

# WARREN D'AZEVEDO: BY DEAD RECKONING

Interviewee: Warren d'Azevedo

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## Description

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Great Basin Anthropological Conference in Reno, Brian Wallace, Chairman of the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, proclaimed October 15, 2005 officially "Warren d'Azevedo Day" in recognition of this anthropologist's steadfast and compassionate commitment to the Washoe people over some fifty years, as well as his extraordinary contributions to the profession of anthropology. Professor emeritus and founder of the Anthropology Department at the University of Nevada, Reno, Warren d'Azevedo's life history is presented here through a series of interviews with Penny Rucks, a friend and former student. Detailed in his oral history is his involvement with family, longshoremen on the Oakland waterfront, fellow seamen onboard merchant ships in the Atlantic and Pacific, students and mentors at University of California, Berkeley and Northwestern University, colleagues at University of Nevada, Reno, and the many Washoe and Gola people whom he got to know over the years. Readers who have been privileged to know this man will instantly recognize his "voice," a voice filled with the wonder of learning, a voice of eloquence, a poet and a writer, a brilliant lecturer and synthesizer. This oral history is full of value and meaning for the anthropological community, the university, and d'Azevedo's many friends and colleagues. He left his papers on Great Basin research to the Washoe people and to all students with an interest in Washoe studies. The Warren d'Azevedo Washoe Research Archives in the Special Collections Department of the library of the University of Nevada, Reno, holds many materials that provide additional insight into his many contributions to the field.



WARREN D'AZEVEDO

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# WARREN D'AZEVEDO

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BY DEAD RECKONING

From oral history interviews  
conducted by Penny Rucks

Edited by Penny Rucks  
and Mary A. Larson

University of Nevada  
Oral History Program

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Dee, it's hard enough to be a Swede among Scowegians, like on this ship. But you're a damned squarehead Portugoose, some kind of halfbreed wop—like putting ice in dago red, like Africa and Scandihoovia squeezed together on a map. You've got two ports of departure and at least two possible destinations. How are you going to find your way home? You better read up good on dead reckoning.

-Bob Nelson (Warren's good friend and shipmate, a young Swede from Minnesota), at sea, 1944

Positions by dead reckoning differ from those determined by bearings of terrestrial objects or by observations of celestial bodies, in being less exact, as the correctness of dead reckoning depends upon the accuracy of the estimate of the run, and this is always liable to be at fault to a greater or less extent. The course made good by a ship may differ from that which is believed *being made* good, by reason of imperfect steering, improper allowance for compass error, the leeway (caused by the wind), and also the effects of unknown currents . . . . Notwithstanding its recognized defects as compared with the more exact methods, the dead reckoning is an invaluable aid to the navigator . . . . Before losing sight of land, and preferably while objects remain in good view, it is the duty of the navigator to *take a departure*; this consists of fixing the position of the ship by the best means available, and using this position as the origin for dead reckoning.

-Nathaniel Bowditch, *American Practical Navigator*





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## PREFACE

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**F**OUNDED IN 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) records and collects interviews that address significant topics in Nevada's remembered past. The program's chroniclers are primary sources: people who participated in or directly witnessed the events and phenomena that are the subjects of the interviews. Following precedent established by Allan Nevins at Columbia University in 1948, and perpetuated since by academic programs such as ours, these recorded interviews and their transcripts are called oral histories.

This research volume is crafted from the verbatim transcript of interviews conducted by Penny Rucks with Warren d'Azevedo. The recording sessions took place in the d'Azevedos' Reno home between September 1997 and June 1998. Remaining faithful to the transcript's content, and adhering as closely as possible to Warren d'Azevedo's spoken words, the manuscript was edited for clarity. The editors also gave it chronological

and topical organization not always found in the raw transcript. Dr. d'Azevedo reviewed the work and affirms that it is an accurate interpretation. Readers who desire access to the unaltered oral history are invited to visit the offices of the UNOHP, where the tapes of the interviews may be heard by appointment.

To add context to written representations of the spoken word, the UNOHP uses certain editorial conventions. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs; and ellipses are used, not to indicate that material has been deleted, but to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete . . . or there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of *Warren d'Azevedo: By Dead Reckoning*, we advise the reader to keep in mind that it is a personal account of a remembered past, and we do not claim that it is entirely free of error. Intelligent readers will approach it with the

same anticipation of discovery, tempered with caution, that they would bring to government reports, diaries, newspaper stories, and other interpretations of historical information.

UNOHP  
November 2005

## INTRODUCTION

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ON THE OCCASION of the fiftieth anniversary of the Great Basin Anthropological Conference, in Reno, and at the conclusion of a session titled, “In Honor and Respect: Papers in Great Basin Ethnology for Warren d’Azevedo,” Brian Wallace, Chairman of the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, read a large scroll inscribed with a lengthy tribal resolution proclaiming that day, October 15, 2005, officially “Warren d’Azevedo Day.” This was in recognition of Warren’s many contributions to the tribe in its land struggles, its attempts to protect sacred sites, its efforts to document its history and culture, and, most of all, in recognition of his steadfast and compassionate commitment to the Washoe people over some fifty years.

Chairman Wallace then wrapped Warren in the Washoe Tribe’s flag, which he also presented to him as a gift. The many people in attendance rose in a standing ovation to thank the honoree for his equally compassionate and steadfast commitment to his many friends, colleagues, and the

profession of anthropology, as practiced locally as well as nationally.

Both tributes were thoroughly deserved, as a reading of Warren’s d’Azevedo’s life history—presented here through a series of interviews by Penny Rucks, a friend and former student—will well attest. The data that make up his life story are extraordinarily rich, full of his passion for living and for involvement in his own life and those of others, be they immediate family and other relatives, longshoremen on the waterfront in Oakland, fellow seamen onboard merchant ships in the Atlantic and Pacific, fellow students and mentors at the University of California, Berkeley and Northwestern University, members of the Black Students Union and countless other students and colleagues at the University of Nevada, Reno, or the many Washoe and Gola people whom he got to know over the course of many years. Warren’s gift is to make all people immediately feel the interest and respect he has for them, from their first acquaintance to renewed contacts many

years later. He is, above all, a humanist in all of its facets.

Warren once characterized the initial process of becoming an anthropologist as one of being “reforg[ed] . . . into a self-correcting instrument of observation—a reflective stranger”.<sup>1</sup> Through these interviews we get a very real sense of this process in his life, through the many experiences that taught him to be more than an observer and a recorder of human behavior, but rather an active and caring participant in real peoples’ lives. He also remarked that doing anthropology involved one in an almost continual, and continuing, reciprocity, wherein commitment and engagement with one’s fellow human beings should be not only the norm but a virtual requirement.<sup>2</sup> Without engagement and a willingness to do more than observe and record, there is no true learning from and with others, and there is no true benefit to the human situation. This is the measure that moved Chairman Wallace, as well as the others assembled that day, to recognize Warren’s contributions and to honor him in this way.

Those who have been privileged to know this man in any of the capacities covered here will instantly recognize his “voice” as they read through this volume. It is a voice filled with the wonder of learning and living and being, loving and being loved, questioning the world and getting answers, and then asking yet more and deeper ones. It is a voice of eloquence, a poet and a writer, a brilliant lecturer and synthesizer, a prober of things well beyond the obvious. His mind works like no other that I know, always following leads and directions that others may not see.

As a student in his introductory anthropology class in the 1960s at the University of Utah, I found his lectures filled

with the passion and compassion of a person deeply moved by his recent field experiences in West Africa. In additional classes in other years, I came to realize that his passion was the measure of his involvement with all people. And as a colleague of his at the University of Nevada, Reno, in the department he founded, I never stopped being his student and learning from him what was required to be an anthropologist and what it meant to be fully engaged in the enterprise. That association continues to the present, with a feeling that both Don Fowler and I have of the deepest respect and admiration for a life that is both full and rewarding and continues to inspire.

Warren’s life story would not be complete without his wife Kathy and son Erik and daughter Anya. Kathy is a participant in a number of the interviews contained here (her responses being designated by a “Kd:”), and, as readers will see, she shares with Warren the same passion and commitment to people. Her willingness to share his life, including his fieldwork in places often remote and more than difficult when you are caring for small children, is a measure of her character as well. She was also a full participant in his anthropology, a person with instant empathy and understanding of others. With a distinguished career in her own right, she has been a major contributor to their joint enterprise.

Penny Rucks and the University of Nevada Oral History Program have produced a document full of meaning for many, and one that will serve the anthropological community, the university, and Warren’s many friends and colleagues well. In characteristic fashion, Warren left his papers on his Great Basin research to the Washoe people and to the many students and



colleagues with an interest in Washoe studies to follow. The Warren d'Azevedo Washoe Research Archives in the Special Collections Department of the library of the University of Nevada, Reno, holds many materials that provide additional insight into his many contributions to the field.

CATHERINE S. FOWLER  
University of Nevada, Reno

#### Notes

1. Warren d'Azevedo, "Afterword," in *Others Knowing Others: Perspectives on Ethnographic Careers*, eds. Don D Fowler and Donald L. Hardesty (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), p. 223.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 224.



# PART ONE

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## FAMILY HISTORY

**P**ENNY RUCKS: *The plan is to provide a rough chronology of your life so that we can begin to identify some themes that we can explore later. First I'd like to ask you about your childhood, starting with when and where you were born and your immediate family.*

WARREN D'AZEVEDO: I was born in Oakland, California, on August 19, 1920. It's hard for me even to imagine that it's been that long ago, but it has. I was born in a hospital near Lake Merritt in Oakland called the Jackson Lake Hospital. It was run by a Dr. Enos, a Portuguese doctor rather well known at that point in local history. My parents both had grown up in Oakland. My mother had grown up on Seventh Street in something of a working-class neighborhood near what's now the freeway. The house has been torn down, but it was rather important to the family for many years. My father grew up on Eighth Street just a few blocks away in a somewhat upper middle-class neighborhood. His father was a physician and surgeon. In fact, he was one of the first Portuguese doctors in Oakland.

I have come to think of two mythic traditions as part of my identity. One is the Swedish strain on my mother's side, especially my grandmother who was a peasant. And, as I once wrote, I would like to remember her in a memoir to my children as my Swedish peasant grandmother who spoke in tongues. And the other tradition comes down through Joaquim Leal d'Azevedo, my paternal great-grandfather who was an Azorean farmer and whaler from the island of Pico. He came to the United States, to Boston, in the early 1850s and then went around the Horn and jumped ship in San Francisco during the California Gold Rush. He ended up mining and farming in Sacramento and opening a winery with his cousin.

The reason I think of these as mythologies is that one creates one's own life in terms of certain key figures that stand out as a kind of family lore. Certainly my maternal grandmother, Hanna, was part of a lore, and my paternal great-grandfather, Joaquim Leal, was very much a part of the lore on that side of the family. I was four years old when he died,

but he had already become a kind of mythological figure in that family.

I remember my paternal grandmother referring to him as a pirate. "He was just a pirate," she said, "until he came to California." He lived in Sacramento, where a great many of the Portuguese extended family lived. Hayward and Sacramento were the two areas where they settled. His digs were in Sacramento—he and his cousin, Mañuel, who had jumped ship with him. He even tried gold digging and farming but ended up buying a site for a winery, the Eagle Winery in Sacramento. So he was something of a controversial figure in this large Catholic extended family, and he was obviously a very rough and tough kind of a guy.

I have photographs of him and his beautiful Azorean wife, Rosalia, when he went back and brought her to California. And he also brought some relatives who became the extended family that began to grow. They said he spoke a very crude and rough kind of Portuguese lingo, and some people, like my father's mother, were a little askance. She considered herself a fine lady, and he was, from her point of view, just a pirate, but when I was a little kid, I remember his story stuck with me.

He was a wonderful, heroic figure to me, the guy who left the Azores during a period of deep depression (I think there had been a volcanic eruption as well) and went to sea and whaled and finally came to this country to seek his fortune. He developed a large extended family, and as far as I'm concerned, there was an unforgettable aura of mystery and adventure. I'm sure that in my own mind I've elaborated that considerably, at least when I was young. I saw him taking part in all sorts of marvelous feats at sea, and my grandmother fed this view. Yet none of this exactly happened, I'm sure.

On my mother's side, my maternal grandmother, whom we always called "Mama," and her husband, whom we used to call "Papa," because our parents called them that, and we called our parents by their first names. On the Portuguese side, just as on the Swedish side, there was this great drive to become American. All that early group spoke Portuguese, but my father's generation, though they spoke fluent Portuguese, did not do so to their children. I've always resented and regretted that. Many years later, when Melville J. Herskovits brought me to Northwestern on a fellowship, he was *deeply* disappointed. Because of my name he had planned to send me to a Portuguese-speaking area.

