**Interview with George Mische**

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

**Oral History Project**

**October 30, 2018**

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**Peter Simmons, Interviewer**

**October 30, 2018**

Name of interviewee: GM

Names of interviewer: PS

00:00:00 PS: This is a recording of an interview with George Mische. My name is Peter Simmons

and I’m the interviewer here. This is being done for an oral history project called We Won’t Go! and We Don’t Want You to Go, Either.) This interview is being done at George Mische’s home in Columbia Heights, Minnesota on October 30, 2018. It’s the afternoon of that day and we’re going to be talking about the draft board raid that George was involved in and a host of other things as well.

So, first thing, George, will you please say a few words about the Catonsville 9 [Catonsville, MD, May 17, 1968] draft board raid as it became known, what that was and when and where it was?

GM: Okay, yeah, in 1968, early actually in ’68, we found out, [during the Baltimore 4 trial] because of the blood pouring action [October 27, 1967] at the Baltimore 4 that the U.S. government had no draft files, duplicate copies, of—every eighteen-year-old had to sign up with the draft agency since World War II. And we found out they had no copies at all and we decided to go into Catonsville, Maryland’s draft board and take out all the 1A files and take them outside and destroy them. Because we felt that if we could get a movement going where people across the country went out and started to destroy draft records, it was going to be tougher and tougher for the U.S. government to draft people to go fight the War in Vietnam so it wouldn’t be a symbolic action, it was going to be a direct action to make it more difficult to run their wars. Which by the way, at the time, the overwhelming percentage of people who were going to Vietnam were minority people who, where white students were so often successful in getting deferments.

So we went in and took all the draft files out and burned them with homemade napalm, which we found the recipe for in a U.S. Army handbook and it destroyed three hundred seventy-eight draft boards, draft files of people who were the most eligible to go to war and that would be the 1A files.

PS: What was the date when that happened?

GM: It was May 17, 1968.

PS: Okay, and you were one of—?

GM: Nine. And all of us were Catholics so we decided that the—I had gone around and interviewed eighty U.S. Catholic bishops after I came back from Latin America and unfortunately, the Catholic church was one of the biggest supporters of the war because of Cardinal Spellman [Archbishop Francis Joseph Spellman (1889-1967)] from New York [New York City, NY] would go over every Christmas Eve, celebrate mass and bless the bombs in a sense in Vietnam. And of all of the four hundred and some Catholic bishops, only five Catholic bishops came out against the war at that time. And why we wanted all Catholics to be a part of the action—all of us were beyond draft age so they couldn’t say we were a bunch of draft dodgers and that not only went after the war but the way the U.S. government never—during that time—was you couldn’t have guns and butter. So all the money that was being spent was spent on warfare and not resolving the issues of the poor. So we tried to speak to all those issues of what was going on in America at the time.

PS: So you were how old at that time?

GM: I was—1968—I was thirty-one.

PS: Okay, now let’s go back in time a little bit from there. You’re from this—you’re a native born Minnesotan?

GM: Originally from St. Cloud, yes.

PS: Okay, and was your childhood there?

GM: Yes. I grew up in St. Cloud, yes.

PS: Okay, and I’m guessing from what you said before that you—through your youth and at least young adulthood, you were a member of the Catholic church.

GM: Very much so, a daily communicant, never missed a day without mass and communion all through high school.

PS: Okay, that was all through your growing up in St. Cloud?

GM: Yes.

PS: Yes. Did you—so your early school years, too? High school was in St. Cloud?

GM: Yes.

PS: How about after that? After you finished high school what did you do?

GM: I enlisted in the Army and went in the Army and I spent eight years on active duty and

00:05:00 reserve at the time and when I got out of the Army—when I was in the Army I’d become

close friends and really, first time, had the issue of Harlem, New York, exposed to me and what the dilemma was of blacks living in New York City in abject poverty and all the difficulties. So when I got out and came back to Minnesota, I decided I was going to go and check that out myself personally so I went out with my brother and I started working in two jobs. One was I working with street gangs up in Spanish Harlem and living up in that area and got really firsthand experience of what I had been hearing from my friends in the Army of what life was like. It made a great impact on me at the time.

And then eventually, I went to college and got deeply involved in interviewing on campuses all across from Chicago [Chicago, IL] east, of getting high school and college students involved in Latin America, which was a big important issue at the time with Latin America because of the Alliance for Progress.

PS: Give me a little time or date context there. You got out of the Army in what year?

GM: Nineteen—nineteen fifty-six.

PS: Okay, so what you were just describing happened in the first years after you got out of the Army and when you went to university after Army—you went from high school to the military and then college after you’d been doing some of this field work in New York, right?

GM: Yeah, well, I was doing both at the same time. I was going to college—

PS: Where was that?

GM: Well, I started out at Saint Peter’s [now Saint Peter's University, Jersey City, NJ] with the Jesuits in Jersey City and I was working at New Jersey’s Boystown [New Jersey's Boystown, Kearny, NJ] about fifty hours a week, going to the college full-time, or at St. Pete’s and then one of the Jesuits over there said, “George, you know, this is crazy, the schedule you’re doing. Why don’t you go out and play basketball up at Scranton [Scranton, PA] with our place with the Jesuits and then get your degree and you can get back in management and work with all those people you’re working with now?” And I said, “Yeah, that sounds like a good deal,” so I gave my brother my car because he had—we had had this organization that he had set up in New Jersey [Association for International Development], working in Latin America, and I hitchhiked up towards Scranton.

And this sales guy picked me up—he was one of the few salesmen that really know what was going on politically, what was going on in the world. And we got talking politics, whatnot, and finally sometime later he said, “Where did you want to get off?” I said, “Scranton.” “Oh my god, that’s an hour and half, two hours past.” He was going to Buffalo, New York. And I said, “Well, I’ll stay with you and go to Buffalo and I’ll catch a bus—I heard about a college over at Erie, Pennsylvania, Gannon College [Gannon University, Erie, PA] that my brother talked about and I’ll take a bus over there So I took a bus over and found out what the college was like and what they were getting into in terms of Latin America and—

PS: What was the name of that school?

GM: Gannon College—now it’s called Gannon University because now it has Ph.D. and everything. And so I ended up in Gannon and getting my degree from there. And at the same time I was organizing colleges and high schools about getting involved in these programs in Latin America, too, at the same time. And when I was speaking at a big conference down in Washington, DC, by this time I was almost twenty-six, because I was twenty-six when I graduated—they—some guy heard me talk and offered me the job of coming to work with the Alliance For Progress with the Kennedy [U.S. President John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1917-1963)], administration and I decided to do that.

And years later, in 1993, a guy at the university was doing one person who graduated from each decade on their fiftieth anniversary to come back and talk about what they did. All the other people were rich guys who contributed—they picked me, asked me to come back and talk about the 1960s. And the place was packed and here all these military guys show up who were—had ROTC [Reserve Officer’s Training Corps] and I thought, Oh, oh. Well, it turned out they really supported the positions I was taking on U.S. warfare and somebody said, How did you end up here at Erie, Pennsylvania from Minnesota? And I told him the story. I said, “It just goes to show you—you better plan out every part of your life for sure and it was all,

00:10:00 you know, karma I guess. By accident I ended up there and how I got involved in everything.

PS: You mentioned ROTC. A lot of people don’t know what that is anymore. That’s the

Reserve Officer’s Training Corps? So these people had been involved with that in their way when they were there.

GM: Yes.

PS: But you were never part of ROTC?

GM: No, but when I saw them show up, I mean, obviously, I thought Oh, oh. And here, I remember, a guy was a U.S. Army guy, a full colonel, and during the talk he told people he totally agreed with everything that I had to say about U.S. foreign policy. That the military really was using recruits as cannon fodder for their wars for oil and every other reason around the world. And I thought, Wow, and it was an interesting union to say the least.

PS: Unexpected, huh?

GM: Yeah, sure.

PS: So you spent time in Latin America when you started working for Alliance for Progress?

GM: Yeah, I spent a couple years in Latin America and I resigned during the Johnson [U.S. President Lyndon Baines Johnson (1908-1973)] administration. I happened to be meeting with the President of Honduras [José Ramón Adolfo Villeda Morales (1909-1971) the day that Kennedy got assassinated [[1]](#footnote-1)and he was a big fan of Kennedy because he—any other president I had met with in Central America—you’d go in their places and there was all the pictures of Simon Bolivar [Simón José Antonio de la Santísima Trinidad Bolívar Palacios Ponte y Blanco aka Simon Bolivar (1783-1830)], of all the heroes of their country and this guy didn’t have any of that stuff. He had one little picture on his desk and it was of Jack Kennedy. And I noticed that right away and here a guy came in and whispered something to him and it was before this day of what—we have computers now—it was the telegraph is how he got the news and I was kind of—and he said he just found out that his aide said that President Kennedy has been assassinated. So we were reading the stuff over the teletype what had happened.

And I had to fly back to San Pedro Sula [San Pedro Sula, Honduras] from the capital, in Tegucigalpa [Tegucigalpa, Honduras] and by that time, the whole—everything on television had been shut down on normal programming and it was all about Kennedy’s assassination. Immediately in all of Central America, you started to see parades with—supporting Kennedy because Kennedy was hero to them because not only was he Catholic but he was the first president who had gotten to Central America since Teddy Roosevelt [U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt Jr. (1858-1919)] or something way back then.

And, in fact, the president told me, when he found out I was going back to the States, he said, “Don’t go back home,” he said, “they’re shooting Catholics up there.” They really believed that he was killed because of that. And so, one of the first things that I got called back in consultation, is Johnson—and I got—they didn’t send me back to Central America because I had told them—and they overthrew the military—or the democratic government in Honduras while I was there and put in the military and I had meant to deal with the labor guys and said, “If you go to the hills, I’ll go with you.” Because how they’re going to explain this young, diplomatic guy from the U.S. government is siding with the people in the hills? And they found that out back in Washington and they sent me to the Dominican Republic.

So I’m down there and the ambassador tells me that he—all the—

PS: The United States ambassador?

GM: Yeah, and when Johnson became president, within the first thirty days, he put in a guy by the name of Rodas [Modesto Rodas Alvarado (1921-1979)], I think—I searched my brain for that name for years. But he was the newly assigned guy to take over the Alliance for Progress and all the policy of Latin America. They called all the ambassadors back and when Tapley Bennett [William Tapley Bennett Jr. (1917-1994)], the ambassador at the Dominican Republic told me that when he got back what happened—he said that they guy told him, “From here on in, all the U.S. foreign policy will from here on in be decided upon by how it best suits the interest of the United States.” And the government - Ed Martin [John Bartlow Martin (1915-1987)], who had been the ambassador in the Dominican Republic, now was in one of the choice places in Chile, and he had always been an independent minded guy, a real progressive guy on what our policy should be, said, “Well, does that mean from now on there’s no such thing as a good guy or a bad guy?” And he said, “That’s right.”

So when Bennett told me that I bet him one hundred dollars. I said, “Within a hundred dollars; you’re going to see the unravelling of all the democracies, beginning with Goulart [João Belchior Marques Goulart (1918-1976)] in Brazil. So, about a week later, he calls me out where I’m stationed in the other part of the country [Dominican Republic] and he says, “When are you coming into the capitol?” And I said, “On Monday.” He said, “Well, come by and pick up your hundred bucks; Goulart just fell today.”

And one thing about—that happened with Kennedy—Kennedy quietly had told every government there—because there were—when he came to power there were three democratic governments. Everybody else was military or dictatorship. If you want to have continued support from the U.S. government, military or foreign aid, get rid of those military

00:15:00 governments and put back that democracy. So by the time he was assassinated only Stroessner

[Alfredo Stroessner Matiauda (1912-2006)] in Paraguay and Somoza [Anastasio "Tachito" Somoza DeBayle (1925-1980)] in Nicaragua were with dictators; all had gone with democratic governments. And all of a sudden, when that message came back, all those democratic governments were starting to be overthrown again by the military and replaced. And I resigned during the Johnson administration because of that and came back and spent—I don’t know—a year, year and a half, lecturing around the United States, Canada and Mexico against U.S. foreign policy.

And it took me awhile to realize that here, what I had seen in Latin America is exactly what was happening in Southeast Asia and that’s how I started—my concentration had been Latin America, turned over into Vietnam. And I got heavily involved doing the Vietnam thing and that’s how I went around and met the eighty Catholic bishops, trying to get them to break from Spellman and all the right wing cardinals to break with the U.S. foreign policy and the church.

And then I met my wife Helene [Helene Mische] in Chicago and we got married, Dan Berrigan [Daniel Joseph Berrigan (1921-2016)] flew out to Chicago to marry us in 1967 and I told her at the time, before we got married, that, “I’m probably going to end up doing something that’s going to get me into serious trouble because it can’t go on with knowing what the hell really was happening with U.S. foreign policy and do nothing about it and just move on with another career.” So, she’s a—telling me years later, “I never had any idea you were thinking about like that.” I said, “Wait a minute. I told you.” She’s like, “Guys lie all the time. And I just said, “Wait a minute. Damned if you do and damned if you don’t. I told you what was the truth and then you said guys don’t usually tell the truth.” So that’s how it all began with Helene and I fifty-one years ago.

PS: So that time between when you left being officially part of government during the Johnson administration and your marriage, say, you were traveling a lot and you were learning a lot more and your thinking was developing about American foreign policy?

GM: Well, the foreign policy—I think in my attitude was pretty clear. I already arrived where I’ve been mentally and spiritually for the last fifty-one years.

PS: So there wasn’t a big turning point somewhere for you in that—in the middle or late 1960s about that?

GM: No, you know, I had been leaning that way all through college and one of the advantages—I had two—family influence was a lot but I didn’t know, and my mother never knew, about our father—that long before I was one of the Catonsville 9, my dad was one of the Seattle 19. That when he grew up in Germany. He was born in Minneapolis. His dad got killed in an industrial accident. His mother took the younger kids back to Germany so he came over sometime, we guess, seventeen or eighteen years old.

And he got involved with the IWW [Industrial Workers of the World], International Workers of the World, and became an organizer for them out on the west coast in the Oregon/Seattle [Seattle, WA] area where I often wondered—he had the index, the toe on each foot next to the big one, was missing and he had a big ring out of his arm. I used to say, “Daddy, what happened to the toes and the ring in your arm?” And he’d say, Well, during the Depression it was really hard times and you didn’t have a chance to get a lot of meat and Mom would cut off some and make a stew.” And that’s the story always. I used to say, “Oh, c’mon, Dad.”

He never told us about his background at all and then we found out years later, when I was back—I can’t remember—I was back permanently when we moved back or I was visiting on one of my many trips, here he [one of Mische’s brothers] gives me this print out. We had a nephew who was the first geek in the family with electronics and he was working on his Ph.D. in nuclear physics at the time and he—how he ever found out—he gets this article and he gives it to my brother and my brother shows me at his house.

I’m reading and here’s—it’s either 1917 or 1918 story in the *New York Times* and it talked about the Seattle 19, who were down in the New York City prison, which in the sixties, we used to affectionately call The Tombs. That here were these guys were singing Bolshevik songs down there led by Louis G. Mische. And I couldn’t believe it and I thought, Where the

00:20:00 hell did you get this? And he said, “Well, Gene, Jr. discovered this thing.” And I said, “My

mom didn’t even know this stuff about Dad?” “No.” “Well, didn’t you - ?” And she said, “I never had to ask. He was the finest man I ever met.” And she was twenty-eight when she met him and he was thirty-two and they got married and never knew any of that kind of stuff about his background.

But politics was big in our house. We listened to the news every night on the radio. In fact, during that period growing up, we had one of the few radios in the neighborhood. We used to have it by the window and neighbors would come over and they would listen to the news outside the window and there was no subject that you didn’t talk about. And it was always social peace and justice. It was very political. We never knew that the background on him, though, of how he arrived.

Then two of my older brothers, Jerry, went over—got drafted during World War II and I remember him coming back and telling me the stories of coming in at the end of the war through Dresden [Dresden, Germany] and describing what Dresden was like, how we destroyed that city with the bombings and all that and that had a big impact. And then another brother, Will, set up the first really successful Catholic Worker House in Chicago in 1952. So, I had two brothers who were very much into the social/political movements whatnot. That made a big impact on me so none of the stuff, as I got out into the world, was like Greek to me. You know, I had at least a basis to work from.

But then, you know, with experience I really, you know, the first I had experience was really important for me in my evolution and so, you know, when Helene and I got married, we moved out to New York, and I was at the time trying to put together actions—people about—who I knew from my past—about going after American corporations who were really destroying Latin America. J. Peter Grace [Joseph Peter Grace (1913-1995)] and all the big Rockefeller [John Davison Rockefeller Sr. (1839-1937) and descendants], you know, what they were doing in Latin America. And that’s when all of a sudden the whole Vietnam thing started to become a reality in people’s lives that, you know, that probably weren’t there at the beginning, you know, twenty, thirty years before about what we were doing in Southeast Asia.

