planned any educational experience to shock your students you couldn't have done better. It was just incredible that all those things happened right there. So it did; it affected all the students, every one of them.

But anyway so we get back, and at that time the FBI is checking all around, so the union had gotten against me too so they were after the college to fire me, the coal companies were after the college to fire me, and the chancellor said, I'm caught in a hard place. Then he didn't; he kept me on. But he said when the union was looking for you it was okay, but now that they're both saying you've got to get rid of that woman up there, put her back in the classroom, get her out of our stuff. But anyway, so I became controversial with both the union and [the coal companies] and I had students working with union reform. And then Arnold Miller gets elected and that's okay, that's good, and everything seems to get cleaned up and I'm in good stand with the union again, [Laughs] so I can keep my job. But then while I'm gone we have a new dean that comes in, and he gets this big offer from the coal companies for a whole lot of money to get rid of the program and put me and my students--.

Okay, there's one other thing that happened. One of the students started something called Virginia Citizens for Better Reclamation, named Frank Kilgore, and that was very successful. He had people from all over the state joining so it really began

a real movement which resulted in the ’77 regulations. He was being threatened and they tried to run him off the road. I was being threatened; they were going to burn my house down. So it was at that point that the coal companies really got on our case, so they were offering monies to the college, and the chancellor said that they offered I don’t know how many millions of dollars. And he said, “But we didn’t take it.” [Laughs] And I said, “Well, I’m not there, Joe. Somebody did.” Something happened. Anyway, that was the end of my teaching at the college, was I get back and they have put me into this impossible situation, so I just quit.

By then John Gaventa has moved back to Highlander, one of my former students is there developing a program, a health program, to work with clinics because the reform candidate, Arnold Miller, at the union is starting all these primary health clinics in West Virginia. So at that point I start going to working with Highlander, so I said I’d stay a year and make sure that Frank Kilgore got graduated, that they didn’t run him off, and that all my students who were getting social work degrees could get transferred to a place where they could get their social work degrees. So I stayed and taught for half time but they would not even allow me--. They were going to interview somebody to run the program, the welfare program, and they got this guy who all he wanted to teach was something about sex and play around with the students, so he got fired, so the program disappeared, completely disappeared.

JW: Were you-- [Sound drops out from 1:20:10 to 1:21:18]

HL: Okay, marriage, let’s see. [Pause] We had begun to have trouble when I went back and got my PhD. I was no longer the good housewife who was serving tea and being the big “hostess with the most-est” when he and his students would gather. I had

students following me now, and the whole sort of social movements that I was involved in got him frightened, so our marriage was getting really, really rough. So finally I remember there was one night we went to this reception or something and there were several coal operators there, so I'm off in the corner talking to the coal operators and saying why don't you do so-and-so, and so on and so forth, you know; to the commonwealth attorney saying how can you go [Laughs] to Richmond and talk against black lung compensation, that kind of stuff. I'm not being--. I'm still playing the Southern lady but I'm being fairly outspoken, to my husband's embarrassment, plus the fact that I had gotten too aggressive. What had happened was that I got to the point where when I came back to teach that I'm going to be who I am. It was kind of like I felt like I was going back to how I was when I graduated from college, which was sort of strange. But it didn't work, you know? So after this reception thing where I get home and we're playing--I said every night we play "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" you know--I just walk out the door and get in the pickup truck and drive away. I had at that time bought this farm--

JW: The farm in Virginia?

HL: --mm hmm, okay--because he was getting tired of so many students--. We were having a lot of students from other colleges come down, and I was working with Monica and Ann on something called the University Without Walls. And we were also doing an Antioch Field Study Center, they were doing it, so I was working with them on that so I had gotten involved with these nuns who had pulled out of the order in the early '70s. So Ann and I were looking for a place that we could have a little center for the University Without Walls and the Antioch Field Study Center, and my husband was

getting really, really tired of students sleeping on our floor from coming from all these places. So we're looking for a place and we found this farm, the most beautiful place I'd ever seen. So after we'd seen this hundred and fifty-two acre farm with a mile of riverfront, pretty isolated--it really wasn't what we were looking for. We were looking for something close to the college. But she says, "There's no way we can buy this farm," and I said, "There's no way we don't buy this farm." It was twenty-two thousand dollars, this incredible thing. So Monica at that time had gone to Boston, Amherst, and she had just finished a master's in community ed that they had at Harvard at that time and had married and had a baby and she wanted to come back to the mountains. And he had a degree in urban planning but he wanted to have a vineyard or something. [Laughs] Anyway, so I called her and she sends me some money, and I have some money, and we buy that farm. Ann says, no, she's going to go back to graduate school herself so she's not in it. Anyway, Monica and I buy this farm in 1972.

So we have this farm, and Jud had thought it would make a good golf course or something, [Laughs] which was not at all--. So we became these hippy back-to-the-landers. I didn't immediately move to the farm. What I did was that night I just leave and I decide to come back to Georgia and see my sister and maybe I'll just move back to Georgia. Of course I'm teaching and I've got to deal with that, I've still got teaching to do, so it must have been--. I can't even remember now when it was, whether it was summer when I had some days off or Christmas or something. I think it was summer. So what I do is I go to the farm, and I rent a little house down the road, which is vacant and full of rat shit and I wheelbarrow out loads of it. It doesn't have any water, doesn't have a bathroom, doesn't even have a good outhouse, you're washing in the creek, and I set up

housekeeping, [Laughs] to which my husband can't believe it. So I don't get a divorce or anything. He does, later. I'm just getting out of that situation, is what I am, so I move down there. So I'm kind of next to the farm. Then Sue Koback has this house, she buys a big house--this is one of my good friends--because the first night that I leave I go down to her house and the next day we get in the truck with her little baby. She had been a real activist and then married one of the VISTA volunteers that came down from Harvard. And they married and had a baby, and then he died of leukemia. So she was there, a single mom. All of that group of Appalachian Volunteers and so forth flocked around the college and the program I was doing. I would have this class in social issues, and they would help mentor different groups and help groups do projects and stuff like that because they wanted to get involved and wanted to hang around the college and hang around that program.

Anyway, so there were a bunch of those people. Monica and Michael moved down to the farm and we all lived in the barn. That's a whole story in itself. We lived in the barn and had these stalls where we had our bedrooms. Then Michael had been with Bread and Puppet Theater, so that whole crowd came down. So we got the reputation of being this hippy farm because all these hippies from the Boston area, from Vermont actually, came down and all the students, my students, would hang out there, and people from Appalshop--Appalshop had just gotten started--they would come down there, so we were kind of those back-to-the-landers. But we saw this as being a center, a field study center, and we did do some of that. But it became after awhile too complicated to run the farm, because it was a lot of work to keep that place going or to get it going, and we were going to try to really live off the farm, we thought, except for me. I'm teaching so I'm

running back and forth every day. And Jud's still teaching there, and we've become sort of friendly and get along pretty well together, better than living together. So I'm on the farm and he's there, but then I need a house, so we sell our house and I get half the money and that's how I build a house at the River Farm. Then he gets involved with a student and marries. He's sixty years old and she's twenty-two. [Laughs] So I'm teaching there and I go and some of the secretaries were saying, "What do you think about that? He's marrying--." I said, "Well, I was twenty-two when I married Jud Lewis. It's a perfect time to marry Jud Lewis." [Laughs]

JW: [Laughs]

HL: So anyway, that was my smart alecky reply to that, and it was. I mean he had a young person to teach all this stuff to, because he was older than I was, and he was very sophisticated and we would go to France and he could speak French like a Frenchman, so there's all that stuff, all that good stuff, you know. Anyway--.