On my mother's side, the same sort of thing took place. The size of the extended family on my father's side was such that Portuguese continued to be a tradition among them: because they were living in a large Portuguese community, both in Hayward and in Sacramento. My maternal grandparents, however, came over as depressed immigrants. In the early 1890s Simon Erik Isaackson Finne came over, and then sent for his future wife, Hanna, whom I called Mama, Hanna Fogde. They married and were very poor farmers when they first came over. Later, in Oakland they lived in an immigrant neighborhood with Chinese and Jews and Poles and Irish. The Irish at that time were the lowest rung of the ladder but had most of the jobs. So my grandfather Simon changed his name from Finne to Finley in order to get jobs in the lumber camps. These are little stories that I used to hear when I was young and developed this part of the myth.

My grandmother was a kind of matriarch in a strange way. She had six children in the first eight years she was in this country, and only one died. Her children all were able to go to school. They found a way. My grand-



*"My grandmother was a kind of matriarch in a strange way."* The Finley family c. 1912. *Left to right, standing:* Helen (Warren's mother), Genevieve, Arthur, Edith, and Raymond. *Left to right, seated:* Simon Erik Isaackson Finne Finley and Hanna Isaksdotter Fogde Finley (Warren's grandparents).

father, somehow or other, with all his odd jobs managed to send their children to school, and keep them scrubbed. All these things were family heroic stories about what they were able to do despite how poor they were and how uneducated she was. These are the things that you are told when you're very young.

My grandmother was a very hard worker, and obviously enormously determined to bring up her children well and strong, but she never learned to speak English properly. She forgot Swedish, so by the time I got to know her, she was speaking a kind of patois, which the whole family used with her, but no Swedes would understand. She could write a little Swedish, and sometimes wrote to her relatives. My grandfather, Simon, however, had gone to school in Stockholm and was, I

guess, fairly well educated for a young Swede at that time.

Vassa was a Swedish colony in Finland where my grandmother and her family also lived. My grandfather's people had a large farm. They seemed to be well-to-do peasant farmers. My grandfather had gone there as a conscript in the Czar's army when the Russians controlled that area. He deeply resented and hated it. (He was a fisherman for a while when he was a little younger.) But in that experience he met Hanna's father and saw her older sister and thought she was a very fine looking woman: strong and able. That was the one he wanted. Then he left Finland and came to this country as an immigrant, came all the way out to California across country. Had a little bit of money with him—he was waiting for his inheritance,

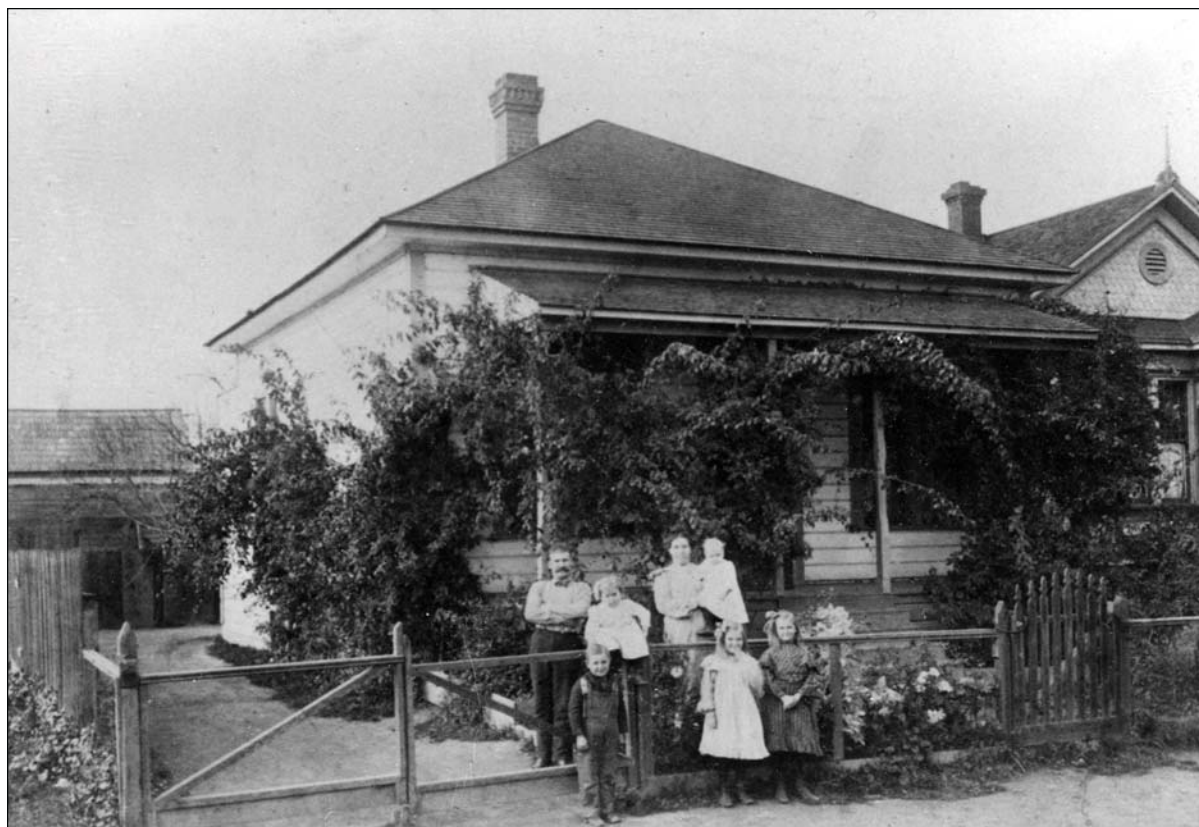
which he never got, but he had a little bit of money—and he bought a piece of land in Morgan Hill, California. Then, of course, he had to make a living, so he changed his name to Finley and went up to the lumber camps among the Irish workers.

All the time, he was writing to the father of my grandmother, saying that as soon as he had a little money he was going to send for this other daughter, who in the meantime had gotten married. And so he wrote, “What about your other daughter?”

And the father, whom he hardly knew, answered, “Well, she’s available.” She was only, I think, sixteen, seventeen. And this poor young woman came. She had very little education. In fact, some people thought she was retarded. That was one of the stories in the family when they got mad at her: Mama was dumb. But she wasn’t dumb at all, she

must have had culture shock. She came to this country through Ellis Island with her few little trunks. She had left all of her belongings at home, because my grandfather told her people didn’t use that kind of thing in this country—all of her carefully crocheted dresses and table cloths. And she left all this, her hope chest . . . she left all that in Finland and just had her few belongings with her. Came to Ellis Island. Didn’t know anybody, anything. Some man helped her. Now, we always joked about this man who helped her find the train across country, her helper, without whom she probably wouldn’t have gotten all the way.

In those days, can you imagine? Eighteen nineties. All the way across country on some of the first railroads to Morgan Hill, California. My grandfather didn’t meet her. She didn’t know what to do. She was stand-



The Finley family farm in Morgan Hill, c. 1905.



ing by the train station. My grandfather, not knowing what day she was coming, was still working in a lumber camp up north. So some neighbor came and said, "Are you Hanna?"

"Yes."

Took her to the little farmhouse that my grandfather had and set her up there. And in a few days he returned. They married and subsequently had six children. She ran the farm. She did all of the slaughtering, the butchering of the calf or two that they had and the chickens, because my grandfather would faint if he did it. He was a very sensitive man. [laughter] She did all of the heavy work and brought up the children.

These stories were to me among the things I can recall of my childhood—this family lore on both sides that I think meant more to me than the people who told them to me. We moved so much and had so little continuous connection with neighborhoods or people that I wanted very much to pick up the threads of who I was and where I came from, and I would listen to these stories and put them together in the most fantastic ways in my own mind.

There's one which my brother Don, who is very much a positivist and a good one but also very opinionated in his thinking [laughter], denies that he ever heard anything about. Of course, he considers himself the guy with the great memory, and if he doesn't remember it, it didn't happen. But I know that I heard this from the family: that somewhere around the turn of the century, when my grandparents, Mama and Papa . . .

By the way, we called them Mama and Papa because that generation, their six children, were calling them Mama and Papa. So we kids also called them Mama and Papa. And because my parents were of the "modern age" in the 1920s (they thought they were avant-garde in some ways and Americans),

they had us call them by their first names, Helen and Joe. So they were Helen and Joe, and my grandparents were Mama and Papa all through our youth.)

So, Mama and Papa at the turn of the century, the story goes . . . (I think my Aunt Edith told me this. Aunt Edith was the remarkable, wonderful, really mad woman that I loved dearly who was almost a surrogate mother to me.) So at the turn of the century, somewhere in there, there was an evangelist who came through Morgan Hill. (By the way, Mama and Papa came over as Lutheran Pentecost.) This evangelist just swept through Morgan Hill, and hundreds of people were swayed by his prophecy of the millennium at a certain date: the world was coming to an end, the second coming of Christ, that whole thing, that whole schmo. Mama and Papa gathered their children together and went to the top of Morgan Hill, left all their furnishings and their farm with neighbors and took their children and a few possessions and stood on the top of Morgan Hill with hundreds of others waiting for the second coming. Aunt Edith told me, "Well, we believed our parents. We believed Mama and Papa."

But it didn't happen, and then the preacher said he just got the date wrong. "It's going to come soon." So they all traipsed back to the farm and went about their business.

To me that's a wonderful story, because it sets the scene for my relationship with my grandmother, Mama. I really had a tremendously warm, affectionate feeling toward her. Though I couldn't communicate very well with her, there was something about her that I found extremely maternal. I knew her when she was an older woman, really, when I was a little kid. I suppose she was in her forties or fifties—a very large woman; very placid; very responsive. She could giggle a lot, laughed a lot if you made jokes. You had to make very

strange and crude jokes for her to laugh. She couldn't understand English very well, and she spoke in this kind of patois that we would use to some extent. She would call me "Poika" or "Varren," and so would my grandfather in this sort of mixed Swedish and English. I remember being extremely taken with her. She was always around. As I grew up, five, six, seven years old, they left and sold that house on Seventh Street in Oakland and began living with their children. My grandfather went on doing day labor and odd jobs, and my grandmother lived with the family.

Their daughters gave them such an awful time, constantly criticizing Mama. She didn't speak properly; she didn't dress properly. They'd sometimes dress her up until she would look like some kind of decrepit Queen of England and have her picture taken just so they could show their friends this was their mother. I guess they were ashamed of her, and yet they had a tremendous sense of loyalty and devotion to her for all that she had been. But they were trying to be upgrade Americans.

All of them had gotten a little education, and they all married in a way that they thought was well. Two married Englishmen, and that was considered great. Here are these Swedes from Seventh Street, from peasant stock, who had managed to marry into *English* families. You know, the whole idea of the British upper classes . . . but these guys weren't. They were just ordinary guys, but their parents were English and had English china around. I mean, the saddest kind of things. And being an American—being with it, going to school—my mother going to Oakland Technical High School, where she met my father. And so they married "well," you see.

*Would that include your father, too?*

My father married "down." That was a very sticky wicket we'll get to. My own parents had quite a different experience. But nevertheless, the feeling was they were moving forward. And here they had these two *peasants* who were . . .

We had a house in Alameda while my father was doing his internship in San Francisco, a very small house. We had my grandparents there sometimes, and I used to have to sleep with them. We had not enough rooms or beds, so sometimes my brother *and* I would sleep with Grandmother and Grandfather in the same bed when we were little kids, and they'd get up in the middle of the night to go into the closet and pray at the top of their voice. They would pray, call upon the Lord for forgiveness, and mainly this was their way of communicating to their families what was wrong with them: "Oh, Lord, please keep Jenny safe. Don't let her do this or that." And, "Oh, don't let Helen (my mother) say such mean things to us. They don't respect their parents." On and on at the top of their voices. Sometimes the neighbors would complain, and of course this horrified their children, who were trying to be nice neighbors and good upstanding American people.

But I admired them enormously. I thought there was something kind of wonderful about my grandparents, mainly because they were helping me to work out some sense of a rebellion that I had: "These people can get away with it. They can annoy everybody!" [laughter] And all under the guise of godliness, you see. So, they were a wonderful pair.

My grandfather would get me up in the morning and send me to school when they were living there, and he'd put some kind of horrible Swedish soured-milk clabber (which



"I admired them enormously." Warren's maternal grandparents, the Finleys.

I didn't like at all) on my cornflakes and tell me to eat it, and then he'd spit on his hands and push my hair back and get me looking good for school and send me off. I remember that he prayed. He'd stand in the door and in a loud voice call upon God to see me safely to school.

My grandmother would have long sessions where she'd cry and shout when she was praying. She was always weeping when she was praying; when she really prayed seriously, she wept. I remember when I was about four or five years old, she was lying on a couch having a nap, and I was sitting opposite her. She woke up very quickly and said, "Oh, Warren, I have been with Jesus." And she told me how she'd been on the lap of Jesus, and he'd taken her hand and put it inside of his

breast on his beating heart. And then she took it out, and Jesus had let her feel his heart.

And I said "Mama, you were there on the couch sleeping."

