**Interview with Don Olson**

**We Won’t Go! (And We Don’t Want You To Go, Either)**

**Oral History Project**

**December 10, 2018**

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**Peter Simmons, Interviewer**

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Name of interviewee: DO

Names of interviewer: PS

Recording 1

00:00:00 PS: This interview is happening on December 10, 2018. My name is Peter Simmons and

I’m doing the interview with Don Olson, who’s here with me at my home in Minneapolis today. This recording is one of the interviews in the project currently titled, We Won’t Go and We Don’t Want You To Go, Either, which is funded or enabled by the Minnesota Cultural Heritage Fund grant and also administered or assisted by the Minnesota Independent Scholars Forum. And with that, Don, I’d like you to please say briefly something about the event that happened that’s the central reason for my doing this interview with you and then we’ll go on from there.

DO: Well, you and I were—found ourselves on the road down to Winona [Winona, MN] that July day in 1970, July tenth, and we were there for a final look through at the draft board for Winona County. And it was, even though all the places that people were going to be going in at the same time had been pretty much cased out, knew what it was, one of the things we wanted somebody to do is to go in and see if they had these new devices that would detect movement. If you opened a window or a door, it sets off an alarm.

So we drove down to Winona—Brad [Brad Beneke], you and I—we were in the threes—

PS: Brad being?

DO: Brad Beneke, okay. And I think it was you who went into the draft board and checked to see if they did have these—what do they call them? Armor? Anyway, it wasn’t one of these things because in other—we’d been casing out various places, we had noticed that some places had had them added because of the—earlier in that year—in 1970, there had been break-ins, specifically at the ones in Minneapolis and St. Paul and at the state headquarters for selective service. So we got down there and saw there wasn’t one. You came back and reported and we went across the river to Wisconsin because ‘lay low.’ It was a nice, sunny day and at the time I had very long hair and very distinguishing and so I was lying down in back so—just on the off chance somebody might recognize me but unlikely in Winona, but we decided I would do that.

PS: You were lying down in the car to avoid being noticed?

DO: Being noticed, yes.

PS: Before going into those details too much because we’ll come back and review a lot of the events, we were doing this, you and I and Brad, planning to do what? And briefly what happened when we got there?

DO: What we were going to do was to go into the selective service office—it was about midnight and take all of the—well, the 1A files, the people who were eligible for, you know, induction at any time; 1A is when you can be inducted into the U.S. military. And we wanted to get rid of them so that everybody could make up their own mind about whether they wanted to participate in this Vietnam War. And we were going to call ourselves the Minnesota—

PS: Conspiracy?

00:05:00 DO: Conspiracy to Save Lives. We had another name that was given to us, the Minnesota

8, but we—so we were going to take them out and we were not going to be standby like a lot of the draft board raids had been when people would go in, get files, sometimes during the day with the workers there. But we had decided, No, we’re not going to do that. We’re not going to stand by and wait for the police to come and arrest us. And we decided we didn’t want to do that. And so, we—well, do you want me to say how we got in?

PS: We can do more details like that but ultimately what happened that was not what we planned on was that we went in, but then what?

DO: Well, we started going in, going through the files, and checking out. This is dark and lo and behold these guys came out of this adjoining office in sports jackets and, “Put your hands up!”, and, “You’re under arrest!” they said; barked out their orders and I thought to myself first right off. God, were we so clumsy that we got noticed by—there was Steamboat Days going on there in Winona? But it turned out to be the FBI, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and we knew that they were looking around, following people, and that they flooded in agents after the people had destroyed files, as I said—I talked about the Minneapolis/St. Paul and the state headquarters.

PS: Earlier that year.

DO: On February 28, 1970.

PS: So we got—we were interrupted and arrested.

DO: We were given a charge of attempted interference. First it was attempted interference with national defense materials and—which had been fun to deal with because we were trying to stop the national offense but, you know, that would have been a good thing to talk about. So they then changed it to attempted interference with selective service procedures and so the maximum penalty, instead of ten years, for the attempted sabotage, five years. It just made it a lot easier to convict us on, to prove their case.

PS: So we didn’t succeed in our raid plan but we became well-known. Anyway, but we’ll come back to that. So again, this happened the night of July 10, July 11, 1970, in Winona and we’ll get back to what happened, a little bit more about what happened before that and after that.

DO: Okay.

PS: But now about you. Let’s start with—you’re a native Minnesotan and you were born and spent your early years where?

DO: South Minneapolis.

PS: Okay, and you were born when?

DO: July 27, 1943, and I grew up in the Seward neighborhood, much different than it is now but—and I went to Seward School [Seward Elementary School, 2309 28th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN] and then to South High School [South High School, now 3131 19th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN] and we were—my father was an alcoholic and eventually—he was a machinist at Toro [Toro Company, now 8111 Lyndale Avenue South

Bloomington, MN] which is pretty close. Everybody drank a lot in those days, a lot of the working men, and eventually we didn’t have enough money so my mother had to go to work. She was a fry cook at a diner which was in South Minneapolis called The Diner, across from the Hexagon [Hexagon Bar, 2600 27th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN], which is still there.

PS: Ah, that diner—the one with the railroad guy swinging the lantern on the top.

00:10:00 DO: Yeah, it was owned by a guy that worked on the railroad but I can’t remember that

railroad lantern on top but—be that as it may—but yes. So I had to start working pretty early.

Since I was twelve years old I started doing newspaper routes and then I had morning and afternoon and then—and Sunday was all part of that one route and then eventually I added a morning route and I was doing it in South Minneapolis around Franklin Avenue from Twenty-fifth to Twenty-seventh Avenue and then morning route I had on the Seven Corners area which is now been obliterated for the development for the bridge, Highway 35 Bridge. And then I started washing dishes at this diner and when my mother remarried I started—her husband had his own restaurant a block away, the Sugar Bowl Café, so I started off scrubbing floors and then washing dishes and then becoming a waiter. I worked all through high school.

PS: So you graduated from old South High in South Minneapolis—

DO: Right where Little Earth [Little Earth of United Tribes, 2495 18th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN] is now.

PS: Yes. And by that time, you, from what you told me in the past, you had some career and work interests that wound up being different than what life turned into for you later. Talk a little bit about what you did when you—you went to the university after graduated from South and your plans then were what?

DO: Well, in high school, I was always interested in international affairs and I would read the paper every day and I would win contests for the recall of international events so I won a slight scholarship at something or other, passed this test. But I was going to go into international relations and so I was interested in political things but my counselor there, when I got there—

PS: At the university.

DO: At the University of Minnesota. She told me about this international relations program which really seemed to fit because, you know, I’d thought, Well, maybe going to the state department or work in the state department. I was pretty young and naïve and not terribly sophisticated by any means.

PS: Back up just a second. So you started at the university—what year was that?

DO: Fall of 1961.

PS: Okay, keep going.

DO: And so then, you know, I liked the variety of different classes, different—there were—the international classes for a number of different social science programs and I also at this time, I thought, Well, I will want to find out more things about socially going on so I joined a fraternity. And I joined a working class fraternity as it turned out but I was kind of a poor kid as are most of the others who are there. Some of the fraternities had a lot more rich people.

PS: Which fraternity were you in?

DO: Zeta Psi [Zeta Psi Alpha Beta, formerly 1829 University Avenue SE, Minneapolis]. It’s not there any longer. So I gradually started staying over there and living and then I moved in there, especially when my family moved out to Mesa, Arizona when I was a sophomore.

PS: That early?

DO: Yeah, so they—I moved into the fraternity so I lived there for—on my own for the rest of college life although I did go to Arizona State [Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ] for one semester to help my mother get a restaurant going back in 1964. And because there was—

00:15:00 the war was going on and the draft requirement, I had to register at age eighteen. I thought

about, Well, maybe I’ll join Air Force ROTC [Reserve Officers Training Corps], which seemed like the clean branch of the military. So I did fall—this other guy I knew, who had put out this underground newspaper at South High called *Age of Reason*, who got into a lot of trouble.

PS: *Age of Reason*?

DO: *Age of Reason*, yes.

PS: Like Tom Paine’s [Thomas Paine (1737-1809)] essay [*The Age of Reason; Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology*, by Thomas Paine, 1794]

DO: Um-hm.

PS: Okay.

DO: So he was going to do it so I thought, Okay, I’ll try it, too. But I only did it one quarter as they were then and then it was mandatory when I was at Arizona State so I did one semester there of it and then I briefly thought, Well, I’ll do when I transfer back to the University of Minnesota that fall of ’64, but I decided, No, I didn’t like that. So I dropped out of it; dropped that as a class. So it was always on the mind and a lot of the people in the fraternity, it was always on the mind about the war going on and how to deal with it.

PS: Those were pretty early days in the Vietnam War, though, not at all what it turned into later.

DO: Yes, exactly right, but, you know, people knew about it, so many people who were older than me were having to think about it and talk about it really. One person—this girlfriend he had—she had a child so he got a marriage deferment by marrying her and he became quite a right-winger later on but he wasn’t going to go into the military and then—but people would—well, we had our differences of opinions. I mean, I myself when I did—during high school I’d become a Barry Goldwater [Barry Morris Goldwater (1909-1998)] conservative because of the influence of my social science teacher in eleventh and twelfth grade and the guy who—there was another teacher there who was more of the DFL, Democratic Farmer-Labor, he wished I’d been in his class because we talked.

When I got to the university I went to the Conservative Students Club brown-bag meeting—I went to many different groups just to try out everything. But when I went there, they were just—they wanted to kill Kennedy [U.S. President John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1917-1963)]. This is fall of ’61. I thought, Oh, that’s a little extreme. So I didn’t go back there at all but, you know, I—

PS: And this was an official campus organization?

DO: Oh, yeah, just, you know, they’re—and I thought I would try them out and look at them. But I was—I became an usher for the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra that was in Northrup [Cyrus Northrup Memorial Auditorium, 84 Church Street SE, Minneapolis, MN] then, and, as I said, I was in a fraternity and so I wanted to expand my horizons to I did all these, joined all these groups, and—

But it was later on, and, of course, sometimes as the war started becoming more and more some of my fraternity brothers would go over to the—when the Student Peace Council was meeting in front of Coffman Union [Coffman Memorial Union, 300 Washington Avenue SE, Minneapolis, MN]. I remember one fellow, Cosmo Klein, he would throw eggs at them and he’d come back and he would laugh about it.

PS: What was that name again?

DO: Jim—we called him “Cosmo;” People had nicknames a lot and nicknames, Racer Brown—he was a right winger and anyway, so we had differences of opinions there and I was gradually becoming more of a person who, you know, sort of a Democrat. I mean, that goes—when the ’64 election came around I think I couldn’t quite remember who I voted for—if I voted for LBJ [U.S. President Lyndon Baines Johnson (1908-1973)] or not but I certainly wasn’t going to vote for Barry Goldwater. I wasn’t a conservative anymore. And I had gotten

00:20:00 interested in more race things and—

PS: So at that point, even though you had just come back from Arizona, his home state, you weren’t a Goldwaterite at that point anymore?

DO: Oh, no, so I was still looking to, you know, I was taking these political science classes and learning this and that and it was interesting—in my international relations classes in the political science department, they really didn’t know much about what was going on in Vietnam. It was—they—there was one old teacher there that he just didn’t have a clue to what was happening. So I was—eventually I started going to teach-ins; they had these teach-ins there.

And a big thing was when I had to—when I was on the five-year plan for college. I was—I had a speech class. And we had to debate the Vietnam War and I—there were two ROTC students in there and they took a pro-war so I had to take the other one. So I had to start investigating that and—

PS: This was in what year about?

DO: Oh, ’65, spring of ’65, maybe ’66. But, you know, so then I had to—I read *Ramparts* magazine [*Ramparts*, published by Edward M. Keating, 1962-1975.] and Donald Duncan [Donald Walter "Don" Duncan (1930-2009)], this Green Beret, who’s on the cover, said, “I Quit!” Well, I thought that was pretty interesting that, you know. So he had a lot of his issues—that’s what he had in that magazine. So I started looking for things and came across that in the newsstands when I would look for things that—so I was gradually thinking and finding out a little bit more, a little bit more and then I started going to the antiwar movement in Minnesota, antiwar groups, but they had so many conflicts between them—

PS: You mean among themselves?

DO: Yes. What I eventually found out was the Socialist Workers Party versus maybe the Communist Party or the pacifists—anyway, the majority walked out and I eventually set up in ’66, the—with an old guy I knew from the fraternity world, John Remington Graham, who became kind of a—he was kind of an interesting person. He graduated, went to law school and when we were down at The Mixers—

PS: Which was a bar on Seven Corners—

DO: Bar on Seven Corners he would recite from memory long passages out of the *Federalist Papers* [*Federalist Papers*, by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, 1787]/ And he was quite a character but we—so we sent up this group called Conservative and Liberal Americans Against the War in Vietnam. And he was the conservative and I was the liberal and I was the vice president but we had a lot of people who were graduate students and lawyers, professional people with training who wanted to be against the war but still keep their professional career open to them. So you had the Conservative and Liberal Americans Against the War, patriotic and all that.

PS: So that was what you officially called yourselves? And this became a recognized campus organization, too?

DO: Yes, indeed. And—

PS: So this was in about 1965?

00:25:00 DO: No, no, this is ’66 and I think that—actually that spring of ’66, is when I did that

speech, had to give this speech was when I graduated, ’66. So I was in this group and Jack then graduated and became notorious later on for—when he was the Crow Wing Attorney General—County Attorney, John Remington Graham—

PS: For Crow Wing County.

DO: For Crow Wing County—he wouldn’t allow—they fought against fluoridation of the water system and so—but anyway, that’s a side note. So he had graduated and then I took over as president. We limped along and then in the—in 1967, because I’d gone to more and more things, I took a test for the National Security Agency [National Security Agency (NSA)].

PS: Still thinking of—

DO: Government.

PS: public relations and government so this was like that.

DO: Right. I didn’t know anything about them but they said I would—I would make a good cryptographer.

PS: For the NSA?

DO: For the National Security Agency. And—so they flew me out to Fort Mead, Maryland, where the headquarters is and you know, they had a bunch of us who were being brought in there to be—and they—I had to—at the time I had to talk about if I’d ever been arrested or done things.

PS: So this was sort of an initial assessment and clearance check and things like that for the NSA for you?

DO: This is a lie detector test and I was in there so long that people—the other people there said, Geez, did you go to Europe? Have you been to Europe? Well, I’d never been to Europe but, you know, I was arrested during Fraternity Days after hours parties, being in a tippling house. Yeah, well, we went out all the time on weekends and to parties and going here and there. We were somewhat under surveillance a lot by the police. They put up a big spotlight across by the—from the university by the place where people could go for intramural sports there—shine a light on us all the time so we couldn’t—

PS: So they were keeping an eye on you all the time so—

DO: Oh yeah, they’d come by there, you know, parties.

PS: and you were quizzed about all this at the NSA?

DO: Yeah, so I was, you know, why did I care? I mean, I’d done it if it was on there. Plus, then I had to tell them about when—putting out an underground newspaper, *The Age of Reason*, that my friends—we were sort of the oddballs, the political oddballs—

PS: This was back in high school?

DO: High school. So we had somebody who was from Estonia—he was kind of a sort of Nazi and people were Socialists and I was the conservative but we put out this underground newspaper which just like, Wow—it almost tore the school apart; teachers were crying in their classes about it and I was almost expelled and I had to promise my mother, Oh no, I won’t do it anymore, because I didn’t know what I would do—that’s a young age, but I did work on it. We just put out a very few copies but it’s pretty famous and it was one of the very first

00:30:00 underground papers. People from later, people from the journalism department at the

university for high school kids and that.

So, but we’d—some of us once went downtown. We thought, Well, let’s go see where this group is. It was the Socialist Workers Party and I didn’t know anything. Up and down, what that meant—who they were. We went—they had an office on the second floor around Seventh and Hennepin, so we went up there just to look around and, you know, my mentioning this to this guy that was interviewing me, it was the same thing as if I’d said that I wanted to personally gun down LBJ as the president. It was just like, “What? You? Well, what did you see there?” “I don’t know. There were some pictures on the wall.” “What kind of pictures? What kind of pictures?” And, “I don’t know—something—maybe Cuba, maybe.” You know, I was too young and naïve. It didn’t really make a difference so later on I—

PS: So this was still during this interview with the NSA?

DO: Yeah, so this—we went over all these different things and so, later on, they said they really couldn’t find a place for me and I think that, as I ascertained it out, if you want people to go into these kind of operations, you want those people who are not going to look to the left or look to the right—just look straight ahead and not do anything out of the ordinary.

PS: No deviation, huh?