So then I was trying to put something together in New York along those lines, but of an international flavor, going after U.S. foreign policy and then the Baltimore 4 thing happened and, of course, I had known Phil [Philip Francis Berrigan (1923-2002)] and Dan Berrigan for years and went down to the trial and that’s when I found out that there were no draft records, duplicate copies in the U.S. government. Because, you know, especially in those days and even now, the wars were all fought on the cheap. The less that you had to spend money on Selective Service and all that was more money for the Pentagon to go out and create war. And we’ve been running those kind of wars for years.

PS: Back up a little bit. You said just now and before that you had known both of the Berrigans for a while. Did you get to know them when you were doing that traveling around the country or some other way? Fill in some of that a little bit.

GM: Yeah, well, Dan and I—when my brother and I went out in 1956, late ’56, to New York, he went out to set up this organization that would deal with professional people going into Latin America and not going over to baptize people but to go over and, you know, in the Sermon on the Mount, feed the poor. And so he set up this nonprofit organization that recruited professional people with agrarian experience and agrarian reform—people who were journalists, who were helping to set up free presses in different countries. And they worked alongside with Maryknoll [the Maryknoll Order].

PS: Is this in a way sort of like Peace Corps except before that?

GM: Yes, absolutely. It was the Association of International Development [started by Gerald “Jerry” Mische in 1956]. I think I mentioned to you that the government set up USAID. Years later my brother tried to get them to use a different name. They said, No, we have the rights even though AID had officially filed as a nonprofit with the government. And so it was during that period that I went out to raise him some money and had to go out and see all the bishops trying to change their—well, in the—oh, and when Jerry set that organization up, that there were three priests who would come over all the time, not as official chaplains, but to hang out because this was a new thing to them, too, this lay organization were Catholics sending professional people into third world nations to work alongside of priests who stood for social justice and so, the—

00:25:00 PS: Those three were—?[[2]](#footnote-2)

GM: Oh, yes, sure. One of those was Dan Berrigan, who at the time was up at Le Moyne [Le Moyne College, Syracuse, NY]. He got intrigued because Dan’s background is kind of unique, too. When he got ordained as a Jesuit—remember to become a Jesuit priest, you can’t be younger than thirty-three years old because of all the orders, they have the longest period of studying to become a priest. And whether the thirty-three had to do with Christ’s age or whatnot, but that’s how old. Well, Dan got intrigued with the worker priest concept that had evolved in France so he went over to see what that was like where the priest didn’t have churches that they were operating in. They’d to go into factories and get jobs and that would be their church. It was a very interesting thing going on during the thirties, forties and fifties at that time.

PS: Just so it’s clear. The term that George used is a worker priest which, as he said, is something that originated in France and some long decades ago.

GM: Yes, right.

PS: Sort of, in its way, like Catholic Workers.

GM: Right, yeah, yes.

PS: Okay.

GM: Yes. So he [Dan Berrigan] went over to that and then, of course, right just before Catonsville, too, Dan had gone over with Howard Zinn [Howard Zinn (1922-2010)] to Hanoi [Hanoi, Vietnam] to get the release of the first three American bomber pilots who had been captured. None of them had ever been released and they had a deal worked out with Hanoi that they would release three prisoners for them to bring back to the United States as a good will gesture towards the American antiwar movement. Well, when he got to Germany, the military came on the plane and took the three prisoners off. They weren’t going to allow Zin and Berrigan to show up in New York Kennedy Airport with the first released American prisoners. And they didn’t let the three prisoners have any access to the press either to tell them how grateful they were and all that kind of stuff.

So Dan and I had done stuff together since 19—I think it was either ’59 or ’60, and Phil Berrigan had—we had brought them to Seton Hall University [Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ] in New Jersey for a week to talk about the book he had written on the—and it was the first really good book on the threat of the industrial military complex [*No More Strangers*, by Philip Berrigan, MacMillan Corporation, New York, 1965]. So that was 1962 and then Mary Moylan [Mary Moylan (1936-1995)] was one of the Catonsville people.

PS: Mary Moylan?

GM: Yes, M-o-y-l-a-n. And Mary had spent four years as a nurse in Africa and she had met with a group called Women Volunteer Association when she came back and when she came back she became the head of that. And she was one of the first people that moved into the house that Helene and I set up in DC. So three of us were close friends before that and then all the other people who moved in the house were the Mariano clan, nuns and priests who got booted out of Guatemala after ten, fifteen years working down there because they had sided with the rebels in the—who were trying to restore democracy against a military dictatorship. They got kicked out by the government and Maryknoll turned their backs on them and they end up moving into the house with us in DC. As my wife used to say—that she doesn’t take inordinately long showers but when she got out of the shower one day, there were six people from Guatemala had moved in with us and they became a central part of the whole Catonsville action.

PS: Now this organization that your brother was initially trying to set up and that you were working with, helping to raise money and so on—did either you or he have any sort of official status in the church organization or hierarchy or any kind of formal—we all know about each other—but we’re working on our own, not for you?

GM: It was a nonprofit organization [Association for International Development] my brother had set up legally and whatnot. And, you know, they were raising two hundred bucks a Sunday and it cost them [unclear] bucks and they’d been really poor. And I said, “Well, look, I’ll go out and raise some money but I’m going to do it my way. I’m going to guilt trip those bishops like they guilt trip Catholics every Sunday, put money in the collection basket and I’m going to go in and really, you know squeeze them to raise some substantial money” which I did.

And the first time—first guy was a guy by the name of Joe Donnelly [Joseph Francis Donnelly (1909-1977)] and he was a bishop up in Hartford [Hartford, CT] and a big lumbering guy, and, you know, you walk into the chancellery office, you know, they’re an incredible wood, you know, very expensive and gaudy looking offices and this guy is sitting there with his black cassock on and we’re talking and I’m telling him what the program is and

00:30:00 we’re trying to raise some money. And I had just been trying contact lenses for the first time

and I had astigmatism and, by the way, he had a chancellor there who was his aide—who was a convert, but who was kind of an ingratiating type guy. And, anyway, so while I’m talking to Joe across the desk. I explained the program and I blink and my boom—my eyelash popped out on this carpet.

PS: Your contact lens popped out?

GM: Yeah, and so I’m down on my knees trying to find it. He said, “What’s the matter?” I said, “Oh, I dropped my contact.” And I’m down there trying to feel around for it and all of a sudden I hear this thump on the floor and here’s this old guy, the bishop, you know, he’s two hundred thirty, forty pounds, fifty pounds, down on his knees trying to help me find the damn contact. I thought, Holy god, this guy’s a different type, horse of a different color and then the thump was heard by the guy out—he came running and saying, “Excellency, Excellency.” “Get the hell out of the way. Don’t step on the man’s contact lens.” He didn’t know what the hell was going on so he told him to get the hell out of the office.

I finally sit down and we talked about an hour and he said, “What do you want from me?” And I said, “Well, I’m trying to raise ten thousand—I have three levels: ten thousand, fifteen thousand and twenty thousand dollars a year depending upon the size of the diocese and you’re in a type would be, you know, ten thousand by an entire commitment of three years.” So he calls the chancellor back in and said, “Write the guy a check for ten thousand bucks.” The guy about shit. He couldn’t believe it.

He was telling me this so I drive back from there and the headquarters in Patterson, New Jersey and some of the people in the office were skeptical about what I was about to do and I walked in and they see me and they said, Well, how did you do? And I said, “Well, here.” So I give them the envelope—the guy Jim Lamb, who had taken over as the director of that office from my brother, looked at it and here’s a ten thousand dollar check. And the guy who was the treasurer guy was a really good guy who had a very successful liquor business in Cleveland [Cleveland, OH] and had spent years himself in Latin America. He was making, you know, economically, the organization work, so they had never seen a check for ten thousand—it was usually two hundred or one hundred-fifty and when I gave them that check, Oh my god, this is possible.

So I did that with—around, you know, and I would read the riot act to these guys about the plight of the poor around the world, here in the country and here the church is building these churches and schools all over hell while the poor are doing, you know, what—I used to—well, what was my favorite phrase that—oh, whenever I’d be in a gaudy office, I remember doing this with Cardinal Krol [Cardinal John Joseph Krol (October 26, 1910-March 3, 1996)] in Philadelphia [Philadelphia, PA]. He couldn’t believe it that anybody had the nerve to do this. I put my feet up on his desk and I looked around his office and I said, “We’ve come a long way from the stable haven’t we?” And that always worked and I’ll tell you. So he raised a ton of money for these guys.

And that always worked and I’ll tell you—so we raised a ton of money for these guys. Dearden [Archbishop John Francis Dearden (1907-1988)] was the best guy. I got forty-five thousand bucks out of him—he was the head of the, you know, they used to call him Iron John and up in Detroit [Detroit, MI], it was—became the head of the bishops but really had a social conscience and he came up with forty-five grand. So it was an interesting time going around, not only raising money, but trying to get the message out but didn’t really find out how locked in so many of these people were with following whatever Spellman and O’Boyle [Archbishop Patrick Aloysius O'Boyle (1896-1987)] and some of these guys, Krol. They did—they jumped through hoops and I was saying, “It’s about time you guys tell those guys to stick it, you know, that—”

They, you know, a few more of these guys started to speak out as a result, too, so it was not only a financial thing but hopefully trying to get them to change their position and stuff. So, anyway, that’s kind of how it all started with the church that I’m concentrating on. It was going around after my brother set that up and I said there were three guys: Paul Mayer was a Benedictine guy.

PS: Merrill?

GM: Paul Mayer, M-a-y-e-r. Paul was a Benedictine at the place where we eventually had the retreat [in August, 1968] in Newton, New Jersey, and he gave the best retreats I ever saw. I mean, I’d gone to stuff in Gethsemane [Trappist monastery in Kentucky] [phone rings] and all that kind of stuff. And the [phone rings again].

PS: Hold on. We’ve got a phone call interrupting here.

End of Recording 1

00:34:28

Beginning of Recording 2

00:00:00

PS: Starting again after a phone call in interruption. Go ahead, George. So you’d been doing all this work relating to helping your brother’s organization get funded. So you had a long and deep involvement in what we’d now describe as social justice activity before you got involved with this other kind of thing in and around Catonsville.

GM: Right. And there was an advantage I had, too, you know, because, you know, I’d been lucky that they, not only the experience I had, but as my wife Helene once said, too, is that—but she met all the people from my brother’s organization—we’re still friends today. You know, years later, those of us who are alive.

That she had, in fact, a funny story if I may about Helene and I. One of the weekends we spent together at the time, I woke up in the morning and I realized that something was changed in my wallet. And I said to Helene in the morning, I said, “Helene, were you going through my wallet last night?” And I said, “What were you looking for? You looking for my—that I was a card carrying Communist?” Because that was the whole thing on the TV was—what was that famous TV program? *I Led Three Lives*?[*I Led Three Lives,* syndicated by Ziv Television Programs, 1953-1956]

PS: I remember that one.

GM: And it was—everybody was a Communist—had a card in their wallet. And I started to laugh when I said—she said, “Well, I never ever heard anybody talk like that about issues.” And that’s why she wanted to check out if I was a Commie. But, you know, the—

PS: Just like your dad, huh?

GM: Yeah, right. So, she had always said, too, that she had never met any men, people that she met with who are friends. A while back she said, “I never met people like that.” Today we remain close friends—she really admires. But, you know, she lived in a different world and we were all either rewarded or victims of our life experiences and I’ve always felt lucky that I—there isn’t anybody—I can’t think of how many people who made influences on my life. It wasn’t me or just one person that—I was lucky along the way and I really bumped into people that really did give a damn what was going on in the world and had incredible experiences themselves, you know. And that’s why I tried to have a—Phil Berrigan understand that with old Catholic luck thing and Joe Tropea when he made the movie—

PS: The movie *Hit and Stay* [*Hit and Stay*, directed by Joe Tropea and Skizz Cyzyk. 2013]

GM: Of the history of all the people that got involved. You know, people had incredible backgrounds, you know, well educated, and history didn’t know about them; unfortunately they only knew about us and I was hoping that we could change that.

PS: Yeah, well, people don’t come out of nowhere.

GM: Yeah, right.

PS: Usually.

GM: Yeah, that’s right, yeah. And I understand that, too, you know, I don’t know if I wouldn’t have had the family experience and the experience I had going through life that—if I’d have the same opinions today that I have. If you leave yourself open to the future it’s amazing what happens to your life in a positive way. That’s the big thing. There are too many people that are too rigid about where they go with their life and I never—I always was a freelancer.

PS: Well, let’s sidestep just a little bit here.

GM: Sure.

PS: You mentioned a retreat. Was that the retreat that was prior to the Catonsville action or was this something different? I sort of lost track.

GM: Yeah, there were two things, two important meetings. One was in—I say March 31, 1968, in the house that Helene and I had organized in DC after the blood pouring action.

PS: Again, for reference, that was what became called the Baltimore 4—the draft board raid where it was revealed that Selective Service System had no duplicate records formally of any of their files.

GM: Right, and all because of the blood that was poured on the files that day the head of the draft service there said were destroyed, you know, such bad shape, so we found out accidentally that there were no draft board file records any place in the United States.

PS: Stupid.

GM: Stupid, yes, that’s correct, yes. So that’s how we found out about that. I said, Shit, man, let’s go in and destroy the records,” because it was to stop this war and make it tough for—then let’s take away their ability to have the personnel that they had had to go out and die for them.

PS: So this retreat—?

GM: We had that meeting in our house [in Washington, D.C.; March 31, 1968] where there were about thirty people. And out of that came the whole theory of where to go from here. Catonsville? Three people were there who were part of eventually the Milwaukee 14—three of the priests. And then—Art

00:05:00 Melville [Arthur G. Melville] who became—was one of those Maryknolls that was kicked out,

became part of the DC 9 which was a third action.

And then the real retreat started. It—after we got out of jail at Catonsville in May of

’68, I went out and started traveling around the Midwest meeting with people telling them that we want to keep this going and have more actions. And so I had a retreat at a Benedictine monastery in [Newton] New Jersey in August of 1968. And that’s where about seventy people, something like that, showed up and Dan Berrigan knew about it and decided he would join me down at that meeting and we told them why we did what we did and what our game plan had been. And hopefully that we would keep this going. I said that there were people here who want to participate in another action and Mike Cullen [Michael Cullen] in Milwaukee [Milwaukee, WI] had suggested that Milwaukee could be a good place to have the second one. And we took the vote that day of all the people there and that’s how Milwaukee started and then out of that came the other actions.

PS: Okay, so just to again give some calendar reference here. When you talked about getting out of jail you mean getting out of jail after you were initially arrested.

GM: Yeah, yes, correct.

PS: Before you were convicted or imprisoned—?

GM: Yes, before the trial.

PS: Right, okay.

GM: And we were in jail for eight days by design. We wanted to fast to call attention to the action more and finally after eight days, we agreed to take bail and leave but we were supposed to go back to the cities that we came from and not leave there without the judge’s permission.

PS: Your home cities while you were out pending trial.

GM: Right.

PS: Yeah, okay. So this gathering at your and Helene’s home was to try to expose or to offer this thinking to many others after your arrest, soon after your arrest, and to promote this and to spread the idea around, right?

GM: Right, and then the meeting at the house was not only to be a one-time deal with Catonsville but the fact that I was convinced and I told people at the meeting I was convinced that after we pulled off the Catonsville action, that people would be coming out of the walls to get involved because people were looking for some way to really get their hands on an effective action that changed policy. And some people were wondering if that was true, that there would be a lot of people. Well, it turned out to be that’s exactly what happened then. After the Catonsville thing, the people contacted—they wanted to get involved and that was the jump start for the August meeting [in Newton, NJ] which then really kicked it off.

PS: Okay, so now the people who were at this meeting at your home wound up being involved in other draft board raids here and there.

GM: Later.

PS: Not long later, usually, but later in other parts of the country. Now, we sort of skipped over the actual Catonsville raid that you were a part of. You mentioned that early at the beginning when we were talking. Tell a little bit more about that, how that got organized and what it was actually like and why you picked there instead of someplace else and a little bit about the actual action. It’s sort of the center of this storytelling in a way.

GM: Well, you know, after being at the trial of the blood pouring action, it was very clearly the government’s aim to really nip this all in the bud and see that this didn’t go on. And I decided that it was important not to have one—by the way, the press did not cover a big coverage of the blood pouring thing at all.

PS: Yeah, the Baltimore 4.

GM: Yeah, the Baltimore 4. They hardly, you know, there were five, ten, fifteen people at most in the courtroom at any time. And that—I thought it was really important to have—to show the government that no matter what you do with the people, these defendants, we’re going to be back and we’re going to really expand this whole movement. And that was the purpose of Catonsville and we—and I wanted it not to be another city but I wanted to have it related right to the Baltimore area because that’s where, at least locally, the press was covering it and it was—people were starting to find out about the whole thing.

PS: So because people locally already had some knowledge because of the blood pouring so it was to add to, stand on the shoulders of that which had happened in the fall of the previous years, 1967? Is that right?

GM: The action was—

00:10:00 PS: In Baltimore, it looks like October 27, 1967.