She looked at me. She said, "Varren, the devil make you say that." [laughter]

I never forgot that wonderful moment in which I was stating what I saw to be reality. In fact, when I'm doing fieldwork, when people are telling me what some might think to be *outrageous* things, incredible things, I will remember my grandmother. She was just *asleep*; she was just having a dream, and yet she got very incensed if I said that she was sleeping. So I always remember: be polite. You don't tell somebody that they were sleeping. You just say, "Oh, that's very interesting. What else did you see?" But I was determined that she was going to face the fact that she'd been sleeping. And so she eventually just said that the devil was in me and telling me to do that.

Those are the things that I remember as powerful myths on both sides of my family. These are things that had some kind of *deep* significance to me that remind me of what Simon Ottenberg said, that anthropologists (and, I suppose, a lot of other people) are what they are because they're in search of or yearning for a lost ethnicity. In a way those two strands are to me my connection with an identity. I suppose we could use the old tired term "roots"—the search for "roots," who you are. My immediate family moved so much from the time I was a little kid that my brother and I really didn't have that sense of connection with a place. We did with a family.

My mother was the youngest daughter in my maternal grandparents' family. When she was about seventeen or eighteen, she met my father. She was a very successful, ravishingly beautiful, young Swedish girl. Made her own



Warren's mother Helen. "*She was a very successful, ravishingly beautiful, young Swedish girl.*"

clothes. *Always* went out looking very spiffy and slick. She was a *beauty* queen for the high school at one point. When the war started, World War I, she was elected queen of the war bond parades that took place in Oakland. There were pictures of her in the newspapers, and she was very proud of this. She aspired to be a dancer or an actress. She wanted to get away; her two sisters didn't. But she was the one who wanted to get out. She wanted to go around the country. Some woman she had met was a dancer and had a troupe and was going to take her to New York, but my grandmother wouldn't allow it, said she was too young. She always said how terrible that was, because she wanted to do it.

My mother met my father while in high school. He had been at St. Mary's, an early Catholic high school, and she went to public school—the Oakland Technical High School. It's still there. It was a monumental

and fabulously modern building in those days. They considered it a wonderful high school.

So, he came from this devout Catholic family and had been to a Catholic seminary. They met, and he obviously became very smitten with her. She had *many* admirers, and that bothered him because he was a very serious and somber young man. Because of what he went through as a kid, he couldn't stand the idea that he had competition. She knew him, but she wasn't really that interested in him, and he used to come to her. In modern terms, he was almost, I would suppose, a stalker. He'd come hang around her house, wouldn't leave her alone. [laughter] She was always complaining, and her sisters and brothers used to tell him to go home and leave her alone, but she finally began to go with him.

My father was a son of Jose d'Azevedo, who was the son of Joaquim, who lived in Sacramento. Jose was sent to Cooper Medical College in San Francisco, which was a new minimal medical school in those days [acquired by Stanford University in 1902]. He got his degree in 1901 and started a practice in Oakland, California. Was a very successful doctor, mainly to a Portuguese clientele. A great many Portuguese had moved into the area, and he was one of the major doctors. Also, he was very advanced in a way, regardless of what his training may have been. (My father always wondered whether or not my grandfather had had any *real* training.) The doctors in those days were strangely prepared, but they knew what they were supposed to do.

My grandfather had very nice offices, first on Eighth Street in Oakland and then out on Lake Merritt in a large white house I'll always remember. It looked like kind of a southern mansion. That's now torn down, but

it overlooked the lake. And upstairs, above the family quarters, was this rather elaborate, early twentieth-century doctor's office. My brother and I used to sneak up there and look around. In those days they had these light boxes with hundreds of light bulbs inside and a rheostat that could turn up the heat, and you'd sit in there and sweat with your head sticking out. We always wondered whether or not somebody would get stuck in there sometime and get cooked beautifully, baked.

In my grandfather's office there was also the first roentgen X-ray tube in the Bay Area. He always wanted to get the new thing. In fact, he could have been a wonderful charlatan these days, because he always wanted the latest electrical equipment. Of course, that attracted a clientele. They didn't know how to use the X-ray. My father was the assistant when he was just a kid, fifteen, sixteen years old, operating the X-ray machine. They didn't have proper shields, and that may be why he became totally bald and probably a little bit out of his mind when he was in his seventies. [laughter] He would run the machine and make X-ray plates of people who . . . lord knows what happened to them! All of them were zapped by this very strong roentgen tube. Later, when I was in my teens, I got it after it had been discarded. I put it on a stand, and it was always on my desk when I was a kid, a recollection of my grandfather's office. The physicians in the family, including my father, never treated their own family. I almost died of appendicitis one time, and he just told me to go to bed . . . gave me an aspirin. [laughter] No, that wasn't the way.

My great-grandfather had a winery. In those days that probably made him a very well-to-do man for a while. Later he lost the winery, and things went bad. But nevertheless, while all that was going on, he had accumulated some money, which in those

days might have been just a few thousand dollars, but it was enough for him to send his children to college. Later, my grandfather and his brothers became physicians. They ended up in Sacramento or in Hayward, and my grandfather in Oakland. Then my father also went to Stanford. When my father went, Stanford Medical School was quite a different place from what it had been when it was Cooper's College and my grandfather was attending. Cooper's College had hardly been a real medical school, but they issued diplomas, so people'd go out and practice. My father always clucked-clucked about what his father knew, but Grandfather was a nice old man.

My father really became his father's father; he really ran the family, his two sisters and two brothers. (My grandfather was sort of an easygoing guy who didn't really get things done and later became a problem because he lost a lot of his money. His wife, my grandmother Amalia, spent it like water because she was a grand lady.) During the period when my father was in his teens, he was in *charge* of the family. That was about the point when he met my mother. He was eighteen or nineteen. He hung around her house a lot. He was smitten, and they joked about him as the guy they couldn't get rid of. He was always there, standing out on the street waiting for my mother and all that sort of thing. She finally began to go with him, and thereby lies a tale:

My father apparently became very amorous one night when they were together in the house alone and seduced my mother in some way or another. How true these things are, one never knows, but this is a story which came down. Then all hell broke loose between these two families. Here was this poor Swedish family on the one hand—these two old peasants with a daughter who was preg-

nant—and on the other hand, there was this well-to-do physician's family. This was *never* talked about within my family. I only learned about it by little asides and things that were said inadvertently. Of course, kids wonder about these things; when they hear something, they wonder about it. Finally, when my mother was dying, she thought she was confessing to me. I was a grown person at that time, and I remember saying to her, "Helen, for gosh sakes. That's a wonderful story. I don't mind at all. I always suspected something like this had happened, and it happens all the time. So what? I feel fine, you know." But I'm sure that in her very religious life, and the struggle that she had, she saw this as a very sinful part of her life—that she had *allowed* this to happen. And, in a way, she resented my father for having helped create it. There was this tension. They got along fairly well, but there were times when you . . . .

When my mother told her mother that she was pregnant, or it became obvious (she was two or three months along, I suppose), it created a furor. My grandmother suddenly became a very forthright Swedish peasant woman and Lutheran Pentecost. She went to visit my father's mother, Amalia, this fine lady with her laces and fine house, and said, "Look what your son has done to my daughter!" It was a real serious problem. Of course, this fine Catholic family, though they were *horrified*, thought they had to do something about it. So they invited my mother to live with them, partly (my grandmother on my father's side was great at this) to hide it, cover it all up and make it nice with a proper marriage.

My mother had a miserable year or two with my father's people, because his oldest sister was very jealous of her and wouldn't let her forget this and looked down upon her.

My father had three sisters. Two of them were practically my age. When I was fourteen and fifteen, my Aunt Marie and Aunt Alice were sixteen and seventeen. Then there was Molly, the oldest one, who my mother had to cope with during that period. And there was this unspoken, but constant, feeling of, "We're doing something for you. We're trying to be tolerant of you and help you," and all that.

So I was born under those conditions, and my mother had a nervous breakdown. Oh, all these wonderful, marvelous, terrible things that happen in families! She never, ever forgave that family. I was born in that house. Well, Dr. Enos's around the corner, I think—Dr. Enos's hospital. They took care of her. They did things for her, but she was absolutely miserable because of the atmosphere in that house.

Now one of the side issues is that almost the same kind of thing had happened earlier. Amalia, my father's grand dame mother (whom I liked very much, but I don't think I could have ever lived around her) made life miserable for her children, particularly her son. She was constantly complaining about her health. She lived longer than any of the others, but she was "just going to die any day." Her heart . . . . Her husband died before her.

When my father was trying to develop a practice of his own in Modesto, she would call every day and complain. But she was also very, very status oriented. She was the woman from Candelaria and Pico who had lived in a fine house, and she knew Bishop Nunes. He became known as archbishop of the Indies in Macao, China, and in India. And she knew all these grand people there. Pico's an island in the Azores. It's one of the biggest islands across from Orta, the city on Faial, which is another island just a little across the bay.

So she came to this country with the idea she was going to live well, and her husband



Warren's parents, Helen and Joe d'Azevedo (front row, center) with Joe's parents Jose (back left) and Amalia (second from right). They are surrounded by Joe's siblings.

was a physician now. She used to have family dinners with twenty-five, thirty people, with three wine glasses and fine plates and lace tablecloths. One thing that I remember about her, she wore corsets like in the 1900s. They were very *tight* corsets, and she had a big bustle and a very large bosom. She would walk through the room telling her servants what to do. She had one or two servants and a cook then; she ran a grand house.

A few years before my troubled birth, Grandmother Amalia had dealt with the scandal of her *very favorite* brother, Guilherme Silveira da Gloria, who was a poet and a priest, well known in Portugal and in the Bay Area. He had written a number of books of poems and was highly admired. Well, he was in the church, but he had a mistress that he had lived with for years, and the mistress finally became pregnant. When her pregnancy became obvious, my grand-

mother went a bit mad. She loved this man; she loved her brother Guilherme. She was just beside herself, so she forced this woman to come into their house, and she put her in a room and locked the door and kept her there . . . fed her and all that, but she couldn't leave until she had the baby. [laughter] By that time, she was able to make explanations. But, of course, he was defrocked.

That is one of the stories that I keep hearing from Portuguese colleagues that I run into who know something about California: "Oh, yes, I know. He was defrocked. He was a defrocked priest, wasn't he?" My grandmother had locked up his mistress so that the neighbors wouldn't know, and she did the same to my mother. It happened, I think, before my parents were married. I'm not sure. I never met Guilherme but I have pictures of him, and I know something about him. It's another one of those stories that became part of the

myth. I didn't know this when I was very young, but it became later part of the mythology.

My mother, in a sense, was treated in the same way—that she was a fallen woman and the family had to be protected from any stories about it. So they arranged a very elaborate wedding for my parents. My mother was, when they got married, about four or five months pregnant, so I was born two or three months too early, something like that. I always knew this. Very early, my brother and I puzzled over the fact that my birth date and their marriage date didn't jibe, you see. My brother, who always wanted to fix up history and make it right, said: "Well, they just made a mistake some place. I mean, you know. We'll have to check on that." Well, when I finally told him what I had learned to be the facts, he was absolutely stunned, because that doesn't happen. It just wasn't the way it should be for parents in those days. So that was a *profoundly* important juncture between those two families, and my brother and I lived with it most of our lives.

While my parents were living, this undercurrent of tension between the two families remained. And I, in order to get some kind of resolution of the thing, saw the families as two wonderful stories, two wonderful traditions that I was a part of that came together with this marvelous moment of an illicit love affair. [laughter] You know? That I was a *love* child. Later in my teens I began to put this together in a way. I made up the tale that turned out to be true.

But those kinds of stories, with all of those elaborations, are part of personal myths. When one asks what causes one to eventually take a certain direction in life, I think these things affect what you decide to do. I always had this image first of the hard-work-

ing peasants, deeply religious or at least deeply *feeling* people, who sacrificed a lot to bring their families up, on the one hand, and who lived kind of fabulously eccentric lives from our point of view. And on the other hand, the family of the people with a degree of wealth and a sense of themselves as having importance in the world. Their importance was that they were the cream of local Portuguese society; yet, I can remember as a kid being called a dirty wop on the street or a "blond Portugee," a blond wop and things like that in the neighborhoods that we were in, and fighting. Though I didn't look like a foreigner, I was treated as one because of my name.

*One of the statements that you made earlier about your maternal grandparents was, I thought, a pretty telling statement about religion as sort of an outlet for emotion.*

I just meant that they were highly emotive. They were highly emotive people, and their religion was their expression of that. They had visions. They had states of mind and euphorias and waiting for God to come at any moment, or they would see Jesus Christ on the cross. They believed that at any moment they would be whisked off to heaven to visit with the eternal. You know, there was that *emotive* excitement in their lives. It was partly shared by their children, but their children were withdrawing from it. Their children were really more secular—intensely religious, but in the American, the pallid Protestant way.