JW: But it must have been empowering to go off and start a farm. [Laughs]

HL: Yes, it was. It was great. It was great. It's still a wonderful--. Of course the dream of--the fact that it still exists and that group has stayed together. So we decided--. Monica and I wanted to be more of a commune than other people wanted who came in so we incorporated as a both educational and agricultural community, and we all are stockholders and we're all on the board and we have annual meetings and we put on our board hats and we do all that stuff. But it did have that alternative, hippy, and the community accepted us pretty well actually. But former students, Frankie Taylor and Becky Bingman were a couple at that time and they built a house. Then Beth--. And see they grew up next door to me because my house was next door to their house so they

came to the farm with me. [Laughs] The Bingmans were real friends and good neighbors, and we had all moved up to Wise at the same time. He was with the United Mine Workers Hospital, and we were with the college. So they moved to the farm and built houses. They built their own houses so we had a lot of that going on and other people would come and camp out and live in tents and help and we had people living in the barn. But it became too difficult for Michael and Monica. They had another child and he--. We were not farmers. We raised an acre of squash one year, and we ended up making a hundred dollars out of it. [Laughs]

JW: [Laughs]

HL: That was the whole total profit from that acre of squash. But we did have great gardens and we lived a lot off the land and we tried everything once. We made sorghum. Ann Livey came back from getting her degree in social work with a Presbyterian preacher who had recently divorced and he helped her build her house, but then he couldn't stand the craziness of the farm so he buys another farm next door and becomes an organic farmer. But he also was wealthy. He had money so they were able to have a great farm. Some other friends moved down and John McCutcheon moved over there. We had quite a few other people come and buy farms and houses and it became a whole community of people of similar tastes and so forth. Maxine Kinney and Steve Brooks moved over from Kentucky, and then of course Beth had taken up with and married Rich Kirby and they moved down there. Amelia, the daughter, who's now a filmmaker who's done this wonderful film on prisons--I don't know whether you've seen it or not.

JW: I have heard of it but I haven't seen it.

HL: She grew up there so I helped raise her. So it was--and still is--quite a place. That's why I'm just kind of, should I go back, because that's where I'll be buried. We have our own little graveyard there.

Anyway, so that's--. But it got where--. Monica and Michael went to Blacksburg, he got a job teaching at VPI, and then they went to Africa, to Botswana, and worked with the National Council of Churches programs there in community development and then came back to Blacksburg. Beth and Rich went down to Knoxville for awhile, and she got a graduate degree there. So people were in and out and using it for weekend sort of stuff and things. Ao the last time that I was there, the last year I was there, '89, I was just about the only person on the farm. One of the cows fell off the cliff, and I had to get a neighbor to come in and help me shoot it. It snowed and I got the four-wheel-drive truck stuck across the road and couldn't get in or out. The telephones were not working and the electricity went off, and I was sixty-five years old and I said--because I was fifty when I bought the farm--and I said, this won't do, and at that time Myles had just died and so they wanted me to come live in his house and sort of run that little--.

I had left the farm a couple of times before. There was the year I went to Wales, another year when I went down and lived at Highlander, a year and a half there, and I was the director for a year. Another time I went to live at Highlander because John Gaventa and I were doing a special project. I was working for Highlander from '77, after I left Clinch Valley, until '80, and I lived down there. So I'd lived [there] off and on, all of us were, but that year I was up there by myself so I just moved everything. I decided to sell my house back to the River Farm, so I'm a thirteenth owner of my old house, but I kept

my membership and my stock holding so I'm still part of the River Farm just like other people who don't live there. So then I lived at Highlander from '90 until '97 when I came down here, and I lived at Myles' house and ran the open house guest house at Highlander, and that was nice.

JW: Do you want to take just a little break--

HL: Good.

JW: --before we talk about [1:39:41]? [Break in recording from 1:39:45 to 1:40:59]

HL: --and I would stop along the road and write some of it [poetry]. The muse was with me. This lasted for about a year and it's gone. I don't write anymore. I mean I haven't gotten back into it. The first one was "Bradford Pears: A Lament":

> Presumptuous newcomer, bursting forth in white profusion; advertise the chanticleer proclaiming spring's arrival. False harbinger of spring, you announce the warmth of spring too early, encouraging the apples to bloom too soon. You're a flamboyant scene stealer, upstaging the shy Sarvis tree, quietly calling forth the hidden arbutus. But you're a magical sight, growing upward as perfect pyramids, [1:41:52] in the autumn blaze of purple, orange, and red. Pretty, seductive deceiver, you provide showy, fast, drive-through beauty for instant gratification. You are a decorated militia marching down the median of the polluted highways, drinking the carbon dioxide soup, an invasive carpetbagger pushing out the natives, replacing sturdy oaks, tall poplars, and maples, decorating the mountaintops and creek sides, guarding the gated communities, lining the

driveways to million dollar fortresses, protecting stages for sunset viewings. You come in drag as back-combed, silver-haired matrons, but you are the landscape goats of greedy developers, serving rich refugees from urban sprawl. But you get your comeuppance. You stink to high heaven with a sickly sweet smell foretelling of early death. With weak limbs and fragile crotches you break to wind and snow, bearing bitter fruit and deformed, thorny saplings. I'm not fooled by your clever pronouncement. I wait for oak leaves the size of squirrel ears before planting my garden, and watch my fruitful pear tree limbs heaving with a heavy load of fruit and prepare the jars for pear preserves. [Laughs]

JW: I love that, and my mom will love that. [Laughs]

HL: Your mother will love it. Tell her I sent that special to her.

JW: [Laughs]

HL: That was my [1:43:29 real thing.] After that I wrote a kind of a--. [Sound of shuffling papers] [I've got] one I like. I'm going to read that to you. I'll read two to you, okay?

JW: Okay.

HL: One called, if I can find it--. [Pause; shuffling through papers] One of my favorites really is--. [Pause] It's not in here. I'll read you "The Redbud Tree". This is one of the last [1:44:38]. It's a protest against mountaintop removal, as you will see. It gets a little preachy.

JW: [Laughs]

HL:

Redbud trees, Flowering Judas, in early spring forming a tunnel of blossoms along the road to War, West Virginia. The red trees burst forth with knots of red, rosy purple flowers on naked branches, circling the trunk like the red kerchiefs worn by coalminers who fought at Blair Mountain. Clinging imperiously to mountainsides they make a shrouded gateway to the billion dollar coal field, but the billion dollars left the coal fields. Each spring the redbuds tell that story and point to the destruction just over the hill. The mountains have provided a place of refuge for people, animals, trees and flowers, a home place in which to settle, work, live, for a diversity of people, wildflowers, and grouse, a sanctuary, a haven, for mussels, salamanders, Baptists, wood thrush, and Pilated Woodpeckers. Now scavengers are removing the mountains to dig out the coal. Giant machines turn forested hills to moonscapes, cover streams and valleys with overburden, reduce the mountains to rubble. Holding fast in the arms of the mountain, wearing their red badge of courage, the redbuds resist their removal and protest the devastation of their living place. They are also called Judas trees, named for the Judas who hung himself in shame from a redbud tree and dangled the blood money from the branches. The flowering Judases blush with shame. They shout shame to the Judases destroying God's creation. As the blossoms fade the heart shaped leaves wave to passersby, crying out for the wilderness, "Wake up! The earth is being destroyed. Change your ways of thinking, acting being. You're a part of all living creatures. Recognize your kinship,

interdependence. Listen. Put your ear to the ground. Listen to the voices of the mountain. Listen to the prophets, the hemlocks, the dogwoods, fish in the stream, the bacteria in the soil, all living things." The mountains have provided a fortress, support, and strength to survive for immigrants, moonshiners, Indians, Copperheads, escaped slavers and servants, a safe place, a place to rest your eyes. When the mountains are gone, where do we get our strength? Where do we find the rock to hide behind or beneath? Where do we find solace and rest for our eyes? Put a sign in your yard: Obey the laws of nature.