DO: No deviation because there were people when I was in graduate school who did go into the Central Intelligence Agency who are exactly like that. They just never—they just didn’t do anything. So then I—well, I’d used my going there to—so that was interesting. First time I’d been to Washington, DC, and so I started doing, getting more and more involved and then in the spring of ’67, the—I was thinking, What am I going to do? What am I doing to do about this? So then there was the branch of the state department, what is it called? Oh, where they help all the countries and make them—because all along I’d wanted to—

PS: USAID [United States Agency for International Development]?

DO: It wasn’t AID but it was sort of like that. Geez, I can’t remember right off. Agency for, yes, Agency for International Development. I would go to Vietnam as a development person. And the reason I was always going into these things is because I wanted to help the people of the world, help them develop and why could they develop and so I didn’t really understand all that. USAID exactly.

So I thought, Well, I’ll go to—I’ll use this trip—I arranged it so I’d be interviewed over the weekend where I could go to the antiwar march in New York City and it—Spring Mobilization, April 15—

PS: Nineteen sixty-seven?

DO: Yeah.

PS: But you were interviewing then for the state department?

DO: Yes.

PS: Had you taken the foreign service exam?

DO: Yes.

PS: Okay, separate from the NSA—

DO: Separate from the USAID, yeah, this was a year later—holding out another—

I’d only gotten a sixty-eight; I needed a seventy to continue on. Actually, to pass that test

00:35:00 well, you’d had to have had a good grounding in the introduction to almost every department

that you would have at the university. So the more knowledgeable and urbane and whatever else, maybe even more so than I am now if—I’ve kept up educating myself but so I didn’t pass that but I did—went there for this and I stayed with a fraternity brother in DC, who had just finished Officer Candidate School. So here’s a guy that I used to run around and party with and do all these things. So he was a commissioned officer. So I stayed with him on Friday—I came in; I stayed overnight with him and then two of his other roommates—one was a Chinese specialist; the other was a Cambodian language specialist. So he told me that—

PS: Were they also in the military?

DO: Oh, yeah, they were commissioned officers.

PS: All of them?

DO: All of them.

PS: Okay.

DO: And you know, they were in between what they were going to be sent to for this or that or next training after Officer Candidate School. He—my friend—told me that they were instructed that when you want, when you have prisoners and you want to make them talk, you take them all up in a helicopter, throw one out and the rest will just start talking because they didn’t want to get thrown out and killed. So I thought, Hmm. And he was more of a go-along to get-along type of guy whereas to me, I was kind of horrified by it. But it was kind of good to find out about that.

PS: Was this the first time you’d ever heard a story of that kind of practice?

DO: Yeah, I don’t think I had. It had probably been going on. I don’t think I’d heard about stuff like that. This came out more later on. But so I went there—I took a bus overnight up to New York City from DC, and was out there in the barrier later, pounding on drums with the other hippies—and I say other hippies because—in one of my last fraternity things was that we had this campus carnival and we had this skit about—we had this guy on the annual rush list developed West Bank—he was an art dealer who had a nude painting in the window and he had got arrested or something. So I was playing this guy so I allowed—I allowed my hair to grow longer for the part, you know, and even though some of the fraternity elders were a little bit askance I could—Well, I’m doing this for this part campus carnival. Anyway, so I was kind of a little bit starting to cultural changing over for this and that.

And then—so I was out there pounding on the drums with these hippies and just thinking, I don’t know, maybe I’m going to give up my career aspirations.

PS: We’re shifting back to New York now?

DO: To New York City, yes. And then especially I got together with an old girlfriend who was there—who was in the National Security Agency—she worked for them. And she was there with her boyfriend and she told me, “Don’t ever go to work for the National Security Agency.” So here’s two people from my college days who are warning me about all these going ahead.

So when I got back there for Monday for my interview in the Agency for International Development—it was a big building and annex—they loved me till I told them I was president of this antiwar group. Whoa! Whoa! So he said, This is the chief procurement officer for the

00:40:00 Far East, he says, young guy. He says, Well, you know, I think we ought to just black top

them over and put a stripe down it, which is just what Ronald Reagan [U.S. President Ronald Wilson Reagan (1911-2004)] had kind of suggested should happen.

PS: Talking about Vietnam?

DO: Talking about Vietnam. And it was interesting so he was kind of like the political person who was there and kind of there was an older guy—he was kind of like this seemingly long suffering underling to this young person who was yapping about all these things about how he would treat these other countries of the world. But he just didn’t say anything; he just took it all in. That was interesting.

So then my interview ended and then I got the letter saying, Well we were all impressed with your credentials. However, we don’t have a place where you could fit in. So that was fine with me.

PS: That was later after you got home?

DO: Yeah, a month later. And so then—’67 was Vietnam Summer.

PS: Hold on a second. Back up a little bit. At that point, when you went out for your USAID interview, had you started at graduate school

DO: Yes, I was in graduate school.

PS: So, you in mid-graduate school career at that point?

DO: Yep.

PS: Okay. Still in international relations?

DO: It was in the school—it was called public administration. Now it’s The Humphrey School of Public Affairs, so it was soon to change over but so I was doing the international things, classes, within that program, you know, looking at this and that. Maybe with the UN [United Nations]? The Food and Agriculture administration? I thought about applying for it but I didn’t have any qualifications for it—what they wanted. But so, yes, I was in graduate school.

PS: So you’d been doing that for a while and now we’re back to the spring of 1967.

DO: Yes and so it was decided by these groups, some of the groups—there was one—

PS: Campus groups you mean?

DO: Campus groups. Well, you know, the campus groups but also—not many of the community groups met on campus or ever had a lot of close touch on there, but the group that had left, Minnesota Committee Against the War, they decided on a Summer of Education, called Vietnam Summer, where they tried to do a lot of things both on campus as well as around town. And I did just a little bit here and there but some of the wrap-up over there I came to—that there was a meeting with the American Friends Committee, John—

PS: Martinson [John E. Martinson (1935-2009)]

DO: John Martinson.

PS: American Friends Service Committee.

DO: American Friends Service Committee at the time to start a draft counseling [center] because he had been doing it but there were some people like Dave Gutknecht [David Gutknecht (1947-)] and some others, Ellen Hawley, that wanted to get a real big push on—

PS: Just for the recording. So David Gutknecht and Ellen Hawley, H-a-w-l-e-y?

DO: Yes.

PS: I used to know her, too. But backing up a little bit more. Vietnam Summer wasn’t something that just happened here in the Twin Cities, right? This was a national effort.

DO: Right, a national effort.

PS: Sort of modeled on Freedom Summer, which had been in 1964.

DO: Yeah, yeah.

PS: Okay. So you—back to the end of Vietnam Summer in ’67 with Martinson and counseling.

DO: Yeah, so we said, That sounds like a good thing to do because I still didn’t know what I was going to do—I still had my student deferment but also, Dave Gutknecht is the one that talked about draft resistance and I thought about draft resistance. That could get you into prison a lot easier and quicker, whoa! And so I wasn’t quite ready to do that right then, but so

00:45:00 – we got ourselves educated onto the draft and did a lot of things. And we set up a draft

counseling center over on Third Avenue just off of Franklin Avenue.

PS: So Third Avenue South in Minneapolis up the street from the Minneapolis Institute of Arts [now, Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2400 Third Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN] right?

DO: Yes, but it was kind of in a derelict area. Maybe it’s just starting to be developed now but it was cheap rent. Doug Gutknecht [Douglas Gutknecht] was involved—

PS: Dave’s brother.

DO: Dave’s brother—and some others and so we started having counseling hours. Well, wouldn’t you know it? Soon enough, as we started getting our name out there, we had our windows shot out.

PS: This was in fall of 1967, or winter, or when about?

DO: Yeah, it would have been winter. So then we moved over to—three blocks away—no, that was on Fourth Avenue, this one was, and we moved over to Third Avenue.

PS: So the first one was on Fourth Avenue closer to—

DO: Right, right along the freeway, just half a block off Franklin. And so then we were on the second floor at the corner of Nineteenth and Third Avenue South and we were there—we did a lot of counseling there. and then we started doing a lot more outreach and I was—I was dividing up things people should do since I was still a student, well, I should go on campus and have a group there. And put a little notice in the *Minnesota Daily* [*Minnesota Daily*, University of Minnesota newspaper, 1900-present] and a bunch of people showed up, mostly who were concerned about their own draft status.

But there were some who wanted to do things and we settled on the name of SASS, Students Against Selective Service and our motto was to have your thumb on the nose and to flap it against whoever was in authority because we were taking a different viewpoint. And so we did a lot of tabling on campus. We had talks. Mulford Sibley [Mulford Quickert Sibley (1912–1989)] was our advisor, faculty advisor—you had to have one.

PS: So he was your legitimizer as an official student organization, Mulford Sibley?

DO: Yes, well-known pacifist, Socialist and so we were quite glad to have him. And clearly—he had famously just talked about how there should be groups on campus for homosexuality; for Socialism and he listed a whole bunch of them and this got into a terrific uproar by this one member of the St. Paul City Council—and they would even have these debates about whether there should be all these different kinds of groups.

PS: Do you mean whether they should be allowed?

DO: Allowed? Yes, allowed even. Milt [Rosen, St. Paul City Council member mentioned above]—heck, what was his name? And so we did a lot of outreach and we put out—through the Twin Cities Draft Information Center we did a lot of reprinting of articles from *The Nation* magazine [*The Nation*, edited by Katrina vanden Heuvel, 1865-present] or we’d get articles from the developing national network of draft counseling and we’d have literature tables where people could get it and we’d have buttons about, you know, an omega [Greek letter] sign which can mean resistance and so we developed a pretty

00:50:00 good following on campus. We were kind of an unusual group. A lot of groups didn’t have it.

We often had also, much more of an anarchist view of the world, about how government shouldn’t be able to force you into the military; that you should be able to make up your own decision if you wanted to participate and that you should have a draft free and democratic society. People should be convinced to participate in something like this with such enormous consequence.

So we had a lot of philosophical arguments and we had tables almost every day in the basement of Coffman Union. It was really well set up for it, for the—they’ve remodeled that possibility out of existence but there would be—eventually, then there were the SDS, Students for a Democratic Society. I was a little bit active with them. We overlapped, but they were much different with what they wanted to do. You know, conservative groups, SPAR, Students for the Preservation of the American Republic, and then there—but there were a lot of other just groups that wanted to go camping, you know, walking through the wilderness, Rovers Club.

PS: So groups that were present in lower level with tables of various kinds a lot of the time?

DO: Yeah, but you had a little place in the basement; you could have a locker there, a very small one, to keep your literature and go there and so we did that for quite a bit.

PS: Hold on a second. So, at that point, in its early days, SASS, Students Against Selective Service, was a service spinoff of the Draft Information Center. Is that about right?

DO: Sure. I mean, others—we had the people like David Pence [David Pence (1946-)] and Dan Miles—

PS: Dan Miler ?

DO: Dan Miler, who did the Student—SMU? Student?

PS: Minnesota Student Union?

DO: So MSU, Minnesota Student Union. And so they were taking care of that so we all these various different things and at the time I’d stopped working at the public administration library, and we would—we were starting to get enough money that people could live cheaply, you know. You could get twenty-five to maybe seventy-five dollars a month to live off. We had some communes so you could live a lot cheaper back then. But so I could devote a lot of time to doing all these things.

And we would do what I call street counseling. Give them a lot of information because I knew a lot of good counseling people and then we’d send them over to the Draft Information Center if they really wanted an in depth thing, or if they were going to go into conscientious objector status—usually you have to go into a philosophical discussion.

PS: Was the Draft Information Center at that point still on Third Avenue or had it moved over to the West Bank yet?

DO: Yeah, it was over on—it was over on Third Avenue until after the Milwaukee 14 action took place, where the draft files were burned there. We’d had—that fall of ’68, we’d had a Happy Resistance costume parade where we went from campus and went downtown; didn’t have a permit; got down to the mall; split in two; the cops didn’t know what to do. But we were just kind of all having fun. Nancy Lehman was the one who came up with that idea. We were in costumes and it was in great fun—kind of a—we tried to have more of a high jinx sort of hippie-fied—she wasn’t a hippie, but there was just a lot of—we just had something different.

PS: Sort of a Yippie flavor?

00:55:00 DO: A Yippie flavor, yes. That night we had—in order to bring this about we had a special

where we reserved a special room on the first floor of Coffman where you could, if you were going to do, for a month or two, you could have a place where you could organize out of. Well, and then that night, a very strong supporter of our adult support group was having an art auction for us somewhere over—I think it was over on the West Bank in some place over there. And that night we had both the Third Avenue place burned out and this place at Coffman Union burned because—I can’t remember if there was a note but I assume it was because if the Milwaukee 14 had burned draft files well, they’re going to burn our offices. So then we decided, Well, let’s move over to the West Bank, you know, the hippie haven, so to speak, at 529 Cedar.

PS: Was anyone ever caught for either of those fires?

DO: No, of course not.

PS: I knew that there’d been a fire at Third Avenue but I didn’t know about the one in Coffman Union temporary office.

DO: Yeah, it wasn’t a huge fire but it was a fire that burned up our literature and let us know that they didn’t like what we were up to.

PS: This was in advance of the Happy Resistance Day parade? The fires?

DO: The fires? Yeah, it all happened that night. It was like a pretty ambitious so we had—in the late afternoon we had the parade and that night then it was separate from that. Only a few of us would go all over in contact with the adult supporters for this art auction where they did that and donated art and all that. And so then the—we went there. So that’s when it happened.

PS: So the fires happened the night of the day of the Happy Resistance Day parade?

DO: And at the same time we had this art auction which was in the evening.

PS: Of that same parade day?

DO: Um-hm.

PS: Yeah, I remember that parade real well. It was pretty inspiring.

DO: It was great fun.

PS: And it was big or it seemed pretty big.

DO: Well, yeah, why not? People like—it was fun to do.

PS: The fall of 1968. I mean, the whole counterculture was flourishing. There were hundreds of people who were in this parade.

DO: Yes, so this came, too, after we had started pushing the National Days of Draft Resistance. The first one is in the fall of 1967 and then we had a—the first National Days, you know, very few came. I think just three people turned in their cards.

PS: You mean here?

DO: Yeah, but across the country people were doing it, a small number of people and then we had a small one in January cold, and then we were pushing for the third National Day—we were going to do it April 4 [April 3, in fact]—

PS: Of what year?

DO: Nineteen sixty-eight.

PS: Okay.

DO: This is going back. And we were really starting to get a lot of attention and *Time* magazine was going to do an article about the resistance. But what happened—the day before Martin Luther King [Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968)] was assassinated. Well, that took precedence over everything and anything because of all the flyers that went across

01:00:00 the country. There was a rocking of the whole political world or racial relations. I mean, he

was a major person and so—but we had about twenty-three people that turned in their cards.

PS: Still, that April day in ’68?

DO: Yeah. It was the day after. It was April 3 and then he was killed April 4. That’s what it

was. So we had our cards and turned them in and I finally was of the presence that I could turn mine in, decided I was strong enough in who I was as a person and my knowledge of the world because I’d been gradually reeducating myself. I started teaching classes in Free University on American foreign policy because I’d started reading William Appleman Williams’ [William Appleman "Bill" Williams (1921-)] *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, W.W. Norton Company, 1959], and his other books so I learned enough so I could teach classes on this.

PS: Were you still in the public affairs program?

DO: I, you know, I was less and less attending class. I was more interested in activism, changing the world.

PS: So by early, middle 1968, you were starting to migrate away from academia, official academia?

DO: Yeah, exactly, and I gave up my job and so I cast my fate and so—

And another big thing in my life was that I

End of Recording 1

01:02:08

Beginning of Recording 2

00:00:00

went to—in the fall of ’67, I went to the March on the Pentagon and that was very big and I’d been to the one in New York in the spring but the Pentagon one, Marching on the Pentagon, it was—I think I remember as we got ready for it we had a couple busloads going. As we were just leaving, the headline was “Parade Permit Granted; Paratroopers Flown In.” Well, that puts it in a whole different—October 21, I think, of ‘67. So I went there and I was part of the people that got close—it was huge. Norman Mailer [Norman Kingsley Mailer (1923-2007)] wrote about it in *Armies of the Night* [*The Armies of the Night: History as a Novel/The Novel as History*, by Norman Mailer, New American Library, 1968]. But as we got closer to there, something—somebody had already turned around where I was and we had arrived at where the Pentagon was and there were fences around to keep you from getting close to the Pentagon. But just as I was getting there, people broke through these fences. Well, I went through, too. So we reached the Pentagon.

PS: That must have scared them.

DO: Well, they—all of a sudden we got there and then the marshals came out the doors so we decided we would sit down and have a sit-in.

PS: Were these federal marshals or were they MP’s [Military Police]?