*Were you raised as a Catholic or as a Lutheran?*

I was part of the warfare. I was a pawn. The d'Azevedos wanted me to be baptized as



a Catholic and to be brought up as a Catholic. And my maternal grandparents were absolutely, vividly anti-papist, anti-Catholic: “Those dirty Catholics.” They would have none of that. Finally, I was christened both in a Lutheran church and in the Catholic church in Oakland. So I had two consecrations. I had again figured in the family feud. I think neither side knew what the other did. Nobody said anything about it. As long as I got baptized Catholic, I was OK by the d’Azevedos. As long as I was christened, saved, in the Protestant church, I was OK by the Finleys. So there again, the two traditions, you know.

*You spoke about the dream that your grandmother had.*

I remember being impressed by it, deeply impressed. And there was a period in my early adolescence in which I became very religious in a mystical sort of way—not in either of those traditions, but a series of mystical experiences and things. Going back to *that* . . . the speaking in tongues. My grandmother and grandfather, when my parents didn’t know it, would take me to their holy-roller, charismatic church in Oakland. I couldn’t have been more than four, five years old. I remember clearly my grandmother rolling in the aisle and talking in this marvelously *fluent* gibberish. And later on I would think, “She was so fluent in that language; why couldn’t she be in either English or Swedish?” The people were terribly impressed by her. And she had her moment in the sun, her moment of fame in her church.

My grandfather had great respect for that. He sang and had a great voice. He thought of himself as somebody who could have been a great singer, and he used to sing hymns in a loud voice, not only in the church, but at

home in the closet. And wake up the neighbors.

Isaac Karnley was my interpreter and associate in Liberia. On our first field trip, he was a member of a little Christian group in the village, and he would sing the same songs that my grandfather used to sing. It was *déjà vu* all over again—way back in the 1950s. Those things have their continuities.

To me my grandparents had dramatic lives. I guess they weren’t very dramatic from the inside, from the point of view of their sons and daughters, who looked upon them as just creating horrible scenes for them, and difficult. They were Americanizing fervidly. But I always looked upon these two old people as a source of great excitement and feeling. They made things happen; things happened around them.

Well, there were other parts of the lore. When I was six or seven, my father was going to school in Palo Alto, and we were *very* poor. It was during the Depression, of course, and that affected people like his parents. Certainly, we had very little. My father had finally decided to go to medical school; it was a late decision on his part. I was born before he decided to go back to medical school, so he was a late starter like myself. I always made that connection. I was ten years behind my colleagues in age and ten ahead of them in experience, and so was my father, who went back as a married man with children. That was very difficult. He got a *little* help from his father, but mostly he worked in the labs and cleaned up the monkey and rat cages and paid part of his tuition that way. We wouldn’t have enough money to stay in the places we were in. He had to move to something else. So there was a constant moving around.

My grandparents were with us, my mother’s people, in this four-room house . . . little shingled house in Palo Alto. There was



"This four-room house . . . little shingled house in Palo Alto." Warren in front of the family home in the early 1920s.

only one little potbellied stove that heated the whole house. In the wintertime it got very cold, and we'd all get up in the morning and stand around the potbellied stove. Well, there was one day when the stove smoked: it wouldn't work. My father couldn't start it, and it turned out that all the metal pipes were clogged. So he had to pull it apart, and he was cussing. He had to get over to the university, and he was in a terrible sweat, and we were all standing around shivering. The soot was coming out of the pipe, and my mother laid newspapers around, and the soot was piling up. Then he was trying to put the pipes back together. He couldn't make them fit, and my grandmother was standing there saying, "Joe, you must pray. Pray to God. Pray to God."

He was *furious*, "Oh, shut up Mama!"

Everyone would say, "Be quiet, Mama."

So she started praying in her loud voice, "Oh, Lord, come and help this poor man, this

poor son." And while she was praying, it fit. [laughter]

My mother, of course, was always very much impressed by these things, but she didn't say anything. My father was just deeply furious—nullified, not mollified. That is how my grandmother and grandfather pulled their weight. They did their thing. I didn't believe she had caused it; on the other hand, I had a great admiration and respect for that moment.

We used to tell that story at family gatherings. Sometimes in family get-togethers people would start reminiscing and telling stories about the family, but nobody was really interested in a sense of the history of the family. I didn't know of any of my close relatives who would tell me much about family genealogy other than little bits and snatches. They never all got together. Not both sides of the family. The Swedish side of the family had its own set, and the Portuguese side had

its own. *Very seldom* do I remember them ever even partly getting together, and it was uncomfortable when it happened.

I got most of my information about the Portuguese side through my grandmother Amalia. During my first couple of years at Cal, I had this great urge to visit her in Oakland and talk to her about the past. Oh, she was a grand lady! She would crank up her old Victrola and her old vinyl records and play operas for me. Sit there as the grand dame. And when I'd ask her about the past, she loved to expand on it. She wrote me some letters about family history, was one of the few who talked about it. My father, now and then, in *rare* moments, would mention something about his family. But he didn't like to

talk about them. He really felt estranged from them.

My great-grandfather died when I was about four. I may have met him. My brother, who knows everything, [laughter] says that we used to go to Sacramento and visit the distant members of the family. He was too young to remember, but he says he was sure that we had done that. So at the age of four, or maybe five, I might have done that. I vaguely recall meeting some of those people. Later on, I met the others. Whether I saw Joaquim or not, I don't know, but I have a vivid recollection of what he looked like, because I have this photograph which I always used to think I resembled. He was a weird-looking character.



## EARLY CHILDHOOD

WELL, ONE of the earliest things that I remember when I was very young, maybe three, four years old, is seeing my father now and then put on his World War I army clothes, his breeches and boots, and his hat, and take my brother and me out to the shooting range. And he would target shoot with his pistol. And, I remember my brother and I being very *bored* by this, because he was so . . . what would you call it? He was mesmerized by some vision of himself as a soldier with his gun and shooting. And he would sit sort of looking down at the ground with his gun, while the two of us sat next to him. And then he would get up and take a few shots. We never really understood what he was doing; however, he looked kind of grand in that outfit.

And then, through my mother and others, we learned that he had been recruited into the army and had been on the UC campus in the barracks they had there during the war. He was all ready to go abroad, to go to Europe. Then the war ended. It wasn't a disappointment, but it certainly interrupted a period in his life in which he'd gotten away

from his family, as happens to a lot of young people. He'd become somebody on his own; and somebody quite different than they had expected. I gathered he rather liked that life, even though it was very difficult for him. He had been a big shot in his own family, and here he was a little guy. I think that experience of being among a lot of other kinds of Americans was very important to him. He was the Portugee, you know, and they would joke and kid around. [laughter] Yet he was well educated and handled himself well.

So, he had some friends. And *then* of course, the real problem with my mother and her pregnancy and my birth and their marriage came right after that. So, here was a guy who had just begun as an adolescent to get a view of himself—and she, *too*. And the two of them found themselves in the clutches of a particular time: they were suddenly a family. Coming from the kind of backgrounds they had, they took that seriously. My mother had what was called a nervous breakdown and slowly recovered from that.

I would hear about the war during my youth really in terms of my father's involve-



*Clockwise from top:* Joe, Helen, Donald, and Warren d'Azevedo, mid-1920s.

ment in the army and the very strong anti-war feeling that was developing after World War I—the League of Nations and the rising conscientious objector movement. That had a very powerful effect on me. I just took that for granted. I took for granted that war was bad, and that I would never be in one. That was just a given. It would never happen again. That was the last World War, and we'd learned how terrible it was. It would never happen again.

I remember later when my father was going to medical school, part of his training at Stanford, was to go out to the hospital for disabled veterans on the edge of Palo Alto. Now and then I would go with him, and here were all these guys with limbs gone. And some of them, you know, pretty mixed up mentally. Part of his job was to come out there and administer to them as a medical assis-

tant. And I remember feeling very bad, but also I remember *he* never talked about it. We lived in a family where my mother was the big talker; she talked all the time. Drove us all mad at times. She had a lot of ideas, and she was very powerful and intelligent, beautiful woman, but she just talked incessantly and had a *lot* to say. My father had almost nothing to say. [laughter] Even when he got mad.

So I watched and learned to learn. I saw his concern and his care of these old men, all of them. And I remember feeling how terrible it was that that had happened to them, and so glad my father had escaped it. How wonderful it was that it didn't happen to him. But he never talked about that. I just knew. I remember one time when I was driving with him in our old Model T Ford from Palo Alto to see his parents in Oakland, and there was a guy walking along the road near Dumbarton Bridge in the dark. The lights shone on him. The man stopped and stared. An awful looking person with a disfigured face. And my father stopped and knew him by name and asked, "Where are you going? Get in and we'll go back home." And the guy got in, and we turned around and drove back to the veterans hospital; this guy had been an inmate and had gotten loose. That impressed me deeply, that my father talked to him like a real person, you know, talked to him with respect, and helped him. So, little things like that.

As for the war, that's what I knew and thought about it. It wasn't until I was in my teens that I made the connection between the development of fascism in Germany and the obvious imminent development of the second World War. Then I began to reflect upon the first World War and how my mother had sold war bonds and all that during the war. There had been a lot of patriotic feeling. Flags—everybody had flags—but that

diminished over time. They were too busy doing other things. Their lives were involved with getting by, getting jobs, my father getting through school. That was a hard time. The Depression hit us, too. My grandparents would have starved to death had it not been for their children who took care of them and kept them in the family, because my grandfather had no work anymore. He was an older man, and my grandmother had illnesses that required operations and all that. And so, their kids were taking care of them. They were dependents, which was very hard on them and hard on the rest of the family, because there was a real gap, a cultural gap between the two generations. That was a period in which people had had great expectations. There was this great sense that the United States, America, was moving on and improving. I remember my Uncle Raymond, a young guy that I liked very much, and an Uncle Arthur. *All* were people who were sure that next year was going to be better, and they were going to improve themselves. Something you don't see today really; a tremendous sense of security about the future.

*Well, there must have been a lot of investment in talk in the value of education.*

Oh, yes. You had to go to school. You had to get an education. Oh, *absolutely* essential. And if you didn't, you'd just go downhill. For example, I was supposed to go into medicine like my father, but I had a rocky relationship with him. Sometimes, deep antagonism. I was the oldest son, and I was expected to maybe follow along. Later, my brother filled that expectation, but he had a tough time of it. I took a lot of pre-med work in high school and junior college, and I was preparing for that, but I slowly realized it wasn't for me. I didn't want it. I admired it and all that, and

in a way, I felt for a long time that I should have. But I couldn't. It wasn't my world.

*Well, I get the idea from your memories about childhood that it was a very diverse environment.*

Yes, it was a crucible of ethnic and religious diversity and personalities of vastly different types. All impinging on one another, even within each side of the family. On the Swedish side, it was a wild and wooly bunch with three very powerful daughters, matriarchs really, always struggling to make their mother into an American. [laughter] Never, never, in a million years could they have ever molded her into anything more than what she was. And yet, they always tried. And they themselves presenting themselves always as some upwardly mobile people, and always bickering. Deep, family struggles going on all the time, deep jealousies, resentments about what was said. And, when the telephone began to be a part of their lives, the argument was going on day and night between the daughters to and from Oakland, Palo Alto, San Francisco, Alameda, then later Modesto. Then on the other side, there were problems I would say were gothic. It was a highly charged, Portuguese, Catholic extended family with all the melodrama that can mean. They were each loud and emotive in their own ways. There was a lot of weeping and wailing and constant mourning, mourning over something.

My grandmother, Amalia, would weep about music. She would sit and play these records for me, as I remember, opera. Then she would weep, and then she would tell me the story of the opera. Then she would read from her relative, Guilherme da Gloria's, poetry in Portuguese and then translate for me and weep some more. But she wept with great style. I mean, she always had a lace

handkerchief. [laughter] You know, to catch the tears. And she would control herself, very obviously controlling herself, because her feelings were so great that she didn't want them to bother me. But she wanted to bother me. And then she would weep when she was talking about the family, about poor Alice, poor this person, poor that person. And when she would talk about my father, you know, "Poor Jose, he works so hard." And then she'd weep some more. But, her weeping was graceful and well planned. It was part of her persona.

*Were you a good student as a little guy?*

Oh, off and on. When I was good, I was very very good; and when I was bad, I was very very bad. [laughter] Depending on what school I was going to. In Palo Alto, when my father was going to school, we started school on the same day. We have a picture of my father dressed with a coat and tie ready to go to his first day in pre-med at Stanford, and I was standing by him with clean shirt and shorts. The title of the picture was First Day of School.

*And what about your brother?*

My brother was too young. That was one of his problems. Donald was always in the background, but he was there watching. He remembers more than I do, in great detail. He had to remember. That was a life-saving device on his part. But, I went off to school. I did all right, excepting that I was in trouble all the time. I would get in fights.