GM: What does it say up there? Yeah, October 27, 1967. So it was what? Four months after Helene and I got ready to move out east.

PS: Yeah, so that was about seven months before the Catonsville raid?

GM: Right.

PS: So then, when we’re talking about getting things organized to actually do the Catonsville raid, I assume that there were people who you talked with who were interested but decided to do like support things or not be an actual part of the raid?

GM: Well, what happened was the—

PS: How that worked?

GM: Yeah, the basis of the whole Catonsville was our house because there were five of us, six of us, of the nine, were living together at 1620 L Street: Mary Moylan with her background in Africa and whatnot and then the three people who were from Guatemala, Tom and Margie Melville [Marjorie Melville] and John Hogan.

PS: Maryknolls, right?

GM: Yes, they were Maryknolls. And when I decided I was going to create a second action, one of them—Mary Moylan came out to me and she said, “Are you really going to do this?” And I said, “Yeah, and she knew all the reason why because we had talked together in the house. We were not living together as strangers. And she said, “Well, count me in. I want to be in.” And I thought with her background, not only with four years in Africa but when she got back she hooked up with Marion Barry [Marion Shepilov Barry (1936 -2014)], who became the first elected mayor of Washington, DC and a guy by the name of Catfish Mayfield [Rufus G. "Catfish" Mayfield] who was doing incredible organizing in the black community and was the head of—started a group called Pride [Destiny- Pride, Inc. 411 Sixth Street S.E., Washington, DC], which was one of the first big groups around the country who got into doing like—what’s the thing that Jimmy Carter [U.S. President James Earl Carter Jr. (1924-)] got going? Humanity—who builds houses at all? [Habitat for Humanity]

PS: Oh, yeah.

GM: You know what I mean. And Pride really was doing real things, not just talking about it. And Mary was involved with that so she was number two in. And then Tom Melville comes up to me and he said, “Are you and Mary really going to do this?” And I said, “Yeah,” and he said, “Well, I would be really interested in that but I have—I would have three—not demands—criteria.” And I said, “What are those?” And he said, “Well,” he said, “I mean, we don’t want to just do something about just Vietnam.” Because, you know, the fifteen years they spent in Guatemala, they wanted to be—get the Guatemala and Latin America story out. I said, “Tom, what’s my beginning? Latin America. Mary Moylan’s? Africa. Sure, you know, yeah, the statement—that’s why the original statement talks about Latin America and all that kind of stuff.”

And then I said, “What’s number two?” And he said, “Well, those of us in the house here from the Guatemala crowd, we’ll decide which of us will go on this action; which one goes in further actions.” I said, “Yeah, fine, agreeable. What’s the third thing?” And he said, “We want no brother act.” Because he had been what? Fifteen years? No, ten years—Art had been fifteen years in Guatemala—both Maryknoll priests. And he said, “If I run this action, then Art will go on the next one or if I do this one, or if Art goes on this then I go on the next one.” He said, “We don’t want any brother action because if there is the press is going to make that the issue and not the real thing about what the action’s about.” And I said, “You’ve got a deal.”

So therefore he was in—it was three and he tells Margie, you know, who was a nun for seventeen years down there, and they had just been married right after we had been married, Helene and I, and he told her what he had decided and she said, “Tom, now that you’re married, aren’t we supposed to talk these things over first?” She goes down to Dupont Circle by herself for a couple hours, comes back, said, “Okay, I’m in.” So Hogan was it. And the reason they wanted—he wanted to decide themselves, there was another guy by the name of Mark Kent living with us.

PS: So this is—

GM: Mark Kent.

PS: Kent, okay.

GM: Mark Kent had spent fifteen/twenty years in China as a Maryknoll and had been in prison for quite a period of time and his sister was—

PS: In China?

GM: Huh?

PS: Imprisoned in China?

GM: Yeah, not during the Mao period by Chiang Kai-shek [Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975)] and all like that. And he had a famous sister by the name of Sister Corita [Corita Kent (1918-1986)], born Frances Elizabeth Kent, who was a great nun who was an artist and very prominent back in the sixties whatnot. And they’re not—Tom and the crew were—they would know Mark would want to be in the action and were sure that he could handle prison again.

00:15:00 And so they had to decide who was in, which I agreed to.

So, by the way, and then we had to decide to have a meeting on March 31 and Dave Darst was a Christian Brother living in St. Louis [St. Louis, MO] at the time, working at a—Christian Brothers all have high schools in ghetto areas so he was working in the ghetto himself, teaching. And he saw the blood pouring thing and then he sent a telegram or a letter congratulating them and he said, “Where a flame starts, a bonfire could come out of, so he would be interested in anything in the future.” So we contacted him and invited him out.

Phil had the three priest friends up in Boston [Boston, MA]. They got invited. Everybody they invited—

PS: Phil meaning Phil Berrigan.

GM: Phil Berrigan, yes. And everybody at that meeting who was not ready to go to prison on that action were all people that Phil had invited. It was a humbling experience for him but all the other hands of people went up and one of the guys who—

PS: And this is when you asked this assemblage, “Who here is ready—

GM: To go.

PS: to go?”

GM: And all these hands are going up all over the place. And the interesting thing about—a guy by the name of Tony Mullaney [Anthony Mullaney (1929-)] who’s still alive—Tony’s got to be eighty-four, eighty-five now for sure. Tony is a Benedictine and there were those three—those three priests were interesting guys. They lived in a place called Packard Manse, a house in Boston that dealt with social/political issues. It was a place where they would train people, have seminars, have all that kind of stuff and Tony was a Benedictine. Bob Cunnane [Robert Cunnane], I can’t remember what his order was yet, and then Jim Harney [James W. Harney], was a Diocesan priest. Those three were there and Tony Mullaney, talk about a man with a pure heart, said, “George, I’m not sure your political analysis is right, that if, now that Johnson had announced he wasn’t running for the election, that Humphrey [Hubert Horatio Humphrey Jr. (1911-1978)] would do the same damn thing on the policy. I’m not sure you’re right but we’ll soon find out.” That was true. “Two is that I’m not sure that people are going to be coming out of the walls like you predicted they will,” and third, is that he is not sure that he could handle prison himself.

And I said, “Tony, if there’s anybody in this room has any hesitation about whether they can handle prison they shouldn’t be in the action. There are plenty of things for people to do that’s important in terms of resistance and who knows? It’s the old labor concept. If you get people to take one step off the curb, all of a sudden they say, “Well, that wasn’t that bad.” And they’re ready for the next step and we progressed in our own way. And I said, “So, who knows?” And he said, “Well, but maybe if you’re right that they’re all going to come out maybe I’ll be ready for the next action,” And he was.

And he ended up showing up, the three of them, at the later retreat in [Newton] New Jersey and they became a part of the next action was Milwaukee and then Art Melville kind of was the leader of getting the DC 9, which was the first time we branched off from draft boards into corporates, corporations when they hit the Dow Chemical Company and office headquarters in DC and trashed that place. So already it was starting to go past what some people envisioned at the beginning, just draft boards and also then, if people knew what my position was. You don’t have to agree to go to prison. And if we go out and nail these other draft boards as long as nobody got hurt and we’re not violent in the process centers, way with our skills at getting into places and casing them and being able to pull them off. And that’s where the bulk of the actions came down after a while. You know, where they were hit and run. Some of the people were—I knew people who were in seven and eight hit and run actions—East Coast Conspiracy was the name of a group and then another one was up in the State of New York was the New Improved East Coast Conspiracy to Save Lives. There were so creative they didn’t—the Beaver 55 thing wasn’t, you know, that must have—the feds must have gone crazy there thinking there were fifty-five people involved in that action. Tom Trost [Tom Trost (1932-)] was very creative and decided to come up with that name, you know, to screw up the feds. So all these actions started to devolve after that.

00:20:00 PS: So it just kept spinning off, one sort of thing after another based on that first model.

GM: Yeah, you know, I told you before they’re showing a guy with Bob Siegal and I was just [unclear] the Pasadena 3. I hadn’t even heard of them and then here Bob Siegal was one of the three who end up in Lewisburg Prison [United States Penitentiary, Lewisburg, PA]. with me and I thought they did it on the first anniversary of Catonsville, the Pasadena 3 [Pasadena 3 [May 20, 1969, Pasadena, California]. So the West Coast was finding out about it and people out there were picking up and in my research I found this out. You know, I’d like to show you here that I have traced between forty-five and fifty actions after Catonsville where I knew the dates, who were in all the different actions and as I was picking up all this information around the country from different people, clippings they had in either their basement or their attic, here Mike Giocondo [Michael Giocondo (1929-2014)] who was the key guy with Camden [Camden, NJ, August 22, 1971]. He was an ex-Franciscan who had spent six years in—

PS: So Camden 28.

GM: Yes, what did I say?

PS: You just said Camden.

GM: Yeah, right. And Mike had been—was a Franciscan for six years in Central America, came back and ended up in Camden and he set up a center for Latinos in Camden. It was very active and he was kind of the key guy on that, laying the groundwork of the Camden action. And when I was interviewing him—he just died about a year ago—he was probably eighty-seven, eighty-eight when he died. And Mike had—well, he said when I interviewed him—I taped him, I said, “Wait, you got any clippings and stuff?” A lot of the stuff he’d already given to some museum in Virginia, but he had two bags full of stuff, you know, army bags full of stuff in a closet at his house in Chicago. So he let me take that back like—and here I’m seeing a couple articles in there that it was on the same day in the *Washington Post* and the *Chicago Tribune* by an unnamed government official said—didn’t say Catonsville—didn’t say Camden—but between 1968 and 1973, I think it said in the article, that there were two hundred ninety-two draft board raids during that period. So that’s how—so when I saw that, I walked upstairs like, Oh my god, Helene, look at this.

Had that not happened, you know, and then I remember when Walter Cronkite [Walter Leland Cronkite Jr. (1916-2009)]—and when I would tell Joe Tropea when he was making *Hit and Stay*, I would tell him some of these old stories and he’d kind of look at me, wanting to believe but he wanted be sure. And I would always show him where he could find out proof. I didn’t want to give him any BS. And so I told him about Walter Cronkite, had gotten on TV in 1971 and these articles were ’92, but I found out years later. And 1971, he got on CBS TV News at night and said, “Well, there again,” didn’t mention Catonsville or Camden, “since 1971, there have been two hundred seventy-nine more draft board raids across the United States.”

And I told Joe this and Joe is a good researcher—goes up to the library in New York, finds the tape that CBS had of that night. And you’re supposed to pay them ten thousand bucks but his attorney said, Hey, it’s been so long, that should be public property, so CBS never tried to make Joe come up with some money when he made the movie and here, if you remember in the movie, here’s that Walter Cronkite thing in 1971, saying just that. And then later on I find out there were—I think it says two hundred ninety-two in that article, you know. Thank god that Mike had all that stuff, you know, that’s part of the history stuff.

And a lot of the creative things that were in the different actions one that was really good is they hit three draft boards, different draft boards, in Delaware. And they tried—and one of the places they thought, Well, we’ll try something new. They took the draft files of each person—they got—one of them got—mailed them back to the persons—

PS: The 1A files?

GM: The 1A files and said, This is your draft file. You can do whatever you want with it. You can keep it, destroy it, or go take it back to the draft office saying, here was somebody—and they found out later that not one person ever took their draft file back to the draft office and said, Here’s my draft file. So, you know—oh, there were a lot of little things like that. I remember after Catonsville, Phil Berrigan and I were in a little restaurant—and we just went by it recently on St. Paul Avenue and Baltimore, and he and I went in to have a little strategy session and we’re sitting in the back of the restaurant and when it came time to pay we go up

00:25:00 to pay the bill. And I pay the bill and this young guy comes up to me and he recognized Phil

and I and he says—

PS: Because you’d been in the news already, prominently.

GM: Yeah, yeah, and he said, Thanks, thanks a lot. And I said, “What?” And he said, you got one of my draft files—one of the draft files you got was mine. And he pulls out his pocket and he says, I don’t have any money, you know, I wanted to just thank you. And here, this is what I’d like to offer you so he gave it to me. And Phil by this time comes up and said, “What was that about?” And I told him. I said, I told him, “The guy just said he’s one of the guy’s files that we got.” And he said, “What did he give you?” And I opened it up and here it was a little LSD—(laughter). That was his gift to me. And Phil said, “What are you going to do with that?” And I said, “I’ll put it in my pocket and one of these nights Helene and I will have a nice evening together.” And he looked at me; he didn’t know what the hell to say. So I came back to DC; I showed her what the guy gave me. She says, “What are you going to do with that?” I put it in my watch pocket. I said, one of these nights we’ll try to check this out. Well, mysteriously, it disappeared and my wife claims, “Oh, it must have got caught in the laundry.”

PS: In the wash.

GM: And she wasn’t one that wanted to try LSD so I never got a chance to check out to see if it was fun.

PS: Well, to back up again for a little more context, Camden 28—that was later than some of these other things that we’ve been talking about and it was notable or special in 1971 because the Camden 28 were acquitted, correct? And that had never happened before. Is that also correct?

GM: Yeah, and I’ll tell you an interesting story about that. I happened to think of it before telling you.

PS: And before we go further with that I’d like you to tell something about your trial, too, for Catonsville, and the connection that you told me before that that had with someone who was present at the Camden 28 trial, one of the marshals.

GM: Oh, yeah.

PS: But go ahead with the Camden 28. You were—

GM: Yeah, the only thing about the Camden thing is that I heard there were some interesting things going on in that trial that didn’t happen in any other trial. You know, that trial last three months; ours lasted a week; most of the trials were bing, bing, bing. And every place you went to they never let anybody on the stand except the defendants and you can say what you want, but there were—there could be no discussion about the legality of the war; no expert witnesses. We found that out in our trial in the pre-hearing as [Howard] Zinn took the stand, was going to say what he had to—and the judge, No, no, no, ain’t going to happen.

Well, what happened is—I get over—I heard these things had happened going on over—and I doing a lot of on the road stuff, too, so I went over and spent a couple days over there because they were all old friends. And I walked in this courtroom and, you know—

PS: This is Camden, New Jersey.

GM: Camden, New Jersey, yes. And unlike our trial, which, I don’t know, had roughly had five thousand people outside for all week long and all the stuff that was going on in Baltimore, most of the trials did not have that kind of response. And here in the courtroom, first of all, I walked into, is five times bigger than our courtroom because in Baltimore, they didn’t want a big courtroom; they wanted it as small as they could get but you could probably get a couple hundred people in. But this thing, you’re going to get a lot more. And I walk in and all my Jesuit buddies who had their blacks and their Roman collars on, saw that I had come in through the door, walked through the gate, came up to me and took me by the arms and walked me through the gate and introduced me to the judge and the jury. And I thought, Whoa, what’s going on here? And they said, This is George Mische, one of the awesome members of the Catonsville 9 and introduced me and I thought, Holy God.

So every night they would go over to, across the street from the courthouse, to have a few drinks, a half a dozen guys. And I went over so I get the orders of what they wanted; I was going to treat them to drinks; and I go up and there’s this—and it’s a big place, too—and there’s this long railroad bar, one guy sitting there and it’s the judge in the center of the bar. Down on the other end by himself—

PS: By himself.

GM: By himself and down on the end of the bar, around the corner is the prosecutor and I thought, Ooh, and I go and put the order in and the judge says, “George, can I talk to you for a few minutes?” And I said, “Yeah, let me get the drinks here and I’ll take them back to the people and come back.” So I take the drinks back and they saw that he had said something. What did he say? I said, “He wants to talk to me.” So I went over. So here the judge is sitting down and, you know, I know by this time how long the trial was and, you know, he let Zinn, he let everybody—he let Phil Berrigan testify. And it’s, he said, You know, a lot of you know

00:30:00 that when this trial started he didn’t think these guys were the good guys at all, you know, the

defendants.

And then he started, as the trial was going on, and here they found out they got Hardy [Bob Hardy] the snitch, who got paid to set them up with the FBI and here all the burglary equipment is laid out on the floor here that they used to get in and it was all supplied by the FBI, and the judge is looking at this thing. And then he said, “George,” he said, “you know, I got my position on the court when Clifford Case [Clifford Philip Case, Jr. (1904-1982)] was the progressive Republican, one of the senators from New Jersey.” There were three Republicans senators who opposed Nam: Clifford Case and Keating [Kenneth Barnard Keating (1900-1975)] and Javits [Jacob Koppel Javits (1904-1986)] in New York. And those were the only three guys. He said, “Clifford Case put my name in. I got it,” he said, “I try to be an honest judge and every day I take my six kids and drop them off in my little Plymouth going over, and then I come over and have to hear this stuff.”

And then he said, you know, he sees the burglary equipment and all that kind of stuff and then he’s reading at the same time all the stuff about Watergate. And he’s finding out about all the slush funds and that Clifford Stans [Maurice H. Stans (1908-1998)] had that big slush fund that was used to break into Ellsberg’s [Daniel Ellsberg (1931-)] office out on the West Coast and he’s—and then the number one law enforcement officer in the country is a crook, meaning William Mitchell [John Newton Mitchell (1913-1988)], who ends up going to prison. And it was blowing his mind.