DO: No, they were U.S. Marshals.

PS: Okay.

DO: And there were a couple of people from this one far left group that ran up into the doors and they were battered and banged and carried off. They were the U.S. Committee to Support North Vietnam or something like that, very, very small group. But then they brought out these troops—I think from the 82nd Airborne who set up, you know, we weren’t very far from the, you know, ten feet to the steps where I was and they set up a perimeter. And they—

PS: These were the paratroopers mentioned in the headline, right?

DO: Yeah, and they were elsewhere, too, around town. And then if they ever got tired after hours and hours, they would lean on the back of somebody who was there—the marshals would reach through, grab that person and club them a little bit and haul them off to be arrested.

Well, it was kind of like a stalemate and it went through the night. Under the cover of darkness, I was brave enough to join with others who were setting their draft card alight, which is, you know, illegal, but nobody knows about it who was going to do anything, but you were then supposed to have it on your person at all times on pain of five years or ten thousand dollar fine.

Anyway, so that was kind of like one more thing along the way that I was doing, which is building on my resolve, doing things which I felt were important and steeling myself and learning more intellectually about what the real history of this country was. You know, I have always kind of wondered about, you know, the Indians and Chief Joseph [Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekt known as Chief Joseph, Young Joseph, or Joseph the Younger (1840-1904)] of the Nez Perce [Nez Perce Tribe, Pacific Northwest]. I didn’t exactly like what had happened there but I hadn’t really put it all together. It wasn’t until I reeducated myself by this whole revisionist history, a lot of it was scholarship coming out of Madison.

PS: Madison, Wisconsin?

DO: Madison, Wisconsin. So I became part of that and so—and I just kept doing more and more things trying to be nonviolent but to escalate what was going on in opposition to the war because the war had been going on for year after year after year and the body bags kept coming back in bigger and bigger numbers. And we, you know, we started having the people who were returning vets, who—because we had always been—we used to go down to the induction center every morning because we’ve got the Draft Information Center going legally

00:05:00 and saying, Well, if you don’t want to go in, we’ll help you. We’ll give you counsel about

what your alternatives are because most of them didn’t know anything about it.

PS: You mean if you don’t want to go into the military?

DO: That very day, yes. And the draft boards were pretty much worthless at telling you what you legally—what kind of deferments or exemptions you might be entitled to.

PS: I want to back up for a minute. Back at the Pentagon, that’s when you burned your draft card?

DO: I did.

PS: And that was the first time that you did anything that was overtly illegal that way?

DO: Well, other than I smoked dope now and then.

PS: I mean, related to the resistance and selective service and like that.

DO: Yes, exactly right.

PS: So that was that. I wanted to go back a little bit more to SASS, Students Against Selective Service on campus. Mulford Sibley was your advisor. What were other faculty/staff at the university like related to SASS? I mean, did you get resistance or assistance or some of each? Were others in on that sort of thing much at all?

DO: No, we had a—the faculty on campus, Arnie Goldman [Arnold L. Goldman (1925-2013)] and a bunch of people in the English department, [unclear] and we had this one mathematician and John Buttrick [John Arthur Buttrick (1919-2007)] in the economics—professor in the economics department—they were all—we had a very strong adult support group. We set this up to raise money for us; to give us adult support; we were mostly much younger, of course. And David Noble [David Watson Noble (1925-2018)]—some people wanted to know if they could get credit for this class I was teaching so I went to talk to him and I told him, you know, I was teaching out of William Appleman Williams. “Oh, well, you can’t get anybody better than Williams, so yeah.” So I was turning in grades for those who wanted to take them as classes.

PS: So Dave Noble was your legitimizer for that.

DO: For that, um-hm.

PS: So before we talk about—

DO: But, you know, that was very much this alternative education thing—ideas were also floating around.

PS: Things like Open U and all of that.

DO: Yeah, Experimental U [in fact, the Free University].

PS: So when you before talked about the adult support group for the Draft Information Center and at your Resistance Day and so on, this included a lot of faculty at the university as well as other people, too, probably, right?

DO: In the Resistance Parade, no, it was mostly.

PS: But later on, for SASS, I mean.

DO: Yeah, they knew about SASS and I would talk to them because I was older than most of the people who were involved there, undergrads, activities and so on.

PS: Anyway, it wasn’t just Mulford Sibley who was helping by supporting SASS and these other activities.

DO: No, no, no. We had these people who, you know, were themselves against the war from the philosophy department. And there was one person who—one professor who ran in ’66 as—in opposition to the member of Congress on an antiwar thing. So there was a lot of it—not all of it—a lot of it came out of the Prospect Park area. There was a very strong interrelation there I found out later on for a lot of people. But there was a lot of different ones there because they, themselves had been organizing and learning about it and dragging them out—most academicians are not that active. They’re always worried about their jobs.

PS: Is this—were these people who were involved in doing some of the teach-ins that you referred to earlier. Talk a little bit about that.

00:10:00 DO: Mainly the teach-ins, I guess I was referring to, were the national ones from the state

department where we had Norman Thomas [Norman Mattoon Thomas (1884-1968)] would be debating somebody who was antiwar and pro-war and—but these were part of this teach-in movement that was across the country in these more upper level—but there were a lot of things that the faculty were doing which were on a smaller scale. Coffman Union or would give talks at times and we’d go to it and bring people to it.

PS: So there was student and faculty interaction about all this on campus. It wasn’t just all those students?

DO: No, but they had their sphere of combat so to speak and we had our sphere that we mostly did. But, you know, they gave us great sustenance to know that there was professor support. But at a certain point, we came to know that a lot of professors didn’t know much about what was going on or they were just so pro-war or—

PS: Well, back to the induction center downtown. You would go there with information for people who were being inducted that day?

DO: We’d say, If you don’t want to go in, we’d help you, but if you did go in, you have rights. Don’t let them push you around just to kind of promote a spirit of—you still were a citizen even though you were under military law and the like. So when they started coming back—people who were against the war coming back—

PS: You mean veterans returning.

DO: Veterans returning from Vietnam they set up a Vietnam Veterans Against the War and we’d do things closely with them. I mean, they were sometimes on campus but in the community and would do whatever so we were kind of in the same orbit going on. So we—the whole thing about antiwar people spitting on returning GI’s—from my point of view, there’s no substance to it and there’s a book about it, *No Spitting Matter* [*The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory and the Legacy of Vietnam*, by Jerry Lembcke, New York University Press, 1998], but there’s no substance to it. But because we worked closely with them because they were against the war and so were we. We knew how it was if you could be drafted in there, suffering through all this and going through the agony of decision making. It was not easy for anybody who was living through those times about what to do; how to go about it; how to—whether you could go to prison or not; whether you, you know, had enough internal fortitude to do that. It was something you had to develop.

PS: Speaking of that, at that point here in the Twin Cities area, in 1967-1968, we’re talking about, had there been people here who had refused induction and also, separately some of those for refusing induction or burning draft cards who’d been indicted? It seems like that was going on somewhat by then here.

DO: Yeah, we did have a few people that were, very early on, had gone to prison and oh, one of them’s name—his name—oh, I’ve run into at poetry events, but he did a stint in my alma mater, U.S. Medical Center for Federal Prisoners [United States Medical Center for Federal Prisoners, Springfield, MO], back in ’65 or something.

PS: That’s pacifist?

DO: Yes, early pacifist, yes. And there were people—Dave Gutknecht was one who really was involved early—the resistance things. And he, Dave Gutknecht, eventually had a court case at the Supreme Court named after him because he had been sent an induction order, drafted out of sequence from where it should have been because of turning in his cards and his

00:15:00 opposition and he was brought to the head of the line which was illegal. And his winning that

case got—affected a few thousand people, both people who were in prison as well as some even in the military but—so that was important. So we did have a few people like that and—

PS: That was still kind of early days—

DO: Early days, early days.

PS: but there weren’t a steady stream of people refusing induction at that point.

DO: No.

PS: Just Dave and a handful of others like—well, and who else? Dave Pence at that point? Did he? Maybe around then?

DO: At a certain point, maybe around there, maybe a little later. But he—but yes, eventually we, you know, at TCDIC, we were counseling one hundred guys a week.

PS: TCDIC being Twin Cities Draft Information Center.

DO: Exactly. And then it turned, you know, it got to be where every day, somebody was refusing induction and if there was a lot of people who were refusing, we would have a demonstration down there but, you know, we would have—so we’d tell people, Well, what would happen if you go down there and you’re not going to take the step forward because that’s the step forward because that’s the crucial part. Once you take that step forward, even before you take the oath of allegiance, then you’re in the military.

So we had also panels of supporters of lawyers who were very important. They had been set up. They became skilled in draft law and they were defending people. So we could tell people, We have lawyers here who can defend you. We also had a—some—medical people who could investigate if you had a particular physical or maybe mental malady that they could write you something, a medical terminology and the knowledge of it because we used to joke around that the Army doctors who were conducting your pre-induction physical—boy, if you didn’t point out something, they sure weren’t going to find anything wrong with you because they needed bodies; they were into—they had to—the draft calls kept going up as the war kept escalating.

PS: For people who don’t remember or know about this pre-induction physical typically happened at the draft induction center the day that you were sent there to be inducted.

DO: Often, sometimes it would be before—

PS: Sometimes before.

DO: Generally that pre-induction physical that very day. It’s all wrapped up in one day and then you’re on the bus that night for—or maybe the next morning, whether they put you up overnight at some hotel- the next morning you’re on your way to Fort Leonard Wood for basic training.

PS: That’s in Missouri, right?

DO: Missouri.

PS: Backing up to the panel of lawyers, one of those lawyers you had mentioned earlier who you had formed this organization on campus with early on, right?

DO: Yes, John Remington Graham.

PS: So he was the conservative part of Conservatives and Liberals Against the War and was still against the war enough that he was helping people who were draft resisters at that point some years later because he had finished law school and was in private practice?

DO: Oh, yeah, he was. We had some very strong people like Chester Bruvold [Chester A. Bruvold (1935-1982)]

PS: He defended Dave with his Supreme Court case right?

DO: I believe he did, yes indeed. He always—he was one who was quite enamored of the thirteenth amendment, involuntary servitude. Well, if you’re forced to do things against your will, isn’t that involuntary servitude? Supposedly the thirteenth amendment would not allow. And he would push that a lot. The only time it had been brought forward was in the throes of

00:20:00 World War I when you had some circular argument to get around the thirteenth amendment

there as to making the draft for the First World War, making it legal and so everybody else

just referred back to that even though it’s not a very good argument.

And then Ken Tilsen [Kenneth Earl Tilsen (1927-2013)] got a lot of cases. In fact, he was our lawyer for the Minnesota 8 high jinx. And—but there were others, too. They worked together and they did a lot of things and they would try and get people for various—so they’d spread it around and as more and more people were refusing induction and as the country is starting to turn a little bit against it, the sentences given started to go down. And so the first one was Dave Pence. Dave Gutknecht got four years and then people started getting three years. This was with a five-year maximum and then two years and then eighteen months and then six months in the seventies and three months. And at the end of the war, Miles Lord [Miles Welton Lord [1919-2016)], Judge Miles Lord, was just having people sit for a couple hours outside of the U.S. Marshals office because they were showing how effective the community ideas about opposition to this War in Vietnam had people being forced into the military.

PS: Now we’re jumping ahead a little bit of where we were.

DO: Yeah, quite a bit.

PS: But just to expand on that a little bit here you talked before about how much draft resistance there was here in Minnesota and the federal district of Minnesota.

DO: Right.

PS: Say something about how voluminous that was.

DO: Nineteen sixty-nine, seventy and seventy-one—so of the cases that were indicted in the state—

PS: Of any kind.

DO: Of any kind. More than half are for selective service violations.

PS: In all of those three years?

DO: In all those three years and that were only a small percentage of those who were in violation so they weren’t even being, you know, for whatever reason, they weren’t being prosecuted. Sometimes the draft board—I mean, I—as I was starting to get more and more active my draft board offered me a conscientious objector status.

PS: Really?

DO: Yeah, didn’t have to apply for it.

PS: They came across in advance.

DO: Yeah, they just told me, you know, I don’t like the draft. I’m against it. But I did eventually refuse induction on January 5, 1970 and it happened to be Mike Therriault and I who were part of the six people who were refusing that day. Mike Therriault was eventually one of the Minnesota 8 defendants. I remember one guy who was going to go refuse; he had some sort of a drug in his pipe. He was smoking on the top step of the federal building outside—opium, just a little bit. So I’d never had opium so I thought I’d take a toke from there. I didn’t do marijuana and hashish. So when we got in there I started telling people, as we got to the second floor, Oh, you don’t have to go in if you don’t want. Go to the Draft Information Center. We can help you get out. You can always come back again if you want.

00:25:00 And so I enraged the sergeant who was doing it, he offered to hang me from the ceiling to get

me to shut up. So we kind of tromped around a little bit and then we walked in one way and

before Mike and I went we had — SASS had been with some of the people and we had partied all night long before I went down there and—

PS: The night before?

DO: Yeah, with a whole bunch of people.

PS: Now you had burned your draft cards sometime before—this was a couple years beforehand, or three, close to three years beforehand, right? Or no, two and a half? December ’68 at the Pentagon?

DO: Pentagon was Fall of ’67.

PS: Sixty-seven so—

DO: I got another one—

PS: So did—?

DO: to turn in. April 3, 1968.

PS: So was your induction—when you refused induction in early 1970 was that the result of any kind of special attention that you got or was that just you finally came up?

DO: Well, again, it was an illegal order.

PS: Still or again?

DO: I was over twenty-six and the way the draft worked then, you were supposed to not be able to be drafted so I wasn’t—so I had extra reason for—so I was over age. So that was January of our fateful year.

PS: Yeah, there was a lot more to come. So you—I lost my train of thought here. (Pause in recording.) Okay, so we’re back recording again after a short break, and Don, you’d been talking about how you had been—well, you refused induction in Minneapolis in January of 1970, partly because you were—well, you can talk about more about why but you had more than one reason why because of your age and—

DO: General principles.

PS: General principles.

DO: Opposition.

PS: But that was the first big, overt putting yourself in the public eye in a way thing that you did as I understand your history and what you’ve talked about. I’d like you to talk about—

DO: Well, I did earlier—Molly Ivins [Molly Ivins (1945-2007)[ did a series called “The Young Radicals” for the *Star Tribune* [formerly *Minneapolis Tribune*] and I was one of those people she featured when she wrote for the *Minneapolis Tribune*.

PS: Yeah, so she was a young, new reporter.

DO: Yeah, came from New York, and she was wanting to talk to people who were antiwar or whatever else and she became very much more famous, too, when she was in Texas. But she did a lot of things there, got them into the paper.

PS: Well, including a big story about us when we were arrested, too. But so you were not an anonymous person in the Twin Cities, in the resistance at the point at which you refused induction. That was the first big illegal thing you ever did. Is that right?

DO: Yeah.

PS: And so you talked about getting to the point when you were ready to take that kind of step. Was it mostly a matter of your self-reeducation or were there also individuals who maybe influenced or inspired you to take that kind of a step? I mean, you can think something but doing that kind of something is another matter. Do you feel like there were other things or events that helped you get to that point?

00:30:00 DO: Oh, well, I was reading widely. I knew about stuff going on around the country,

reading *Liberation* magazine [*Liberation,* published, and edited by David Dellinger, New York, NY, 1956-1977] out of New York City that Dave Dellinger [David T. Dellinger (1915-2004)] had published, various pacifist publications. I read *The Guardian* [*The National Guardian,* 1948-1968, then *The Guardian*, 1968-1992] put out by the Communists, not the Communist Party, but just people who were radicals or Communists. And I went to a lot of demonstrations and started to think myself of trying to be a militant pacifist by doing these things. But, you know, the things—I tell people—just marches in the street helps you overcome your inhibition to making yourself look foolish or to put forward that you are here; you’re marching for something that you feel strongly about. And I did it on a number of issues and, you know, I demonstrated when George Wallace [George Corley Wallace Jr. (1919-1998)] came to town and got teargassed then. So, yes, but that wa —being arrested for the Minnesota 8 was the biggest thing. But I was very well-known by a lot of the counterculture.

PS: Okay. Never in any of what you’ve talked about so far, you hadn’t mentioned family members as having influenced or like urged you in this sort of direction or did you have religious motivations or a background like that that sort of tipped you in that kind of direction. Was this—you said on general principles—were there like moral or—?