*Well, is this where you got called the blond wop?*

Let's see. I was six years old I guess in Palo Alto. But that's when I was four or five. We

were living in Oakland, out in the Rock Ridge area, when my father was working at a bank, before he decided to go back to medical school. He put in a couple years at banking. He didn't want to go into medicine at that point, and he got more and more upset with what he was doing. My mother helped him decide to go back to medical school. So, it was while we were living in a rather nice neighborhood, as I remember, with a yard and all that sort of thing. I think I know why I was called a dirty wop. Our name, of course, but also because my Swedish grandfather, Poppa, would send me out in the street with a dust pan and a shovel to pick up the horse manure, because in those days they had horse-drawn carriages. You know, the garbage men and others. And I had to pick up the horse manure to bring back for his vegetable garden.

And people would see that and make fun of us. And I'd say: "Poppa, I don't want to do that."

But he'd say: "Now, boy, you must do it. We have to have this." I'd get a lecture and have to go do it. So, I was the dirty wop, or whatever. That was only for a short time, but I remember it very clearly, though I didn't understand what was being said. I was just thinking someone was making fun of me or didn't like me. I don't remember that being an issue later until I got to high school.

But now I'll get back to Palo Alto. I wasn't a good student there. As I remember I was having fun and feeling rambunctious. I would get into fights. I'm trying to think what I fought about, and I'm not sure. There was this teacher, I would be put under her desk a lot. I was disrupting class for some reason. I don't know what I was doing. The teacher would put kids who disrupted under her desk, and you had to stay there. It was like being in the corner, you know. And then I used to



reach up in the back of her desk and steal the things out of drawers that she had taken away from kids, including some that she had taken away from me. I don't know what they were—marbles and things of that kind—and I would put them in my pocket, and I'd give them back when I was out in the yard. I felt like Robin Hood. [laughter]

And then I was in trouble, because on the way home from school, I would go down to the brook. There was a brook through the area where my school was. It's still there. There's a lot of housing on it now, but it was a kind of wild area going through town—maybe Palo Alto Creek or something—and I *loved* it. There were polliwogs and minnows, and all kinds of strange people were camping there. It was the beginning of the Depression. Later on in Modesto, the same thing was going on in a place called Beard Brook. I was *fascinated*. I would go and sit and watch these people cooking with their families. I wanted to get to know the kids that they had, but I was afraid because they were so shy. And I didn't know them. But I would always go down there on my way home from school. I would wander down this creek in Palo Alto, sometimes with my brother or with some other kid from school. Each time they caught me doing it, I'd get a whipping from my father. Probably for a good reason, because there were stories of trouble, you know, in the area. These were called "tramps," yet some were whole families living there.

I must have talked my brother into going, and we found some floating logs, and we tied them together and made a raft. And we floated down this stream. My brother, of course, *all* during his early life, was a tattle tale. *He* told my folks, and of course, I got the whipping. I was the oldest one. I had brought him down there. Why did I go? Well, I was fascinated by people who *lived* in strange

ways. I remember thinking about it all the time. I watched them. I was fascinated by the fact that they were so different.

*Were you old enough? I mean, was the Depression something that people talked about, or was it just a fact of life?*

Let's see. I remember Herbert Hoover. We used to laugh about a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage. It was his slogan. We had jokes about this sort of thing. There were tramps coming to our house all the time, looking for food, *literally* hungry. And I remember my mother *always* there, not only in Palo Alto, but even when we had very little she *always* gave something. Sometimes she would complain when they left. But in the tradition of her family, like her mother and father, she never ever turned anybody away from the door. And at their church, they even brought indigent people home from the church to live in their house and fed them. So that tradition stuck with her. She *always* had to give to them. It was only later in her life that she became cynical about hand outs and things of that kind.

But I remember that very clearly. There were *lots*, sometimes two or three a day, coming to the door willing to work. "Is there something we can do?" Do it for anything—for a cup of coffee and a sandwich, anything, anything. So, *yes*. There was a lot of talk about the Depression. The folks didn't follow the news. We didn't even have a radio as I remember, but the word was that everything was very bad. And my father was desperately off many times, paying the rent. They would pay twenty-five dollars a month for this house. Well, we didn't have that half the time. I remember one thing that we wanted more than anything—my brother and I—was roast chicken from the roadhouse outside of

Palo Alto. We had gone by there once and had smelled and seen those roast chickens on the spits. And one time, my father, when he had passed an exam at school, felt very good, and he went out with a buck and a half or something and brought home one of those chickens. To us, we were living in splendor.

When my grandfather was there, we ate well. He'd go down to the railroad tracks. He would scavenge with a sack and with my little wagon, you know. I'd go down with him and sometimes Donald. We'd go down to the tracks, where the produce was being unloaded or loaded, and stuff would fall on the ground. He'd come back with *fruit* and *vegetables*. He did the same thing when we were down in the Bay Area. He'd go down to the docks and get fish. He'd come home with sacks of herring. I remember eating herring for days. So, the Depression was survived. It was very common. We didn't think of it as anything strange, because so many people we knew were doing the same thing. Everybody was frugal and careful.

But the people along the brook were different in the sense that they were living there in little lean-to's, and they were living in a much worse way than us. They were also from elsewhere. A lot of them might have been part of the early movement of people out of the Midwest. These were migrant laborers.

KATHLEEN D'AZEVEDO [Kd]: They were called Okies and Arkies.

Yes. It was in the 1930s. Later in Modesto that's where there were thousands of them coming through. But I never remember seeing a black person when I was a kid. I don't recall ever seeing a black person or even having it talked about very much.

Kd: There weren't any.

I doubt that there were, and if there were, people didn't pay any attention to them.

Kd: There was one black family in Alameda. That was all.

Yes, and there was one in my school in Modesto.

*So, when did you become a good student? When's the first time?*

Oh, not in that school in Palo Alto! I had a heck of a time there. I was always carrying notes home to family. My mother had to go up a couple of times to talk me out of trouble. I broke some kid's glasses, I remember, and she was terribly worried that we'd have to pay for them, because we didn't have the money. I managed to claim that he had started it. [laughter] I don't know who started, but I doubt I started it. I didn't really pick fights, but when things got to a point, I always fought. That was partly my folks doing, because they used to tell us: "Don't ever let anybody put anything over on you."

I remember them watching me one time when a neighborhood kid in Palo Alto had tried to fight with me out in the lot next to the house. I sort of fended him off and came back to the house. But they sent me back out to fight. I was ready to fight if I had to. So, I got in a lot of trouble that way. I don't remember what my grades were. They must have been abysmal. I didn't really have any interests of any kind at that school. I just remember I liked being able to give out the stuff that I stole from the teacher back to the kids, and being a big shot. I liked that.

And I liked that creek. I *loved* that creek. That was another world to me—polliwogs and strange people and all that. But then we went to Alameda. I guess that was after Joe,

my father, got through school, and he was helping his father for that couple of years while we were in Alameda. I was about seven or eight. And I went to Mastick school. Much later I learned that Kathleen had been going to a school nearby. Alameda was our connection. I liked that school. I liked the teachers, and I became a star student. I put on plays. I made sets for little shows that we'd have at the school. My grades were excellent. I was looked upon as a genius, because I had done well in some kind of IQ test. I was *somebody*.

I remember a teacher who used to give us fire drills and make us hold hands. None of us liked that. We had to hold hands with girls, protect the girls. And, there was one girl there who I wanted to hold hands with, but she was always with somebody else. Everybody felt that way. All the boys would complain. They didn't want to hold a girl's hand. And then the teacher made us dance. She was a weird teacher. She had a little Scottish dance that we had to do for exercise. And then we'd climb up the fire escapes and go back to class.

There was another teacher who had the art class. I loved it. She had a section of her class where we drew. We had to bring things to draw every day. Leaves. I was wonderful at drawing leaves. I could draw the most magnificent branch of leaves. I would pick them on the way to school. I *loved* that class. Oh, and poetry, she had us write poetry. But, she was the one that I had a real fight with. She accused me of plagiarism, that this poem couldn't be mine. I had a poem called "Kiting" or something like that. I had gotten the idea of the rhyme from that guy who used to write popular poems. Oh, Eugene Fields, a well-known name at the time. Doggerel stuff. I liked the rhyme, and I wrote my own poem in the same style. I was very angry at her, because I liked her. And I said, "You *show*

me where any poem like this has been written before."

She said: "Well, maybe you *did* do it." And after that, I felt very proud of myself, because I did do it.

*And also, you stood up for yourself.*

Well, I did in those days, but not always. There were times when I got beaten up and felt like a loser and all that. But, no, generally no.

*Do you think the poetic style of this old relative, Guilherme influenced you?*

No, because I don't think at that time I knew much about him. It was later that I knew about him. But my mother and my uncle Raymond, they admired that sort of thing. And of course, Amalia, my father's mother, poetry was a part of her bloodstream. Bad poetry as well as good poetry. Oh, and Edith, my Aunt Edith. She used to write songs.

Kd: I think that was a rather common thing. There was much more home entertainment. There was no television. There was not even radio.

And Edith would write songs. She even had one semi-published. She'd write love songs, and she would sing them and just drive everybody mad at family gatherings and play the piano in her off-key way. So, there was a place for it. But that teacher exposed us to many things, and I remember liking that.

So, that was Alameda. That's where I met the Mollers and Clyde, a friend of mine next door. He and I and Donald used to do all kinds of wild things together. His father was an old seaman, a sea captain, and later I

worked on his little yacht. They were Danish, German and Danish. But I was still a wop, at times.

*The wops, I thought, were Italians.*

Many people didn't distinguish between a Portuguese, an Italian, or a Spaniard. They were all just wops. Later on there was more vernacular distinction between them. Portugee or Portugoose! I was even a Portugee in Africa.

Well, let's see, we're now in Alameda, and there were the Mollers. That friendship went on for a few years. We used to see Clyde. He would come to visit us in Modesto, later. Then when I was going to Cal, the Mollers had a little boat, a yacht, a small one—thirty or forty footer. And they asked me to help them, and I'd work on the yacht. We'd go to the local regattas on San Francisco Bay and sometimes out to the Farallons. It was great. But Carl Moller was a very hard-bitten, Germanic, authoritarian type. I was a little afraid of him, because he was terribly severe. He tried to whip me into shape on his ship. And Ida Moller, she used to make wonderful Danish or German sandwiches. I was always hungry in those days. She used to make five or six of them for me, and I just stuffed myself with those sandwiches. I enjoyed that, and I learned something about sailing.

My father was helping my grandfather at that point. My grandfather was failing, and my father was trying to help him carry on his practice. At the same time, he was continuing his work as a student. Anyway, he had a microscope. My brother and I lived in a porch at the end of this little tiny house, a very old house. And there was a room on this side of it, and my father had his study there. A small little room with a table and his microscope. When he was gone, my brother and I spent

hours upon hours there. We'd learned to make slides. I was absolutely enthralled. I could spend hours with that microscope. And drops of water. I used to categorize them, different kinds of water from different places, and leaves and bugs and wings of insects and on and on and on. I recall that being one of my most pleasant times. And now and then, my father would actually deign to tell us something about it.

Don and I would do that together pretty much. We also stamp collected. We were great stamp collectors, especially Don. We scavenged stamps from various people and places. My brother still has it. He gave it to his daughter. We had a rather extensive stamp collection.

You know, we really didn't have many friends. We were always in new neighborhoods. Well, there was our friend Clyde Moller in Alameda. He used to come in, and we would show him the wonders of the microscope. We used to enjoy lording it over him, saying, "Look what we have here. Now, look into here Clyde, and you will see . . . ." You know, that kind of stuff. [laughter]

And then he and I and Donald had a gang. We were fighting with a gang a block or two away, and we used to lure them into our yard while we were up into the large tree with paper bags full of ashes from the fires in the stove. We'd wait up in our roost in this big tree in the backyard. We told these guys to come over to make a treaty, and then we dropped the bags on them. The whole neighborhood would be full of ash dust.

And then there was a strange, crazy lady who lived up at the corner, whose house was a place of mystery. It was really a wonderfully mysterious, gloomy, four-story old Alameda Victorian. She lived all alone with a stuffed monkey that had been her pet, and she used to bring us in, and the monkey would be sit-

ting in a chair, stuffed with a cap on its head and pants and shirt. And she would talk to it and tell us about it. It had a name and all that. Of course, we were transfixed by her.

Then across the street there was a house that had been abandoned. It had a lot of milk bottles in the back. I remember we loaded our carts with all these milk bottles and got one cent a piece for them. We felt so guilty. We had done something terribly bad. Here's part of that ethic, that Protestant ethic, whatever it was that we got. I couldn't go to sleep that night. We had gotten fifty cents for fifty bottles. We'd stolen this. We shouldn't have done it and all that. It was one of the few memories I have of my father as a kindly man. I called him in, and he comforted me and told me it was all right, that he would take care of it in the morning. Go to sleep, he said. And I had this wonderful sense of release from sin. Of course, he was a Catholic. He didn't know what sin was. Only my Swedish grandparents knew what sin was. [laughter] But I remember that *great* relief that all was right.