And then he’d seen what the—

PS: Because this trial is all happening in 1972, right?

GM: Yes.

PS: Not soon after their raid in 1971. So, this is when you’re talking with the judge is when all the Watergate stuff is hot in the news?

GM: Oh, and it’s really pissing him off, obviously, because he’d really taken his job seriously and hearing the real story about what the government’s willing to do—

PS: And finds out he’s working for John Mitchell, who’s a crook.

GM: Yeah, and as long as—and he never said this to me but it was—well, let me finish before that. The prosecutor sitting down—he’s seeing what’s happening. He meanders down and he leans on the bar towards me and he says, “George, you used to live in Jersey. You know how corrupt this state is.” You know, because New Jersey government is one of the corruptest it has been for years. And he said, “I didn’t even want to bring charges against these guys. We’ve got enough corruption.” That he was after prosecuting people but he got to work for the western—from what the hell was the guy’s name for the Red Squad said that they knew about the Camden thing coming down, to let it go because they wanted to do the entrapment thing, you know and tie it into the investigation with Harrisburg[[3]](#footnote-3), [Harrisburg, PA] too. And that—so he said, “I didn’t want to bring charges.” He said, “George, I went door to door for Eugene McCarthy [Eugene Joseph McCarthy (1916-2005)] in Omaha, Nebraska.” And he’s going on like, Little did I know who this guy was to become.

PS: The prosecutor.

GM: The prosecutor, yes. So he’s convincing me that he didn’t really want to [unclear]. Well, I went back, you know, this was going on an hour and forty-five minutes, I go back to the table and all my friends are sitting there. What the hell was that all about? I told them, I said, “I don’t care what that jury is going out, I think in the next day or two. When they come back, you guys aren’t going to prison. No, he didn’t say that, but you are not. I’ll tell you right now that that judge’s mind’s been blown and he is not sympathetic to the bad guys.” And, of course, the jury ends up acquitting them and the marshals and the jury people [members?] throw a victory party for the Camden 28 people, which I was at. What a night that was.

So it was a total change of what happened and when they made the Camden 28 movie—I don’t know if you’ve seen that yet. There’s a movie on the Camden 28. It’s well done. And Pete Fordi [Peter John Fordi (1914-2015)] who I just talked to last night—I tell you, he’s one of my old Jesuit buddies, ex-Jesuit buddies, who’s—who joined Helene and I when I got out of prison, who—he—one of the priestly things he’s done since he left the Jesuit is he’s married—all four of my five kids who are married now—and he’s done that—he’s like the favorite uncle of the kids. In that movie on the Camden 28, I would say did a nineties, 1993, 1998 effort, or 2000 around then—whatever that was and they asked Pete, Father Fordi, what did you think when the jury came in and acquitted you? He stopped for a minute and he said, “Holy shit! We finally won one!”

00:35:00 And then one after another, all the charges was not guilty so it blew away his mind and that’s

why I filled in—when I used to do this publicly, the only reason Catonsville has any relevance, is that all the actions that came after it, but when Camden finally won one, where years later the jury said, Not guilty, because they, you know, when we did Catonsville, the Gallup Poll showed there was 76 or 77 percent of the people in the country that supported what we doing in Vietnam. By the time I got out of prison and was at the time of the trial, it had just flopped over where 70 percent of the people were not only opposed to Vietnam, but opposed to all the stuff we were doing overseas. That’s why that was such a secret about what the Contra[[4]](#footnote-4)

PS: Yeah, [unclear]

GM: Yeah, because that was not something they did openly. That was all subversive and, you know, it makes sense because at our trial when Tom Melville was on, three guys show up in the back of the courtroom with military officers—they wanted to hear Melville’s testimony about how much he knew about the airplanes which were coming in with the Contra, which he knew about. And he talked about it. And when he got done, they all walked up so now they knew what had been made public by somebody who was living down there at the time, who knew about that shit that was going on sub rosa and that was all because the country at that time, has never been supportive of any more stuff about Vietnam. At that time, if anybody had tried in the Middle East there would have been a tremendous reaction in the Congress against the Middle East bullshit then, you know, going back.

PS: Yeah, the whole Contra scheme that was pretty much unknown to people—

GM: Absolutely.

PS: at the time of his testimony that you were talking about. Let’s talk some more about your actual trial, the nine of you. You had described some things already about your judge and how he was different from the Baltimore 4 judge who was really severe. Just talk some more about your trial and how that was. A lot of people came and it was much in the news how that went, what the prosecution was like, all that sort of thing.

GM: The guy who had been the prosecutor in the blood pouring action, so a guy by the name of Steve Sachs [Stephen H. Sachs (1934-)]. Steve Sachs was a political yuppie who had been a Rhodes Scholar and he really—he was Jewish—and he really was really aggressive during the blood pouring thing and we had heard—I had heard way back then—and he was the U.S. Attorney then, and later became the attorney general for the state of Maryland and then ran to be the governor as a Democrat and fortunately, he lost the primary to Martin Mandel [Marvin Mandel (1920-2015)], Governor Mandel. And he got so much flack from fellow Jews and I had heard way back then at the time at a fundraiser that he was at that fellow Jewish guys came up to him and got on his ass about, Why are you going so aggressively after these Catholics? If we’d have had more Catholics like them in Nazi Germany, we’d have had less people would have ended up in the ovens. And I knew that. I had heard that always.

So when it came around to our trial, he wasn’t willing to risk that again because he, you know, he was thinking about his political future so he took a black guy, Murphy, and made him the prosecutor and then, I can’t remember who was the guy—the guy who was the assistant prosecutor was a Democrat type guy who eventually later became the chief U.S. Attorney who brought charges against Mandel for corruption and that sent him to prison. He was a legitimate guy. In fact, at one point when the guys came down to bail us out, they were late with the check—he put up the check of seventeen hundred fifty bucks to bail us out and I had to reimburse him later.

PS: Your prosecutor did?

GM: Yeah, the guy was the assistant prosecutor at the time. And I told him I thought the guy was supposed with the check so he wrote the check. It was a great story. Well, what happened was at our trial we decided we were going to have nothing to do with the selection of the jury. We had Bill Kunstler [William Moses Kunstler (1919-1995)] as our attorney and Kunstler, you know, as our attorney.

PS: Oh, yeah, we want to include that.

GM: And interesting how we did Kunstler is one thing we had never talked about who you were going to have as attorneys. And while we’re in the lock-up for those eight days, you

00:40:00 know, doing the fest, here’s a story coming out of New Orleans [New Orleans, LA] where H.

Rap Brown [Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin, aka H. Rap Brown, (1943-)] was on trial for doing his

own nonviolent thing. He flew across state lines into Virginia or Maryland was it, Virginia or

Maryland with a gun, unloaded, as a symbolic thing to say that blacks are going to have to start defending themselves against the police in this country because the cops are killing Black Panthers and people off the street and the Latin Kings in Chicago, and the Young Lords in New York right off the street corners. So that was his way of doing it nonviolently. They arrested him.

And at the trial in Louisiana, Kunstler is representing him—that’s how Rap and I became friends that I had Kunstler get us together. Here’s the story. Kunstler tells this white judge that he had to disqualify himself on the basis of that he’s a white racist—well, the fucking judge went nuts (laughter) and ended up giving Rap five years and a fifteen thousand dollar fine, whatever like that. So, when it came to—and I yell out to Melville—I say, “Tom, here’s who we’ve got to get for our defense attorney, Kunstler”—because we haven’t talked about that yet.

So when we get out, Dan had a different idea. Dan was close to Benjamin Spock [Benjamin McLane Spock (1903-1998)] and William Sloane Spock [William Sloane Coffin Jr. (1924-2006)] and all those guys who went on trial way back then and they raised—and I remember at the time they spent one hundred eighty thousand dollars, which today’s day would have been fifty million dollars probably. And they didn’t go in to say, Yeah, we told young people to burn their cards. They went out on technicalities to get out and I thought, You assholes. That’s how Spock and all those guys got out. Not because they said, Break the law and [unclear] so they got out. And Dan was friends with those guys. And Dan wanted to get Boudin [Leonard B. Boudin (1912-1989)] and what’s his name? Rabinowitz [Victor Rabinowitz (1911-2017)], who represented them to represent us.

And I, bullshit, I’m not going to do that because if we get off on those we have to go and do it all over again. So I go up with him because he wants to say something to Rabinowitz. We go into Rabinowitz’s office in New York and we sit down and Rabinowitz has got this big really fancy, you know, place that his desk is about four miles wide and he’s sitting there, not a thing on his desk, and he’s listening. And I let Dan do the talking and Dan’s telling him that we’d like to have him as an attorney, blah, blah, and they knew each other from the other trial.

So Rabinowitz is listening to the thing and by this time, of course, the *New York Times* had stories on us—he’s asking finally. His first question is, “How much money can you raise for the trial?” And I just listened and Dan is sitting there while he said, “Well, probably you guys need a retainer to get started, probably twenty-five thousand dollars.” And Rabinowitz said, “Okay that’s fine.” And with that, I swallowed that. “Dan, I’ll tell you what, you can keep talking if you want. If we can raise twenty-five thousand dollars, it wouldn’t be going to attorneys like this; it’d be going out twenty-five or fifty bucks a week for organizers to out and organize more stuff and not for lawyers’ defense of us.” And I said, “But you can talk to him,” and I left the office.

So I walk down the street three or four blocks to Kunstler’s office. So I go into Kunstler’s office and I told the receptionist—and he and his partner, Arthur Kinoy [Arthur Kinoy (1920-2003)], They were the two great people in the civil rights movement. I remember this thing of Kinoy being [unclear] anyhow, he was a cripple, being hoisted up by the shoulders of people when he refused to participate with the House Un-American [House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC, or House Committee on Un-American Activities, or HCUA)] activity and they dragged him out. He was a courageous little guy. And Kunstler—I tell the lady who I am and who I represent when I talk to Kunstler. So Kunstler comes out. I didn’t even have to go into the office. We’re standing in this big office and I’m telling him who I am—and he says, “Yeah, I read about it in the story in the *Times.* What are you thinking about?” And I said, “Well, we want a political trial.” You know, really say we didn’t make a mistake. We knew exactly what we were doing and hopefully this is galvanizing other people. He says, “So you want to go in and say your guilty and proud of guilty and all of that stuff?” And I said, “Yeah.” And he said, “Well, this is the first time I’ve ever had a potential client walk into my office, one to hire me on the basis of I’ve got my last client the maximum sentence and started to laugh (laughter) and I told him about Dan with the Rabinowitz thing and I walked out.

And I said, “I’d like you to come down to DC and meet with the people.” And he did. He came down and everybody really loved the hours, the afternoon we spent with him. So then I set up a luncheon up in New York for Dan and Kunstler and I to get together and when Dan

00:45:00 met Kunstler, you know, he was willing to go along with it. So that’s how Kunstler got into

the whole thing. So our strategy was we were going to let the government put us on trial and

do anything they wanted, that we were inclined to—we are not to participate in jury selection; we were not going to object to anything that they brought on the prosecution and so it was all in the judge’s hands. And one of the twelve people he approved as a [unclear] was a guy who was the head of the local—one of the local American Legion outfits was kept when he was in there. He didn’t think that was prejudicial and he put him on. And there was one black lady on it and they—and we told them we were not going to participate in the jury at all.

PS: By participating, you mean, not going to question the jurors or—

GM: Yeah, nothing.

PS: object to anyone or strike them because of them because of any reason just come what may, huh?

GM: Yeah. And Kunstler basically said, You bring in the first twelve people and seat them. It’s your show. You can have them. So they get the jury and, by the way, Steve Sachs never once appeared at the table but he stood in the back of the courtroom. He knew exactly what was going on all the time.

PS: He’d been the prosecutor in the blood pouring case.

GM: Right, and didn’t want to be poisoned the second time by his conduct. So we didn’t—

End of Recording 2

00:46:39

Beginning of Recording 3

00:00:00

PS: Back again after a coughing interlude here.

End of Recording 3

00:00.06

Beginning of Recording 4

00:00:00

PS: Okay, back again.

GM: Okay, so when it came to our position that we led off with Phil [Berrigan] and Tom Lewis [Thomas P. Lewis (1940-2008)] and, you know, they had been in jail now for about six or seven months without bail so they had been locked up—

PS: Because of Baltimore?

GM: Yeah, because of the blood pouring thing and I was able to bail them out two months after our trial. Anyway, so the two of them you could see were—Tom Lewis is not real articulate anyway. He was supposed to be the guy who got the people’s attention when we went in the draft board to tell them that we’re there for—he kept stammering and now I kind of said, “Tom, speak to them. Get it out.” So, anyway, they both were not very effective at all and, you know, to blame it on the fact that here they had been in the joint for a while and, you know, while all of us were free. And so at the break—I was supposed to be one of the last people—I said, “Hey, we’ve got to change this,” because every time they would talk, try to get into some rationale about the war or whatever, the black prosecutor would get up and object. And it was just—they could hardly speak for three minutes and bang! And it was really unnerving the two of them.

And the judge was not defending the defendants, he was, you know, backing the objection. And I told the—when we had a break at lunch—I said, “I’m going to go on next and I’m going to break up this routine. We’re not going to let this guy away with this crap that every time of us wants to talk they’re going to jump up and object and all that kind of stuff and break up the thing.” And so they agreed and then I looked at Dan and I said, “Do you have any problem with that?” And he didn’t have—I don’t think he wanted to discriminate at that point and he said, “Okay.” And I’m glad I did because soon as I started to talk—and I would talk to the jury, too, really and the judge sitting there. And so the first time he jumped up I said, “Wait a minute. Wait a minute. You pulled this routine on the last two guys. We didn’t do a thing when you presented your case.” And the judge really pissed off that I-- gaveled me down and I said, “Hey, look, you going to let this guy get away with this kind of stuff?” And I said, “I’ll be damned if I’m going to go to prison for ten years and playing this routine and not have the jury understand.” And he didn’t like that I even said that, you know. And he—really angry at me, you know, and [unclear] this. And I said, “Hey, look, this is the way it is.” And I said, “You let this guy do that routine and I’m not going to let it happen.”

And this was, of course, before what they did to Bobby Seale [Robert George Seale (1936-)], bound and gagged him. And Kunstler was—he got in that crowd, too. So he was really pissed off that I did that because he tried to do it two, three times even after that and I cut him off each time the judge and I said, “You can bang the gavel all the time; you can break it as far as I’m concerned. I’m going to keep talking.” And so finally, he gave up on it. And that really opened up the whole thing for everybody else to be able to speak. And when Dan was on—he was the last one on—and Dan really did well. And—

PS: Something procedural here. In this trial and in any trial, normally the prosecution presents its witnesses and information claims first and so what you’re talking about is when it’s your turn, the defense’s turn, each of you were on the stand as witnesses in your own behalf, right?

GM: Yes.

PS: And again, the first two were Tom Lewis and—?

GM: Phil Berrigan—

PS: Phil—

GM: who had been in jail for all these months.

PS: You had said Dan before but it was Phil.

GM: Yeah, it was Phil Berrigan and—

PS: Tom Lewis.

GM: Tom Lewis.

PS: Okay, yeah.

GM: And Dan Berrigan ended up going on the last and the whole dynamic changed once I took the judge on which really had made him angry at me the whole trial after that. So, you know, when—what was—some of the interesting dynamics was when we did Catonsville and I didn’t mention this before—Gandhi [Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948)] had a principle on all of his actions. He didn’t do a thing in silence and by yourself. Whenever he did his civil disobedience stuff, he not only had all the people who were going to participate in, but they had hundreds and hundreds of people who were there to witness it, too, and support the people who were doing it and they made sure that the press was there to be able to

00:05:00 document what was going on so they’d get the message out politically. And unfortunately, the

left wing in this country really didn’t use those tactics the way they should and I believed in it very strongly that that’s exactly what you’ve got to be able to do.

So when we did Catonsville, we had all of the local press. One of the guys who took those famous pictures, was a guy, Kris Farniocus, who had been a draft resister or conscientious objector during Korea when it wasn’t very popular in those days and there could be heavy duty penalties. But even though he was a CO, he went in and became part of the original M.A.S.H. unit and talked—and when—

PS: M.A.S.H, the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital?

GM: Right, that was the big TV program for years and that—he won all kinds of awards for people he carried off the battlefield and helped save their lives. And the—when PBS did—I don’t think it was Burns—it was before Burns’ era—PBS did a great thing on the whole Vietnam War thing. It was about a week long or two weeks series thing—and one of the things was the role of M.A.S.H. in the war and Kris Farniocus was the guy who did the voicing, the whole two-hour program. And Farniocus took all these pictures and he was up in Middlebury? Middlebury, New York? [actually Middletown, New York], which was up by the Army, U.S. Military Academy [The United States Military Academy Preparatory School, aka West Point Prep, West Point, NY]. He had been in demonstrations with Phil when they were up there. And the *Middletown New York Press* has the largest small—largest subscription of a small town newspaper. The Sunday *Middletown New York Press* was two hundred fifty thousand circulation—it was bigger than hell. And he was very accomplished, awarded journalist for them. And he took the pictures down at Catonsville.