DO: Yes, I developed a moral pacifism as well as I came to see that the United States was an imperialist county and that I was—that it needed to stop and that—so I would read all these people who would—I went to many, many talks at the university—people who would be coming through, or professors here on campus who had, you know, a strong moral point of view. Since my family had moved away I could basically be on my own. I didn’t have to answer to them. They didn’t know too much about what was going on with me although at a certain point, the FBI was starting to investigate me and they would go and harass my sisters who were living on the West Coast and they were both marrying some Navy guys and so that was—they started to find out that I was involved with these things that the FBI would be checking them out.

PS: So the FBI was looking at you because of your work with SASS specific or other sorts of things. I mean, this is certainly before you were arrested, right?

DO: Yeah, I tried to remember exactly when that was but it wasn’t about all that time—I mean, I knew about all of the draft board raids, say. And I read what they had to say about it and I thought, Well, very brave; strong. They have a strong religious viewpoint and I didn’t. I’d grown up Lutheran and sure, I knew Jesus said, “Thou shalt not kill,” but most of the

00:35:00 religions weren’t pacifist. I started to be around the Quakers and a lot of them were historic

peace church and they would have people in World War II refuse induction so I got to know some of those people.

PS: So that was all part of the surrounding atmosphere I guess but it’s not like you had a direct personal upbringing kind of connection with that sort of thing?

DO: No, at a certain point I told my mother I was going to refuse induction and she said, “Well, you probably know what you’re doing.” This is a few years after I had hitchhiked through town, went out to the West Coast just to see what the Summer of Love was in Haight-Ashbury [Haight-Ashbury, San Francisco, CA]. I was just there for a minute and then I hitchhiked down the coast and then over to Phoenix [Phoenix, AZ] and—

PS: This was in sixty something?

DO: Sixty-seven, Summer of Love. At the end of it in September, then I—even though my hair was just a bit long she said, Don’t come back until you get your hair cut. Well, all right. I didn’t see them very often. I’d been there three years before then and I’d worked in the restaurant as a waiter, just a little—Annie’s Fry Broiler—to help her getting it going. And so no, I—but I talked to a lot of the people.

I talked to people like Dave Gutknecht who talked a lot of philosophy, political outlook and the like but I was having to have discussions with people at the literature table and we would talk about all these things, the history of the war. So I would find out that I had to—if I didn’t know something, I would have to find out so the next day—and people often came back—we had people who came back there time after time. We would have huge discussions going on—twenty people around the table because—

PS: These are the tables in Coffman?

DO: The tables in Coffman Union, in the basement there. And we’d give out this information and sell these books about—against the war. I mean, we had people who were going around, you know, like Noam Chomsky [Avram Noam Chomsky (1928-)]. I took a lot of sustenance from his take on the world. He had sort of an anarchist/pacifist view and how he took a year off and I would read his stuff in the *New York Review of Books* [*New York Review of Books*, published by Rea S. Hederman, 1963-present]. You know, I was, but having to talk with people about it and you really had to fill in any gaps you had but I can’t say there is any one person who was just a whole new you. You know, you start to say, Well, yeah, they’re doing all this. Maybe I’ll have the internal fortitude and sustenance to do more of that.

PS: Wow. So you got to that point when you got your dubious induction orders that you and Mike and maybe others that day were going to refuse induction.

DO: Turned out to be six.

PS: And did you ever get charged for that?

DO: Never, nope.

PS: Other things got in the way of that I suppose.

DO: I suppose, yes, the Minnesota 8 charges superseded—maybe they would have been illegal but Mike never ever got anything either.

PS: He didn’t. So I mean, this was six months before we got arrested and other people had been charged based maybe on their prominence or their [unclear].

DO: Yes, exactly, sometimes it wasn’t that way. A lot of people never got it for whatever reason. They were not put forward.

00:40:00 PS: So you had been—you refused induction in January of 1970 and then you kept on

doing the other activities, I suppose, that you had been doing beforehand?

DO: Yeah.

PS: There was a big event just a couple months later here in the Twin Cities, that you had mentioned before, the raids on the state and Hennepin and Ramsey County draft boards that happened at the end of February.

DO: Beaver 55.

PS: Yes. Now—

DO: So they found out.

PS: We—I remember that very well, but I didn’t know that that was happening or that anything like that was going to be happening here until the next morning when the Monday news came out that this had happened over the weekend. It was a weekend [unclear] effort evidently. Did you know anything about that before it happened, any inkling?

DO: No. I heard about some of the early ones before them but basically it was—

PS: You mean that happened elsewhere.

DO: That happened elsewhere, and but I wasn’t ready to do them, but no, I didn’t know anything about this one going to be there—Beaver 55 coordinated it, attacks and so on which—and nobody’s ever been prosecuted to this day. But when I was meeting with some people, planning some antiwar things and that was kind of gloomy. We took great sustenance out of the fact that this had happened. Oh, that was—lifted my spirits—that was a great thing. Oh, yeah. So that—we were quite happy about it and we continued on.

PS: So when that happened, and it’s the surprise of many people locally, did that make you—lead you to start thinking about doing something like that yourself? Did that help sort of tilt you further along that way?

DO: Well, not particularly. I mean I was glad it happened. I didn’t know who had done it at the beginning because I was pretty busy trying to figure out, What can we do? What can we do? And we started getting ready for some things in the spring and just everyday things we were doing and, of course, then we had the—in April, a few months later, we had the going into Cambodia.

PS: Right, the big invasion and things pretty—well, burst into—well—

DO: Here we had Nixon [U.S. President Richard Milhous Nixon (1913-1994)] who had this secret peace plan and here he’s expanding the war by invading Cambodia.

PS: A year and a half after he was elected.

DO: Yes. And so, we had met with, you know, over at Coffman Union with—we’d met with—who is this guy who was this well-known rotund black guy who was DFL?

PS: Earl?

DO: Earl Craig [Earl D. Craig (1932-1992). And we met and Earl suggested that we have a student strike.

PS: So this was right after—?

DO: This was before the national student call for a student strike—we decided on that beforehand.

PS: Before the invasion even?

DO: No, no, no, but before the national call came out, we here locally—and I remember Earl Craig was the one who had suggested it. We thought, Yeah, let’s have a student strike because this is a big deal.

PS: He was adjunct faculty or something of that kind at the time, right?

DO: Yep. And so—

PS: And this was a couple years after he’d run against Hubert Humphrey [Hubert Horatio Humphrey Jr. (1911-1978)] for the Senate?

DO: Yeah.

00:45:00 PS: So he was locally prominent then, too.

DO: Yeah, I mean, he was locally prominent is exactly right. Plus he wore suits.

PS: He was one of the adults in the room, huh?

DO: That’s right.

PS: So this was in April of 1970, shortly after the invasion happened and everything exploded then.

DO: Yeah, and then we had the national call for a strike and so then this drove a lot of people and then, of course, Kent State [Kent State University, Kent, OH, May 4, 1970] and Jackson State [Jackson State College in Jackson, Mississippi, May 15, 1970]—whoa! Things were really getting—

So Coffman Union was taken over and a strike committee was set up. Bill Tilton [William Leo Tilton (1947-)] was one of the strike leaders and he himself had been a—then—he was a vice chair of the Minnesota Student Association.

PS: Vice president.

DO: Vice president of the student association so he had prominence on campus and he did a lot and just as this was getting going, I developed a medical anomaly, a malady. I had the—

PS: We’re talking still about April of 1970?

DO: Yes, it was right during the beginning of the—I missed quite a bit of the strike because I had the ureter, the tube from the kidney to the bladder plugged up so they had to go in through the penis, the catheter and put a little electric current to open it up. This was somewhat experimental at the time but—

PS: So you had a stenosis?

DO: I don’t know what that is but it—so that—it took me a while to recover from that and then I was back at it. Then it was interesting, too, at the same time, that we had the Coffman Union—that we had the Red Barn incidents in Dinkytown [Red Barn Restaurant, 1307-1311 Fourth Street SE, Minneapolis, MN] and Mike Therriault was living over there so they were trying to defend the property from being developed so there was a lot of things going on campus. And then there was this famous picture just right after that where this fellow drove his car into the Red Barn over at Oak and Washington. Famous picture in the centerfold in the *Hundred Flowers* paper that Eddie Felien [Ed Felien] put out so it was like, whoa! Things are really picking up steam. So there was a whole bunch of activity that I was involved with when I got back on campus.

PS: And on campus, a lot of classes weren’t being held anymore. I mean, the strike was fairly effective at—

DO: Yeah, it wasn’t a majority by—but it was quite a bit. I mean, it never is but it doesn’t have to be. So all these educational things were developed and out into the suburbs and so, as the strike kind of wound down, and as these things will, then there were people started saying, Well, maybe there should be a draft board raid outside of the metro. So I started being a little bit involved with it. I mean, I did a lot of the casing, going out there to see how things operated in the middle of the night around these places. I remember we once went out to Stillwater [Stillwater, MN], the—it was in the Armory, the draft board. And we were going to

00:50:00 climb into a window into the Armory and at the last minute, pulled a flip back; there was

somebody sleeping on a cot below the window. So we said we checked that one off. (laughter). We weren’t going to do that one.

PS: No luck there.

DO: No luck there. But—and so, you know, people would find these “Silent Knights”—these various ones and find out which ones had these things where—

PS: These were alarm systems, early alarm systems.

DO: Early alarm systems that if you opened a window or a door, that this would set them off and even the guys in prison later on, they didn’t know how to defeat them either. Because we used to talk about stuff like how to get in.

PS: Crime skills, right?

DO: Crime skills, yes.

PS: Now when—you didn’t say how you got connected with doing these efforts to go exploring these possible draft board targets. You must have been talking with people—how did that happen that you—you certainly volunteered in a way but did somebody approach you or did you sort of ask around? How did that happen?

DO: I sort of knew about it because of being in anti-draft and all that and having done the support things for the Chicago 15 and the Milwaukee 14 and the like, you know, I was in that milieu. And there were certain people who were underground organizers came by, who I knew, talked to them about it and how things could go down. And so just things kind of festered and thought about, How can we do something more to be against the war? To carry the struggle forward?

And so I was still recovering but I still thought I could do this. But eventually I decided, Yes, I should be involved with this but I was sort of talking to people about it, this and that. You know, some of the ones who took public responsibility for the Beaver 55 and they revealed themselves in early afternoon. I think it was at the Great Hall in Coffman Union and I can remember certain FBI agents there that friends of mine recognized. And I remember I went over and sidled up to them and I said, “Oh, the FBI is with us today.” Oh, did they get excited. (laughter)

PS: That they were revealed, huh?

DO: That they were revealed and then they quickly split, left the room, but they were there to—how many? There were three of them there standing together with their polished shoes and—

PS: At least three that you knew of?

DO: And so this had been pointed out; somebody who had been involved in some kind of drug offense. Anyway, so that going on. So I knew that and talked to people and finally did it and—

PS: So you sort of asked around in a matter of speaking?

DO: Yeah, mostly people talked to me about it. You didn’t have to ask.

PS: It was just in the air?

DO: Yeah, there were people I knew and they would just discuss these things or other people that they knew who I was, you know, I had some prominence, and they’d tell me about these things. I mean, there was a lot that was going on. There was a—I found out over the years there were others, attempted break-ins like in Detroit [Detroit, MI] that were aborted, and other things had developed. But it was all part of this culture of resistance and how you can be a part of this and be well-regarded by the community that you thought important. So

00:55:00 eventually I came to, Yes, I could be part of that and yes, it might send me to prison. But we

weren’t going to be a stand around action like most of the others had been.

PS: So the idea was to not get caught first, and to not identify yourself afterward necessarily but not to wait till officials showed up to put the handcuffs on.

DO: No, we were going to try not to have any legal consequence.

PS: No jeopardy was the idea.

DO: Because we could continue doing all of our other stuff. However—

PS: That’s not quite how it played out.

DO: Our being caught—I mean, a lot of people dropped out along the way because it, you know, and whether it’s something—things are a little loose and people dropped out so I don’t know if somebody said they alerted the FBI. We knew they’d flooded in agents.

PS: Mention that a little bit because you talked about that before but not today. This is after the Beaver 55?

DO: This was after Beaver 55 because all this total destruction. First time a state selective headquarters was attacked. Well, this was not something that was not to be just let go. So they brought in agents. You know, they were asking around, this and that and they never found out stuff but they—we knew that, I mean, eventually when we started casing places, sometimes the very cars and some of the very people who had taken response, taken credit for it originally, Chuck Turchick, and we used his dad’s car and one of the Minnesota 8; and Frank Kroncke and he would drive places. But we had other people, too, and so—

PS: The surveillance was going on.

DO: Yeah, we knew it so we knew you had to be a little bit discreet and we should have been a lot discreet. However, you know, things are loose. I mean like, you know, we’ve got to keep pushing this. I mean, this war is going on forever and now it’s expanding. We’ve had all these killings of people, of political figures and the ghetto’s uprising and the whole thing which as it developed were part of this whole world that we’re living in. And Nixon was in office.

So we cased them out but our being caught had a bigger impact than the Beaver 55.

PS: Even though that was the biggest raid that had ever happened in the country at that point, is that right?

DO: Exactly right, because we were known to people. They knew who we were and each of us had, you know, some sort of sphere of people knowing us, some influence, some activities. We were well-known and here were people that had attempted sabotage charges and so there was a great mobilization in our support the next night [July 11, 1970]. And they demonstrated outside of the jail downtown, the courthouse. And, as I found out later, when Ellen Pence had a red flag and put it through the front door window of the courthouse they literally thought—the people in our support out there—were going to come up and bust us out.

PS: And Ellen is David’ Pence’s sister.

01:00:00 DO: Thirteen people were arrested: Dave Gutknecht; my girlfriend at the time—she called

one of the cops, a chauvinist pig and the cop said, I don’t know what that means but I know I don’t like it. (laughter) So anyway, now it’s—

PS: Well, and we were inside the jail at that point and could hear some racket but we didn’t really know what was going on.

DO: We had been brought back. We were arrested in each of the cities: Winona, Little Falls and Alexandria [all MN]. We were taken back, one to a car, and I don’t know if you remember, it was Steamboat Days. I walked—the FBI had us handcuffed behind us. I walked over to the window and flashed a “V” sign, a peace sign and there was a big cheer that went out there and the FBI got a little bit excited. They got on the radio right away. “We got to get them out of town right away”, as if they [the crowd outside] were going to do something. And so we were one to a car. We were brought back to the FBI office in the federal building here in Minneapolis and, as they brought in the guys from the other places, I know I decided to do, Wow, Mike, Bill! What are you doing here? As if it was all a big coincidence.

PS: And a double surprise, right?

DO: You have to have fun because they had them.

End of Recording 2

01:02:08

Beginning of Recording 3

00:00:00

PS: Well, maybe this is a good point to stop because we can resume a little of the details of our apprehension and what happened after that because, as you said, things got a lot bigger than around our situation once we were in the public eye in that kind of way.

DO: Yeah.

PS: So we’re going to pause here until tomorrow after a couple plus hours of talk and we’re going to start up again later. So, again, this is Pete Simmons interviewing Don Olson on December 10, 2018, and we will resume later.

End of Recording 3

00:00:56

Beginning of Recording 4

00:00:00

PS: All right. This is part two of an interview with Don Olson, same place, same people, one day later, December 11, 2018, at my home and I’m Pete Simmons again interviewing Don for the same project. And so we—at the end of our first section we did return to the point of our arrest and then the near term aftermath and we’ll just sort of pick up with that again. So go ahead, Don.

DO: Well, so we were then, after the—found out about the people who were outside demonstrating in our support and that thirteen people were arrested and we were in our cells, we were then—had a series of visitors, of lawyers. So they came in and talked to us about the case because, you know, everybody noticed it was going to be a pretty big deal. I mean attempted sabotage charges—for the first time there was a sabotage of national defense materials that was given to a case like this. Everyone else was charged under a selective service violation. So in a sense we were interviewing some of the local lawyers, all active and all good. And we were, as to who we might need for an upcoming trial and we—the arrest had a big splash and the following Thursday, when we were going to have a bail reduction hearing—we were originally given a fifty thousand dollar bail.

PS: Each.

DO: Each of us. And who would be, which—that’s still a lot of money and so we wanted to have it taken down but we had become very notorious because of the young people who had demonstrated so then, Mayor Stenvig [Charles A. Stenvig (1928-2010)], the former Minneapolis Police Department lieutenant, forbade any demonstrations in support of the Minnesota 8—or with a different name that was being used there for a little bit—but he forbid it. Well, when Thursday came, five days after our arrest, people illegally marched, i.e., marched without official sanction and they came there to the federal courthouse where we were then appearing for this bail reduction hearing before a magistrate.

PS: Was that Earl Cudd [J. Earl Cudd )1930-2005)]?

DO: Earl Cudd was the magistrate.

PS: Not a judge, but a federal court magistrate, different thing.