JW: [Laughs]

HL: It does get preachy, doesn't it?

JW: [Laughs] But I like it.

HL: It's preachy. It's real preachy. Let me see, one of my favorites. "The Forsythia" I read at my sister's funeral. I'll read that. It's a little up. [Laughs]

Forsythia, promise of spring, it's also called Easter Bush, joyously reaching upward in praise pose, since the catacombs a sign of joy and a promise of resurrection, calling forth the Pentecost. If you get close enough you can hear them speaking in tongues. They form a chorus line on the fence row, waving their arms and singing the "Hallelujah Chorus", charismatic missionaries spreading the message and warning the farmers the cabbage root maggot is coming. Not solemn sermonizers, they playfully ring their golden bells, they leap out, they spread wings, inviting all to join the dance, flaunt your beauty, and brighten the corner where you

are. Freedom loving, uninhibited, they thrust limbs into the soil, producing young upshoots. Nervous gardeners try to control their exuberance. They clip and cut their boundless growth, making ugly mounds and shaved hedges. They resist control, expanding in abundance. New growth springs forth. Let them go. Listen to their song. Ready yourself for the good news, the promise of spring. For every death there is a resurrection.

Now that's my theology. [Laughs]

JW: [Laughs] I like it.

HL: How's that? The last one I've been writing is on okra.

JW: On Oprah?

HL: Okra.

JW: Okra. [Laughs] I thought you said Oprah.

HL: My favorite, but it's a flower too, you know.

JW: I didn't know.

HL: It's a hibiscus. Surely I've got that one. [Pause; shuffling through papers]

JW: That wasn't it, behind the--?

HL: That's "Okra", but that's not the one I'm looking for. [Pause] This couple adopted a child from Vietnam actually. She had not been able to have children so they went over to get this child and we had a shower for them or for the child before they left, and so they asked me to write a poem for her arrival, so this was what this was. [Pause] And I've written this really mean one about--. I started it about--. Oh, here's "Queen of the Meadow". This is a nice one. Joe-Pye Weed. Do you know queen of the meadow?

JW: I do.

HL: [1:52:01]

JW: Yeah.

HL:

In late summer the queen of the meadow, a stately matron, rises and sways above the goldenrod, daisies, and asters. With a flume of lavender for a tiara and whorls of lance-shaped leaves as her regal dress she nods graciously to her subjects and gives a royal wave to all who pass. A seer and prophet, she foretells the coming of fall and bids goodbye to katydids and hummingbirds. She welcomes the bright turning of the sourwood leaves and makes room for her regal cohort, ironweed, a sister clad in deep purple who pronounces summer's end. An ancient healer, called kidney root and gravel root, she relieves kidney and gallstone problems, breaks high fevers and repels flies. Tea from her flowers, roots, and leaves have cured typhus. Indians claim her potions were aphrodisiac. She taught Indian medicine man, Joe Pye, her secret powers and joined his name to her many titles. She is a refugee, running from her enemies, seeking refuge in ditches and rocky edges as the weed eaters and the bush hogs search her out. Clearing the meadows, shaving the fields, they eliminate diversity and creative spontaneity. Landscaping grassy fields to produce order and predictability the community is mowed down. Who is left to close the season, to warn of cold nights and frosty mornings, and who can heal our world, provide the secret powers for earth's renewal, give us

energy to rebuild diversity, while waving gently, promising another year of survival?

JW: Those are great. [Laughs]

HL: [Laughs] Well it's like there was this muse for awhile and then it tended to disappear. I just haven't been--. Well I had gotten into all these other things I had to write so I got into that other style, but there was a period there where this was all I wanted to do, was write these poems.

JW: Yeah. Well maybe it will come back with a little bit of time.

HL: I hope it will come back, because it was fun. I don't think they're that good poetry. "The Mean Streak in the World" is a bad one.

JW: That's the title?

HL: Newt Gingrich--. "There's a Mean Streak Loose in the Land".

JW: Will you read that one too?

HL:

The load is shifting. The reptile is shedding his skin. The fig tree is being pruned. The whirlwind has turned loose a mean streak in the land. It's swept clean the garden and stirred up hunger, replaced the home place with fields of commodities. The storm was generated in the financial towers of the north, carried south through the [1:55:12] and bits and promises. The global machine shudders and sloughs off unwanted appendages. The jolly green giant tightens his belt. The dragon is coughing and spitting out its mangled [1:55:26 victuals]. The leaking ship lightens its load, dumping flotsam and jetsam in the sea. The scavengers

eviscerate the land. The forest bends and bows, flinging leaves and broken limbs, making room for the four-legged soon-to-be Big Macs. It rattles the empty gourd tree of martins who died in poison bogs. It is hovering as fog as a thirteen-year-old girl heaves her frail eighty pound body to birth a baby. It seeps through the crevices of a chicken house hostel where tomato pickers sleep. It is blowing broken glass around towers of stacked misery. It is riding on the steam covering the cardboard shelters of the [1:56:13 city's disappeared]. It fuels electronic eyes seeking metal in Mickey Mouse book bags. It puddles in the floor where mumbling old ladies are tied into their wheelchairs. It pushes a toddler down the corridor and sucks him into the broken elevator shaft. There's a mean streak loose in the land. It uncovers long-controlled hate and violence. Children die in the street from random bullets. Children kill children in the school cafeteria. Husbands kill wives; mothers kill their children; teenagers kill themselves. Empire moguls searching for depleted resources to feed the voracious machine invade and occupy weaker nations for energy and resource control. Corporate peddlers sell their guns, their militia, their souls. The vultures pick up the leavings. The hyperventilators smother the voiceless. The social servants eradicate the obsolete. The guardians disappear the misfits. The uniform functionaries hide the outlaws. The iron maiden in the harbor cries, bring me your weak, your vulnerable, your unneeded masses. I will free them from care, from love, from hope.

Isn't that awful?

JW: When did you write that one?

HL: I started it with Gingrich. When he started that Contract with America I started with that "mean streak is loose in the land", and then it laid there for a long time. Then when I got into this poetry thing I picked it up one day and finished it off with all these really ugly, ugly images.

JW: Mm hmm.

HL: I mean it really was just kind of--. Maybe I just got rid of a lot of stuff. So it's a mean poem. It's an ugly poem.

JW: It's a strong poem. [Laughs]

HL: [Laughs]

JW: It's vivid.

HL: "Okra's" fun. It's not finished really, but it's kind of a--. We had a group when I was teaching at Clinch Valley. There were about three or four of us and two of them I had hired and one of them had been a student of mine but we all were teaching there, but we all came from a little further south than the coal fields. Marilyn was from Alabama, Bill was from there, I was from Georgia, Eugene was from Mississippi and he'd gone to the University of Virginia. She'd gone to Chapel Hill and ended up at--. Because when I was teaching during that social work program I made a deal with the social work program at Chapel Hill, and they'd send me interns, people from there who wanted to teach, so I was able to integrate the first blacks teaching at the college there through their interns. Marilyn graduated from there and she came there and taught. But anyway, we formed something called the Knights of Okra, [Laughs] because you can't

grow okra there. It just doesn't get hot enough. So it ended up that we would have these crazy ceremonies initiating people into the Knights of Okra if they had enough of that spirit. Anyway, we get together every Christmas. Eugene and Marilyn and Bill come here for Christmas and we initiate some of my friends into this. [Laughs]

JW: [Laughs]

HL: So I started writing one of my poems but I never quite got it together, but I can read you what I wrote if you want to hear it.