PS: Was he still with that newspaper when you did that raid?

GM: Yes.

PS: You invited him down from New York.

GM: Because we trusted him, yeah, and the press people from locally they weren’t told what was going to happen except a significant antiwar demonstration was going to—or action was going to be taken and so we had two people who took all the press to that—they didn’t know where they were going—took them to the site of what was—Catonsville was going to happen and that’s why they were there to film the whole damn thing. Well, the local NBC affiliate, who was—what was his name? He’s in the movie. Pat McGrath [Patrick McGrath]. Pat was the NBC local guy at the time before he went national and he was there to record the whole thing and the next—it never hit the press that night or the next morning nationwide because the feds went into the local affiliate and said that if you do this we’ll prosecute you on conspiracy. Huntley and Brinkley [*The Huntley–Brinkley Report,* NBC News, starring Chester Robert "Chet" Huntley (1911-1974) and David McClure Brinkley (1920-2003)] themselves came from Washington and New York to get the local guy to release the film because they wanted—and he chickened out. He was afraid that they were—so nobody saw that film until the trial.

And in the trial, when the prosecution wanted to prove what dastardly guys we were they showed the actual whole film and, you know, the jury sits on the right, they show the film over on the left side and so they saw it. And when it got to the defense side, Kunstler wanted the whole thing to be shown, not just the small clip that they wanted and the judge had to let them show it and this time everybody in the courtroom who had been on the right side who saw the original one, got up and the whole courtroom switched. I’d never seen such spontaneous action—all the people went over to the right so they could see the whole film. So the whole film was shown for the first time nationwide, or first time anybody had seen it. And only then, later on, did it—so we made damn sure something like that didn’t happen with Milwaukee.

So when I put the Milwaukee thing together, we had heard—one of my friends, Nick Riddell [Nicholas J. Riddell (1930-2014)]—it was the priest [unclear]. He had a gal who was sleeping with

00:10:00 an FBI agent to find out what the FBI was hearing and he thought he was using her to let her

tell him what the antiwar movement was doing. She told Nick—

PS: She was a double agent, huh?

GM: So she came back to Nick and said, they know something big is coming down in Milwaukee. And so when they found that out I got a hold of some of my friends at Marquette [Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI] and said, “Hey, look, I’ve been taking over Sunday cathedrals on different Sundays in protests around the country,” and I said, “We need to do this in Milwaukee,” and I told the leader, Art Heitzer [now a Milwaukee lawyer] why. And so he gets all these students together and we take over the cathedral and they came in with the riot gear.

I’ve still got to get those pictures—there was about a six-page segment in I think it was *Look* magazine that has everything that happened in that cathedral that day—Nick Riddell being dragged out of the pulpit by the monsignor and telling the cops to get him and he’s with his black cassock pointing to get Nick. I mean, knocking people down and I’m walking up and down the church with our baby in my arms and said, “Hey, Friday night.” It was the first time, *Murder in the Cathedral* [*Murder in the Cathedral* by T.S. Eliot, 1935], whatever the hell that big movie was back then—and said you saw it all on television Friday night. Here it is, live, right before you.” And just the whole cathedral was breaking out. They were dragging out people by the hair, beating shit out of people and people are yelling.

After they dragged Nick out, Mike Cullen kneels down to lead in prayer here. We’re going to pray for peace and all that and right wing voice, “You going to pray for Red Russia?” It was a hell of a day’s experience what was happening. And—how did I get on this thing? Of all the different things that were happening in—well, Milwaukee was the second one. So by the time we got out of that cathedral the feds fortunately bought it—that that [the demonstration at the Cathedral] was the important thing that was coming down. And so two days later, on Tuesday, we went in and got the files.

PS: We’re still talking about Milwaukee?

GM: Milwaukee.

PS: Yeah.

GM: And its forty-five thousand files and the next day it was on *Good Morning America* [*Good Morning America* (GMA) ABC, 1975-present],. They showed the film which we weren’t able to do again.

PS: So the point of that is got the media there and it was all over the news instead of being bottled up.

GM: Right, and that was Gandhi. Gandhi’s the—and too much happened later on where they didn’t take into consideration—if we’re going to do a political civil disobedience thing, you’ve got to be able to have not only the people who are doing it there, but witnesses and the media because otherwise if you’re doing it in silence, you know, it makes no sense.

PS: Back to your trial. You said Dan was the last one to testify and that he was effective and I mean, you had sort of opened up the format of all this by not obeying the gavel—

GM: Not only Dan being effective; everybody was. Melville—when Melville got on I think I might have told you this before, three officers from the Pentagon show up to hear what Melville was testifying to about what—the Contra stuff down there. And he really effectively laid out what the U.S. government had been doing in silence down there in Central America with the planes that were coming in at night from McNair [Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, DC], you know, where they were at the time, coming out of Guatemala so they would fly them in.

And Mary Moylan was very affected by what she experienced in Africa and with the civil rights thing and John Hogan, such a gentle giant—I mean, every one of them was really great and they never would have had a chance at that unless—And I’ll tell you David Darst—he was so effective. David Darst at the time of the trial his father was a full colonel in the Pentagon and when Darst was on the stand, his dad shows up at the courtroom, full dress with all the medals, sitting down, listening to the testimony and when Darst got finished and got up from the stand, his father stood up and saluted his son. He said, “This is my son who I am very proud of.” And that blew people’s mind and the press when they saw this, you know, this guy doing this. So it was an effective thing and everybody had a chance.

Now when it came to the final summary this is where Dan the leprechaun entered and took over then. He said, “Your Honor, we think we’d like to have a prayer—we’ll finish this whole thing by saying the Lord’s Prayer and here’s the son of a Baptist minister. How is he going to say? He cops out and he now goes back to Steve Sachs, the prosecutor who was in the back of the courtroom. “Does the government have any difficulty?” And Sachs is walking up, thinking

00:15:00 about what his answer’s going to be—walks up to the rail and says, “Your Honor, the

government doesn’t have any objection to that.”

So here that starts, not only in prayer, but we had a talk back with the prosecutor. That’s when, you know, I went after him again, went after the prosecutor after the judge about how we are conducting the trial. And that went on—I’m not sure, a couple hours. I mean, it was really stunning and he had never had a courtroom like that happen to him.

PS: Or anyone it sounds like.

GM: And that’s what it—the black guy came up to me—the marshal—

PS: The marshal, huh?

GM: The marshal came up to me. He says, “George,” because, and by the way, they anticipated when the jury was going to come in with, you know, the jury was out an hour and a half to have lunch and that and somebody said, “George, that prosecutor or that juror on the right.” And I said, “Don’t worry about it. That’s going to—they’re going to be out for half an hour and they’re going to be back in and we’re convicted.” “Oh no.” “Yeah, absolutely.” And that’s exactly what—so when the jury was going to come in and announce, the government was paranoia—got the marshals to come in, side of the railing facing the audience, figuring, you know, violence.

PS: A phalanx.

GM: Yeah, and they came in and announced the conviction and Art Melville, I think it was, voice rings out, “You just convicted Jesus Christ.” And holy shit, you talk about a heavy moment in that courtroom of that happening and when it’s all over and I remember him and the judge making some remark about, “Mr. Mische, your viewpoints are not doing your cause credit.” And I said, “Well, that’s probably what they said in Nazi Germany, too.” You know, well, that’s when it breaks up and there’s no violence and all that kind of stuff. Then the light-skinned black guy [marshal] comes up to me and says, “George, I’m in—

PS: And he’s a marshal.

GM: Yeah, and the marshal said, “I’ve been doing all these, you know, I’ve been a marshal for years and I was in all the courtroom things that Martin [Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968)] —” He said, “We’ve heard all the things that Martin Luther King did, and I’ve never seen anybody in charge of the courtroom like what you did here, you people did here.” And, you know, where it was interesting—at the DC 9 trial, maybe within a year after—

PS: This was over Dow Chemical [Dow Chemical Company, Midland, MI].

GM: Dow Chemical. At the trial, that was a unique goddam trial, too, and what happened in that courtroom—but they busted—they arrested about fifteen, twenty people who were demonstrating and had them down in booking them in the city jail. And the marshal [unclear] saw me there, came over—I remember it well. He says, “George, you know, they have fifteen or twenty of your people down there. Would you be willing to sign that you take responsibility?” I said, “Sure.” So he takes me down there and the city guys didn’t know what the hell to say, said that, “I [the marshal] want you to give custody to—of all these people—to George.” So I had to sign it and all those people got out. So that was the effect. In other cases, you never know how the people—how you reach them. That he remembered our—what we did in our trial and now he’s going to help out in his way for the DC 9 people get the hell out of jail.

PS: Things come around in surprising ways.

GM: Absolutely. And it’s always enjoyable when you run into these heavy—I thought, Wow, fantastic.

PS: It happens more often than people might guess.

GM: Absolutely, absolutely.

PS: To get back to your trial a little bit. So you weren’t presenting evidence in the sense of, We didn’t do it or the charges are mistaken in some way or something like that? You each took the stand to explain what the surrounding world situation was that led you to do what you were not pleading—well, you must have not pled not guilty but you weren’t disputing that you did this raid. All the testimony was about why you did it or that you tried to do at this point.

GM: And that the war was illegal.

PS: That the Congress never okayed Vietnam and we said that we did this to challenge the civic court system on the illegality of this war and never did refute it. Any evidence said, Yeah, we did it. We’re damn proud of it. In fact, I think I even said that if we got off for the wrong reason we’d have to go out and do it again. (laughter) But we’re going to be sure—the black woman was really with us heart and soul but, you know, you’re a lone black person in a bunch of white people, especially during that era, and on the war, you know, and, you know, I don’t have any complaint about that. That’s the reality of the times.

PS: Well, it’s hard to disobey the judge’s instructions, too, I mean that’s—they have a lot of control over what the jury can discuss—

00:20:00 GM: And where they charge the jury. It terrifies anybody—they’re going to take on a judge

and they’ve been getting away with that shit for years, you know. That’s why thank god for the guy [judge] in the Camden didn’t use that approach.

PS: Yeah, how unique that was in that way, too. So anyway, you were all convicted in fairly short order and then, were you all sentenced equally?

GM: No, when the sentencing came about, it was—we had to meet with one of their probation officers for an hour.

PS: Right, this pre-sentence investigation, right?

GM: Yeah.

PS: Yeah, I did that, too.

GM: And we met with those guys and they came back and they established who they felt were the leaders and obviously, Phil and Tom got a little bit more since it was their second offense so they got three and one-half years and then Dan, myself, and maybe Melville, got three-year sentences and then Hogan, Moylan and Darst got two. Am I forgetting somebody? It was two to three and a half years. The people who were leaders in their mind got the three years and the three and a half years because it was their second. Who are those? Hogan, Margie [Melville]—oh, yeah, the two women and Hogan and Darst got the two years, yeah.

PS: Okay, so and anyway, remind me. Were you out on appeal for some time after the sentencing?

GM: The sentencing I believe I remember it was in November of ’68 and we got the notification in April, early April, of ’70, that the Supreme Court would not hear the case.

PS: Okay, so it had gone through to the appellate—

GM: To the appellate and then to the Supreme Court. And I think the word was that we found out three judges were willing to hear but we couldn’t get—you need four—and we couldn’t get the fourth one. I told you, Potter’s [Potter Stewart (1915-1985)] vote was one we were sure we were going to get because not only was he an Eisenhower [U.S. President Dwight David "Ike" Eisenhower (1890-1969)] appointee but the fact that his wife was appearing in all the antiwar demonstrations around Washington, DC openly and it was the press a number of times had said that the wife of one of the Supreme Court justices was actively involved in the antiwar movement. So we thought we had him in the bag.

PS: Do you remember who the three were who did agree to let you be heard?

GM: No, offhand, I’d have to look to see if I have that in the records or up there or not.

PS: Not offhand though.

GM: Yeah, no. Potter Stewart was the only one I knew for sure who—how he voted, yeah.

PS: So was early 1970 when—or middle 1970—when the Supreme Court said they wouldn’t hear your case?

GM: No, I think it was April, early April, because we were supposed to turn ourselves in I think by April 24 or something like that.

PS: Nineteen seventy?

GM: Yes.

PS: So, a year and a half later in round numbers or almost two years later.

GM: Or two years from the day of the action, yeah.

PS: Yeah, yeah, okay. So at that point, this is where things get interesting again. Did some of you turn yourselves in then on the appointed day or within a day or two?

GM: Well—

PS: I mean, I know some of you did not. That’s a whole different story but did some of you go in pretty much as into custody.

GM: Four, let’s see. Four did. Melville did—because Melvilles were allowed to stay out long enough—they were working on their master’s degree at the time in the DC area and Hogan and Lewis turned themselves in on time. And so that would have been whatever the date was—April 24. I can’t remember if Melvilles got an extra week just to finish school and that but those four agreed to turn themselves in. And five of us did not.

PS: Okay, so each of you five were underground, continuing to travel around and do organizing and for various lengths of time?

GM: Well, three of us were because Phil naively believed—and that was at the meeting we had up in [Newton] New Jersey when I told them that Mary already is underground and I was there to

00:25:00 tell him that we were not going to show—Helene and I were not showing ourselves; neither

was Mary. And Phil and Elizabeth McAlister [Elizabeth "Liz" McAlister (1939-)] objected to what our plans were and that we had an open confrontation about that and Dan had no problem—he wasn’t sure what he was going to do and that the students up at Ithaca [Ithaca, NY] did not want him to turn himself in and said they would protect him at this big rally.

PS: So they—at Cornell [Cornell University Ithaca, NY]?

GM: At Cornell University on the Friday night. And I warned Phil that if you think that—you’ve got to be really naïve if you believe that here—they’re going to agree with the pastor who had got the two FBI agents who were in his parish to agree that they would let Phil and David Eberhardt [David Eberhardt], who was one of the blood pouring guys to turn themselves in one day late was so they could make this statement at the rally outside of the church where [unclear] was. It was the same place where Joe O’Rourke [Joseph F. O'Rourke (1938- 2008)] read my statement of why we were not going to turn ourselves in. And I said to Phil, “If you really believe you must be smoking some ganja if you believe that after Mary Moylan and I do not show up, and if Dan here decides not to show up, and he’s going to go along with the students on Friday night, that they’re then going to allow you to make a statement public on Saturday that—they’re not going to allow themselves to be made fools of that here, all of a sudden, if you do that and they do the same thing that the students are going to do on Friday night, for Dan, to have him escape. They’re not going to look like fools of you rubbing it in their nose the next day. That you will never get a chance.” “Oh, no,” they really have our places.” I said, “I don’t know where you’re coming from, where your mind is at.”

And, sure enough, the feds didn’t wait. They knew they were supposed to be at that parish house and they went in early to grab them and couldn’t find them at first and then in the closet, you know, they had a priest hole in the closet, and here they’re almost ready to leave the closet and then they knocked on the walls and here in *Time* magazine, Father Berrigan, Father Berrigan, are you in there? Come out. Come out. And I read that I was embarrassed. I said, “Here’s this guy [Phil Berrigan] who wants to come across as this hard-nosed revolutionary and he’s hiding in the damn closet.” It was—it just showed where their brains were not at. So they never got a chance; they got arrested, not willingly.

PS: So they—for practical purposes, they weren’t underground really at all?

GM: No. And—

PS: They just didn’t submit themselves routinely.

GM: Right, and I told Eberhardt at the time—when he used to tell people he was underground—I said, “C’mon, get the hell out of here. You had no intention of being underground. You were going to turn yourselves in and the feds outfoxed you. You should have been embarrassed getting caught like that.” At least, you know, I’m lucky I was alive. I didn’t get shot but it wasn’t because I was hiding in the closet.

PS: So you were underground for—

GM: A month.

PS: A month and Dan was—

GM: Six months.

PS: so much longer.

GM: The champion was Moylan. Ten years she was underground and they couldn’t find her and they were looking. And here I’m driving—by this time we were back in Minnesota—and I’m driving from Minneapolis to St. Cloud at three o’clock. When I’m in the car, every hour on the hour I have it on the news of CBS or NBC news and here on CBS news at three o’clock is that—the lead story is that Mary Moylan, one of the Catonsville 9, was underground for ten years, turned herself in in Baltimore, Maryland. And I got home and I said, “Helene, oh my god, Mary just turned herself in.”

And I’m pretty good at pulling stunts like this so I get on the phone and start calling out there. Never said I was an attorney but made it sound like I was—and they bounced me around to three different phone extensions and then Mary answers the phone finally because I told them I wanted to talk to Mary Moylan. Mary answered the phone and I said, “Hey, you finally turned yourself—” “George, how the hell did you pull this off.” I said, “Oh, Mary,” thoroughly enjoyed it. We talked; we laughed like hell. So she still had to go and do eighteen months of her two-year sentence so they sent her. But she’s the champion. And part of the whole problem with that—the syndrome of the Berrigan brothers—is here’s a woman outlasts everybody for ten years and probably still could have been doing it, you know, if she would not have turned herself—and never was—she wasn’t hiding. She was moving around all the

00:30:00 time talking to people for ten years until finally she decided to turn herself in and the press

didn’t pick up anything on her except that thing at noon on the radio.