DO: And they—well, we could hear people outside which was kind of good. And I’ve always come to the conclusion that because it was such a spirited defense in our support and widespread, that had to have helped Earl Cudd make the decision to reduce our fifty thousand dollars to ten thousand dollars. And under the Federal Bail Reform Act, you could put up 10 percent of it, which you could get back, and which made it much more doable. I think everybody, except for Mike and I, had their families put up money and some community people put up my thousand dollars, which they got back eventually.

00:05:00 And then—so we did get released and so it was quite a rush because all of a sudden, Whoa,

you know, it made this big splash on the scene and this was starting to be—this was in July—the Aquatennial [Minneapolis Aquatennial] was coming up and at some point, Molly Ivins did some thumbnail sketches about our wonderful attributes that we had, how sterling was our character and the like.

PS: We were right on the front page of the newspaper at that first big article that she did.

DO: Yes, so this article caused a certain reaction such that someone suggested in a letter to the editor that the Minnesota 8 should be hung on the mall during the Aquatennial. Well, okay, that didn’t happen. Luckily nobody wanted to do it. However, it did stimulate a poem by John Berryman [John Allyn McAlpin Berryman (1914-1972)] called, *The Hanging of the Minnesota 8* [actually titled *The Minnesota Eight and the Letter-Writers* from *“Love and Fame”* 1970, 1st edition only] so he was a famous English professor, a poet. He was at the University of Minnesota.

PS: At that time.

DO: At that time. Notorious alcoholic; eventually committed suicide jumping off the Washington Avenue Bridge if I remember right.

PS: He was a Pulitzer Prize winning poet; he wasn’t just well-known; he was sort of right up there.

DO: And I did talk to him ever so slightly once at Mulford Sibley’s house, who was a faculty member and who had a fundraiser for us. I thanked him for it. I thought it was a great poem. Anyway, we were somewhat local heroes and Eddie Felien and the *Hundred Flowers* newspaper had a centerfold of the seven of us. Famous picture by Cheryl Walsh and by then there were only seven of us because one person, Cliff Ulen, had broken away.

PS: Separated himself from us.

DO: Separated himself from us, made people suspect that he was a person who had been undercover with the authorities and, you know, probably it was a lot of parental pressure and they wanted to get their own attorney for him just so that he wouldn’t ruin his life and etcetera. So we really didn’t see him again and I don’t know if I’ve ever seen him again. I hear about him every so often, because we eventually had an attorney, Ken Tilsen, and we were thinking if we were ever going to have this attempted sabotage, we’d also need a national attorney.

PS: Because again, that charge of sabotage had never been laid against people who did what we were caught trying to do before.

DO: Exactly. And in terms—so this was in 1970 so this was an escalation of how they were handling nonviolent, nonviolent to people—maybe not so much to property—because the very night that we were arrested, there was all the files from Wabasha, Minnesota, were all thrown into the Mississippi River. They were successful. There were no members of the FBI or local police forces there and there were others, other things that might have happened, but didn’t, fell through for one reason or another.

00:10:00 And, over the years, sons and daughters of sheriffs, especially in northern Minnesota, told me

about how their parents—their father, the sheriff—was on duty, on guard, waiting for somebody to break into their place. Part of it was we had cased out and gone to so many possible sites, it was only right at the very end, when we saw how many people we had; how many places; how many people were checked into each place—then we decided on which places we would do and how many we’d just forget about.

PS: So we were caught at three particular places but that same night part of the same operation was the Wabasha draft board, which succeeded, right?

DO: Right.

PS: And then there were—was it just one other—total of five places? And the fifth one was called off because of maybe alarms that had been installed since last time.

DO: Yes, exactly. And coincidently, from years after that people came up to me who—and thanked me because they had been registered at the Wabasha draft board and they got out of the draft so I said, “Well, good. That’s what we were looking—that’s what we were trying to accomplish.” So that happened quite often and also some of the people where files were destroyed in Minneapolis and St. Paul at the state headquarters. At the time, there were not backup files. It isn’t like now where it’s on computers and it’s all stored at Great Lakes Naval Center, last I heard—they had backups so that—get rid of the file, that’s it. Everybody would have to make up their own mind if they could be convinced.

Anyway, so we started to gradually form a defense committee and people were drawn into it and we were starting to put on some fundraisers because we knew it was going to be expensive for this. The national lawyer we were looking for—did I say Leonard Weinglass [Leonard Irving Weinglass (1933-2011)]?

PS: You didn’t mention, but we did have more than one person come and we sort of checked each other out for their interest and our interest.

DO: Well, Leonard Wineglass was quite capable, quite knowledgeable and experienced. He’d been kind of the second attorney for the Chicago 7, Chicago 8 trials and he was next to Bill Kunstler [William Moses Kunstler (1919-1995], who was the lead attorney for those trials. They went on for months and months, of course, they were internationally celebrated trials. And it was kind of fun to find out about how he was able to have his law practice and, you know, not getting all this much money coming in from some of his endeavors, but he lived in his office.

PS: Leonard or Bill?

DO: Leonard Weinglass. Much at certain times as Larry Leventhal Larry Leventhal (1941-2017)] had, who was another attorney that we talked to, who was also a great movement attorney.

PS: Locally.

DO: Locally here, who did a lot of draft cases and he also did a lot of cases for American Indian tribes and the like. So we put on some events and then eventually—I mean, I can’t go around talking about how we would—we’d be happy to plead guilty to sabotage of the

00:15:00 national offence (laughter) but to just kind of put that out into the atmosphere here. I’d be happy

to do that, I said. I didn’t say anybody else would because that would be much more about what we were doing. We knew that the national defense was such a bunch of malarkey and after a few months, they did reduce it to the charge of attempted interference with selective service procedures, which then, instead of a ten-year maximum sentence, we had five—we could get a five-year maximum sentence and/or a fifty thousand dollar fine.

Well, that made it—we knew it would be easier to prove so we—

PS: But it was months after we were first charged before those charges were changed. We were operating with the sabotage charge for some time.

DO: Yes, exactly right. And so we were starting to plan out how our trial was going to be and we—I think we decided that we wanted to have—maybe the government decided—that we’d have three separate trials. And the reason being, because we were in some of these areas of the state, and whereas Minnesota is one federal judicial district, some of the outstate areas sometimes do have places where a federal trial could be held by a judge which travels there based in the Twin Cities. And they might cover a certain area.

PS: Sort of an administrative district somehow.

DO: Somehow, that they—and some—two of the trials, being from northern Minnesota, they then came under the judge—what’s his name?

PS: You mean our judge?

DO: No, not ours but—

PS: Philip Neville [Philip Neville (1909-1974)].

DO: Philip Neville, yes. And whereas we, you, I and Brad Beneke, were from southern—we were [unclear] southern Minnesota city so we became—

PS: Got an airplane going by, pausing here. Okay, back again after an airplane noise pause.

DO: So maybe Chuck and Bill did have Philip Neville, maybe they had—well, anyway, we went first with Judge Devitt [Edward James Devitt (1911-1992)].

PS: Edward Devitt.

DO: Edward Devitt, widely regarded; had written law books or books of procedure in the federal judicial system and he was a no nonsense guy, sort of a Republican hardliner.

PS: At this point, we had decided that we were just going to have a local attorney; we weren’t at that point being national sabotage charges so it was just Ken being our attorney at that point, right, at that point?

DO: Right. We decided we didn’t need that and it wouldn’t be more useful to have that much legal help and talent since there were all sorts of things going on across the country being much more important. So we tried to figure out what—how we could have some kind of a strategy because we were arrested right in the selective service office around midnight. Well, how do you? Yeah, I just stumbled in there. We just had to figure out some way to do it and so we came up with a strategy of having people who would say nice things about us.

PS: You mean, witnesses for us.

00:20:00 DO: Witnesses, character witnesses. And we decided that because we were going in front

of Judge Devitt, we could not personally testify because we would be forced to perhaps reveal who also—who was involved with this Wabasha event.

PS: Or maybe other things.

DO: Maybe other things. They could have gone on here and there, cross examined, on direct—they could ask you quite a bit of things so it was a—well, we just wanted to have, well, we also decided that we were going to have a little bit more help because Brad’s father was an attorney and he also helped out. What was his name? Beneke was his—but anyway, he was an old-fashioned type county attorney or county attorney from—

PS: This is Arnie, Arnold Beneke [Arnold W. Beneke (1913-1999)], Brad’s father and he had been county attorney for McLeod County. Does that sound right?

DO: I’m trying to think of the city that—I want to say Glenwood [Glencoe, MN], but it’s somewhere out there and we got to know him quite a bit and Brad’s mother, Millie [Mildred "Millie" Adaline Beneke (1919-2002)], was involved, too. We got to know a lot of the family there. And we especially got to know Ken Tilsen and his wife, Rachel [Rachel Le Sueur Tilsen (1928-1998)], because we had a lot of weeks out at their house.

PS: And their kids.

DO: And their kids, but less so, because we really did have to try to figure out stuff. So that was quite an exciting time trying to figure out things. And we—when we get started having the—one of the problems in the—in a federal trial with a voir dire, where you question the prospective members of the jury. In state courts, you can ask—the defense attorney asks the questions, can ask questions and you can go probing into them and find out things about them. In the federal system, the judge asks the question. I mean, it’s often, Are any of your thirty people in this potential jury pool prejudiced against these people? I mean, it was like—it was almost like that. It didn’t really make—he wasn’t going to find out much about whether they really were prejudiced. I mean, it’s quite possible they could have been. They might have known about it; whether they could set aside their beliefs and listen to the evidence.

And one of the things that we were going to try and do was to do a jury nullification if at all possible. I think it’s in Maryland where it’s part of the Constitution where the jury, if they decided that the law is not just, they can find the defendants innocent and the jury nullifies what the charge was.

But we started our trial and when a—the St. Paul courts building and during lunch, when the jury polled—the jury was kept and they were set to start and they started to hear some of the evidence in the trial was starting, over lunch one of the—two of the jurors were talking and one of them was heard to say, And he’s got hair down to here, hitting his shoulder—and that

00:25:00 happened to be me, Don Olson. And so this came—someone heard about it and told our

lawyer and we discussed what we wanted to do about it and we decided that we really didn’t think we had much of a chance with this jury pool. So after the lunch hour, this person was called before the judge and was asked if she had made remarks, disparaging remarks about one of the defendants. And it caused even our stone-faced prosecuting attorney, Robert Renner.

PS: He was the district attorney for the State for the whole federal district.

DO: This is their top guy. I called him old stone-face but even he cracked a smile when this woman started telling lies. Oh, no, no. We were talking about that attorney, pointing at Ken, how he looked like somebody I knew from the church or something like that. And so she got so nervous and she went on like that. Well, so then we had a mistrial.

PS: So then that didn’t wash with the judge?

DO: Well, the judge allowed it. He allowed that we would go for a mistrial. And wouldn’t you know it? So afterwards, Ken’s office was in the Minnesota Building [Minnesota Building, 46 East Fourth Street, St. Paul, MN].

PS: In St. Paul.

DO: In St. Paul, downtown St. Paul, and we came downstairs after we got there.

PS: That’s where our trial was happening was in the federal building [St. Paul Federal Courthouse, 316 North Robert, St. Paul] in St. Paul.

DO: Federal courts building, and what do you know? Here’s some people from the jury having a drink in the bar on the first floor. And well, we talked to them for a little bit and one of them was very friendly—she might have been the one who might have held out for an innocent thing. Ah, but you never know. It’s all a—life’s all a series of chances. Who knows? You know, this corner; that corner.

And so then we had another jury pool and I had people that came, people I knew from the fraternity college days but I hadn’t seen them all that much over the years so it was kind of lame; they didn’t know me recently, but five years before then, but whatever. So they quickly brought back a guilty plea and so then, the next trial—

PS: Before we get into the next trial, one of the things I remember is that we weren’t all being represented formally by Ken.

DO: Yes, some of us—we had to have at least one person who was being represented by our lead counsel, Attorney Ken Tilsen and I believe that was you.

PS: Yes, that’s right. Among the three of us, you and me and Brad.

DO: And so Brad Beneke and I decided that we would like to be pro se, representing ourselves. The judge didn’t particularly like it but he didn’t care. He knew he was going to convict us, he thought. So we could ask questions of the attorneys and, you know, we got to ask the FBI guys some questions, Well, what were you doing all this time when you were waiting for us in there? I think Ken asked something about—they’re all called special agents. Well, what’s so special about you? So Ken has been kicked around a bit by some of the federal FBI people or whatever. So we didn’t find out anything new but we did bring out a tiny number of things, but yes, pro se.

00:30:00 PS: So that was trial number one.

DO: Now, do you remember the exact—that was—was that in September?

PS: I don’t remember exactly.

DO: Yeah, I think it was. And then Brad and Chuck had a trial.

PS: You mean Bill.

DO: Bill Tilton and Chuck Turchick had a trial—maybe they were with Devitt; we’ll have to ask them. And then Bill was pro se and he defended himself and they were quickly convicted. And then, we had the trial with Philip Neville.

PS: This was in Minneapolis.

DO: This was in Minneapolis and he was going to allow in testimony about the nature of the War in Vietnam and expert witnesses talking about the role of civil disobedience in American society and the underground railroad with slaves and labor unions sitting down and women chaining themselves to the White House gates and all that over history. And that was Staughton Lynd [Staughton Craig Lynd (1929-)].

PS: Well, he was one of many.

DO: One of many, yes, yes. We had somebody from the University of Vermont [University of Vermont, Burlington, VT]; he spoke about the ecological destruction going on in Vietnam with all the Agent Orange and the bombings and everything else. But the U.S. marshals, whom we’d gotten to know over the years, because we’d had so many trials of draft resisters and we would hang around, talk to them some; we were somewhat, you know, on a joking basis with them ever so slightly. They decided, Well, we’re not going to let you in. If you were defendants in the trial with Philip Neville, you aren’t going to be able to—if the place filled up; you aren’t going to be in there; we’re going to keep you out. And so this, a lot of courtroom stuff, and—

PS: So we couldn’t be in the gallery—

DO: That’s right.

PS: like the press or other citizens?

DO: Right. Because there was quite a bit of interest in the trials, a lot of our supporters would show up and so this was the—Philip Neville said this was the first time that all this information was being allowed to be put before a jury. And then, at the end of the trial, he said, “But I’m not going to let you consider it in the guilt or innocence of these defendants.” So he went as far as he thought he could, I mean, judges are often somewhat affected, sometimes, by public opinion in their life, and there had been and Frank could probably tell you about—he had some religious document in there, *Pacem in Terris* I think, *Peace on Earth*, talked about that. And Mike had some papers that he had written that he could talk about. So that’s all they could go on for bringing about—the trick is you always want to give

00:35:00 the jury something they can hang their ideas on as a way for them to bring back a not guilty

verdict. So they were out for quite a while and I was there when they did come in, late one night, I think it was a Friday night, and some of the jurors were crying. The jury foreman was apologizing for having been in the Korean War. Nobody had talked about the Korean War but whatever his own war—so it was interesting how he’d said that. They had been so affected by the testimony, probably something they never heard before. But they were also found guilty.

PS: That was Mike and Frank.

DO: Mike and Frank.

PS: This trial was some time later, after the first two. There was some—there was a significant delay because of court calendars, things like that?

DO: Yes.

PS: Or just because of—our attorney was representing them, too, and how many things can you do at once?

DO: Yes, and we do know that Daniel Ellsberg [Daniel Ellsberg (1931-)], famous for the release of the Pentagon Papers, had later on said that he had wanted to release them during this court case.

PS: He was a witness during that same trial we’re just talking about with Frank?

DO: The same trial with Frank and Mike, but talking to the judge in chambers- oh, no, no, he was not going to have that happen in his courtroom. So eventually Daniel Ellsberg related how he decided, Well, he would do it later by getting copies of the Pentagon Papers and taking them to the—releasing them to some of the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and some others. Great movie recently [*The Post*, directed and produced by Steven Spielberg, 2017]

PS: Related to that, when Ellsberg was on the stand—because he was on the stand briefly during that trial—but he had some of the Pentagon Papers with him in his briefcase when he was on the stand. Isn’t that right? Does that sound right?

DO: It likely is. I don’t really know that but I think I heard that but I didn’t hear it directly from him –but everybody-- and I wasn’t in the courtroom; kept out of the loop there somewhat. But, yes, I wouldn’t be surprised if he didn’t have them with him because that’s how he was going to start releasing them.

PS: So that was all before he became famous or infamous or notorious and hunted.

DO: Exactly, exactly. It was one of the things that compelled him to release it—that and he had a great friendship with Randy Kehler, who was the war tax resister. He had a big impact on him, on his wanting to do that kind of civil disobedience thing. And certainly later on we also had an impact on his decision but –

So then, I think it was in December, we had our sentencing with Judge Devitt and I remember I wrote something about—he had said something about ecological when I talked about—way back then when I knew about some of the environmental problems—this was after Earth Day. That had happened the previous April.