And the next day, he just told me, "Well, you take the money and go up and try to find the people there. If there's nobody there, then it's all right. They were going to get rid of it anyway. But if they are there, you tell them here's the money you got. You do that for two or three days. If they're still not there, forget it. It's all right." *Oh*, what relief. I had a sense that the world, the sky had lifted, you see.

But then we didn't know what to do with the money. We bought bubble gum, and then we felt a little guilty about having so much bubble gum. I must have had a bag full. We buried it in the ground in a tin box. The idea was that it was our treasure. You know, the wonderful things kids do.

There were a lot of crazy people in the neighborhood, mainly crazy old ladies. There

was one across the street who used to throw things out of her window at us. She was the rich lady. She was very rich, and she'd open her window and scream and throw things at us, and we loved her. *Oh*, and she had a bear skin in her backyard, a big old moldy bear skin. Obviously they must have had a very fancy house with bear skins, stuffed bears, and all. And we used to go out and sit on the bear skin. Then she'd open the door. "Get off my bear skin!" Then she'd throw out bottles and all kinds of things at us and scream and yell. She was a very old lady. We adored her.

We had a landlady living next door. Everyone thought she was also crazy. She had an electric car, and she'd get in her electric car and go buzzing about with barking dogs behind. Now and then, she'd have great fits, particularly when we'd drop ashes from our backyard tree and it would blow all over her yard. And she'd come out and scream at us. We loved people who screamed at us. They were the best.

*You said that you'd been christened or baptized both Catholic and Lutheran, but were you going to church at all?*

My grandparents used to insist that we go to church when they were around, and we'd go to their church. But my parents were uncomfortable about it because theirs was a wild and wooly holy roller church, and I remember feeling kind of strange about it, too, as I got older. My father had become quite secularized and withdrawn partly from his family, yet he still saw them. Although he became a non-Catholic, he was somewhat religious and sort of gravitated toward my mother's Protestantism, and my grandparents'. He had a lot of respect for my mother's parents. Now and then she could

drag him to church on a Sunday, but usually he was too busy, wanted to be too busy. She would go, but mostly she'd send us alone to Sunday school. So, we went to Sunday school, which I used to hate but sometimes enjoyed if there were interesting people and if they were doing something interesting. Like in Modesto, I led a Sunday school class. I didn't know what I was doing, but I led the class. And we put on plays to dramatize sec-

tions of the Bible, and I was the director and all that, so I had a role. And there were some interesting kids there. Yes, Sunday school was a kind of social thing. My mother seldom went. Both of them were estranged from their past and their families and yet were very religious in their own ways, their own mystical ways. I can go into that later. It had an effect on what I did.

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## FAMILY DYNAMICS

TALKING ABOUT estrangement within the family, part of which was expressed in religious views. In a way, that conflict, that intra-family conflict, was something that had a deeper effect upon me than I would ordinarily realize. The problem, actually, was that my father, because of the trauma that he and my mother went through with his family and her family over their marriage and the conditions under which it happened, withdrew from the orientation of his family, particularly with regard to Catholicism.

He developed into a kind of agnostic. Part of that had to do with the fact that he was in medical school and working very hard. I remember him studying all night with the light on in the other room, while my brother and I slept in the porch next to him. And I remember him being *gone* most of the time to school. I think the experience of medical school was to him a secularizing experience, but at the same time, he was surrounded by my mother's family. He had her parents living with us, and they were of course fundamentalists and prayed constantly and

interpreted everything in highly charged religious terms. I think, he found a kind of refuge in my mother's family. It separated him from his own, though he kept contact with them, close contact.

And my mother having been the rebellious young woman in her family, and having been involved in the scandal of my birth, and having what she considered to be the *terrible*, humiliating experience with my father's family and her so-called nervous breakdown when she withdrew for almost a year and lost much weight . . . . They thought she was going to die. She was just miserable.

By the time I was grown up slightly, and I and my brother were five or six years old, she had built some kind of personal boundary between herself and that world. She was very religious and respected the views of her mother and father, but, at the same time, felt she was an American in a fast developing world. She felt restricted by her immigrant family and yearned to move out into the world and tackle new problems.

She read a great deal. I remember she had a shelf of Harvard Classics, and she would

read things that she didn't understand, but she felt she should. She wanted to know about Aristotle and Horace and Plato, and she would now and then talk about it with us. She had this aura about her of somebody who wanted to learn, who wanted to get out in the world. But there was also a sense of lost opportunity. She had wanted to be a dancer; she had wanted to travel; she had wanted to do a lot of things, but marriage and children had tied her down. So, there was always around her a shadow of disillusion and resentment about her life.

Nevertheless, she was loyal to my father. She encouraged him to go back to school. She had encouraged him to do things that were very difficult for them both, and I think he looked to her for a kind of strength and leadership which he may not have had himself. That was a very rough period. It was during the 1920s, the beginning of the Depression. They were extremely poor. His parents no longer had the kind of funds that they had once had, so that he got very little help from them. And that's when I remember him working all night in the labs taking care of the monkey and the rat cages. And sometimes I'd go along with him for part of the night.

I remember making friends with an old rhesus monkey that would come to the side of the cage, bang, shake the wire and scream at me when I'd come in and then go off in the corner and look at me. And little by little, I got so that I could go to the cage and talk to him, and he would come up and sit by me. One time I brought him a mirror, a little tiny mirror. It drove him absolutely *wild*. He'd run all around the cage. Now and then he'd look at himself and then turn somersaults and come running around again and then throw it out at me. Little by little, he and I developed a very strange relationship. I remember

this because it was like later relationships with certain people. [laughter] It took a long time, but I had this sense of success. I was about seven, I guess. I had this feeling of great success that I could go there, and we would recognize each other, and there would be a kind of communication between us.

I remember one time, I had the mirror out, and he reached out for it. And he took it, hid it under some straw at the other end of the cage. He kept it, so I realized that I had made a conquest, and he and I were friends. My father cleaned cages, and sometimes it would take him all night. But I'd only stay a couple of hours. We had to walk through this eucalyptus grove, a sort of forest, that was around Stanford at that time, to our little house across the railroad tracks. Sometimes I would walk home alone, and I remember this feeling of having done something important.

My father would try to make connections with his kids. He had a hard time. He didn't know how. He really wasn't very outgoing on that level—in fact, on any level when I come to think of it. He wasn't outgoing with my mother, and she was always trying to provoke him into some kind of reaction to things. And now and then, she would succeed, but it would just make him uncomfortable. He was very much an introvert on that level. He had male colleagues at school and at work. He had people that he knew, and now and then they would drop over. He was much more lively with them than he was with the family. There was a kind of reticence when he was within the family. So, there was this aspect of him that I remember cleaning the rat cages; I'd help him with that. There must have been thousands of rats, white rats. We even had some in our garage at home. And I remember the horrible time when we came back in our little Tin Lizzy and opened our



garage door and the lights shone in. And this female rat ate the heads off all of her babies, because she was frightened. Here were all of these baby rats, just born, with their heads severed. And my father calmly just says, "Well that's what they do when they're scared."

And I thought, "Well, why do we have them in the garage?" We had rabbits that also came from the labs. We had a rabbit cage. My brother and I took care of them. Those things were very important to us.

I remember one time my father, in his strange way, thought that he was introducing me to the practice of medicine just as he was beginning to become one of the main students in the medical school. He took me into the rooms where they had all of these cadavers. I remember steeling myself and feeling, "Why am I here? What is all of this?" All of those bodies lying around partly carved up. And then he went over to a ceramic tub, took the lid off, reached in and pulled up a head, a man's head. The skull had been carved like a basket. You could lift it up. And here was this smashed face of a very ugly looking human being. I just stood there, and I tried to be calm, because I didn't want him to know I was afraid.

I always wondered about that, what it meant to him. I connected it in a way with early medical school, the stories told sometimes when some of his friends were over. They would talk about other colleagues and students, medical students, and talk about the way that they had hazed a couple of young women medical students. Once they had hazed one—it was a hilarious story to them—by taking a hand off of one of the cadavers and putting it in her bed. So when she went to bed, she felt this thing up against her and looked and became hysterical. Now as I heard the story, I thought *I* would be hysterical. It

was a horrible thing to do to somebody. It sounded so cruel, and I sympathized with these women who were trying to become medical people. And these men were trying to scare them, haze them, with a lot of sexual innuendo, too. You know, things that would frighten or upset a woman or a kid. It is a wonder that any woman got through Stanford Medical School under those conditions. It happened at other medical schools.

I suppose my father thought he was arousing in me an interest, an excitement about medicine, but you know, I thought, "I don't want that. I don't want to be involved with that kind of world." Yet that was very early. It took me many years to really decide that that was the case. But this was one aspect of my father's life. There was also the great personal struggle he had with regard to philosophy and religion. He tolerated my mother's people and their religion as well as my mother's much more rarefied philosophical, spiritual view of the world. She wasn't a fundamentalist in the same way that her parents were, but an extremely, I suppose, spiritualized Christian, philosophical Christian. He had sort of gone along with that. They used to read Harry Emerson Fosdick, a popular Christian revisionist who wrote uplifting, mind-improving books from a Christian point of view. They read those things together. A few years later when I was in my early teens, my answer to that was to read Robert Ingersoll, who was this great atheist who was looked upon as the devil by many Christians. I found him in a library, and I read avidly his whole collected works. That was my break with all that.

My mother, through all this, always had a kind of sense of herself as an outlaw, as somebody who believed she had been rejected by my father's family though she wasn't really. And because she wasn't able to get into

it [the family], she used to say, "I'm not an in-law, I'm an outlaw." Then in her own family, because she had always been a kind of adventuresome person, she had been called a bad girl when she was younger. She was the one who was going to get into trouble. And she *did*, with my father. So, she felt herself as somebody who had made deep mistakes, who had been vilified by people around her, and she tried to rise above that. She used to always make sure she dressed well. She made her own clothes, and during the 1920s, I remember, she used to go out in a kind of flapper garb, you know. She always looked well, and people always complimented her. That was important to her. She was quite beautiful actually, and she was trying very hard to achieve a kind of status on her own and to be the kind of person my father needed for his coming career. So, the conflict was often expressed in terms of philosophy and religion, though they didn't argue about it at all. My brother was a very perceptive, bright, young kid even when he was five or six years old, and we used to have long talks about the family. And later on, this would happen a lot. We would lie around in bed and talk for hours about different people in the family, and we would analyze them—what their foibles were, and why they did this, and why they did that. We were quite aware of this problem between our parents that really reflected the two sides of the family in a way.

These two people were in the crucible of that cognitive dissonance between these two families and their divergent orientations to the world. My father's withdrawal from Catholicism had made my mother more of an anathema to his family, though they treated her well. They didn't treat her badly, but she felt everything was a slight. She had become paranoid about them. I remember my brother and I talking about how terrible it

was that all she could talk about was this terrible humiliation that she had gone through. She talked incessantly about it. It was a kind of an *idée fixe* with her. The more I think about it, the more real it becomes that there was this early, very early discord in our lives.

My brother handled it differently than I did; in fact, he accommodated it more. He was younger, and he had a hard time when he was very young, because he was always the one who was crying, always the one in the way. I was always the one that was out doing things, and he was the one who tagged along. Everybody was complaining about him, because he just didn't do anything right. But as he got older, he was able to cope with them and deal with them more directly than I was. I became more and more rebellious about my family. He never rebelled. Later he did—much later, in his late teens and in his marriage—but that was much later. He had a wonderful mind. Right now to this day, I call him when I want to remember something accurately that happened. He has a calendric mind. I mean, he can remember dates, times and names and places, things that just escape me most of the time.

I used to argue a lot with my family. I didn't argue much with my father because he was non-responsive. He would just grunt. Well, sometimes he would get angry. He would argue a bit, but he was a Jesuitical arguer. I always felt totally at a loss when I had even ordinary discussions with my dad, because he would go around and around in a most convoluted way and end up, in his mind, winning the argument, when really he had said nothing. [laughter] And I used to be so frustrated. Once you'd get him started, you'd get this speech from him, a monologue. When I look back, it was utter nonsense. It sounded pontifical. I was aware of that when I was young, when I was ten or twelve, and

in my teens, feeling it was hopeless to get into discussions with him about religion, about philosophy. He would always become very pompous and sonorous. He would hold forth, and when he was through, I still hadn't the slightest idea what he'd said. [laughter]

I think a lot of people get impatient with that. I think that's part of the business of going on, is that you become impatient with bullshit. But, his wasn't merely bullshit. He meant it. He didn't know he was afraid of committing himself to an idea, so he would go around and around and around. If he felt that you were wrong, and often he did and he wanted to correct you, he didn't know how to do it directly. He had to do it in this most indirect, convoluted sort of a way, where you'd get lost. You didn't know what he really believed. So, I didn't have much of a direct connection with him. Yet when I was twelve or so I created a kind of idealized version of him in my mind, particularly as a doctor, as a man who helped people and who really did commit his time and energy to his profession in a way that few doctors do. He was a rural physician and surgeon later on, and he spent a tremendous amount of time with his patients. But he neglected that aspect of his life with his family.