PS: Because it was stale news by then.

GM: Yeah, and it was unimportant. She was unimportant, you know, in their minds.

PS: Not a celebrity.

GM: That’s right. That’s the unfortunate part of what—so when I hear this stuff about fake news I don’t know if it’s fake news but, you know, one thing about the Occupy movement was good was that what the media does do—anytime there’s a movement, they want to know who the leader is. But then they focus and the leader comes and Melville’s understood that and the Occupy movement was—and the Black Lives Matter, the same thing—there is no one leader. No, it’s a ‘we’ situation—it’s a movement. They never allowed themselves—they learned and I admire that with the outcome that came from Greenwich Village [Greenwich Village, New York City, NY] when they started. They didn’t let the press determine there was a leader of any one group and so they couldn’t do the stuff that they normally have done, create leaders or false leaders, people who weren’t really the leaders, so they could focus in on them personally and make them the issue.

PS: That’s a personality cult kind of thing.

GM: That’s right, absolutely. And that’s the unfortunate part of it. That’s why I didn’t want another Catonsville movie, because of that mentality. I told Joe. There’s been enough of that.

PS: Joe?

GM: Joe Tropea.

PS: Oh.

GM: I told Joe that there’s been too much focusing in on, created on individuals and not enough about all the people who were involved. There’s been too much done on this and I believe that for—Mary Moylan and I were against Dan writing the book. He wanted to write it and I said, “Dan, we don’t need the damn book.” I said, “The problem is you write that, people are going to come along and they’re going to distort the whole thing about the movement. They’ll decide what’s going to happen and that’s what exactly happened then.

And the problem with Dan and Phil, both were—they never saw a headline they didn’t like, you know, and that’s the unfortunately part of it, that never once did I—all the years we’ve been friends—you know, all of our kids are named after them. Our daughter is Danielle, after Dan Berrigan; our second is Phil Rap, after Phil Berrigan and Rap Brown; Chris—Christopher Moylan, after Kris Farniocus, the guy who took the pictures who was, you know, [unclear]; and Mary Moylan and then, Peter is Peter Melville, after Peter Fordi ,the ex-Jesuit from Camden and the Melvilles, all the Melvilles. So when the fifth one came along, that’s why unfortunately, Doris, unfortunately doesn’t have any—that we—Helene thought it would be nice to have our youngest, a girl, named after the two grandmothers. I’m sure they’ve forgiven us up there that we didn’t name our fifth kid after them.

But, Dan and Phil, and never once—and I’ve told them this to their face—Phil and Melville did, too. Went up to see Phil on his dying death bed and said that how proud we all were that we acted together but let Phil know he totally disagreed what he and Liz have done with the Plowshare Movement and all the personality cult and that he does not agree with what they did. It was a problem, you know. And I used to tell people, if I ever saw them once through the years ever say, It wasn’t just us; it was all these other people that gave—never once. They were willing to accept the hero and what do you call it—the prophet stuff—and that’s—if you see the second movie on Catonsville, oh, man, they’re both quoting the prophets because they’re sure that that’s the role that they see themselves as and, you know, the sibling rivalry between the three youngest Berrigan’s and then the older three who did not agree with what they did, you know. Phil and Dan and Jerry are three of a kind. You know, I’m glad—I mean, I had more invested; I deal with them; I have personally I thought the world of them, you know, when you get to social change processs, you’ve got to learn not to take yourself too seriously, you know. That’s the real danger in movements, you know.

PS: Yeah, it’s not about you.

GM: Yeah, yeah.

PS: What—you said Dan wrote a book. He wrote lots of books. What was the book you were talking about?

GM: Probably *The Trial of the Catonsville 9* [*The Trial of the Catonsville Nine*

by Robin Andersen, Daniel Berrigan, James Marsh, Houghton Mifflin, 1970]. He wrote the original thing, the trial at Catonsville, that prompted the Catonsville 9.

PS: Okay.

GM: And we told him, Mary and I told him right out, Don’t do it. It’s going to take—get distorted into who we were and what we were about. And one of the problems with Dan is this

00:35:00 to his ego is—the statement I showed you—how we had that statement was I started a rough

draft; I pass it around to every one of the people and said, “Additions, subtractions—this

statement’s got to be represent all of our thinking.” And that’s what it came out to be. And Dan, you know, got bullied into being into the action in the last week—Phil bullied him and I was along on that trip and I blew it. And—

PS: So he was initially disinclined?

GM: Oh, no, here’s what happened. He [Dan Berrigan] wasn’t at the meeting.

PS: That final meeting?

GM: He wasn’t at the original one—[at the Mische’s house in Washington, DC, 3-31-68]

PS: Neither of them.

GM: No, well, he came to the second one when he found that I was doing the retreat. He risked getting arrested and came down from Cornell to [Newton] New Jersey. By this time, he thought, What the hell. I’ve been out there doing this kind of stuff. He would, too. But what happened was after that meeting in our house when it was on, here Mel—see, and that’s why I say they weren’t always forthcoming, those two guys. And Phil calls me and says, Hey—he wants me to come over. They want to go up to Cornell? That Dan is getting a bunch of people together and, you know, it says to tell people what we’re about to do. And I was intrigued by going up for this reason—that he was going to go to Syracuse [Syracuse, NY] first. And while they were—while most of the kids were born and raised here in Minnesota originally before they moved back east, because they were, you know, up in the, what do you call it? Virginia area—

PS: The Iron Range.

GM: Yeah. That’s where the family started and then went to Syracuse and his dad was kind of like the fix-it, handyman guy in the parish in Syracuse and they had six kids. In exchange for him keeping the church and the property—they got free rent and they raised the kids there. And all I ever heard about them was, about the dad was, they never referred to the dad as Dad. He was always that old bastard. He was the old bastard. And the mother was the Blessed Virgin Mary. You know, she could do no wrong and I was intrigued.

So I went up and we get up to Syracuse and the brothers—Jerry are two of the three of them. And they introduce me to the dad and mom and whatnot and he had bib overalls on, you know, not a center of attention type guy. And all of a sudden I kind of notice he wasn’t there anymore and I kind of looked out and here he was out in the backyard sitting at the picnic bench. So I wanted to get an idea for myself so I went out and sat down and we talked for about two hours. And I was really impressed with the guy. Obviously, you can’t make up your mind on somebody accurately on meeting him once but everything I had heard about him from the brothers was negative—he knew everything that was going on in the world. He had been involved in labor stuff and [unclear] had gone through strikes himself.

And I’ve pretty good peripheral vision which always came into advantage playing basketball and I could glance and tell that the three brothers were looking through the window all the time while I was out there with him. Never asked later on what went on but I had a whole new idea about who Tom Berrigan [Thomas William Berrigan] was all about. And I liked the guy. And Freida [Freida Fromhart Berrigan] was something else. Well, years later when they wrote their autobiographies—and Dan has written—well, I don’t know what—the latest count was fifty-one books. And it’s really a clan, I’ll tell you. And the—where was I going with this?—so anyway—the next day we go down to Cornell. And there’s about twenty [unclear] where I met Eqbal Ahmad [Eqbal Ahmad (1933-1999)] for the first time—who had gotten indicted at Harrisburg.

And I can’t remember who was the great economist who died a couple years ago. He was a really sharp guy at Cornell—but they were all there and we didn’t tell them what the specific action we were going to do—but talked about where we were going with everything and finally, after two, three hours, go [unclear]; go to bed and we get in the car in the morning to drive back and a lot of people at that time were driving Volvos from a friend of mine who had a Volvo dealership in New Jersey and he’d give a free car because he was politically on the

00:40:00 same page as all of us. They were driving his cars. The feds one time went at him, doing a

good guy/bad guy and they wanted to know why all these radicals were driving around in his cars and Paul [Paul Korzinski] said, “Well, because they trust an honest business guy and got a good vehicle.” The cops didn’t know what the hell to say to that one—and some would be intimidated, you know.

So we’re driving back. Phil is driving his Volvo; I’m sitting in the passenger seat—Tom [Tom Lewis], I knew something was—Tom was sitting in the middle but forward, so this is a conversation. And then Phil says, “Well, he’s in.” And I never made it easy ever on the two brothers about letting them just talk when something’s like that and I said, “Who’s in what?” And he said, “Oh, Dan’s in on the action,” and then he said, “We sat up all night long,” which they both did in the past—they liked to have a drink or two. And they killed a bottle of scotch and he said, “I had to get—” They’d tell the little bastard, “What are you doing that’s so important in your life you can’t do this?” And then I thought about it later and I thought by this time Phil had got—or Dan had got over and done with the worker priest thing; had been to get the patients or the pilots back and who by this time had been kicked out of the country, too, because of speaking out against Spellman. And the Jesuits with that power and influence kicked him down to South America until Joe [unclear] and myself—we organized a full page ad in the *New York Times*, demanding that he be brought back and which got Dan back in the country because he had been exiled. He could have spent the rest of his life in South America because the Jesuits weren’t going to [unclear] at all.

PS: He was exiled by the Order.

GM: Yes.

PS: Not by some political entity here.

GM: No, the Order, the bishop. Spellman and the New York Diocese were the two powerful dioceses in the country, always were Boston and New York because of the money. All of the Catholics who raised money and supported the Vatican the cargo there, from playing into the Vatican—they wanted him out—and Pedro Arrupe [Pedro Arrupe SJ (1907-1991)] was relatively new international president of the Jesuits. He was actually a pretty good guy. But they put enough heat on him to get Dan out of the country - hear that Arrupe told [unclear] to kick him out. So they sent him out to Jesuit Missions. That was his official. His mission was supposed to be going to Latin America and write articles for the Jesuit Missions magazine [*Mission*, by the Jesuits West Advancement Office, Los Gatos, CA]. So we were able to get him back in the country because we demanded he come—went after the Diocese and to his credit, he would not agree to keep his mouth shut because they had tried to get him to agree to that and put it on him, but he wouldn’t agree to that. So they bring him back.

So, anyway, here, when he’s saying, what he’s telling his brother, You little bastard. What are you doing that’s so goddamn important with your life? And he said all night long he sat up and finally he agreed to it. And I told Tom Lewis years later, “I really fucked up in there. I let friendship get in the way of judgment and I should have told them exactly what Tom Melville had said originally earlier, ‘We don’t want no brother act.’ And that it’ll—that will become the issue. And I should have told them—” And I told Tom this, “I should have told them, ‘No, if you’re in, Phil, he’s out. If he’s in, you’re out.’ ” And I didn’t and it was a mistake on my part. I should have said, “Either that or the action’s off.” But, you know, it was so much—and this is only a week before.

So we’ve got two—no, it’s the night before, two nights before, we’re getting ready to do it and we’re mixing [unclear] at Bill O’Connor’s [William W. O'Connor (1923-2006)] house and Lewis and what’s his name—Dean Pappas [Dean Pappas (1939-2017)], are downstairs in the basement making homemade napalm. And we were—Dan’s down and we’re giving the press statement. He didn’t like it and he wanted to change it and Phil started to laugh at him and said, “Hey, man, everybody agreed to this.” Well, he didn’t like it and unbeknownst to him, Dan writes his own press statement and released it to the press. And, of course, Dan was well-known at the time because he had won all these prizes for the poetry that he had written and all that kind of stuff and, you know, and he was catchy with his phrases and whatnot. So it was basically his statement, which is all Vietnam and what the hell’s the famous thing about ‘Excuse us for—”

PS: The fracture of good order?

GM: Yeah, right.

PS: This is very compelling; it’s great reading.

GM: Oh yeah, and the press picked up on it so they pressed his statement and our statement

00:45:00 never got to the news. They just ignored it. So I felt bad for the Melville’s because that’s how

we got—kind of became a single issue thing of Vietnam when the statement was far beyond that—it was Latin America, Africa, poverty in this country, racism and it didn’t come across as a multi—it came across only as antiwar. So here, years later, when I’m—I got both their autobiographies over there—the whole beginning of each one says—refers to the old bastard, their father, saying that he—the mother married beneath her dignity to marry the father. And I thought, Why would—if you really believe that, why would you feel that that’s important to put in the press? That you have contempt for your dad who had a hell of a job during that period, raising six kids, six boys, with no college education or anything like that man. But, you know, the three older brothers did not agree at all, but the younger brothers—one of them just died a couple years ago but he still was living up in, not Eveleth [Eveleth, MN], somewhere on the Range, I can’t remember. He never left. One of the others was down in the Southwest and he died down there.

So anyway, that’s the unfortunate that Dan and Phil, and there was a lot of sibling rivalry between the two.

PS: I never knew, just like the public never knew, that this Catonsville raid wasn’t essentially organized by the two of them. It always seemed like it was their event and—because they were the names that always were attached to it. I never knew, never would have supposed or guessed, your continuing role in getting all that going beforehand because everyone else, except for their underground-ness, was—sort of fell by the wayside. And, of course, it was Dan’s being underground that was in the news so much because he was such a great public figure—

GM: Oh, yeah.

PS: that way in all those ways and the drama of the disappearance at Cornell and all that, perfect theater. And it became theatrical more than—well, more than you had all intended in that kind of way, right?

GM: Where the story started to come out was—it was funny. At the twenty-fifth anniversary of Catonsville, they did a thing at Goucher College [Goucher College, Baltimore, MD] and I went out for it. And—

PS: At what college?

GM: Goucher. Goucher College is a very well-known place in Baltimore. It deals also with the deaf—it’s a prominent college and I’ve been there. And they had this new theater in the round thing. It was quite something. So they do it there as Friday, Saturday and Sunday were three days of events. And I drove out and here I get out there on Friday night and it was, you know, early evening, but here they’re having this outdoor cookout outside with a tent up and whatnot. And I don’t recognize anybody and I’m looking and thinking, Where the hell are the rest of them? And here, all of a sudden, out of the kitchen area, walks Elizabeth McAlister with some food and she’s very distant. You know, I knew her before Phil knew her.

And I said to her, “Where is everybody?” And she was almost like distant and rude. And I don’t know and I say, “C’mon.” “Well, they may be over at Brendan Walsh’s, the Catholic Worker place.” So I left. And I said, I didn’t know anybody there and I felt uncomfortable. So I get over and here everybody’s over at Brendan Walsh’s place, the Catholic Worker house, so I walked in and they all mocked me and laughed when they found out I went over there. And I said, “Well, I didn’t know. I got to thinking. I figured you guys would be over there.” Oh, no. Those are all Phil and Liz’s people because they were promoting the Plowshare shit. And all of a sudden, I said, “Hey,” I said, “you know, one thing when I was over trying to find out where you were, you know, Liz came out and she was really kind of cold or rude and I’m trying to find out where you were.” And they all started to laugh. And I said, “What’s that about?” And they said, What appeared in the paper this morning.

And I didn’t know what it was and they showed me the paper and in the paper that talks about the Catonsville 9 twenty-fifth anniversary, and everybody’s coming in for that, it said, in a way—I forget how they phrased it, but it basically said, Contrary to what people thought in the past that the real leader who organized Catonsville 9 was George Mische. And I read that and I thought, Oh, Jesus, that, you know, and—

00:50:00 PS: Hit the fan right there, huh?

GM: And I said, “Who the hell came up with that? How did they get a hold of that?” And everybody started to laugh and looked at Tom Melville and said, Tom Melville told the press that in advance, and I said, “Tom, you didn’t mean that.” He said, “Hey, I am tired of all the bullshit lies about they come out for twenty-five years. I figured it was about time that the real story came out.” And I said, “Tom, it never bothered me because as long as they thought those two guys were so crucial, I was able to go around the country quietly and organize and pulling this shit off. And if I’d been the guy who’d been fingered I would have not been able to do that.”

One time in Milwaukee, the press found out that the *Milwaukee Journal* that wrote the article, that I was coming in to speak right about that time and the cops said, If he appears, because I was traveling without permission, they said, If he appears in the city we’ll arrest him. And so we go down—over to Marquette—and it was after we had bailed the Milwaukee 14 out and go over to where the rally is supposed to be and we were locked out of their auditorium. And I looked across the street, across Wisconsin Avenue, and here’s the Marquette Chapel [St. Joan of Arc Chapel, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI], all lit up. Why not just go over there? So all the resisters took all their equipment, set up over there, and who was the guy’s name yet who said, *Are You Running with Me, Jesus?* [*Are You Running with Me, Jesus?* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965/40th anniversary edition, 2005)] He was from up at Yale University [Yale University, New Haven, CT], a Protestant minister. Oh, famous at the time. [Malcolm Boyd (Jun1923-2015). And he and I are to talk. And he’s talking about free love and sex and Jesus. Everybody on campus was on the free love and didn’t have to be told by him it’s okay.

PS: [Unclear] the population.