PS: That same year, 1970?

DO: That same year. Nineteen seventy was the first Earth Day and so I talked about how, you know a lot of stupid things are done by the people in power. I didn’t think I was really going to convince them or win them over but I wasn’t snarly or abusive or anything like that. I just said sometimes these things have to be done and this war is going on forever. And so we

00:40:00 all got sort of a maximum. I guess it was five of us; three of us of a certain age got the

maximum five years and you and Brad got an indeterminate youth sentence from zero to six years. And so—well, then we decided on—and I think it was—we decided we would appeal. So they let the sentencing go for a while, going to prison, and I think it was, yeah, whenever the Philip Neville’s trial came, they were on a separate course from us and—but they were eventually and maybe Frank will talk more about that and we eventually all were—lost our appeals.

PS: These were appeals to the federal circuit court, the appeals court.

DO: And then to the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis [St. Louis, MO]. We knew it was a long shot but decided to do it. So then we had our notice to report to go to prison just before Thanksgiving in November 1971. And we decided, Well, why should we miss out on Thanksgiving; that was just one more little thing we could do so we didn’t show up for our—when we were supposed to turn ourselves in.

PS: Wasn’t it the day before Thanksgiving? The day immediately before?

DO: Yep, exactly. So, well, that got the feds excited. They were going all over town looking for—

PS: So essentially we were fugitives.

DO: We were fugitives and how we could—they were looking for places that they thought we might try to hide out but we turned ourselves in after—there’s a service at the Fort Snelling National Cemetery and we took that as a back drop for talking about the war and all the people who ended up there because of the war and then we went down to the federal courts building and turned ourselves in that following Monday. So it was kind of a little satisfaction. I also decided to cut my long hair so they wouldn’t have the satisfaction of cutting it because you can’t have long hair in prison. And so then we were there and then we had no idea where we were going to go to prison. As it turned out, the warden at the then only federal prison in Minnesota, at Sandstone, Federal Correctional Institute [Federal Correctional Institution, Sandstone, MN], medium security—he wouldn’t accept any of us so we were scattered one to a prison across the country; we were so notorious and—

PS: Now this wasn’t just you and me and Brad; it was also Bill and Chuck, all at the same time.

DO: Yes.

PS: In the first bunch of us going into custody.

00:45:00 DO: Yeah, Bill is a—the first five of us. Bill went to Michigan, to what’s that prison called

there?

PS: Milan [Federal Correctional Institution, Milan, York Charter Township, Michigan].

DO: Milan, Michigan. And Brad went to Ashland Prison [Federal Correctional Institution, Ashland, Boyd County, KY] in—is it in Kentucky, not West Virginia?

PS: No, it’s Kentucky.

DO: And Chuck Turchick, Pete Simmons and Don Olson were in the same—we were driven together south on 35W, Highway 35.

PS: They squeezed us all into the same car.

DO: And we had a—we were handcuffed and things around our waist.

PS: Shackles.

DO: Shackles and they wouldn’t tell us where we were going. I guess they’re not supposed to and I remember one time we talked about it. And so here were these—some of the same U.S. marshals that we’d known for all these years, they started—they kind of showed their real—what they thought of us because they kept urging us to try and escape so they could shoot us. And they were not fooling around; they were—they wanted us to do that and they said it with enough of a snarl.

PS: There were two marshals in the front seat of the car and we were squeezed in the back.

DO: Yes, and I remember at one time just a—Well, if that’s how they’re going to be. We stopped at some roadside place to use the toilet and when we were there I decided I would try and convince the couple running this place—

PS: A café or something? Gas station?

DO: Well, it a gas station, junk food type thing—that they actually had turned the tables on us. That we were supposed to be the ones taking them to prison. Well, we looked kind of scruffy—that wasn’t going to go too far but, you know, it was sort of fun to do. And so, later that day we got back in—

PS: This is street theater with a small audience.

DO: That’s right. And we got down to Kansas City [Kansas City, KS] and we pulled into the Jackson County Jail [Jackson County Jail, Holton, KS] a lot of federal prisoners or prisoners in transit are kept overnight someplace and so I remember Chuck and I had a lot of—we talked a lot. We were in the same cell. I think you were somewhere else.

PS: I was in a different cage, yeah.

DO: Yeah, in a different cage and we had a good talk about this and that and it was kind of interesting because it was the Jackson County Jail, but about three weeks later, the prisoners burned it out because it was such an awful place. I wouldn’t have recommended it either. (laughter)

PS: It was pretty bad.

DO: Yeah, so we still didn’t know where we were going to go but I think there you were separated from us in another vehicle and you went west. You were going to Englewood, Colorado [Federal Correctional Institution, Englewood, Littleton, CO] and Chuck and I continued on to Springfield, Missouri. And where the U.S. Medical Center for Federal Prisoners, where I was deposited and he was—went down to El Reno Federal Prison [Federal Correctional Institution, El Reno, OK] in Oklahoma. So that’s the last we saw each other.

So the five of us went in the same day and then that began prison.

00:50:00 PS: So tell me—you had a differently interesting prison experience than some of us

because of the medical facility that you were at. The story of how we got released is

something else and interesting in itself but talk a little bit about what it was like being at

Springfield in particular.

DO: Well Springfield was the then only medical/surgical/psychiatric facility in the federal system. Now there’s another one at Rochester, Minnesota, and there might be another one someplace, too. So people would come there from all over the country to have some sort of surgery or treatment or all the people who were on psychiatric status evaluation to see if they were competent to stand trial would be there.

And it was also known throughout the federal system as ‘The Night of the Living Dead’ because some of the people in the psychiatric area would be getting Prolixin and Prolixin is a psychotropic drug which can have irreversible Parkinson-like side effects. And so they would walk around the halls like zombies but wouldn’t be let out into the general population until several weeks after they were given this dose because it was so strong.

And then they would do this—what we called the Thorazine Shuffle where, like if you’re waiting in the chow line, you can’t just stand still you have to shuffle forward, shuffle back, shuffle forward, shuffle back and, because starting in 1957, they came across these Thorazine and all these other types of drugs and Prolixin was kind of a newer controversial drug but it was so somewhat used as an admonishment throughout the system. Well, if you don’t behave, we’ll send you to Springfield. Well, people know what that meant just by the prison grapevine.

So when I got there I—there were some people still there from some other draft board raids, the tail end of—there had been Philip Berrigan [Philip Francis Berrigan (1923-2002)] and some people from the Chicago 15. There was a guy, John Phillips, who was a, couple on the early left, they’d all had a Fast to the Death, trying to end the war, and eventually they were taken from Danbury, Connecticut prison [Federal Correctional Institution, Danbury, CT] to Springfield and then force fed to break their fast. And many of them had been shipped off so I didn’t meet any of those people but John Phillips was the clerk for the director of nursing and he was going to be leaving soon to go back to Danbury to finish out his sentence. So he asked me if I thought I might like to do that job and I said, “Well, that sounds good. Just sit there and type, file, water the plants, read.” So that’s what I did for the twenty months I was in Springfield. Twenty months I did of the five-year sentence and we—so one third of the prison was psychiatric; one third was medical/surgical and one third was regular prisoners.

PS: Like you.

DO: Like I was. So I was in what they called The Camp where—I mean, it wasn’t really a camp it was—I mean, the federal system, there’s places like camp which are lower security and maybe you get a little more good time, good time meaning if you’re good, you’ll take

00:55:00 some days off the end of your sentence so you can get out. At that time, if you were maxed

out, you’d have done over forty months of a sixty-month, five-year sentence. But then you could still—they still had parole. They’ve gotten rid of that since so a prisoner gets a sentence; you do the whole dang thing.

So at camp you could go to one of the two yards, outdoor areas, where you could walk around and exercise and the main one where all the heavy duty prisoners that came down from Leavenworth [United States Penitentiary, Leavenworth, KA] and Atlanta [United States Penitentiary, Atlanta, Atlanta, GA] and other penitentiaries, long term—they could only be in the inner one which was completely encircled with buildings. But the people who were in the camp, the Nine Building it was called, you could go out; you could look out over whatever there was there to look out on. There were some fields; they had quite a range. But it was still two fences, pretty high fences; one with concertina wire. There were gun towers and they would shoot to kill. Yeah, probably some of the medium security wouldn’t shoot to kill if you started to run away; they’d just catch you and give you more time.

But here they would shoot to kill and we had one guy that escaped one day; it was an exciting escape during lunch hour. It was pretty ingenious how he got over these two fences, including concertina wire which—if you ever think you might need that information. (laughter)

So I got into a round of things there and it’s a—there were quite a few draft resisters there because there were so many draft resisters from Minnesota that were going to Sandstone that, you know, the prison wardens, they don’t like to have too many people who could potentially cause trouble, trying to bring about, rectify, some situation they found wrong. I mean, [unclear] the draft resisters during World War II were the ones who agitated against racial segregation. So I’m sure that they knew about these things.

So a lot of them were being sent to Springfield from Minnesota as well as other parts of the country and all of the prisoners, let alone the draft resisters, were all amazed how many were coming down from Minnesota. And a bunch of them I knew just being around town, sometimes counseling but knowing them here or there. So we had quite a few there. And I was—I got into playing handball and I’d been in pretty good athletic shape beforehand and I played very well and I would often win. And the thing about prison is when you have competitions, like playing pool, or this outdoor handball courts, if you want to keep playing, you’ve got to win so you sure as heck try to win.

PS: You hold onto the court then.

DO: You hold onto the court then and I was really good with this other guy from the District of Columbia and we were a great team; we really won; we were good. But we had some great people coming down from Leavenworth who had been decades playing handball. They were really good so there were terrific matches that would go all days; all weekends and whatever else you could do.

So I also had got into the craft shop. Alan Jones—he refused to continue with his alternative service as one way of dealing with the selective service. He had gotten in there and was learning pottery. He had learned a little bit before at this commune in Georgeville [Georgeville, MN].

PS: Alan was from Minnesota.

01:00:00 DO: He was from Minnesota.

PS: One of the people you already knew.

DO: Already knew and that’s how he got me in there so I learned pottery in prison so I started spending a lot of time there. It was fun to do, you know, you learn how to do that wheel, glaze them, started selling things in the—they had a little gift thing in the visitors’ room and the guy would tell us how to do—he was a free world potter. He would be the judge of the competition. We would have people who would do the mold form things and they would beautifully decorate these vases and teapots but it was only open to people who used the wheel that won. And boy, were they mad about that because he only thought that was the skill, not just pouring something into a mold and taking it out of nothing. And he was kind of this gruff old but I learned how to do pottery.

But it wasn’t competitions. I learned the skill which I used after prison for about ten years. In some ways, when joking around—

End of Recording 4

01:02:08

Beginning of Recording 5

00:00:00

they say, Well, how was prison? I say, “Well, you know, it’s sort of a sports and health club.” And then I explain, but no, there was a lot of tension. It wasn’t like it would be in a maximum security penitentiary, like Leavenworth or Atlanta or Lewisburg [United States Penitentiary, Lewisburg, Lewisburg, PA] but it was close security because we would have a lot of heavy duty convicts there who—and so they didn’t wanted people escaping there; had to keep them all under control. So we had about a thousand people there.

PS: That’s pretty big as the federal prison system went those days, right? It was one of the bigger?

DO: It was pretty big but there were some of the penitentiaries were, you know, several hundred more, I know that, really big things. Some of the federal FCIs, the medium security places, five hundred.

PS: FCI being Federal Correctional Institution.

DO: And then there are camps where you have even fewer than that, but so then, your level of tension was, you know, it was there all the time. There could be danger; there could be problems. And some of the draft resisters—we would talk about it; some of them would be pressured for sex in prison. And I’d say, Well, if you don’t want to be part of it, you just have to be strong in who you are. You had to say, No, you weren’t interested and just establish that that’s how it—there was, you know, certainly an underground scene that went on there. And there was a phenomenon called “daddy kids,” where young guys would attach themselves to an older convict for protection. And these were mostly regular convicts; this [unclear]. So it was a—

PS: You mean the regular population, not the medical.

DO: The regular population, yep, and that everybody who was a daddy and who was the kid and it was somewhat regular—maybe there was something sexual involved; maybe it was just that they liked this person and wanted to protect them and they just wanted power and control. So that was an established thing. And we, for the heck of it at times, some people would make hooch, which was alcohol, they got sugar and raisins, in an empty locker and let this ferment for a few days; take it out. We’d drink it and once I took mace, which is—can give you a sort of a slight psychedelic buzz, you know.

PS: Oh, the spice mace.

DO: The spice mace, yeah.

PS: It’s related to nutmeg.

DO: Nutmeg, yes, and, of course, sometimes there would be—people would get in—sneak in some drugs one way or another. We had one guy who was there who was known, self-described as the Timothy Leary [Timothy Francis Leary (1920-1996)] of New Orleans [New Orleans, LA], and he brought in LSD. And I had taken it before so I did it with this other guy that did it. Well, he—so he took it and one of the things when you’re in prison you’re counted quite a few times in the day, especially on weekends, but after you came back from work;

00:05:00 everybody had to work somewhere unless you wanted to spend all of your time in the hole. So

he was starting to have a—starting to, shall we say, freak out, wanted to be with his girlfriend and really feeling alone and far away from home. He had a five-year sentence, too. He’s Frank Gerrity. He’s since died; he had brain cancer. But he was one of my good friends there and it just so happened I was sitting next to him—I wasn’t at my bunk but I thought, I should stay with him—

PS: Because he was having a bad trip?

DO: He was having a bad trip and occasionally you could get away with that because they would count you and they would know who you were—this was when we were in second floor in Nine Building in a one hundred-twenty man ward. Everybody had a locker and a low bed, locker low bed, up and down the rows. So nothing happened but it was just something different to do. Things get very boring in prison.

PS: Talk a little bit more about the counts and what that was. I mean, I know what that is but other people might not get what—

DO: Well, they count you in the middle of the night when all you’re sleeping there and, of course, some of the famous escapes is if people would prop something up to look like it was a body under the covers and all that; sort of look at your face and shine a flashlight into your face. So they had to have a count and they had to—how they did it? Then about seven thirty they would do it and then you went to work and then about three thirty they would do it and then, after dinner or chow, they’d count you at night and then—once they said all the numbers had to match up. If somebody was—they had to have the numbers right. They had to count everybody all over again because that could have meant somebody had escaped. Well, we were always trying to figure out how to escape and how it could happen.

One time when we were there, we were doing the—things weren’t in Minneapolis especially, but all over the country there were demonstrations after the mining of the harbors at Haiphong [Haiphong, Vietnam]. I think it was in April ’72. We had gone in there from December; we finally got out on a special parole, which is interesting, July 23, 1973. But in ’72 there were demonstrations across the country and Minnesota was especially—they really had done a job on the national news. Well, there were eight of us decided to go —we were going to go on a work and hunger strike.

PS: At that same time?

DO: At that same time for that very reason. And so we, instead of coming in at the end of yard time, time in the yard, we just sat down in the outfield where you could play baseball and they came and arrested us; put us in the hole and I don’t know, after about five days, I got bored from not eating anything so I took some cherry Kool-Aid—boy, did that upset my stomach after not eating anything. And I was roiling in my stomach and they—I said something about not feeling well but they said, Yeah, yeah, yeah. Most of the time they just ignore you if you say you’re not feeling well. But anyway, by about midnight, I started

00:10:00 retching a little bit and by morning I was throwing up; nothing to throw up so I was just

ripping out my guts with blood. And the hippie doctors, the fascist doctors, who were there on a—getting their deferment from going to Vietnam by being a Public Health Service doctor in the prisons. And they were not at all sympathetic with any of the war resisters even if they had beards, you know, and all the other stuff. They were all different. They weren’t going to do anything and they would not put me into the hospital until everybody agreed to give up the fast.

PS: So they used you.

DO: They used me. Sort of glad they did; I mean, I was in the hospital for a week. We could communicate somewhat. We could talk in the hole—you could talk through the radio. That was a little thing you could switch on and off but there was kind of an opening and they would hear you talking through that to the next person.

PS: It wasn’t like an intercom but it was passage—?

DO: Passage of air. Audio could go through this opening in the concrete walls. So anyway, I lost all my good time, lost all the money I’d—ten dollars a month I would get for here and there.

PS: Because of the sit-down and the fast?