JW: Yeah.

HL:

> Okra, [2:00:37], barnya, [2:00:46], *Abelmoschus esculentus*, [2:00:51]; anyway, a world traveler with many names and many uses. Growing wild in the Ethiopian and Sudanese highlands it was probably carried from Ethiopia to Arabia across the Red Sea and then Moslems brought it to Egypt in the seventh century. It was reported to be grown in gardens along the Nile in the twelfth century and the small pods eaten with meal. From Arabia okra traveled all over North Africa and completely around the Mediterranean. You moved all over the Middle East to India and the Balkans and Central Africa. In the sixteenth century you came with slaves to the West Indies, South America, and North America. A gastronomic, cosmopolitan nomad, a member of the mallow family, related to the hibiscus and the cotton plant with wide open white and pink [2:01:52] blossoms. The fruit, finger-like, curved, ribbed green pods with edible seeds have a unique, exotic, delicate flavor which attracts loyal fans

and equally strong detractors who shun its gummy, slimy mucilaginous character, but Indians of Louisiana found it a better thickener than filé and used it to make gumbo. African slaves brought okra's magical powers to the plantation kitchens of the South. In India they use it in [2:02:28] bhindi, and in the Middle East it makes the dishes [2:02:33]. In England they renamed it lady fingers and in the Caribbean it makes callaloo. A coffee substitute and cooking oil in Egypt and India and the hidden ingredient in ketchup. In Irmo, South Carolina they have an okra strut, build statues, and okra fans parade and dance and sing ballads to okra. Knights of Okra fans widely dispersed meet annually to celebrate this cosmopolitan, gastronomic nomad and serve okra steamed, fried, frittered, soufflé, added to soups, stews, and salads, pickled. Pickled okra in a martini produces an okra-tini. There is a polarization of tastes among okra eaters and a big difference in personality between those who like and those who shun the boiled and steamed pods. The real okra connoisseurs find it a sensuous experience when small pods are steamed, lightly buttered, and eaten by fingertips. The pod smoothly slides down the throat, creating an erotic experience. Shared by lovers who feed each other it creates an amorous situation. [Laughs] Critics of the texture provide fried okra, which is crispy and has a nutty flavor. Good, but it lacks the smooth feel and delicate flavor of steamed pods. Roy Blount, Jr., who wrote "A Song to Okra" celebrating its quality, he says, "Okra's green goes down with

ease. Forget cuisine, say okra, please. You can have strip poker. Give me a nice girl and a dish of okra." [Laughs]

JW: [Laughs]

HL: It never got into a poem but this was my notes to make a poem in favor of sensuousness, I think, is what that was about. Anyway, it provided something to read for the Knights of Okra.

JW: [Laughs]

HL: So that's my poetry.

JW: Well thank you for sharing. It's really great. Hopefully the muse visits you again.

HL: I hope it gets back. There are some--. I don't know what message I have to say right now. [Pause; shuffling papers] Well, this is my [2:05:16]

JW: But they're going to publish some of these in the book?

HL: Well two of them--. I think so. Two of them have been published in *Appalachian Heritage*, "The Joe-Pye Weed" and "The Redbud Tree." Nobody's published "The Bradford Pears," which was my--. That was my masterpiece. [Laughs] At least that was the first one--. Well actually I started that "Mean Streak" a long time ago, but the one with flowers and trees telling the stories all started with Bradford pears when I was really determined I had to say something about developers. And they do, they just cut down all these good trees and plant all these Bradford pears, and they are pretty, you have to say. When they first bloom they're quite beautiful but they don't last and they are fragile. They've got fragile crotches. [Laughs] What I did was I got all these

catalogs that sell these things and read what they said about them, and that was one of the terms they used,--

JW: Oh, fragile crotch.

HL: --that they had fragile crotches. I thought, great. I've got to use that term. But, yeah. They've tried to improve them and make them better. I've done nothing but tell you stories,--

JW: [Laughs]

HL: --so why don't you think about what you need for your dissertation instead of the oral history stuff and we can talk about that, or whatever you want to do. [Clattering noise in the background] My gosh.

JW: Oh, the cats are waking up. [Laughs]

HL: Something was after them.

JW: Oh, you think so?

HL: Or they thought so.

JW: Yeah. Well, I have a couple of themes that we can focus on, that I can bring up. We didn't touch on your work at Highlander really, so I was wondering if there was anything you want to say about what you think you brought to Highlander when you were director and in the years that you've been involved there.

HL: Okay. When I first went there I was with the health program, and so I spent a lot of time in several communities in West Virginia where they were starting primary health centers in the community and it was started by the community, and my job was to train the board and help the staff and help recruit progressive physicians and medical care

and try to help them understand that this could be, not a medical center, but a health center.

JW: Do you want to say something about the distinction between a medical center and a health center?

HL: Well a medical center just gives you prescriptions and the doctors prescribe. You go in with an ailment. A health center looks at all the causes of the problems and tries to also look at the occupational health, the environmental health, the health of the whole community, and it also become much more of a community center and monitors people's health. The ways of doing it, I mean you could make a thoroughly community health center that monitors the health of everybody in the community and also the health of the air and the water and occupational problems and that sort of stuff, with a lot of education and preventive health and stuff like that. Otherwise you take your ailment in and you get your prescription and then you walk out the door. That's exaggerating what medical centers do, but certainly under most of the regulations today. What was good about the project was that it was funded by the United Mine Workers through their--. They had a good healthcare program which gave funds so that they could subsidize the health center. You didn't have to be cost effective. You didn't have to make your money. It was paid for and you could prevent problems and there was a lot of education and problems with black lung and things like that could be dealt with in varied ways. So the thing was to find doctors, and help educate doctors, to work under the leadership and control of the community and to help the community themselves understand that they knew what the health problems were in that community and that they could run a health center, that they could figure out what would make for a healthy community. So that was

part of my job and it was really, really interesting, and it worked pretty well. I mean we had some very interesting and good clinics going.

But then the United Mine Workers lost their health and welfare funds in the last contract, one of the contracts, and so therefore some of the clinics had to go out of business. We found some great doctors. We found doctors from places like Vanderbilt and Harvard and Yale and places, progressive doctors that really wanted to participate in that kind of health care. So there was kind of a social movement there in the early '80s about those kinds of health clinics. But then the politics of the federal government changed and these clinics that were funded by the United Mine Workers lost their funding from the Mine Workers, and they had to go on the federal programs and then they had to be cost efficient. So a lot of the education programs and a lot of the programs that they did which were educational and preventive had to quit because those were not cost effective. They did not bring in money. Some of the clinics were able to survive. They joined with other smaller clinics and they were able to buy stuff collectively and cut down on management costs that way, and they also cut out a lot of the programs that they were doing, so a few of those clinics still survive. One of the ones that I helped start in McDowell County, Tug River, is still a good big clinic and serves a lot of people and does good work but it is not the kind of clinic that it was in those early days.