It was always confusing and mysterious to me, because I was never sure where I stood with my father. I don't think he was sure where anybody stood with him. He had trouble with his two brothers, because he was the oldest and he had to deal with them almost as a father. He had to correct them and admonish them, and I suppose he felt that they were losers. They weren't. Well, one of them was, turned out to be a ne'er-do-well; nice guy, though, Virgil. And then his other brother, Alfred, whom my father, again, looked down on like he would a younger brother who was never doing things right.

Alfred, when I was very young, was a star football player at the University of California—Azevedo or "Aze" as he was called, the famous Portuguese football player. Later he became very important in the San Francisco school system and in the Democratic Party, but my father never gave him credit for that, always looked upon it somehow or other as a fluke. He also had a program on TV. My father couldn't *stand* that. It just made him furious to listen to Alfred hold court. Yet my father, himself, whenever he had a chance to speak, they'd give him fifteen minutes and he would be there two hours. He loved expounding, but he couldn't stand his brother doing it, because his brother could not possibly know anything.

I think he felt that way about both of his children too, that they were just not coming along the way they should. He didn't understand anything about the development of children. [laughter] And the way he handled it was by just withdrawing, or now and then having a kind of a rage. Seldom did he ever spank us, and then only when my mother insisted on it if we had done something wrong. He just wanted to leave us alone. We were to grow somehow like weeds in the field. And yet, because children do, I remember idealizing him, his work and his career and his determination, his *hard* work. And as kids do, if they've got a chance, they seek the heroic in parents. My mother helped in this. She helped create a myth about him. She wanted us to admire him and to be loyal to him, and she would sometimes try to explain his behavior to us. But at the same time, in the same breath, or at another time, she would be in an absolute state of desperation. She'd have tears and hysterical rages over the fact that he was so difficult to get along with, because he was so silent; and he was gone so much, and he didn't talk to her about *any-*

thing. When he did, it would only upset him. And she was a very voluble, talkative person, very high strung, and very intelligent. So we had this feeling that she was trapped, that she had been trapped in a relationship. That was one part of it. Another part of it was, of course, that we idealized her as the helping, loyal wife and all that, the mother.

*But do you think that when you were growing up you had this, these realizations? Or is this in retrospect?*

Well later on in our early teens, we could articulate it to one another. We felt it. I remember talking about it with my brother. If your mother has tantrums and depressions and locks herself in her room, you know something is going wrong. Now, I'm sure that happens in many families, but it was a disturbing thing during those years.

*Did you have other relatives, aunts and uncles, that would try to explain it to you?*

Yes. That she was high strung, and that she had always been a problem in the family. And yet everybody admired her because she worked hard, and she always dressed well, and she'd made all of our clothes, her house was neat, and she did all the right things. So, there's always this double entendre, you know, about people. Also, about my father. They thought he was *wonderful*, and they'd always tell her, "Don't complain about him, he's a fine man. Look what he's doing, look how hard he works." These were my aunts, the two aunts. They were always telling my mother, "What are you making such a fuss over?" and, "How lucky you are." But she felt that she was unlucky. On the other hand, there were long periods of time where things

went very well, and we all had fun and did things together.

Most of the time, my brother and myself were left alone, left to just do our own thing. In a way, I look back upon that with a certain amount of delight. We had a lot of time to ourselves, a lot of space. We could do all kinds of things. There were just a few things that we got into trouble about, but if we followed certain rules we were left alone to think, to do what we wanted, to wander about. And my rebellion was to run away.

*Did they pack your bags for you? [laughter]*

Well, not exactly. There was a point when my father intervened. I must say that he had some sense. Later in Oakland or in Alameda, when I said I was going to go, they said nothing. They just waited, and so I *went*. And when I came back, the door was locked. It was late, oh nine o'clock at night. The door was locked, and there was a pillow and a blanket outside, which was really clever of them. [laughter] That was to them a diagnostic feature of my personality. I was a difficult person. And, of course, there was the family legend about me. I had been born under strange circumstances and from their point of view this was always problematic in a person. Lord knows what the Lord had in mind, you know. The devil did do it. At the same time it created sympathy for me. I think this is how my Aunt Edith felt. Her child had died just before I was born, and his name was Warren, so I got his name. I'm so glad, because my mother was going to name me Horace. She was reading the Harvard Classics at that time. When I think of it, I shiver. [laughter] Anyway, my Aunt Edith, really was very much a second mother. When Helen was not well or she and my father, Joe, would go away, Edith

was always taking care of me. So, I got to feel very close to her. And there was not only the idea that I was replacing her own baby, but at the same time, there was always a kind of deep sympathy for me, because of how I'd been born and my mother was considered such a problematic person.

*You know, you said you moved around a lot, and this was characteristic of your youth, but it seems like in a small enough universe that you could maintain contact with this extended family.*

For the first few years, it was all around the Bay Area, and, yes, we would keep seeing the family, but our schools and our friends were constantly changing. Our basic environment was changed, but there was always the family connection. That's true. That made some difference. And, my aunt, Edith, was really a port in a storm to me. When I was a little kid, two or three years old, and we were living in Oakland, I would run away and get lost. I would know that I was lost, and I'd be worried and crying. Then I would look over and see her house, and I'd go to it. So, my folks always knew where to find me. [laughter] I was over at Aunt Edith's. So, that business of running away, I don't know why I really did it. But it might have had to do with the lack of attention and . . . I don't know. It's hard to put those things together, but one can *guess*.

My brother, he didn't do that. He was just miserable. He was just a miserable kid. For example, we'd go get ice cream cones. We'd drive out to Berkeley. There was a place out in Berkeley where you got chocolate-covered dip cones. I think it was a partly dirt road going out to Berkeley in those days—all farms and marshes. And we'd go out on Sundays to get these cones. And almost every Sunday, while the rest of us were eating our cones,

my brother would hold his until it started to melt. It would be melting and dripping all over him, and he'd scream and yell. He'd spoil the day for us. I remember once my father reached back and grabbed his cone and threw it out the window of the car. And Don would scream some more. He was an unhappy kid. I think he was pretty much set aside by the family when he was very young. Later on this changed. He worked very hard later on to get the approval of the family, accommodated much more than I was able to do.

It was about that time that he and I began to communicate with each other. We gave one another a lot of mutual support; however, we also fought *terrible* battles. People say we came close to killing each other. One time, my brother threw a frog spearing hook at me when I was driving away on his bicycle. He was furious with me. So he threw this frog spear, and it stuck in my back. Now, that was a serious thing, you know, close to homicide. [laughter] So, he'd have these furies, and we'd fight tooth and nail—I mean batter each other, and people would have to separate us. Sometimes we'd go at it secretly in a room and quietly fight one another, so we could fight without getting into trouble. In fact, my Aunt Edith remembers us in our teens at a time when we had to live together and sleep together upstairs in this little, hot room of her house. We'd get into arguments, and she and my uncle said they'd hear us in the middle of the night biff, biff, bock, bock [fighting sounds], with no one saying anything. However, when that wasn't going on, he and I were able to talk a lot about things, about the family.

He was very smart. He had a good mind for things that I didn't—mathematics, statistics, remembering details, methods. Take our stamp collection, for example. He says to this day that he wanted to organize the

stamps according to country, and I wanted to do it according to color. That's his idea of an insult—but he is wrong. I probably had some idea that color was significant. [laughter] So, anyway, a lot of our early life was overwhelmed in a sense by family conflict and the personalities of my mother and father—the drastically different personalities.

*Was English spoken almost exclusively, or did you hear other languages from the grandparents?*

My Swedish grandmother had a hard time with English, and we had a hard time with her patois. Portuguese was spoken in my father's family, almost exclusively, but they all spoke good English as well. My father, who was a fluent Portuguese speaker, never spoke it in the home, and that's part of this second-generation phenomenon.

*Were you ever aware of your father dealing with any prejudices or ideas about him as a Portuguese versus a WASP at Stanford?*

He never talked about it, but others did. There was a woman doctor in Modesto, Ruth Schmidt, who, when he was sick and dying, told us how he had gone to bat for her when she started her practice. When the other doctors were giving her a hard time as a woman, he was supporting her and helped her to get started. She just adored him, and she knew he had similar problems when he started, as the one non-Anglo doctor. Well, of course, he had a Portuguese family, and some rural and uneducated Portuguese relatives as well, so he had that experience early in life.

I don't remember either of my parents having any kind of prejudices against other ethnic groups. They'd grown up in very mixed neighborhoods in the Bay Area, among immigrants of all kinds. But my Aunt Edith,

oh, the Chinese terrified her. She couldn't bear the Chinese. You don't go to Chinatown, because they've got trap doors in the street, and women are taken down and sold into white slavery. You don't eat Chinese food, because they have rats and bugs and, lord knows, cats and things. She never got over that. My Aunt Edith was a marvelously dotty woman. I loved her dearly, but she was dotty. She had a narrow, little life, but she was wonderfully generous to us. You go by what people are to you. But she had trouble about racial minorities. My mother and father, as far as I know, if they had them, they didn't express them to us.

*So you don't feel like you grew up with any attitudes yourself?*

No. Just in the family, just in the rest of the family. My Swedish grandparents and the others were outspokenly critical of other minorities. They had tags for all of them: Poles, Chinks, Irish, and Catholics. Oh, those awful, dirty Catholics, and here my mother had married one, you know. But they learned to get along with him. They admired him, because he was a hard working successful man, and he wasn't a real practicing Catholic, you know. Yes, there was a lot of that. Those were the prejudices of that period, but my parents seemed relatively free of them.

Kd: Didn't your father threaten to send you to military school?

Oh, that was in Palo Alto. Yes, because I had been so bad. Well, my brother had been bad, too, but it was always my fault, because I was the oldest. I always got blamed for what he did, and he always told on me whatever I did. But I got into some kind of trouble. Maybe it was this business of constantly go-

ing down to the creek, or I don't know, different things.

But anyway, my father had a *lot* of trouble with disciplining us. I don't know how he disciplined his brothers and sisters. It must have been an ugly scene, because he probably just got glowering angry and glared at them. Something like that. I don't think he would ever physically hit. The few times I was spanked was when my mother insisted on it, and he would reluctantly take us into a room and give us a few slaps and that was all. Strange man. Later on, I had no trouble spanking my kids. In fact, I regret it to this day. I feel guilty about spanking them.

So one time, he says, "Get in the car." He and my mother seemed to have worked this out, and he put both of us in the back seat. They had little bags packed.

And my mother said, "We're taking you to the military school."

There was a military school near town. There were terrible stories about how hard it

was for these kids, and how sad they were to be away from their families, and that they were all kids who were put there because their parents couldn't do anything with them. So here they were taking us to the military school. I must have been about seven. I remember that my brother was crying, and we were both scared. And I was thinking, "They *don't* mean, they *can't* mean this. They *don't*, they *aren't* going to do this." I remember telling myself, "Don't give in. I am *not* going to be scared of it. I *know* that it is not going to happen."

And as they drove they kept talking about how sorry they were they had to do it, but they just had to. But I just was quiet and just waited. And sure enough, just before we got there, my father said, "Well, we've changed our mind." And I had a sense of tremendous victory, an inner assurance that I knew it was not going to be that way. So, yes. Those are the little things.





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## MOVING AROUND

I GUESS WE WENT to San Francisco after Alameda. Yes, because I was younger in Alameda. And in Alameda, with the Mollers next door, my friend, Clyde, and I began to be interested in space, in outer space, of course. I ran away a number of times in Alameda, and the idea of spaceships somehow engrossed me. I don't know what I was reading or seeing. There were comic books in those days about spaceships. Buck Rogers, I guess. Or was that later? And also Flash Gordon. I was into this business of spaceships, going to the moon, to Mars or Venus. Oh, Jules Verne, and Edgar Rice Burroughs, maybe I was reading those things at that time. But somehow that was just the beginning of it.

It was in San Francisco, a little later, that I got very interested in space travel and things. I had been reading Edgar Rice Burroughs and H. G. Wells and Jules Verne. We had the whole sets in our family, and I had also started going to the libraries. This kind of imaginative thing really attracted me, because it really was getting away. This was really running away. This was getting to the

other side of the world and outside into the cosmos. I remember seeing a little ad in some magazine about the American Rocket Society and Robert Goddard, and I sent the slip in with my name, and I think I became the youngest member of the American Rocket Society—one dollar a year. I wish I had my membership card. And I would get this little circular every now and then about rockets and rocketships.

I, Donald, and our friend, Steven Mills, who was an Hawaiian kid we liked very much, would sit around making drawings of rocketships. I still have them. They were wonderful. I was terribly absorbed and mystified by the problem of how you could have a propeller inside of a closed vehicle, and how you could route the air so that you were driven forward. Why won't that work where you have the stream of air from this big propeller going through a series of tunnels and then around the skin of the ship and to the front and just circulating? Wouldn't that press you forward? It wasn't until years later that somebody who knew something about physics explained to me how it just won't work.