DO: Yeah, occasionally you would get ten dollars a month to use if you needed it and you could buy things in the commissary, fruit and whatever else—they didn’t offer very much. The apples were soft and—but anyway, it was something different. So it was really interesting to be there because you see the average age there was about—educational level was about eighth grade or so, maybe a little bit more. It was a little bit higher than most prisons because a lot of people, even at Springfield, had never completed high school. Some people hadn’t completed grade school. I mean, I helped people, read letters to people from the south who couldn’t read, illiterate, helped write letters. But you see all the reasons people were there from need to greed and a lot of it involved drugs; being an alcoholic, or Dilaudid was something a lot of these guys were in there for. It’s kind of a sedative; you can break into drugstores to use and all that.

So we’d be talking about all these things and we had, sometimes there were a lot of car thieves there who had crossed state lines and it’s a federal charge but we had a lot of first time bank robbers who, and a lot of these people were just, had their life completely falling apart; they didn’t know what to do. So they would go in, with or without a gun, unloaded, no firing pin on, just so they could be arrested to get them out of their situation. One roly-poly guy had his business kind of illegally stolen from him. I think he‘s [unclear] to Idaho institutions and so he lost his family, whatever, and he lost his business. So he didn’t know what to do so he just walked into a bank and he got ten, fifteen, twenty years. Bankers make sure you do a lot of time.

PS: They’re serious about that.

DO: They’re serious about that. But this was the high tide of the prison resistance

00:15:00 movement and so we had a lot of prisons. I mean, at a certain point there, all over the country

prisons were having things. Some places like San Quentin [San Quentin State Prison, San

Quentin, CA], when there was really racial overtones and how the people would get killed and in the federal system, a lot of them were going down every week. They’d be having—and regular inmates were the ones who were doing it.

PS: Were doing?

DO: Were doing the—setting off the strikes.

PS: The strikes, okay, that kind of resistance.

DO: Because there was the kind of a prison reform and they took it to heart and they wanted to do something. A lot of them were sent to Springfield to cool them out and to get them away from their home base. So it was fun to run into some of these people and talk about what had happened in their prison. We had one guy who was one of these people who was one of the best chess players ever. I mean, he memorized the first ten moves of all the different offenses and defenses. But he had a voice like a Shakespearian actor and he would recite these things, soliloquies, and he was quite entertaining. And he also talked about having been in New Jersey prisons during the—in a psychiatric unit in New Jersey during the fifties. And about how they would—

PS: So he was an old timer.

DO: Old timer. But how they would give out all this electric shock. And the way he was describing it is that they would give it to you in batches of ten, not once to see how you were, but you’d get ten and they would—so they’d ask in the cell blocks all the people who were going to get these and they’d go down the row, one through, one after the other. Because everybody knew what was happening, guys would start screaming and hollering. They didn’t want to go; they didn’t want to get it because they’d had it before and they hated it but, of course, that wasn’t going to stop them from getting it. So by the seventies, they weren’t doing electric shock anymore but they were doing these drugs to control—and they had some special programs to try and control people, mind control, and the like. So it was interesting to be there. I learned a lot; school of life so to speak.

It was kind of fun whenever we’d have a—free world people would come in; P.J. Ciccone, the doctor [who] was the warden of our place. He had to go to places in Springfield, night clubs or whatever, and have a band come in and play for us. And so he had—Tiny Tim [Herbert Buckingham Khaury aka Tiny Tim (1932-1996)] came once.

PS: Really?

DO: So they wanted people who did the, you know, *Eve of Destruction* [*Eve of Destruction*, by P.F. Sloan, 1964]

PS: Oh, Barry Sadler [Barry Alan Sadler (1940-1989)].

DO: Yeah, because, you know, they were there. The guy that was from—so there were some interesting things—music, but a lot of it was [unclear] on it. And one time when there was— this one group was playing and everybody started getting, Dancing and whatever because they got—especially some of the Mexican and Latins. Well, boom, lights on! That’s the end of that concert.

PS: You can’t have dancing, huh?

DO: You can’t have anything that we were really enjoying it. So that was—

PS: You can’t have—you can’t have too much fun there?

DO: You can’t have any fun virtually.

PS: Well, let’s talk a little bit about how it came to the point of release and what was that

00:20:00 like and the big surprise of it. Well, back up a little bit. Had you had an initial parole hearing

at some point? That usually happens comparatively early in someone’s time inside.

DO: I had an “A” number, whatever that meant. That meant that you were eligible for immediate parole so I went for parole right away and they gave me an eighteen month set-off.

PS: Set-off meaning how long it is until your next parole hearing.

DO: Yes. It is to be expected I guess. And then what happened—Chuck—I mean, six months after we went there, the first five of us went, then the other two—we’re not the Minnesota 7. They were—their appeal was six weeks behind ours.

PS: Frank and Mike.

DO: Frank Kroncke and Mike Therriault.

PS: The ones who were tried in front of Philip Neville.

DO: Somehow they got a release date and they were going to serve about twelve months or fourteen months or something like that. Well, Chuck, who doesn’t always remember this, came up with a brilliant idea. Well, here we are. The same crime; the same group of people and the rest of us were going to serve a lot more time than these two were going to be.

PS: We’d already served more time.

DO: We’d already served more time and so, we filed a writ, an appeal and because this would have been a really big thing that a lot of prisoners could have used to argue in court for their release after somebody else had been released who had been a co-criminal with them in something or other. So to get around that, they declared that moot and we were all given the same date, release date, July 23, 1973. So it turned out to be like twenty months. So we all got out on the same day.

PS: Is there any—does anyone know to this day really how that happened that Mike and Frank got that release?

DO: I think it was just a mix-up that they thought—

PS: And they were both in Sandstone.

DO: They were both in Sandstone and by then, there’s a different warden so they accepted them to come right there and Brad and Chuck had been involved with little altercations with the prison, some sort of a strike or whatever, so they were—

PS: Where they first were.

DO: Where they first were. So they were shipped from Ashland and El Reno, and they were sent back to Sandstone, where they could be closer to family, whatever. And—

PS: So Brad and Chuck and Frank and Mike were all at Sandstone at that point?

DO: Um-hm. So it could be one, either they were so happy that Frank was teaching in the free world in Sandstone; he was teaching classes there because he’d done some of that, or whatever, they just thought—

PS: He was getting out to teach at a nearby school.

DO: It was called work release and we didn’t have much of that—I never got outside once, outside of the prison once the twenty months I was in Springfield, Missouri, and so—but maybe they could have thought, here are these guys here; they’re all coming up for parole. I think it would have been in September for me, so roughly, others would have been so we’ll give them this date, July—somewhat within the same realm it seemed. Well, instead of letting

00:25:00 this—Chuck’s appeal—his writ get onto the books, they gave us all the same date so we got

out at the same time and exactly why it happened? Who knows? But saved me a couple months because I wasn’t going to go up again until September and they usually have a sixty-day set-off to let you get ready to leave, just wasted time, of course. So I was happy to save four months.

And so we got out and the Food Co-ops had declared the day a holiday because we were still heroes to some people and I—some people got me a ticket to fly back from Springfield to Minneapolis so I, as opposed to taking a bus. So I went down to Riverside Park; we had a little party, but I was—it seemed like whoo—you decompress and you’re kind of—I found that I was—you’re a little bit really observing the scene because you don’t know what’s gone on for twenty months exactly, even though you had some letters, people telling you this and that, but so you’re kind of relaxed and I had a terrific headache that night from my relaxing of the tension of just getting released and making it really happen and all that.

So it was kind of nice to—Bill came back later. He stayed over a little bit in the area, Ann Arbor [Ann Arbor, MI] or something.

PS: Yeah, because Milan was close to Ann Arbor, right, where Bill was?

DO: Yeah, well, as I joked at a roasting of Bill once that people from Ann Arbor went out to Milan to score dope because they had so much there. I mean it was—so many people were out on work release and all that. Well, I made it up, of course, but it could be funny.

PS: It might have been sort of true; not that far from Ann Arbor.

DO: So then I came back and I didn’t feel like working back at the People’s Company Bakery [People’s Company Bakery (PCB), founded 1970, Cedar/Riverside, Minneapolis]. I’d gone—before I’d gone into prison I worked there, made thirty bucks a week and my parole officer didn’t think I would have enough money to live on but you can live on a lot less then, especially if you were a hippie. And then I had this job working on the railroad just two, three nights a week. Made a lot of money there.

And then I took over—Alan Jones had got out six months before I did and he was back in Minneapolis and he had learned enough pottery. He was teaching in the arts and crafts program at Walker Church [now Walker Community United Methodist Church, 3104 16th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN] And I stayed with he and Nan Hazelton and then when he was going to leave town, because of Nan’s asthma; they were going to go down to Arizona. I took over his job so I had a place to make pots. I had made quite a few in prison and sent them back to the place where I immediately stayed with Nancy Jones and Maynard Jones. They were such a good couple, just sweet, kind, very active. They’d started some of the earliest good food movements, the Southeast Organic Program, which led to Southeast Co-op. So they were very good and Nancy was always doing things. She’s still alive out in Seattle now where her two kids are.

00:30:07 So that was very nice. I was just—I kind of needed to be by myself. They lived out in

Minnetonka [Minnetonka, MN] so you could walk around a little bit of trees and we had a party there while all of us were there and I remember Bob Lundegaard from the *Star Tribune* was there and he was trying to cover his face because here— convicted felons on parole, you’re not supposed to be around each other.

PS: That’s right. Condition of parole; you don’t associate, right?

DO: Yeah, no criminal association so that was—somewhere I have some pictures of that so it was a real welcome back in to the neighborhood.

PS: Bob was trying to pretend that he didn’t see us all either.

DO: He wasn’t so he didn’t have to report this for the *Star Tribune*. So then we were on parole. We had to go down and check in with—I had Jimmy Ziehl.

) as a parole officer; we had to check in two or three times a week and I was big enough to ever get anything—you had to stay within the State of Minnesota, this one federal district. I think I was the first one to get the okay to leave the state to go to my sister’s wedding out west. Ended up I couldn’t do it but I did break that. We had to, we really had to go down several times to check in, I mean, just to harass us; just to make sure that we were still around town; still being good.

PS: In general, was it—talk again about getting out. Was it—did it feel jarring after—did it take long to feel like you were kind of back to being yourself or was it—?

DO: Well, it’s just like you don’t know what’s gone on so you’re slowly catching up on things and people and what had happened and here, you know, the war was nearing the end and people are doing this or that and previous relationships were moved on so it just took a while to establish who you were and what you were up to.

I liked taking pottery. That was fun and that was interesting because I developed a kind of creative side of myself because I’d been so involved with the bookish part or keeping up on current events so it was a welcome thing to learn pottery and I did that for about ten years. And then the weak points on my skeletal system, top of my wrists, my neck and my lower back hurt too much so I quit doing it and now I just buy other people’s pottery. Yeah, it did take a while, but, you know.

PS: Aside from formal or, you know, income producing occupation, you kept on being involved in other things, too, during those years afterward. Talk a little bit about some of those things like *Northern Sun News*.

DO: When I first got out, I couldn’t sit still long enough to go to a meeting. I couldn’t sit on my hands to make me stay there. I just didn’t want to do that.

PS: That was a change.

DO: That was a change. And I remember something you wouldn’t think you would have missed. I walked around with—sometimes I’d be walking around with Sandy Wilkinson, who had been a draft counselor, at night. Now you never think of going out at night all these years—months, twenty months, can’t make it too big but twenty months, so, you know, I

00:35:00 missed it. And even during the—just to go outside. I mean, I used to go outside at Springfield

Prison in the camp yard when there was snow out, not very much, and all these southerners were shocked, shocked, shocked. I said, “Well, I do it all the time. I just like to be outside.”

PS: They were shocked that you would want to go out in that?

DO: They weren’t ever going to go out in that weather. This was, you know, because sometimes we’d have ice storms that would shut the place down because it would throw off the electrical system and sometimes the—one time the prisoners did it on purpose just for something different. But then everybody complained because it was so boring sitting in the dark, not eating anything. They said, Fix that. So it got fixed. So that was good.

I didn’t start getting involved with the—I was involved with the co-ops we had the Great Co-Op War; I was a principal in that, involved hundreds and hundreds of people. I was part of the anarchists and that was versus the Stalinists. We had differing viewpoints of how the co-op should be organized.

PS: You’re talking mainly the Food Co-Op Network here in the Twin Cities, during the middle nineteen seventies.

DO: Yep. So I was pretty involved with that and I was putting out this anarchist paper, magazine called *The Soil of Liberty*, pushing anarchist ideas. There was a strong anarchist aspect to the ideology co-ops decentralized worker management and the like. And so we were reading a lot of people. We had a—started a reading group in 1975 and it’s still going and I’m still part of it here in 2018. It’s one of the longest ones. It’s not always anarchist stuff, not anymore. Most of the people at one point or another were anarchists but now they’re not always so much sympathetic.

So—then I got involved with setting up the anti-nuclear power things. We set up the Northern Sun Alliance in, you know, ’75-;76 I think was the co-op wars; then ’77 was when we set up Northern Sun Alliance and trying to stop another nuclear power plant being built by—then it was called Northern States Power [Northern States Power Company], now it’s Xcel [Xcel Energy Inc.]. And so there was quite a movement that was sweeping the country trying to stop nuclear power, found out a lot more about that. Found out a lot more stuff about science and the like.

PS: That local plant was the one in Wisconsin? The Wisconsin River at Durand [Chippewa River Durand, WI]?

DO: Yes.

PS: That never did happen.

DO: Never did happen. It was stopped and it was in western Wisconsin. There are quite a few in eastern Wisconsin still to this day but—

So I was quite active in that and then with George Crocker and some other people we got involved with a power line struggle and we’d gone out there to help the farmers and—who were fighting this power line. And we tried to—we did the civil disobedience thing in the middle of winter. We sat down and blocked the surveyors, eight of us from the city, because we didn’t have a farm to lose. We didn’t have anything at the time of material wealth but they were—the farmers—they didn’t want to lose their farm and here they were being, by eminent domain, having their land taken.

00:40:00 Then, along with all of the other problems that would come from the voltage, stray voltage,

etc. So we got involved with it and George Crocker, who’s also a draft resister from the Twin Cities area, with a Quaker background, he moved out there to—into the right in the middle of where this was happening. And I was doing the mobilizing of people from the city to go out and support them and we’d have cars every day trying to go out there when there were demonstrations. And so there was a lot of interest when—after we got arrested we got this Chuck Logan,[Minnesota novelist, (1942-)] who was a Vietnam veteran, antiwar veteran, he did this cartoon about here are these anarchists making common cause with the rural people.

And so we did learn a lot about how to deal with that but George was living in Lowry [Lowry, MN] so I was mobile—I was the in-town person so I would get cars going out there all the time and I would materialize and something would happen that we couldn’t go out there so it kept changing all the time. I kind of likened it to the title of a book by this one author, *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute* [*Enormous Changes at the Last Minute*, by Grace Paley, 1974] because it was continuing changing.

And then one day we had a demonstration at the cement plant and the farmers were really mobilizing and the highway patrol was there in Alexandria, [Alexandria, MN] and some of the farmers were being roughed up by the highway patrol. Anyway, I got arrested and I was in the back seat of a squad car and somebody came by and said, Hey, you want to get out? And I said, “Yeah,” so I got out and I escaped. So that was my first escape charge.

So I was living my life back in Minneapolis until they—they had my driver’s license. I knew eventually—

PS: They knew who you were.

DO: they would figure it out. They would figure it out and they came one day, wanted to take me away. So I called up this lawyer; I think it was Larry Leventhal, said, “Well, if they’ve got a warrant, they can take you away.” So I said, “Okay, I’ll be right out” So then I was over there and we had a trial and I decided rather than having an escape charge on my curriculum vitae, that I would plead guilty to something else, disturbing the peace because then they would drop that charge. Because if you get arrested and you’ve had an escape, well, then maybe you could never get bail if you were arrested on something. So it was a pretty classy charge to have had as was when we were charged with sabotage. But there it is.

PS: The prestige charge, exactly right.

DO: So I spent a few days in the Stearns County Jail in St. Cloud [St. Cloud, MN] which was a horrible place because they left the lights on twenty-four hours a day. Aargh!

PS: That is terrible. Were you there with other people? Was it just you who was convicted about that demonstration?

DO: There might have been some other people who had things happen and—but the only one who was later on because—

PS: They tracked you down later?

DO: Yeah, I suppose they had time and thought it was worth the effort so—

PS: This must have been long enough after we all got out in July of ’73 that you weren’t on parole supervision anymore?

DO: That’s right.

PS: Because otherwise, they would have bounced you right back in, right?