So as a result of that, that project that we had stopped and at that point I said we've got to deal more with some environmental problems. We've got to look at environmental health problems in the mountains, of which black lung and stuff are partly occupational and environmental, so at Highlander we started a whole big program of environmental health and occupational health questions. We had black lung people come

talk to the people from the cotton mills who were starting the brown lung movement and that got going. So all of this grew out of that early program, but it was a matter of moving it into a broader environmental and occupational health problem. At that time John [Gaventa] and Juliet [Merrifield] were running this library and making it into a real resource center so that you could research and understand more of the environmental issues, so I applied for and got from the National Science Foundation monies to do--. They had a program called Science for Citizens, in which you got a community that had some environmental health problems or occupational health problems and you brought in scientists or found scientists within the community to discuss this and talk about it and get the community alerted to but also involved in it, so this was a little different pattern of doing stuff than Highlander usually did, where you waited for something to bust forth and they came and asked us for help, or we went out and ambulance-chased [Laughs] and offered our services or something like that. We proposed to have three big forums, one in Kingsport, Tennessee, one in Charleston, West Virginia, and one in Harlan County and the first two were going to be mostly on the chemical industry and Harlan County would be coal.

So we started out, and I involved the Center for Health Services at Vanderbilt and we started a little study group called the Kingsport Study Group. And we started studying and finding out what was going on in Kingsport, and there was one little community group that was concerned mostly about the paper mills instead of the--. Tennessee Eastman was the biggest chemical manufacturer in the world at that time so they were dumping all sorts of stuff into the river and there were all sorts of problems with fishing in the Cherokee Lake and tumors and stuff, and the fishing business there was bad and

they were upset. So we talked to all those people and tried to get a group going. Tennessee Eastman got really nervous. They told every business in town not to participate in what we were doing and that we were outside agitators. They took this big folder to the newspaper--"Highlander is a communist training school"--and were going to get us run out of town. People who were part of our group, one of the people who really had clued us in to do something on this, was a doctor in town who was a pulmonary specialist, and he said whenever somebody came in with these big pulmonary problems he'd say, "Do you spit in a cup where you work?" because Tennessee Eastman was having these sputum tests run on everybody in the yarn division. That was where everybody was getting sick, really, really bad lung and pulmonary problems, and they were spitting in this container for the research that the company itself was doing. But anyway, so he was very concerned that the yarn division in particular was very, very dangerous there.

So anyway, we started--. There's more PhDs in Kingsport than any other place in the mountains probably, but we could not get one person to talk to us. We had several workers who came and joined the group. We ended up having a little group to study called the Kingsport Study Group. Well they would get threatened to be fired and they had to drop out. The doctor even had to drop out, he was going to get run out of town, and no business would join us. So the Congressman reported us to the National Science Foundation that we didn't have any business people in our group, which you're supposed to have the diversity of the community, all the people represented in doing this Science for Citizens. Of course the reason we didn't was because--. And there was actually a federal defense place, run by Tennessee Eastman. Well they finally gave us permission

they would show us through the place, what they did and what the things were, but none of them would cooperate. So we got all these scientists to come in from places like San Francisco and all over the country who had studied these chemicals. So we got word from somebody at the newspaper that they were about to publish this thing about how we were these outside communist agitators, based on the stuff that--. So a bunch of us headed for the newspaper. We talked to the editor and he wanted to know, where are you from, and I said, well I live right up the road here in Dungannon. And I get your newspaper and I'm in your newspaper thing, and then we had local people who were there with us and we all talked to him. He finally realized that he was being taken by the company, and he wrote us a good editorial saying we were on the cutting edge of something. We ended up having a good forum with a big sign in Kingsport, "Pollution in Kingsport," [Laughs] the first time the word had ever probably been used, you know.

JW: [Laughs]

HL: Well that was our first one, but at the same time [2:20:14 Quillen] got that whole program removed from the National Science Foundation.

JW: The Science for Citizens was removed.

HL: Mm hmm, as a result of trying to stop us from having that forum. Then we did the same thing in Charleston, West Virginia, and we had some of the same problems there. I had some people up there who did most of the work on that and we had objections from all of the--. The chemical people were as mean as coal company people when it came to really red baiting you and trying to destroy you. Then we had the final one in Harlan County on coal. As a result of that we also developed--. While we were doing the one in Kingsport we discovered the Bumpass Cove thing was happening so I

went down there and talked to them and got them to come to the forum and tell their story, and the people from Cherokee Lake that were having trouble with the fish, they came and told their story, so it became much more of a regional thing than just Tennessee Eastman. As a result then we got very much involved with Bumpass Cove and with toxic waste dumps. Yellow Creek was fighting the chemicals there at the same time and so that's when we started our real environmental and toxic program at Highlander, so that grew out of that sort of thing.

The next thing was that Sue Thrasher was still there and Billy Horton was working with the Appalachian Alliance, which was our attempt to pull together a--. And we'd already done the--. Well we were doing the--. No, we hadn't done the land study yet. That came later. Okay, so the three of us, mostly Sue Thrasher and I, got together and said, okay, where do we go from here? We have this environmental thing, but really the big problem is we're not going to do anything about the environment, about health, about education, if we don't do something about the economic system. So we've got to get back to economic education, which was one of the basic things that Highlander was supposed to be doing. So we decided we would develop an economics education program, a study program.

She and I went up to Amherst and took that radical economics course that they have there in the summer. We checked out every program in the country, got all the syllabuses together, and all of them didn't really fit us. [Laughs] The Amherst thing was great for people who already had an economics major or were college educated but it was not for ordinary country people with a seventh grade education, even high school education. So we decided to go back to our form of education and see what we could do

in terms of economic education based on Highlander style of people learning from each other and, okay, people are storytellers, people like to tell stories, so we developed a curriculum which could be used in some of these outreach programs because one of the things that I had done and other people were doing was develop little education programs, like in Dungannon. We developed an education center in the old depot and a bunch of us from the River Farm, all with degrees, could teach there, and we started a literacy program. There were some Catholic sisters there too who did that. Then we developed a GED program, and then we talked Mountain Empire Community College into offering some college courses there, so they agreed to try out our little program, a class that we would have on learning your economic history. So we taught a class there and then John Gaventa and I taught one at Jellico later.

But anyway it all grew out of our developing this thing where we start with oral histories, and what we start with is what did your grandparents do to make a living, and what did your parents do to make a living, and what do you do to make a living, and what does your generation make a living doing, and then we analyzed that. We put them up in columns and we'd analyze the history of the economy of this community and how it has changed and you come up with actually a history of the economic changes in the United States, even with a small group of people. Because even in these isolated places people have migrated out to get jobs, migrated in to get jobs, been involved in all the various changes that have occurred in the economy. And then we get to the point of, okay, what is our economy today, where does the money come from, who has the money. For instance, at Jellico there was a little factory there so we had them study what the factory produced and how much income it brought to the community. Well it ended up that the

community itself had provided them with the building and with the land and with no taxes. They came in with a truck with the machinery for a cut-and-sew kind of thing, and they hired these people. They didn't even buy any supplies there. They didn't even buy gas for their trucks there. They bought nothing there. The wages were quite low. The people who worked there mostly lived--you know, they'd go back home. There was a little store that sold a few more extra things but in terms of what they got out of it and where the profits went and what good it did to the community was the few little low wage jobs. So you'd study. Then you'd look at where all your groceries came from and you'd study your closet as to where your clothes came from and how much of the global economy you were part of. So we developed this course based on people's experiences and projects like that and then have what you would change and what kind of services you need that the community could provide if they had this income. Then we'd talk to the banks about what they would fund.