GM: Yeah. And so here, all of a sudden, you could see the cops are arriving on the other side; had riot gear on and the students had been prepared for that. And when they got over the students stopped the cops from getting at me. They got me out from the back behind the church where they had a car parked with the guy from Yale—what the hell was his name? I can see him. And we get in the car; they drive about six blocks away, change cars—got us in another car and drove us to O’Hare Airport in Chicago. And the guy from Yale is speechless. And I turn around and I always say, “Welcome to the revolution.” And he didn’t know what to say because what an evening that was, you know. But the whole phenomena of what was going on after—I lost my trend where I was going with that. Was the reason I took that—sorry.

PS: It was that talk about the twenty-five—

GM: Yeah, the twenty-fifth anniversary, yeah. You know, of—Melville feeling it had to be said to get the damn story out once and for all. And here I found out that night—I was really mad—Mary Moylan was not there. I said, “Where’s Mary?” They said, She wasn’t invited. “Mary wasn’t?” No, she didn’t know anything about it. And I said, “What?” I said, “I wouldn’t be here if I knew that.” And so the next day we go over to Goucher and we got there a little early and I get—up on the top when you come in is a table where brochures and all that kind of stuff. And there’s one picture on the wall. It’s that clipping from *Time* magazine where Dan and Phil are burning the files but the seven of us—everybody else is cropped off—just the two of them and it’s from ceiling to the floor and all the stuff on the literature was Plowshares—nothing about Catonsville and all that kind of stuff. So it was very clear this whole thing was organized by Phil to promote what they were into. Which none of us in any other actions ever supported—Plowshares. So don’t tie that in with us. You know, they’ve been trying to live off the damn thing.

And so here Garry Wills [Garry Wills (1934-] is up on top and also Dick Cusack [Richard John "Dick" Cusack (1925-2003)]. Cusack’s father Cusack—and he was a playwright himself and they lived—and I stayed with them for a couple nights in Evanston [Evanston, IL] when John Cusack was a young kid, you know, before they went to Hollywood fame themselves. And Dick Cusack and Phil Berrigan and another guy by the name of George McVeigh [George McVeigh] were classmates at Holy Cross University and College [College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Massachusetts], and friends so Dick came out for the twenty-fifth anniversary. And Garry Wills, who tracked everything from Catonsville on to the present time—so in books and whatnot and he’s there. And he had written in *Nixon Agonistes* [*Nixon Agonistes: The Crisis of the Self-Made Man*, Houghton Mifflin, 1970].

00:55:00 PS: *Nixon Agonistes*, an account of Nixon’s finish so to speak.

GM: Right, and he had a whole chapter on Catonsville and the effect of the antiwar movement. And had the thing in there about where I got up and told Mike Donner [later part of the Beaver 55 raid on Dow Chemical offices in 1969] and Freddy Ojile [Fred J. Ojile], we want no rumble with the Wallace people [George Corley Wallace Jr. (August 25, 1919—September 13, 1998)] down here during the [Milwaukee 14] trial, staying out there. And Garry had mentioned about me getting up and telling the people, “We don’t want you in the streets with that and you’ll have to walk over us.” And then Dan got up and supported it, too. And Garry wrote a lot of good stuff. He—for the *Nation* down in Atlanta [Atlanta, GA] he wrote one time after Camden, that Catonsville created the myth of the Berrigans; Camden destroyed the myth of the Berrigans. And it’s very effective. And Garry was there for that and when I saw what was the game plan up there on the wall, I said to Garry, I said, “You know, I think I’m going to say a few things here that are going to piss a few people off.” And he said, “George, I’ve always felt whatever should be said, should be said, and not held back.”

So I started out by saying that, number one, I found out here today that Mary Moylan was not invited to this thing. Had I known this, I would not have driven out last night from Minnesota to be here because without Mary, there’d have been no Catonsville 9. And I knew why she wasn’t invited because Mary Moylan was not afraid to tell you you’re full of crap if you were her best friend. And she used to do that with the Berrigans all the time and neither one of them ever liked anybody taking them on, first thing. I mean, it rubbed them wrong always. And Mary had, after ten years, you know, underground, she’d left Baltimore because when she got back she found out she was pretty well shut out from the Baltimore community because of [unclear]. So she left Baltimore.

And here I’ll tell you how I found out this. So I said, “I wouldn’t be here if I knew Mary wasn’t coming. So if any of you people know where Mary might be at this one, at the luncheon I’d appreciate it if you’d let me know.” So then I got up and said that the only reason that there was any relevance at all here today about Catonsville it was because of all the actions that went in. And I told them about Milwaukee 14, how many people, how many draft files, forty-five thousand here. And went down the road until I said, Then finally the thing that proved this all relevant was Camden. When years later that they were ready to come in with an acquittal, which really is what the Catonsville, or the Catholic Love—their term, not ours, why it was relevant because from finish to end, the complete picture of everybody involved.

Now Phil never liked that and after his speech, he left and went to—he was upset that I put it that way. So at the break—Kunstler comes to me and says, “I didn’t know they were trying to find Mary Moylan. I was at a fundraiser with Paul Mayer up in New York last week and Paul Mayer walked in with Val Green and Mary Moylan. Paul would know where she is.” So I called Paul and by that time I had been convinced by the Milwaukee—

PS: I don’t know who that is. Paul?

GM: Paul Mayer. He’s the Benedictine—

PS: Oh, yeah, you did mention him.

GM: Well, he was the ex-Benedictine guy, twenty-five years, and was in one of the actions himself, he and his wife. And I called Paul and I said, “Where’s Mary?” And he told me where she was reachable down in Val Green’s parents’ place out in Red Bank, New Jersey. So I called her and said, “Mary, the Camden people are having a reunion next week and when I found out you weren’t at the Catonsville today, I would have come out. How about I pick you up and we go to the Camden reunion?” She says, “Okay.” So I drove over to pick her up and the house is on a kind of an embankment and I was parked just below and I got out of the car and she’s on the porch looking out and I realized all of a sudden she can’t see me. And I said, “Mary.” And she said, “George, is that you?” And I said, “Yeah.” So I went up and here by this time she’s almost blind and Val Green had worked with the State of New York, got her on some assistance relief up there. She’d have to get on the train once a month to go up to New York to get a relief check.

So I picked her up, went down to the reunion in Camden and we’re sitting and boy, the turnout was phenomenal at Camden compared to—there were a whole bunch of us from other actions. That was a great weekend. And we’re sitting on this grass, this beautiful sunny day, having a beer and she says, “George, really, thanks for finding me. I haven’t had a fun time like this in ten, fifteen years.” So we drove her back then after the weekend and dropped her off and we continued. By this time, Eddie McGowan was with us who was one of the ex-Jesuits who was part of Camden; Peter Fordi, and Joe O’Rourke—all these guys

01:00:00 – we’re all together and we drop her off and decide to stop at the Hoboken Clam House [Clam

Broth House, 36 Newark Street, Hoboken, NJ] which is a famous place up there, you know, with all the peanuts on the floor and all that kind of shit. And these guys were really going after Liz McAlister. And I finally said, “Hey, c’mon you guys. Everybody has a social reading and the fact that even Liz McAlister hardly got time.” Godamn it, George, they won! He’s [McGowan] yelling at the bar. Didn’t I realize how deep this went? And the anger was that because of those people they robbed the rightful place in history for all the people who were in all the other actions. They were willing to, you know, play that game.

And the problem at the twenty-fifth anniversary was when you looked—I [unclear] the program, we looked at the program. It’s all about the people and the pamphlet about Plowshares, their actions—not about all of the other actions that came out of Catonsville. And, you know, and I came back and said to Helene, “All this stuff,” Helene knows and people talk to us privately but I never, ever said anything publicly about the real history and the role those two guys played. And I said to Helene, “When McGowan spoke,”—and McGowan had lived with Helene and I for a year and half, Fordi, with a couple years and you see, and O’Rourke used to base out of there, too. And I said, “You know, I never realized how deep this feeling is in those guys there until these guys started to open up,” and then I found out from other people the same damn way when I started to interview them of how deep the wound was, of people who were feeling they got robbed in the sense of their rightful place. And thank god, till Tropea came along and did the movie, you know.[“Hit and Stay”] It’s at least—that’s the beginning of change, you know.

PS: Fleshes it out in some. I want to—

End of Recording 4

01:02:08

Beginning of Recording 5

00:00:00

PS: have you talk about your time at Lewisburg. But first, before we go to that, I want to circle back to one little thing you alluded to. Back when you were, after that day in the Camden 28 trial and the prosecutor who was down at the end of the bar.

GM: Oh, yeah.

PS: And who was that and why was he noteworthy later?

GM: Here, Pete Fordi, had, ever since his significant other—she died after about thirty-five years together, he decided—and he had moved after I got ill and had to shut down the program we had in DC. He went west to California and was out of the priesthood, teaching aeronautics and that kind of stuff. And when she had died, he decided he did not want to have the house. She asked before he went to [unclear], you know, and he’d been living out of a motorhome that he just drives around the country. He was here for three weeks—oh, wait, I put that in just over the last year here and I told Pete, you know, this is your home every time you ever get tired, you can live with us.

So I think it was two years ago that he and he still has his two sisters still living in New Jersey; his parents are dead. Two sisters, one’s married and the other husband died. And they have a place down in Brick, New Jersey [Brick Township, NJ], and he goes back every year with them, spends time. And then spends time here. And they were having a get together down at the shore with all the Grady kids from up—and other people were getting together for—I think it was probably either the Fourth of July or Memorial Day weekend, down at—with a couple of guys from Camden were there for a fun weekend down at Brick. So I flew out to Newark [Newark, NJ] and he picks me up and we go down and on the way back, we—Pete and I stopped in at Camden to see Mick Doyle [Michael J. Doyle], who was one of the priests involved at Camden, who still is. And Camden is the poorest city in the country now and he’s had this parish [Sacred Heart Church, Camden, NJ] that—they’re the really taking care of the poor in Camden and he’s got this matriarch of about five women and Mick has had real health problems. He’s originally from Ireland, came over and he’s been running this parish and it’s the real center of Camden all these years.

And so we stopped in to see him and a couple of the other guys from Camden, too, came over and we’re sitting there and I’ve got a book around he gave me of pictures—I told him when I was dealing with Dan’s stuff—and here one of the other Camden guys said, Hey, by the way, you know, Mick was doing a couple fundraisers here and raised money for all the programs he’s got working for the poor and who shows up but the prosecutor’s [unintelligible] wife. And she shows up and wants Mick to know that she and her husband both really respected all of the people in that Camden action. And she contributed one hundred fifty thousand dollars. And then a month or two later, gave another one hundred thousand dollars.

Well, the woman turns out to be Donald Trump’s [U.S. President Donald John Trump (1947-)] sister [Maryanne Trump Barry (1937-)] who’s the judge that were really hearing about who’s the judge now and she married John Barry [John Joseph Barry (1940-2000)], who was the prosecutor who is, “George, I don’t want to bring this [charge]--” and they met after the trial and got married and I don’t know if they had kids. I’m not even sure of that but I don’t know they were together thirty years whatever marriage and he died a couple years back. And when I heard that story I thought, Holy Shit, we’ve got to get the press to pick up that story, that Trump’s got a sister who’s not a Neanderthal like this goddamn guy is. And when I heard that story I couldn’t believe it. And they all looked at me and laughed to see my reaction when they told me. I said, “Barry’s wife is Donald Trump’s sister. Oh my god!” So that’s that I keep thinking every time I think about it—I can still see him sitting on that bar saying, “George I went door to door for Gene McCarthy in Omaha, Nebraska.” He so wanted me to understand he was not the devil incarnate.

PS: That’s wild.

GM: But then for her to give that kind of money and wanted to make that known that she and her husband always had a great deal of respect for him and all those people who were involved in that action, you know, and I thought, Wow. Again, you never know who you’re reaching, you know.

PS: That’s another one of those great stories that just sort of pop up out of nowhere.

GM: Yeah.

00:05:00 PS: So I mean, what was the other thing you were going to—Lewisburg?

GM: Lewisburg.

PS: Is that the only place you were? I can’t remember if you got transferred did you say or—?

GM: Well, Lewisburg is a complex of three.

PS: Oh, okay.

GM: There’s behind the wall, which is the longest, biggest prison wall in America. It was built in the Depression by, you know, by the inmates.

PS: So that’s the total institution.

GM: Yeah, and then outside the wall is Lewisburg Farm so that if you get out of the maximum security prison, you either go there or Allenwood, which is down the road. And Allenwood is basically nine thousand public acres, forty-five hundred of which belong to the prison system and has a farm—both of these places had farms—and the other forty-five hundred acres is public hunting areas, you know. And I was at all three because they bounced me around because of my organizing leadership.

And so I get to Lewisburg, as I mentioned earlier, that when I got to—and found out all my rap partners were there I smelled a rat right away because I said, “What? It doesn’t work like that in the federal system. They split you up and send you to all the prisons around the country.” And one thing the feds do different than the states whatnot, too, they put them out in the middle of the boondocks some place and they know that insidious mentality, that by putting the federal prisons out in the boondocks there that the likelihood is that since most people are poor and maybe their wives are on welfare, you know, it only takes a month or two of them coming over to visit and then running short of money because to, you know, and Lewisburg in this district and most people are coming from either New York or Washington, DC or Baltimore area, that it ain’t cheap to rent motels and eat for a weekend when you’re over in Lewisburg.

PS: Plus getting there and back, all costs—

GM: Yes, right, and then to support your own family. So eventually they don’t come anymore and that allows the prison system to have more rigid control of the inmates when they don’t have people coming over to visit all the time, that kind of freedom. And that’s why when they found out that Helene was moving—no other wife was living near prison. They don’t make life easy on the wives. And when they found out she was moving over, they were really upset and then we had a situation where I would size up guys on the inside who were about to be released. I would tell Helene and Helene would tell the guy from the Volvo dealer and others and they would get them jobs when they got out. And the prison system didn’t want that shit either, you know. So they really wanted to nail her bad because—

And how I organized the—but they—the first—they had—I mean, I forget how long I was originally at Lewisburg when I did organize their trouble. Then they sent me out to the farm to get me out. The reason mainly was this. I got inside the wall and realized that the toughest place to be is in the laundry. And there were fights and stabbing all the time inside the joint and, you know, blacks hung together; Latinos hung together; rednecks hung together; and Mafia people—they were all split up in categories and that was by design what they had hoped for like Daley [Richard Joseph Daley (1902-1976)] did in Chicago, that if you get all the different groups at each other’s throat, it’s easier to keep control of the whole place because then you run the place and not them.

And I started to get—I watched who—I determined who were the leaders of their groupings and I started to get meetings in the laundry room, two of each kind. And I said, “Hey, look. As long as we keep fighting each other and knifing each other, no changes will come along.” And at that time is that you were not guaranteed any pay for doing any work for the prison and the prison system is making a ton of money off of inmate labor, you know. And that they had very limited writing abilities. You could—you had to get approved of who the prison said you could write to. You were only allowed—at the time we went into Lewisburg it was three hours of visiting time a month. I think that’s the way it went.

PS: How many people on your list allowed? Hardly any, right?

GM: Yeah, right. And—

00:10:00 PS: Three or four or something like that plus your attorney.

GM: And then you’ve got to have them approved because it doesn’t mean that if you put somebody on a list that they approve it. And so, with Helene going about with the kids what we did was forty-five minutes every Saturday so it added up to the three hours. And that’s what I kept trying to tell Phil—We can’t do anything about the war but we can, if we’re smart and get organized, we can do something about this [unclear]. Yeah, yeah, George. He never did shit. So I started to meet with these people and tell them, Hey, we’ve got to stop this kind of crap. So after about three months there wasn’t a fistfight in Lewisburg inside the joint where it was really a tough fucking place.

So they found out who was responsible and to get me out of there. And they sent me first—that’s right—to Allenwood. And we started running booze. They wanted to get Helene so damn bad. And what we did was, I remember, that first Christmas Eve inside, that we—the warden comes around—and we used to laugh about him. He comes around with hot chocolate and cookies on Christmas Eve and wishes everybody a Christmas—Men, eat up [unclear] So, here what we did was I told Helene to go out and buy as much as we could afford, come up with some money, to buy cases of booze. And Helene—I mean, this is a big area as I told you.

So I had my guys. We went out in the snow and had to go over the fence to get the cases and reach them back up over the damn fence to inside. And I remember this guy, Dave Goldberg, who ended up writing sports for AP years later, he got stuck up on the goddamn wire. And I get up behind him and took him by the ass and just threw him over. And I said, “Jesus Christ, Dave!” So I jump over and we’re taking the booze in and the cops, the guards, they run to the area with snowmobiles. So whenever they would come, we really ducked down in so they couldn’t see us. So we get the booze inside the place. And so after the warden said it once to his men to eat cookies and hot chocolate, when the lights went out then I told all the guys; we took all the booze with a note around—wrapped around—“Merry Christmas from the political community.”