00:45:00 DO: Well, and I could have bounced back in when I went—in March of 1975 I went to one

of the last demonstrations against the war. I went to the White House to be arrested with some of my old people who I’d been in prison with, one of the Berrigans; Mitch Snyder [Mitch Snyder (1943-1990)] who was this person who was caught up—became politicized in prison. He had been hitchhiking, picked up in a car that was stolen and couldn’t convince the people that he wasn’t involved with the stealing of the car so he got a regular sentence. And he ran into the Berrigans, Phil Berrigan, and became political. He was in—eventually he set up a homeless place in Washington, DC and he would go out every night with a vehicle and they would have hot potatoes and offer people sleeping in the winter to go this facility, which was pretty good. So he became quite famous pushing all that, getting funds for it. He had his own troubles. One day he committed suicide but there it was—he was somewhat mercurial. So we had all these friends.

So I was still on parole. I—and my parole officer, Jimmy Ziehl, didn’t like it that I’d gotten arrested there. I didn’t do anything.

PS: You actually did get arrested?

DO: Yes, oh yeah, I was arrested and I just said, Well if everybody else is doing it; they’re on parole, too, who knows? But it was near the end of the war. I think they didn’t want to carry this on too much. But, yes, I did push it every so often here and there. I didn’t want to go back to prison. Why would I want to go back to prison? No, waste of time. Plus all the other medical reasons whatever else. You don’t get very good care or food or anything else that’s good in prison.

PS: So you actually came off parole when?

DO: Well, they dropped it after about a year or so. We got out in ’73 after twenty months and I think we did a little over a year if I remember right. Then we were still having to report and do all these things and then at some point found out—maybe around the forty month mark when you could have maxed out. We were taken off paper and then you have to get around a lesser status of parole is how I remember it and at the time I wasn’t voting anyway because I was an anarchist with ideas and “Don’t vote it only encourages them.” But I did change my mind a little bit later and now I do vote because, even when it’s less than 50 percent voting, it still didn’t matter; they still carried on. Plus if you don’t have some alternative that’s going to fill in for an idea of different ways you do society, then it just helps the fascists grow as it’s doing now in Europe and living with Trump [U.S. President Donald John Trump (1947-)] and all that.

So anyway, I do support the Green Party and the like so I’ve changed some of that stuff.

PS: So talking about that a little bit more, looking back on all of the things that you did, and that others like us did, but thinking for yourself, you mentioned when we talked yesterday about the fact that we got caught and became faces of resistance, compared to the Beaver 55 draft board raid which was really successful but sort of disappeared after a while.

DO: You’re exactly right.

00:50:00 PS: You feel now like you didn’t set out to get arrested but the way it turned out, how do

you feel looking back on what we did; what you did; and did it influence other people? Did it have public impact? Was it worth it? Do you have regrets about any of those particular things? Maybe not details, but—

DO: I’ve actually been asked many dozens of times if I have regrets and I’ve always said, No, I don’t have any regrets. I wouldn’t do it again but I wouldn’t need to do it again. It was decided at the time we needed to do this. This was a righteous thing to do and somebody like Mulford Sibley criticized what we did because we weren’t going to stand around and take our punishment. But we considered it. You know, the official lexicon of how civil disobedience is supposed to work. We were doing it nonviolently and there was going to be nobody hurt. Paper would be destroyed and some people would always say there’s no distinction between property and people. We always made sure there was.

Now, you know, it certainly changed me. I noticed after I got out that I had developed a kind of invisible shield to fend off people because I’d been free to [unclear] you know, open hippie. Well, in prison you’ve got to be pretty—you’ve got to be careful who you’re dealing with because these are professional con people and they are not always nice people. There are a lot of good people in prison but they’re always running some sort of game and they always do it just to stay in practice. People would steal sandwiches out of the kitchen and sell them just to have a little bit of a street action that they could do. You just tolerate it.

PS: Just to keep on being a player.

DO: Exactly, to keep on being a player so—but I realized it, after I came out of it, that I had done that and so, being aware of it and gradually, you know, overcame all that and it [unclear] much more. I mean, it’s not that I wasn’t open to people but I recognized that I had this invisible shield. You know, some guys I was in prison with they said they dreamt every night for a year about being in prison.

PS: You mean afterward?

DO: Afterwards, yeah. Frank told me that once and I had—oh, and I organized a reunion of all the draft resisters from Springfield and I cooked this big turkey dinner in the basement of Walker Church and they came from all over the country. And I got drunk as heck and after I broke my glasses, the only pair I had was sort of stupid pair, but everybody enjoyed it. That was fun, getting together with people.

But I didn’t have any long term residual things that bothered me about it. You just had to deal with what it was. I was a little bit older than a lot of the people who were in there, not too many years older, but I was twenty-seven when I went in; got out almost thirty and it was a little bit easier when you’re older to deal with a situation. I mean, it is with most people, if you’re in a certain milieu, where people are going to go to prison or break the law, robbery, or whatever, stealing, they kind of know what it’s like to expect. There’s scuttlebutt that goes around about what prisons are like. I had no idea. And, as I told Daniel Ellsberg once, “No, I

00:55:00 didn’t know what it was going to be and it’s like [I] just jumped off a cliff into a dark abyss. Who

knew what was going to happen? But I was willing to do it.” And so—

PS: Do you remember—I remember this that we had a sort of a little seminar once or maybe a couple times with people who’d been in federal prison to tell us a little bit about what it was like and like that? I remember this—

DO: Now that you mention it, I may have been there. That could have been true. Things always, you know, things are—what I found out—things are always different at different times in how—

PS: Because I remember “JJ” and at least one other fellow, Mike deBartolo at Neela’s house one time?

DO: That could be. I don’t quite recall it; could have been.

PS: So you said you didn’t think that you had a whole lot of after effects but did you notice things—? Well, you mentioned other people having dreams. Did that ever intrude on you or did you think about being inside for a long time?

DO: Um-hm, yeah.

PS: What was that like?

DO: Well, I would, you know, go across to see them—you’re in such a—not always high tension and all these possibilities that things could happen because these are a lot of convicts under pressure. And so it would come through my mind but, you know, I’d think about some of the people and how they are but it wasn’t disturbing. It wasn’t like it was with Frank. He’s a much more artistic, sensitive person, and luckily for me, I wasn’t that sort of thing, what do you call it? Post-Traumatic Stress now but I don’t think I ever. But eventually it kind of wears away because we were somewhat local heroes but we got a lot of kudos for what we did. As I said earlier, people thanked us for getting them out of the draft. But I was very active and doing things and well-known activist so people liked that I did that. So I had a lot of incoming good vibes.

PS: So positive reinforcement?

DO: Positive reinforcement.

PS: So, all in all—?

DO: And I didn’t have any trouble getting a job being a felon because I was either teaching pottery or now I have my own business. I’m a magazine and book distributor which I try to do along with the Good Food Movement but I’m also getting materials for people to read. I like to read even though it’s more difficult these days with people reading their screens all the time. But there’s people—there’s quite a reading culture which I—it’s part of my job to supply. And I did a separate thing, distributing some anarchist books through *The Soil of Liberty*, but this was my economic livelihood which I’ve been doing since the early eighties, 1980 and going to food co-ops and bookstores and newsstands so I like doing it.

So I’ve been doing it for quite a while now and I had a medical issue a year ago and I thought I was going to have to get rid of it because I had my joints swelling up with inflammation but

01:00:00 I got through that. And there’s not enough money in it to find people to take it over now but I

still like doing it but I like to do other things, too.

I like going around, meeting people and talking to people, being involved with the co-ops, social change things. I don’t go to quite so many meetings as I once did but I go to a lot of talks by people at meetings and will record them. I do a radio show on community radio show on KFAI, based out of Minneapolis, so I’ve been doing that since 1980, once a week.

PS: Since 1980?

DO: Since 1980; same era I became a magazine and book distributor; magazine mostly there. And I also did the—They took over the radio show that the Northern Sun Alliance, which had a lot of different things going on—had a newspaper with ten thousand copies put out every month and I was—took over the radio because they didn’t want to do it and gradually changed it to today, covers a wide range of peace and social justice issues, ecology and trying to give people ideas about how the heck did we get into this mess and what can we do about this impending doom they’re rushing towards? Anyway—

PS: Which particular doom is that?

DO: Well, the ecological doom. I mean, I was doing it several decades when I first read the thing about how they [unclear].

End of Recording 5

01:02:08

Beginning of Recording 6

00:00:00

the ways we were doing it. I mean, following this, even in my sentencing when I spoke I gave a strong ecological story to it but it’s—so I’ve always found it amusing that under Capitalism, it’s a—it’s too expensive. We can’t afford to save the environment for human habitation. Well, I guess that doesn’t make any sense, but there it is. So I’ve become against Capitalism even though I know a little bit more about what is involved with Capitalism the way it is. But Capitalism doesn’t grow all the time. You know, there’s data quality and it’s interesting we watch the ruling classes these days as they are greedier and greedier and shift the balance of how much money the lower classes have. There’s just general class animosity because there’s such a—the lower classes have less and less.

But nothing’s going to stop it and they’re not going to stop polluting the world so they’re rushing us toward Armageddon. Of course, one of the outs could be—well, we could have nuclear weapons—the knucklehead in the White House—who knows? And we should be able to get rid of nuclear weapons. You can’t use them and if you did, well, that would be biocide and so I work on all these kind of issues trying to present reasons why it’s more normal to not want to go on, over exploit the earth and over exploit people and over, you know, keep imperialism from doing more and more of world wars. Since containing Hitler [Adolf Hitler (1889-1945)] we know how to explain it better and how to do it, to help other people, to support other people to do that.

PS: So still going at it?

DO: Yes, yes. I still find it satisfying, useful and I don’t do as much as I once did but I do quite a bit and the older I get the more time it takes me to get things done but I do a good job of doing it, at least I think I do. Anything else?

PS: That seems like a good summing up to me, I mean, after more than fifty years of being more active than anybody that I know. It’s real impressive.

DO: Well, thank you. I mean, it’s just always something that I have to do this; I have to do this. You have to have—what’s his name? Vice president from Minnesota—said you have to have a fire in the belly.

PS: Walter Mondale [Walter Frederick "Fritz" Mondale (1928-)]

DO: Walter Mondale used that phrase and I like that but it’s something that won’t let you rest; that you have to do it. You know, I like to go to plays and I’ve really gotten into plays. I started to get into it before we had the *Peace Crimes: The Trial of the Minnesota 8*, [*Peace Crimes: The Minnesota Eight vs. the War*, by Doris Baizley, 2008] you know, that was well-covered.

PS: Our play.

DO: Our play. And it was based on some memoir of Frank Kroncke, and Frank is the one who made it happen. He got Ron Peluso and the History Theatre [History Theatre, 30 Tenth Street East, St Paul, MN] and we got the playwright—oh what was her name? Barbara?

PS: Doris.

DO: Doris Baizley and worked about three years on that it seems, getting the script ready;

00:05:00 talking about things; raising money; getting an audience and then putting on the production—

that was a great time.

PS: That was almost eleven years ago now.

DO: It was the spring of—

PS: February and March.

DO: of 2008 and I think it was like some twenty-three performances if I remember right. And Ron, who was the director, said there were about three thousand people who went to see it.

PS: Something like that, yeah. I think it was a little more than that, like thirty-four hundred, but—

DO: Okay. And this had a big impact. I mean, a lot of people who here was something once again that really showed this thing so we had a new round of people clapping for us as we were introduced, local heroes. And the play was terrific and it was—just the whole thing came together and it was the first time the History Theatre had done something outside of the History Theatre. It was over at, in conjunction with Minnesota students, who are in the theater department, so there were some actors there who—what do they call it? They were formally trained actors.

PS: Oh, you mean, Actors Equity members, not students.

DO: Actors Equity and they got paid, not students; they got paid. So, you know, I’ve been around—I’d gone to some theater before that and—but I really learned a lot more about theater then and I like to go to the theater now—the Guthrie and small little theaters. I was recently at the History Theatre, having to do with *The Great Society* [*The Great Society*, by Robert Schenkkan, directed by Ron Peluso, History Theatre, 2018] and it was a very good presentation. It really brought things back from the Lyndon Johnson presidency and how he was. The main actor was tremendous. Actually, I met with the final cast party and the people. Ron had me there, talking a bit and spoke about our play that he’d done because a lot of people were politically involved or sympathetic to radical things who were part of this cast. And I still run into people from the cast that we had and we had a really big effect. The second night; we had an opening on Friday night.

PS: Of our play.

DO: Of our play and plays generally opened on a Friday night, but we had a second opening on Saturday night and Doris Baizley thought, Well, that doesn’t happen.

PS: Why that?

DO: Well, Frank had all these people that came there. We had this—all these different people were honored; talked about this or that in one of the rooms at Rarig [Rarig Center, 330 21st Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN], the same place where the theater was where our play was being presented. And there was a special, a whole bunch of people who were really, really sympathetic with what we had done, were in attendance and the feeling that the actors said, the students, told me they never felt this emotion coming from an audience. It always brings tears to my eyes but it was like that and so that was something that even if they don’t fall into theater, you know, as a profession, they really had such a strong relationship with

00:10:00 them. When the final performance came, you know, they gave us a copy of the script and

made up some sort of a plaque for us-

PS: Well, there’s the poster.

DO: The poster and Frank had tried to set up all these things on campus—we didn’t get much interest from the students of that time—they were—even the Students for Democratic Society—they weren’t going to have anything to do with us, even if they had to walk from the third floor down to the first floor. They weren’t going to do it. And—but—so the campus had changed some but we had a great time and so it was maybe a mistake to have Wednesday night performances—‘cause, that was really sparse attendance, but in general they were pretty full.

And I remember one time, Alan Gibas came to us—we had a discussion after a play and I was up on the stage.

PS: We did that several times.

DO: And he was a, you know, a draft counselor and he was in the Executive Committee for Conscientious Objectors in Philadelphia [Philadelphia, PA] so he had a full time—Quaker background. He was really critical of me because in the play the theatrical prop for how to dramatically move the play along, during the draft counseling scene, they had—people were going to claim they had some sort of medical deferment, medical—when they really didn’t—even though a lot of people did try to manufacture things. He thought this was just the worst thing. And, of course, I said, “Well, theater can’t be like life. I mean, if we would have had to have a counseling session on the stage, half the people would be sleeping and the other half would have walked out because it would be going on for an hour or two.

PS: Yeah, it would have taken two or three acts.

DO: Two or three acts, exactly right. So I knew that so there it is; nothing’s ever perfect but it was very good; well done; lot of drama; people picked out who they thought could be this or that person who was involved with Frank Kroncke at the time and the like.

PS: Well, it was a big community event.

DO: It was a big community event, exactly right.

PS: And people who we’d known and been affiliated with us in the past showed up again and well, Dan Ellsberg came among others. It was a big deal.

DO: It was a big deal and we worked hard to get people to come there and talk about—I had a lot of interviews on my radio show and other shows. Frank went on Minnesota Public Radio and talked about it and—

PS: I remember being on WCCO.

DO: Oh, you did?

PS: Yeah, and I think Frank was at that, too, and other things like that.

DO: So we did our best. Ron [Peluso] kept wanting us [unclear]. We’ve got a lot of people; we’ve got to get more. I mean, you only made money if you had a lot of people plus he wanted a lot of people because he wanted a lot of people to see it.

PS: Sure.

DO: And we got a lot of kudos and thanks for that and people—sometimes groups would have tables in the lobby afterwards and—

PS: Yeah, like Vets for Peace.

DO: And I saw many of the performances and I remember one time when the person who was playing me—once he gave really one of the best performances ever and I was sitting right down next to him in the front row and he said my being there inspired him.

PS: This was the actor who played you?

DO: The actor who played me and some people thought, Well, he was—played it a little too swishy—I mean, he was gay but it didn’t bother me that he was an—it was some and not pronounced. It was just fine, I thought, how he did it because one of the roles was about the gay cardinals in robes, kind of gay intimations about the members of the Catholic Church.

PS: Well, it’s quite something, thinking how the community attitude toward what we did changed over the years between ‘should be hanged’ during the Aquatennial and having this play that thousands of people went to and was not condemned but people seemed to think it was okay, at least.

DO: Minnesota Poll did a survey once about us and I think it was closer to when we were going to jail and about one in eight supported us; 12 percent, you know, not necessarily just there’s a lot more antiwar sentiment but the idea of going to draft boards and destroying files—so that’s pretty good, one in eight; 12 percent. But I think it’s grown over the years and I’ve even had people from my high school class—they didn’t invite even me for a long time because I was too notorious—but—

PS: To reunions you mean?

DO: To reunions, but they apologized later on and said they’d really come to support what I did. So, you know, sometimes these things take a while to maturate and people accept things and finally when they come in contact with you, it has an impact; it can have an impact.

PS: Yeah, the personal contact is something extra.

DO: Yes.

End of Recording 6

00:17:33