All of that became our little course in economics education, and it was on that that then we decided, well, we should be able to do some little short workshops on parts of it. So we developed a workshop thing besides a course, and that's what I went to Ivanhoe with. So that was the whole Ivanhoe thing, was my taking this--. A workshop level, which would be several weeks once a week we would have a discussion of what the economy was there, and it was very interesting. They had been working for about a year trying to recruit an industry for this industrial area that they had which had been given to them when the plant closed. In the first place we had to talk about why did the plant close. We had to figure that out. But then they were just looking for any kind of job, so I had them go through this process of all the jobs they'd had and everybody had had and,

okay, now out of these jobs what did you like the best and what didn't you like, and what would you want a job to be? What are you looking for? They were looking for anything. Okay, how does that fit with what it is you--? [Laughs] So they began to change their whole outlook on what to recruit and what not to recruit. They never were able to recruit what they wanted, but at least they turned down some things, like a prison, a chicken factory. They decided they didn't want that. They'd rather be poor, or keep commuting wherever they commuted to get a job, than to do some of these things that would be more disastrous to their community than helpful. Anyway, that's the Ivanhoe thing.

So it was kind of like I moved from health to the environment to the economy and it changed the style of stuff that people were doing, so I think that would be my contribution, if anything, would be--. Also making it okay to come out front with something like a forum to educate people ahead of time about something or pull people together, initiate something rather than just waiting for something to happen, which was a little bit of what the philosophy was--we don't organize; we educate--and sort of forgetting those terminologies a little bit. I'm really big on hospitality and I think having--. When Myles was there his house had been the center for people to come and visit and talk. So many people, [2:31:05] and everybody who's been there and spent time around the table with Myles or sitting around in those informal situations, in those hospitality situations, learning from each other. Not that the workshops are that formal or anything, and also that hospitality is a good way of learning too, is important, so I continued that when I was at the Horton House, and we had fun. We had a great deal of fun when I lived there, so that was, I think, a contribution.

JW: We were talking a little bit earlier about gender dynamics based on the article that someone else has written, but do you want to say something about your own take on the gender dynamics of Highlander and how they changed over time?

HL: Well when [Lucy Massie Phenix] was making the film on "You Got To Move," we used to have a lot of --. We gave Myles a hard time I think [Laughs] and pushed him really, really hard on his kind of sexism, and I think he came around some, not that he was ever--. I mean he tried--. I mean it was partly his growing up, I guess, partly his personality. [Pause] I was the acting director just for a little over a year, I guess, when Mike went off to get married. One of the things that bothered me the most was they had no endowment whatsoever and Myles had always said, well, if we can't raise the money to do this it shouldn't be done, and there's a time for things to happen and a time for things to quit, and that's true, I think. If you get a foundation that holds it together all these years, that lasts longer than it should last, it's no longer doing its work and that sort of stuff. But we had this farm and we had this maintenance and we had these houses that needed stuff, and there's no way you could raise enough money to do those kinds of things and have programs, too. You could get money for programs but you could not get money to maintain the facilities that we had and those facilities were pretty important for the kind of work we were doing. We could bring people in at almost no cost, and most of them didn't pay. We had to finance that. We could do some of that through the program, whatever reason for the conference or reason for the workshop, but--. I helped start that first--and the mailing list was terrible. They'd just let it go to pieces, and we'd relied so much just on Myles going to New York and meeting all his old socialist friends and coming back with some money, and we had certain foundations that

stuck with us all through the years. But it was not enough to maintain the facilities that we had and keep it running. That's one of the things that I did just in that little bit of time, was to help get that mailing list together, get that kind of stuff, and start a real endowment, and of course later we hired a fundraiser and all that stuff and did that but that was a big problem.

Lucy Phenix and the filmmakers were there pretty much some of that time and we used to have a lot of good discussions. But Myles at that point had become the old goat on the hill, sort of. He had resigned as being director, he was not director, but anyway when I was there he would bring his letters down and we had this secretary who would help type stuff. When I came in a couple of people had already left so I had to hire a new--. We had a new secretary and it happened to be the sister to the woman who ran the kitchen, and she was not good. [Laughs] I don't think I hired her; I think she was already there. I don't know. I don't remember that. But he was really--. He said, "You've got to fire her. You've got to fire her." I said, "Well, maybe, maybe not." So I went and sat down with her and I said, "We've got to talk," and she said, "Okay." I said, "You can't type worth shit." [Laughs]

JW: [Laughs]

HL: And she said, "Yeah, I know," and I said, "Myles is on my case and I'm going to have to fire you or you're going to have to learn how to do this stuff." She learned. I mean she started taking a typing course; I mean she straightened up. She became one of those wonderful employees that we had, so it was kind of like--. Maybe the way I dealt with staff, [Laughs] I think maybe was--.

JW: You were willing to give her a chance to fix it.

HL: Yeah, I gave her a chance, because I figured she could do it really. It's just that she didn't have the right kind of skills. Anyway she ended up being a great employee that lasted there until she died of cancer and was most helpful, most helpful. So there's a couple of examples. Through the years the women roles at Highlander were--. I mean there were times when they were kind of overwhelmed by the men, and I was only acquainted with Highlander from 1969, from about the time they moved out to New Market. I visited the place at--. I had heard about Highlander even when I was in college but I had never been part of it, and being in Appalachia during the really hot times of the civil rights movement, we were too busy fighting the coal companies. And I wasn't at Selma, I didn't walk across that bridge, I didn't go for the Mississippi Summer, I was not involved. My civil rights stuff was early. [Laughs] I mean it was in the '40s when people don't know that there was anything going on. So I was there for the Appalachian period and on into the times when we were trying to pull together the civil rights South people and the Appalachian people and that was kind of the last phase. And then integrating in the new immigrants and the Spanish[-speaking] immigrants. They were really getting that program going when I left and they needed more Spanish-speaking, and anyway I needed to go.

But reading this early stuff, there were really, really strong women in the '30s and when I'm reading this life of Frances Perkins I realize the role, and there was Eleanor Roosevelt, there was Frances Perkins; there were role models. There were women that were very, very strong union organizers, Lucy Randolph Mason. There were all sorts of people at that period of time, and there was this group of women who helped organize and get Highlander going and who were union organizers [2:40:33]. But there was this

real macho thing, and I guess your style of confrontation was, I don't know if you'd call it more gentle or more subversive. [Laughs] I mean you learned how to get around it without putting up your dukes. You catered to certain things but then you just did what needed to be done and maybe you had to pretend somebody else thought it up.

So I think there were these little--. I mean women have done that all their lives, you know, and so now if you judge the degree of authority that women have in positions against where you didn't have that much in terms of legal position, you worked in other ways but you could still make a difference. So I think that was the thing that I worried most about that article that she--. She had no sense of any power on the part of women, and when it came to programs the women were all powerful. I mean they ran the programs. They didn't make the speeches much maybe and they didn't raise the money as much.

JW: Well and that's something that seems like was happening in your life and in other places. I mean it's something that you'll find in the university system. You were doing things but administration or whoever was trying to keep you limited, so if you were to look at, I don't know, how long someone was at a place or their life's work they were putting you into a kind of box, so you have to look in different places in a way.

Well, the other topic that I thought maybe we could explore a little more is this idea of the women's movement and the YWCA. I know we talked about it a little earlier, but what are your ideas about the role of the YWCA in those years, the '30s and '40s?