And, at that time, by the way, the Mafia guys starting with [unclear] who was—the Mafia guys who are so tough, you know, they would call the guards “Boss.” And I used to ridicule them. I said, “Boss? What are—you got your machine gun around? You chicken shit. I can’t believe it.” And we were, you know, refusing to go to work from time to time and they admired that. But, you know, everybody knew where we were going. So we put a note on the booze bottles and I think it was every third or fourth cot—I can’t remember what—saying, “Merry Christmas from the political community. Share this with your bunkmate. Merry Christmas.”

So it was all dark and it was funny hearing people going in and sitting in their bunk saying, “Hey, what the hell is this?” And “Goddam, bottle of booze!” I told Helene, mix it up so we had, you know, whiskey, scotch, rum, what do you call it? Crème de Menthe—every kind of variety. People couldn’t believe it. And so everybody was sitting down getting drunk and there were four, one, two, three—was it four barracks? Every barrack—a lot of people in them. So everybody’s—and the note was, “When you get done drinking it, put the bottle in one of your socks and go to the bathroom, the toilet and smash the bottle and break up all the glass and then dump it down the drain and flush it.” So there was no evidence of this.

So here you had black guys who were looking at these rednecks and the rednecks are looking at these niggers and all that—they’re all hugging each other, having a great time during the damn night, you know, and joking around which they never did before. And, by the way, and this came after—when the first time I saw this I said we’ve got to do something about this—is there was a softball game between the black team and Latino game with—it was kind of the advent era of the metal bats. And some—I don’t know what precipitated it, they got pissed at each other and here are these two teams with the bats and clubbing each other. I said to John Hogan, “Oh, we got to do something about this.” And that’s when he led to this.

So when they found out that booze was coming in, it really pissed off and word got it that—

00:15:00 and Helene had made all kinds of trips and we had all different ways we smuggled the booze

in. Sometimes you could drive all the way through at night from the front gate, drop it off and

people would go and pick it up and we used to stash the stuff most successfully down in the engineering department. And one time where there came close was there was a truck that would go out to the farming stuff at Allenwood and everybody would come back at lunch time. That damn truck—and John Hogan was on that detail, was about five, ten minutes late and in the meantime, Helene would drive in as like a visit to me and when everybody was in the mess hall, including the guards and all that, they would come and unload the booze out of her trunk and take it up and here—

PS: In that truck?

GM: Yeah. And here the truck comes in and John Hogan and the guards—there are about five of the guys and the guard—and they walk into the mess hall and all of a sudden, here are these guys going by with cases of booze. And Hogan sitting there was—he got a kick out of how he thought, Oh, my god. And as they kept going—and I still remember the guard’s name was Campbell and Campbell looked at John and he said, “Did I just see what I think I just saw?” And John said, “I don’t know. What did you see? I didn’t see anything.” Fortunately they got the booze down to the engineering department and hid it in the rafters very effectively. They scoured that place to find it and they figured there was only one way it could have got there was Helene’s car. And they really were looking to nail her all the time.

So here they end up and they’re going to get, as a retaliation or scare tactic, they’re going to come up and take me back to the wall and put me in the hole again. And the vice warden, who’s a guy name of Rowe, who is kind of a liberal, progressive guy, he’s having lunch—he comes up to have coffee and lunch with me outside and he’s trying to tell me that they want to come up the next day and to pick me up to take me back, you know, and it would be only one day but this way the administration wouldn’t lose any face over the whole thing. And wanted me to agree to do that. And I would not agree or disagree. And so he thinks I’m agreeing to it. So they show up the next day with the truck and this guy was the captain- it was actually Jones—I mean his name was—he was a pretty decent—he wants me to get into the—they call me to the orderly’s, to the room and wanted me to get in the car to go up.

And here, nothing to do with me, the word was that they were coming to get me. All these inmates pile out of the dorm surrounding the place. They made Bobby Baker [Robert Gene Baker (1928-2017)]—and all these guys who were sleeping—guys their ass out and be a part of the whole group who are not going to allow them to take me to the hole. And Jones says to—or asks, “Where are you going to take Mische?” “We’re taking him into administrative segregation.” And you hear me, you’re taking him in the fucking hole. No, you’re not and didn’t let him take me out. And when they walked—when they finally pull up to drive back up to the wall, we were walking back—everybody said that [unclear] that we do drinking that night in the joint. And they were happy, and I said, “Well, we’ve got to enjoy this because they’re going to be big time up there tomorrow.” And they said, No, no. And I said, “Bullshit. If you think they’re going to sit back—”

And sure enough, and Helene’s up there again at lunch time. They pull up in buses with all these guys in riot gear to round up and they did it just the way I had organized it—two and two from each—they were doing—I think it was eight or ten of each group, loading up the bus to take us there. And they were trying to order Helene off the property and she wouldn’t go and she said, “You’re going to kill my husband and I’m not leaving.” And so, that’s why they couldn’t play roughhouse.

They take us back, take us all, throw us in the hole and normally what they do is they have a kangaroo court. It’s usually the warden, chief medical officer and one other guy and that’s the next day. So I go into this kangaroo court and there ain’t just the three of them. There’s about thirty people in the room from the FBI, from the Bureau of Prisons, everything, Justice Department—all lined up. And they want me to talk and I said, “I’m not talking till I know who’s in this room.” The warden says, “What?” I said, “You know who I am. I want to know who they are.” So, I mean, every one of them said who they were all the way around the thing and reading the riot act at the beginning. And I said, “Hey, look, I didn’t create this situation. You guys did. And I’ve got nothing to say.” And they’re really pissed off because I’m not

00:20:00 kneeling down and genuflecting and he’s getting embarrassed, the warden. We end up at

Alderson later on. I ran into him when I went up to—not Alderson, the place in Terre Haute,

Indiana.

And, so here what happens is they allow a meeting with Helene and the captain in his office

and I’m there and it’s a big, luxurious office and Helene went up one side of the warden’s ass and down the other. You fuckers, this, and, you know, you created this goddamn—and I think Jones—where they were sitting—I think he really enjoyed it. I had to bite my tongue from not laughing while Helene’s reading the riot act to them. Then—that was the day before the big kangaroo court. And they said, Well, they’ll take it into consideration. The next day they have another one and this time it’s just the warden, the way they normally did, three of them and me.

And they want me to leave because by this time I had to get out of Lewisburg because by this time, the *Washington Post* got a hold of the story and they had press helicopters flying over. There were demonstrations taking place outside Lewisburg and a guy who really came to support was William Buckley’s brother, who then was the—for six years—was the—pulled off some political upset—ran as the Conservative Party and the Republic Party’s candidate for senator in New York.

PS: Yeah.

GM: Got elected. And he happened—

PS: James, right? James [James Lane Buckley (1923-)]?

GM: Yeah, and he actually was a big champion of prison reform and he saw what happened up there and he got involved and that really made them nervous out at Washington if he gets involved. So they want me to get the hell out of Lewisburg and the wall. But now they sent me to the farm, not back to Allenwood. So I said, “Okay, under one condition. You let me call my wife.” And he was very reluctant. And I said, “Wait a minute. You know how distraught she was yesterday in there with you guys,” and I said, “I want her to know that I’m okay.” So they said okay I could call when I get out to the farm.

So we get out to the farm and there was one guy I knew was probably the best attorney operating certainly in the eastern part of the United States on prison issues was Dave Rudovsky, [David Rudovsky (1943-)] out of Philadelphia [Philadelphia, PA], who—it’s interesting this because years later—had become one of the Camden 28 attorneys, Rudovsky. And I knew Dave’s background and she told Dave that—or I told her on the phone, I said, “I’m okay, honey. I’m out at the farm and I want you to do me a favor.” And, by the way, the social worker’s in on the other phone, the extension, listening, and I said, “When you get off the phone here, call Dave Rudovsky in Philadelphia, get his ass over here. We’re going to sue these bastards.” And the guy says, You can’t do any—and I said, “I just did it.” So she called Rudovsky. Rudovsky comes over—that’s when the press really exploded. Rudovsky comes over and we decide to go to sue the prison system.

And the guy who was the judge in that district was right there in Lewisburg. He had never, even though the prison was his jurisdiction, he had never been in the prison. He didn’t know anything about what was going on in the prison and he’s going to be the judge. And we had uncovered all kinds of corruption. And I told—first of all, we got an injunction that they had I’d heard when I was in the hole some of the people who had been arrested with me were now being shipped out around the country to other prisons. And we went in, got an injunction from the judge, that all those people had to be returned back to Lewisburg because, you know, their families were out east. They didn’t want to be in the Midwest or West.

So that was the first thing we won. And I told my fellow people who were going on trial so a whole bunch of them were American Friends Service guys and I said, “Hey, we have one chance here to open our mouths so I don’t want anybody to be tongue-tied. Everything we’re going to let hang out with this judge. And we had uncovered all kinds of [unclear]. We found out that here all these guys who were working ever got any pay; couldn’t buy commissary stuff at all. That was one thing. But we found out that here, with all of the cattle that were being raised at Lewisburg and the farm—the guards had to deal with the butcher shops in Lewisburg, Selinsgrove, Williamsport [all PA]—all these cities—that they would take home the horseshit meat because they slaughtered all the meat right there in Lewisburg, too, the

00:25:00 horseshit meat and that they would take that. But all the prime stuff they would give to the

butcher shops who had the best quality stuff and they in turn would give the horseshit meat, their horseshit meat, back to Lewisburg.

And I remember one guy’s life I had saved—I was sitting with Jimmy Hoffa [James Riddle Hoffa (1913; disappeared 1975)]—and a guy started to choke and it was Thanksgiving—we almost never got steaks and it was all grizzle stuff and the guy was choking—I didn’t know anything about Heimlich Maneuvers, but I turned him upside down and whooped him—and out pops the thing. I never forgot that. Here we found out why because what the cops had going with all the meat places around—that they were getting the best quality of Lewisburg meat and we were getting this shit. And so, we had all kinds of stuff like that and I said, “We’re going to let the judge know this stuff.” And how infrequently you had visitors; writing and all that kind of stuff.

So we take them to court. I’m on the stand for a day and a half and some of my friends are—

PS: George? So you were in court and the others, too, over what exactly? I’ve kind of gotten lost before.

GM: Well, the fact that they came down against us and dragged us off and the reason that was was because we were objecting to prison policies that were creating people from getting knifed and beat up and all that.

PS: Okay, so it was—

GM: Overall prison conditions.

PS: you’re just—the general disciplinary clamp down on you all. It wasn’t over the booze in particular?

GM: No, no.

PS: Although the fact that they—everyone came out to keep you from being taken to the hole was part of this probably, too, huh?

GM: Yeah, yeah.

PS: Okay, okay, just wanted to—

GM: Yeah, that’s what the whole thing was about, the general prison condition that Phil would say, Yeah, yeah, but didn’t do anything about it. So I said, “Here was the chance to do something about it.” So we took them to court—

PS: So this is the suing the system, the institution?

GM: And the judge—we had to have blackboards so the judge could understand what parts of the prisons and stuff, you know, the layout. And I must say he was—and boy, you ought to have seen the people that showed up from Washington for this trial. They just sit back there and knowing that, Holy shit. This stuff is getting out. So the judge rules in our favor and said that from there on in, everybody who’s got a job has got to have a least twenty bucks pay so they can buy cigarettes or commissary stuff and all that kind of stuff; that you could have unlimited visiting and not the three hours a month; that you could write to who the hell you wanted or unless the prison came up with some concrete reason why you couldn’t write to one particular person; all those changes were ruled by this guy. And what a tremendous victory.

PS: It’s huge.

GM: Yeah. And so here the prison system appeals his local thing to the circuit level and the circuit level upheld his entire ruling so they were not about to take it to the Supreme Court because how the federal system works—if you get a ruling in the circuit, it’s the law of the land there. But if you go to the Supreme Court, it becomes—they did not want that. So by the time we walked out of there, here everybody had a paying job, you know. Everybody could have the visitors, you know, hopefully keep their families together, right? So it was—and it was a great accomplishment at the time.

PS: It was a great thing.

GM: Oh, shit man, it was worth it. And I thought, You know, if Phil and Dan would have used their prestige to do the same thing—because they pulled them out of there eventually—Phil out of Lewisburg and sent him to what’s the place up in New England? It’s a—Middleton. Middleton Prison[[5]](#footnote-5). Put the two of them there and what the big issue that they charged that the prison system wouldn’t let them say private mass every morning. And I thought, You assholes. I couldn’t believe when I read that in the paper. Here, you’re playing elitist stuff right to the end, you know, that instead of saying how terrible the prison system is, that they want—and when they didn’t get parole or when they got parole, they never mentioned that there were so many prisoners yet who didn’t get the parole.

I went to the parole hearings—I had no intention of playing ball—and obviously what they wanted me to say is what got me into this is Dan and Phil Berrigan. And I’m not playing that game. And I said—and there’s three guys who at the hearing—and they said, Who got you involved in all this? And I said, “Lyndon Johnson.” They said, What? I said, “Lyndon Johnson.” I worked for—they didn’t want to hear that shit. They were hoping I was going to—if I’d have said Dan or Phil, I would have got out. I wasn’t going to play that. So I got

00:30:00 turned down and then I maxed out. And here when I saw a news later, or a news article in a

paper some place that the Berrigans got turned down for the first parole hearing, it didn’t

mention that, you know, somebody else was in prison yet, too, that didn’t make it. But that’s

the elitism thing, anyway.

So it was quite a period of time. I was glad that we played the role we did. Helene was, you

know, Helene by everybody—they were calling her Madame Diem [Trần Lệ Xuân (1924-2011), aka Madame Nhu, the wife of Ngô Đình Nhu, who was the brother and chief-advisor to President Ngô Đình Diệm]—the stories that the inmates were running about her—and I was thinking one night in the john after dark at Lewisburg—no, at Allenwood—and a couple of black dudes are talking about me. They said, You know, that guy who’s over in the corner, meaning me because, you know, the stories were running around what I was doing. See, he’s got his wife coming in and he’s getting laid over there every goddamn night, and I started to laugh and I said, “No, I’m not.” And all of a sudden they saw I was on the can—I said, “Don’t believe that one. The other ones are okay.” (laughter)

But they really were trying to get Helene and they knew all the shit she was doing, you know. But they could never quite do it and I tell you I wish I had on camera that when we sat in that warden’s room and she went up one side of his butt, down the other. And I’m trying not to laugh. I thought, Jesus, if he ever had some inmate’s wife or mother ever come in and lay on that tough—everybody’s so docile, you know, and this come back [unclear].

PS: Sure.

GM: But so it was quite a period.

PS: Helene was really another unsung—

GM: Oh, yeah and well, the article I wrote for—I know if you ever saw the article—the NCR—[“Inattention to accuracy about 'Catonsville Nine' distorts history,” by George Mische, *National Catholic Reporter*, May 17, 2013] I’ll give you that—that I allude to it that Helene was considered as the Catonsville 10 because she was there from the very beginning of this whole damn thing and went through everything and all of whose friends were in the act. And I must say that I always felt very bad for Mary Moylan because her family was not supportive. Melville’s family was kind of half and half; they were supportive. Hogan’s family was very supportive. Darst, too, boy, his dad when he came in that uniform and saluted his son on the stand, I thought, Whew, man, wonder how much longer he stayed with the military after that. No, but it was quite a crew of people, I’ll tell you that, you know, that we did it and the mistake was on the Dan and Phil thing—Melville was right on that. And I told them, I said to Hogan years later, “It was my mistake. I should have said no, one of you, not both of you.” And Melville was really on top of that, you know, he was right. But it was a great group of people.

In the movie one of my favorite lines is—Tom used to tell this about going to prison—he said, “Hey for anybody who went to the seminary, what the hell? Prison was easy. It was the same thing.” And he said it in the interview in the back in Eberhardt’s house. When I saw it I laughed my butt off because he’d always say that and then he’d laugh, you know. It’s good training to go to prison being in the seminary, becoming a priest.

PS: Yeah, all the discipline, right?

GM: Yeah, right.

PS: Well, maybe that’s enough for now.

GM: Sure. Yeah, if you ever got more stuff you want just let me know and I’ll try to get some stuff to you that I think might be good for you to have.

PS: Maybe some additional documents and things like that because I can add things to my collection of materials, too, just like the copies of—or the things you gave after the other interview.

End of Recording 5

00:34:02

1. Upon review, Mische realized that he was mistaken here. Since Morales was deposed by a military coup and exiled in early October, 1963, Mische could not have met with him on November 23, 1963. It was instead a Honduran government minister, probably of the Interior or Agriculture, with whom he met that day. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Paul Mayer, Benedictine,(attached to the monastery in Newton, NJ, site of the August, 1968 retreat mentioned on p. 13.), and another, [name forgotten] who was at the time head of the Theology program at Seton Hall University [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. An alleged plot to kidnap Henry Kissinger, and to blow up tunnels in Washington, DC. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. On review, Mische realized that he misspoke here. The “Contras” were anti government paramilitary militias in Nicaragua during the Reagan administration, who received illegal covert aid from the United States government. Mische knew of a similar opposition movement in Honduras when he was there. This and later “Contra” references are to that activity in Honduras in the early 1960’s. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Another misstatement. In fact Berrigan was transferred to the federal prison in Danbury, Connecticut. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)