HL: Okay, I can't remember exactly dates and things but around the turn of the century, and the YWCA started earlier than that, and they started working a lot with women going into industries and women coming into factories and they'd provide this

dormitory space with the community Y's. Then they developed these more like settlement houses operations. They had this industrial Y program in which they worked with immigrant women and with industrialized women and women in the factories, and most of those, the women on the staff at that time, were socialists. Then after that kind of program folded into other stuff, those women were the ones that started the student Y, so it was led by these women who had been working in the industrial section and they were probably the most radical women of the Y. So the student YWCA was staffed and funded largely from those programs out of New York. The community Y's had kind of developed into community supported and community funded programs, even the YMCA, which also was funded locally. So the YW had a freedom in a sense and a background that was a little more radical than the community Y's, which had become much more involved in the local community and controlled by the chamber of commerce and whoever else was there. So that I think gave them the ability to develop these mission statements that they pushed, so you might say that they pushed onto the South [Laughs] a program and a mission that was not in keeping with the Southern culture. [Laughs] And whereas the YMCA was not as radical as the YWCA for that reason, partially I think where the funding came from and where the control was.

So they hired women and they looked for Southern women and they found radical Southern women to work in the South, but they also had those Northern women, and that received a lot of criticism in the '30s, these Northern women coming down with all these radical ideas, you know, these socialist women coming down and pushing this stuff and disturbing the Southern culture. So there was a lot of that kind of criticism going on from

college presidents and trustees and politicians who finally caught on to what the Y was doing.

So they started out, I mean the interracial stuff--. A lot of their work in the ’20s and ’30s, particularly the ’30s, had to do with economic issues and really a lot of talk about socialism, capitalism, and that sort of thing. Then at one point, and I don’t remember exactly when but we’ll look it up, they decided that the racial problem had to be the most important and that’s when they started trying to figure out how to have--. So what they did first is they would have a Negro speaker and they had this wonderful woman who was a dean at Fisk, Juliette Dericotte, and she was apparently a charismatic speaker, and she went around the South to Hollins and all these colleges and would speak if the college would allow a black speaker to come.

So that was the first part, and then they decided they really needed to have black students and white students together to talk to each other and they developed these little discussion groups first around Vanderbilt, which is where there were both black colleges and white colleges, and Atlanta, and Lynchburg, Virginia. Then they decided to have some big conferences and they would have them not on racial issues but on something that would be important to both races, so they had these conferences on the World Court, which this would be in the ’20s, I guess. One of the first ones was--. They also at that time had a black secretary and a white secretary and the black secretaries went to the black school and the white secretaries went to the white school, then they decided they would try to get them both to go together. But anyway they decided to have these conferences and they planned one for Chattanooga, which would be for all the Tennessee people, and one in Atlanta, and maybe one other somewhere else.

But I got their records of the account of doing these conferences and there was a woman named, I forget, Frances Williams, I think. She was black, she was from the North, and she was pretty critical [Laughs] of some of the stuff that was going on in the South, but she was in charge of developing the one in Chattanooga so she went to the various black colleges and the white colleges and she couldn't find a place to meet, even in Knoxville. No place would let them meet and have an interracial group of students to just plan the program. So they ended up out in the rain at the depot. They wouldn't even let them use either the white or the black waiting rooms to meet, so they're out there standing in the rain, planning this conference, this little group that she had gathered together. Anyway, they finally get it planned and they find a place in Chattanooga to have the meeting. They get the students lined up who are going to come and the black students come in first and they sit down. She writes and the way she describes it that's what happened. Then the white students come in and they sit down. So she stands up and she said they had figured that they would sing some spirituals to get it going, so she said, "Well, we are going to sing some spirituals now," and she started singing and nobody sang with her, not a sound. So she said, "I sat down and didn't know what to do." She said, "I just sat down for about fifteen minutes and finally a white boy in the back of the room stood up and said, 'Ms. Williams, I think we're ready to sing now.'"

JW: [Laughs]

HL: And so she started singing and they had the discussion, and she said it went well. She said afterwards Myles Horton and Howard Kester were two of those students, and she said we became really good friends and we worked together on all sorts of programs and Myles used to kid and say, "Okay, Ms. Williams, you remember when we

hit the sawdust trial together?" So one of those, either Myles or Howard Kester, who headed up all those tenant farmer groups and all that--. He was in Lynchburg. That's why they had the things in Lynchburg, because he was in the seminary there and there was a black school and a white school and he pulled together some of those discussion groups there and there were discussion groups in those places.

But that was the beginning of getting them together. It was so difficult. It was so difficult, just to get those things together and to find a place that you could have a meeting with blacks and whites together. That's hard to believe now, you know. But we don't know who said, "Ms. Williams, we're ready to sing now," but I'm convinced it had to be either Myles or Howard Kester.

JW: [Laughs]

HL: But I mean we've got some really great stuff about--. Anyway, so then they started having more interracial meetings but there was a real struggle for many, many years. See, Weatherford bought and developed this big YMCA center at Blue Ridge, so I did a paper in March at the Appalachian studies thing on Blue Ridge and the struggle with the YWCA to get their conferences integrated there. Finally in '37 they quit having their conferences there because they were not integrated and they refused to go until they were integrated and they were not integrated until the '50s, actually. It was that long.

JW: So what has motivated your recent work on the YWCA?

HL: Well I think it had to do with my experiences and that having been the place where--. I mean I'm just convinced, just as they became convinced in the '30s and really developed the pedagogy of having these interracial groups, that this made people change their minds, that this was a conversion experience for students, to have those experiences,

and that you could have a speaker come but until you really had that participation together. That was my experience, and I just thought people don't even know that happened and people don't have that opportunity anymore. They don't do that kind of stuff, whether it's the problem of race or it could be the problem of something else, but to have that place where people can experience this stuff and talk to people, it makes it possible for change to happen. So I wanted to tell that story, and then when we started looking at the history I was amazed myself at what had happened in the '20s and '30s and the fact that I knew so little about it. As much as I had actually been involved and even worked for the YWCA that summer, I did not know that history and I just thought, that needs to be told.

And then I'm just really interested in taking the whole thing further in terms of how do colleges do that today, I mean how do they get that civic consciousness and that social consciousness into students? Service learning to some extent, I think, does it but it's still on a level that's not really--. It's just still do-good charity stuff, most of it. They don't build relationships and it's kind of like that making relationships, really listening to each other and talking to each other and communicating, that made the big difference. But I'd like to think about how colleges can--who does it today? Who does what the Y did in those Southern women's colleges? And it is true that they were a very big part of the staff and at that time, until it got to be controversial, the presidents of those colleges relied on those people to provide all those services.

JW: Well can you say a little bit about how you ended up at a Southern women's college? Neither of your parents had gone to college so how--? So many women didn't go at that time.

HL: Really? Well it is true that there were only about six of us who were going to college when I was in high school. Well, it's like--. My parents just always assumed that I would go to college; I mean of course you're going to go to college. I don't know that they talked a lot about it or knew where to go. We went and visited GSCW and Bessie Tift and I picked out Bessie Tift because I thought they had the cutest little rooms. [Laughs]

JW: [Laughs]

HL: But my father--. I had wanted to go to the University of Georgia and study journalism and he didn't think I should go to the University, [although] we grew up close to Athens. But I should go to a woman's college, and I think he didn't trust me with boys or something. So it was between those two places, but even so I didn't know enough about getting scholarships and stuff like that. I just went and we paid and then I ran out of money, so then I worked for a year and then I--. So it didn't cost the family much at all after that first year because I worked in the library, and in the summer I'd work full time in the library and then probably twenty hours a week in regular time. I learned how to do--. That's why I got to be a librarian. I didn't go to library school; I had learned how to catalog, I'd learned how to do reference work, I'd learned how to do all that stuff by doing it, because every one of those jobs in the library I had it--. [Sound drops out from 3:01:10 to 3:02:53]

You know, activists and leaders of various kinds. You go through all those biographies and they were part of the YWCA and a woman's college.

JW: So how do you see yourself in relation to a women's movement in the United States? And there's all sorts of ways of framing that. There's the first wave and the

second wave and now people are talking about the long women's rights movement, so where do you see yourself?

HL: I'm part of the long women's rights movement, I'd say, because I come from--. I remember when I was writing my thesis. I wanted to live in the 1830s and have been at Seneca Falls. I really sort of identified with allof those early abolitionist women. I just felt like that was where I should have been, that's who I was, but I was in the 1940s and '50s by then. So when the women's movement began I just fell right in, the new women's movement. So I think that I was one of those hanger-on-ers that kept something going, at least in myself, during the period when there wasn't, as you would say, much of a movement. But I don't think it ever completely disappeared. You can talk about the first wave, second wave, but I think this kept the movement going, through the Y and probably some other women's organizations, maybe even some missionary societies, I don't know. I think if we really looked at--. I know some of those literary clubs were not--. You wouldn't think of them as progressive at all, but I bet you some of those tea parties that women had also led to some solidarity of women, women's support groups. They were like women's support groups if nothing else. And I think those 4-H Clubs and home demonstration clubs--. Now my mother was part of a home demonstration club back in the '20s and '30s and she even went to a conference at the University of Georgia and left my sister and me just with my father. That was really weird that she would do that, you know.

JW: [Laughs]

HL: But I think those home demonstration clubs, which were largely related--. Unfortunately they kind of got taken over by the electric power companies that were

selling electric stoves and people modernizing cooking and stuff like that, selling stuff. But I think we need to really re-look at what was happening to women in that period between what you would call the real suffrage movement and the vote and when Betty Friedan and those people came forth. I think that we missed giving credit to some of those things that were happening. The YW was very deliberately working to promote women's empowerment and things but these others, probably that wasn't their mission, but I think they were filling a role that probably we've not understood fully.

JW: So when the women's movement of the late '60s, '70s--.

HL: Well I was here. I was right there, buying all the books, reading all the books, working with little discussion groups and support groups and consciousness-raising groups and stuff like that. I didn't have any bras to burn or anything. [Laughs] But let me think if there were any kind of marches or anything that I was involved in. I don't know. In the mountains we didn't--. We mostly were involved in--. I worked a lot with the coal mining women's group some, and I took a group of the women miners over to Wales and we had a hard time with some of those macho Welsh miners, I'll tell you. Because they said, "We protected our women by getting them out of the mines," you know, and it is true that they used women in very exploitive ways in the early mining, dragging the coal out of the pits and stuff like that. So they were very proud of the fact that they did not have women miners [Laughs] so they saw us as being very unprogressive.

JW: During the time that, like the coal--.

HL: Yeah, when we were working and pushing to get women in the mines, in the '70s and '80s.

JW: Yeah.

HL: It was in the ’80s, I guess, that I took women miners over there for a big conference and visited around to all the mines. We had a good time. But, let’s see. I can’t think of any big thing I did in terms of--. I made talks about Appalachian women and wrote some things.

JW: Were there changes you saw that were more personal, in groups of friends?

HL: Well I was just really up front about having a partnership, marriage and a partnership relationship, and pushed at it to the point that I left the marriage. [Laughs] And I had quite a number of friends who went to Georgia State College for Women, most of whom had problems with their marriages. [Laughs] So it wasn’t easy. I mean we felt so powerful, and then we get out and we’re in this world, just fighting those battles for employment. I mean the idea that they wouldn’t employ me; I had as good an education as anybody teaching there, and I had published a lot more than anybody else after a few years, and my resume was better than theirs, and I still couldn’t be hired. I ran across those barriers that just infuriated me, because I had expected--. That was one of the criticisms that several of us who went to Georgia State College, went to the women’s colleges, had, is that we were led to believe that we could do anything, but we also had not been prepared for--. We weren’t prepared for marriage relationships, and I think maybe part of it was more these suffragette women were not married and that’s the only way they got to be deans and professors and stuff like that, was not having a family. So the notion was that you could have your family and you could have your career and you could do both really, really well. And the struggle to do that was just more than a lot of women could do, and I don’t know that the college could have prepared us better for that.

I've had some friends who felt really strongly, particularly those who've had families and children. I was always freer to--. I was free to get in my pickup truck and run away that night because I didn't have kids there. My friends with children couldn't do that and they stayed with bad marriages.

JW: Mm hmm. It's getting late, so I won't [Laughs] keep you too much longer with this. One last question for you: I'm always struck by women like you, white women who grew up in the segregated South, who chose to do things that went against what everyone else around them, for the most part, was doing. So I wonder what do you think motivated that and pushed you to do something so different from what other people around you were doing?

HL: I guess it was kind of a religious thing. I felt like it was the right thing to do and you had to do the right thing, and so, okay, you get in trouble, you got to do it. I remember arguing with my husband about why I had to keep pushing and doing certain things, and I said I have to do that; that's what I'm supposed to do. I think it had to do with principles of equality and fairness and justice, and where I got all of that, part of it was through religion, I think. Part of it was through my parents and my father, who was a very just, caring person, and my mother, who was a really hardworking, loving person, I guess. And things I read. I read about powerful women, strong women. I was a big Amelia Earhart fan. [Laughs] I read, oh, I've forgotten, this British woman who was a suffragette. I read a lot of things like that. I was a great admirer of Eleanor Roosevelt. So, I think that's it. I felt I had to do it. There are certain things you have to do--. You can't--. You're going to get in trouble, but that's all right. Myles Horton always said, "You're better known by the enemies you make." [Laughs]

JW: [Laughs]

HL: So it's kind of like certain people I like to be my enemy, not in a dangerous sense, I hope, but I don't want to be in agreement with Rush Limbaugh, you know?

JW: Mm hmm.

HL: But sometimes I've been a--. I remember somebody saying once when they met me, "You aren't as strident as I thought you were," [Laughs] or something, and maybe I might have been too outspoken at times. I might have kept quieter. But then there are times when I should have spoken out more, I think. I feel like now that I am not doing much of anything, but then at my age I just don't have the strength and energy and all that to do.

JW: Well, from what I've heard you're doing more than the average person, [Laughs] still.

HL: I'm still trying to write and I'm still trying to [3:16:32], but I'm not in the trenches, I don't feel. I don't feel like I'm out there stopping strip mining or mountaintop removal. I'm not even dealing with women who are abused or anything. I'm not doing much, but then I don't know what I should be doing. I think I can write, and I can have a voice and I guess that's what I'm supposed to be doing right now.

JW: And I think your life's work, I mean it's still alive and doing its own thing, right? So like me, a student, seven years ago, comes across your book in the library and it's like, oh, this is where I'm from and this is what's going on.

HL: Well good. That's nice to think, okay, so I just have to let that live on.

JW: Yeah, and it does.

HL: And not feel guilty that I'm not out there doing something.

JW: I don't think so. [Laughs]

HL: All right.

JW: Well is there anything else you wanted to add?

HL: Maybe we'll have a little session in the morning before you leave.

JW: Yeah.

END OF INTERVIEW

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