So, I drew a lot of ships that had big propellers inside, and a little place for people to sit, and a very strong nose for landing. That occupied *a lot* of my imagination at the time. I was *determined* to get off the planet. It couldn't be another town; I was going to get off the planet. [laughter] That was a wonderful period. It went on for a couple of years. I guess I was about eight to eleven or so, when we were in San Francisco and even in Oakland, until I was about twelve. I'd matured a bit by that time. I'd decided balloons were the way to go, because I couldn't handle rockets.

I remember we tried to make a balloon in my Aunt Jenny's basement. We had old sheets and canvas that we sewed together. This was inside a basement, and we had a very heavy gondola made out of old boards, and we were going to blow up this balloon with the gas jet. [laughter] This is what kids do. We could have blown up the neighborhood. The thing is, we could never get the gas to stay inside. We didn't know how to make it air tight. But this was all a business of getting us off the ground and off the planet. I found that *terribly* absorbing, and I think I got my brother excited about it, too, although, he was much more intelligent about it. Nevertheless, he went along with these things.

So, at that point, I think I was doing a lot of reading. I was reading Dickens and Joseph Conrad. These were around my parents' house. And, oh, James Oliver Curwood, a wonderful series, and Jack London's Alaskan stories, about animals, from the point of view of animals. That was in San Francisco when my father was interning at the S.P. Hospital—the Southern Pacific Hospital, out near the panhandle. The panhandle of Golden Gate Park was our great range. We'd spend a whole day going out

through Golden Gate Park, getting bamboo spears and chasing the peacocks to pull their feathers and doing all sorts of wonderful things. Out at the Japanese Tea Garden we found frog's eggs and little tad poles, and we'd bring home jars of them and watch the eggs hatching. We'd play in the trees like Tarzan. That was when the Tarzan series was in the movies. Back in the late 1920s there was that weird Tarzan who wore a bear skin. What was his name? Lincoln or something. A terrible version of Tarzan. Oh, we had read *all* of the Tarzan books. But, anyway, we were Tarzans and explorers out there in Golden Gate Park.

We were there one year, while my father was interning at Southern Pacific Hospital. He wasn't sure what he was going to do. He hadn't quite finished, and we were at a kind of impasse, so he decided to help his father, and we went to Oakland and lived in a place called Rockridge in a nice house there. He helped his father keep his practice, because my grandfather was failing.

My father carried his practice for a year or so, but he was looking for a place where he could open his own practice. Finally he got his medical degree and passed his state exams. Then, of course, the question was *where* was he going to practice? This was in 1932 or 1933. The Depression was still going on. That's why he was helping his father, because his father had all the equipment. But his practice was falling apart, and there was no money. I don't know whether he really helped him get back on his feet or not. But anyway, that's where we were. Then he decided that he better get into his own practice.

Finally, some of his relatives, said, "Why don't you go to Modesto in the valley? There are *a lot* of Portuguese there, and you will be the only Portuguese doctor." My father didn't like this at all. He didn't want to be the Portuguese doctor somewhere, the token doc-

tor. Yet he spoke *fluent* Portuguese and the name of his family was known, so he finally decided to try Modesto. He and my mother left us with my Aunt Edith in Oakland and went to Modesto to see what it was like. They had a tiny apartment, a basement apartment while he was searching around. He met a lot of Portuguese families who not only welcomed him but *begged* him to come, so he had this feeling that maybe that was the place to go. He had no money, so he had to rent a space next to a dentist who had a large office and let him use part of it. My brother and I, we were still going to Clairmont Junior High School on College Avenue in Oakland. I enjoyed that place and got along pretty well there. I had some friends. They had a wonderful library, the Clairmont Public Library, and I spent hours in that library, because it was boring at my aunt's place. I would stay after school and before school and on the weekends. I think I read everything in the damn library.

As for my teachers, I don't recall them well. In Palo Alto, when I was in early grade school, I remember how they looked, but I can't remember their names. And I don't recall any particular relationship with them, except the teacher who used to put me under her desk all the time for being out of order. Then there was the school I enjoyed in Alameda. I remember the looks of the teachers, two or three of them, but not their names. I just enjoyed myself and did my work. At Clairmont Junior High, I don't remember any teachers at all but I do remember the kids that I got to know. We used to tool up and down College Avenue and get hamburgers. And then I spent a lot of time in the library. As far as I recall, the school was all white. In fact, all through my early schooling, I don't remember any minorities. There must have been at least a few, but they didn't register.

As for being a "Portugee," that tag had diminished after I got to junior high school. Now and then somebody would say something like, "You're *Portuguese*, aren't you?" but in a friendly way. I don't remember any hostile ribbing, because I didn't look Portuguese, I guess.

My parents voted for Roosevelt, and they were excited about the New Deal. I would say they were moderately liberal politically, but I don't recall any extensive discussions about politics, except the war, the first World War. You know, how the politicians have gotten us into it and all that. I don't recall it being talked about very much.

The *key* thing that was on everybody's minds that we knew was that the war was created by old politicians while young people died. It was created not just by misunderstandings, but by evil intent, people with evil intent or people who didn't care what happened to others. War could be avoided, but it wasn't. Every effort should be made to keep there from being another war. Another war would destroy the world, so people had to resist war. Well, that made a lot of conscientious objectors, and I was one. In fact, my son was one later. I suppose I influenced him in a way, but that was my feeling. It was like many of my friends felt. It wasn't politicized. We didn't talk about political movements or anything like that. It was the general feeling. We had strong feelings about ethical and moral issues.

I liked staying with my Aunt Edith and my Uncle Armand. He had a lifetime job with Pacific Gas & Electric. He was an accountant and office worker who left at exactly six in the morning to catch the bus to go across the Bay on a ferry to San Francisco and got home every night at six fifteen. And my aunt would have breakfast on the table in the morning, and she'd have dinner on

the table at a certain time every night. And my brother and I tried to adjust to this amazing household.

We were a bit looser in our own house. I mean, even when I was twelve or thirteen, I thought, "This is an awful life." Poor Aunt Edith was a bird in a cage, you know, but she liked it. She was very comfortable in her life. She felt that she was doing the right thing. And we ate *well* there. She fed us *magnificently*. She said she cooked for us, because her husband was an Englishman. She always put it that way, "You know, they eat very little, and they're very picky." He wouldn't eat very much, and she loved to eat. She loved to go to delicatessens and bring home different things. So, when we were there, we were the excuse, and we had this great food all the time. I remember her partly for that and also her many kindnesses. She was a very generous woman and loved kids. She was always a lot of fun and took us places, places that the rest of the family didn't have time to go to or didn't want to do. She would take us to the movies and shows that my grandparents didn't want us to go to. I saw Clara Bow when I was eight or nine years old. Dancing ladies and all that kind of thing in those terribly stuffy little movie houses where the film was breaking every ten minutes, and black and white film and no sound. She'd take me, because my brother was always whining. And then we'd look around all the stores and do all kinds of wonderful things and then come home and not tell my Uncle Armand.

I always wanted to go to sea, like my great grandfather, being a whaler, an adventurer. I was always wild about the idea of traveling some place—out beyond the Golden Gate. But here were my parents in Modesto. My mother wrote very long letters about what it was like, trying to prepare us for the place. Really very nice, terribly hot and all that. She

liked the farms, like her parents had come from. Nice letters. I wonder if I still have some of those. So then the time came when we went down to visit. We were shocked to see my mother in this basement apartment. It was down some steps, under a house. But she had fixed it up neat and clean. She had a table cloth, and flowers, but I felt very sad. I felt she was doing this to cover up the fact that they hadn't made it yet, you see. Yet it was very nice.

I remember she had fresh strawberries, and she was very happy that here was a farming area. They had *enormous*, ripe strawberries and fresh cream, and she was very proud of herself about all these things. Fresh fruit, which I remember Modesto for. We ate oranges and peaches and plums and tangerines and pomegranates, fresh vegetables. We were surrounded by miles of orchards, farms, and irrigation ditches.

There were a lot of Portuguese there. Modesto was an old California community. Modesto was a hundred years old when we there. It started in the mid-eighteen hundreds. There were thousands of Portuguese on ranches and farms, the mines and work gangs. Not just Modesto, but Manteca, Ceres Turlock, and Knights Ferry and all those little towns. Modesto was the central, rural town. My father was still trying to get an office going and make connections. He had a positive reaction from the Portuguese farmers and ranchers, and he decided to stay. So, my brother and I went down, and they got a little house. They were paying something like thirty dollars a month for it. That was substantial in those days. It was a little clapboard house on Magnolia Avenue, I remember.

I don't know the exact date when we went down. I was fourteen years old, so it was probably 1933, 1934. We went down in the summer, and it was so hot. It was just like an

oven, yet it was beautiful, all these orchards everywhere and ranches. We had been very urban, so this was really a culture shock. But I recall that we'd take cold baths. There were no showers—I don't think that people took showers in those days. Showers were a fancy thing that came later, or maybe at the school gym or in the army. But we'd fill the tub with cold water and lie in it just to cool off before you went out. Of course, nobody knew anything about deodorants and things like that. You were *always* sweating, and you had to change your clothes a lot. People took a bath once a week in those days. I mean, when I was a little kid, they'd make hot-water baths, and my brother and I and my parents would all take baths in the same water, you know. It took a lot of electricity to heat up water. I remember the big pots poured in the tub to warm the water. We didn't have a hot-water heater there.

But in Modesto, this little house was all right, very small—something like the one in Palo Alto—and near an irrigation ditch which became really our major area of recreation. We'd swim in the irrigation ditch. It was just half a block away. Beyond that was all vineyards. Now it's all built up, one large town all the way up to the mountains, but in those days that was all vineyards and orchards and ranches beyond the ditch right where we were. It was so hot in the summer that we could hardly move, and it took us a while to get acclimated.

But then my father had this little office next to the dentist office, the dentist who put in all my gold fillings by exchanging medical care from my father for the fillings in my teeth. He put gold in almost everything, and my dentists today look at my teeth and say that's the finest job they ever saw. They tell me to stay out of dark alleys. And don't smile. That was all done by barter.

Then my father needed somebody to be in the office when he was on calls and to answer the phone. So, for about two months during the summer, I was his secretary. I would put on a clean shirt, wear white pants and white shoes, which was the way you dressed up in those days in that area. And I'd walk a couple of miles down into town, to his office, to this one room that he had. The phone didn't ring very much, but when it did I had to answer and make record of it. I felt very proud of myself. When he was there with patients, all Portuguese, they *adored* him. They treated him like *God*. You know, "Oh, doctor, thank you, God bless you."

Most of them were poor. We got very little money. For that first year or two, I think most of our income was in the form of food. We got meat, which we had to keep in the icebox. We had to get ice. My mother used to complain about how much the ice cost, but you had to have it. And we'd get meat, vegetables, and boxes of fruit. I remember eating twenty oranges a day. I loved them, because they're cool, and when they're juicy, fresh, wonderful. Grapes—we had so much they would rot, and my mother would give them away to tramps that would come to the door. She would give away the food, because we had very little money.

Sometimes she had to borrow from her sisters. We couldn't borrow from my father's people anymore, because they were really broke. My grandmother had seen to that. [laughter] In fact, a few years later, my father had to support her. She lost her house and all that. So, they were really in a crunch, and this was mid Depression. It was the worst of the Depression. But I remember getting a real respect for what it meant to have done what my father did to get himself through medical school, and then go out to a place like this where he had to establish himself, establish

a practice with nothing. Just from scratch. We were really living from hand to mouth, but I don't think we ever were hungry, but it was all what people gave us at that point. I think we always ate well. I remember wanting things we didn't have, but there was always food.

We didn't see much of the extended family, because that was a long distance in those days. That was a two-hour drive in one of those funny old cars to get out to Modesto in the 1930s. A lot of it was dirt road. I didn't drive at that point. We didn't have another car, and my father needed this one badly. He wasn't going to let one of his kids tool around in it.

I remember going out with him on house calls during that period. It was probably the closest to him that I ever got, during that year when I was sort of helping him, and he was very nice to me in his way. This was in the summer and partly when I'd just started going to Modesto High School. After school sometimes I'd go to his office and help, and he would have house calls. We had a phone, which again cost more money than we had, but he had to have it, and he'd get calls all night long. I remember him getting up at two, three in the morning, sometimes four or five times, and going out to all these distant farms. Sometimes I went with him if it was earlier in the evening. I'd go out with him, and I

had this wonderful sense of watching what I thought was noble work—going out, delivering a child, the family crying and mourning about the pain that the woman was going through, the men outside trembling and they couldn't go in because the woman wouldn't let the men in the house.

I had the feeling that I was seeing another part of the world which I was terribly curious about. It was also a period when I was able to idealize my father to some degree, even though he was still the most taciturn, unresponsive character that the world ever produced. There was very little conversation with him. I remember writing a story about going out with him, and I read it to him. He said something like, "That's pretty good," and that's all. That's where it ended. I was very proud of it. I think I still have it. It was well written. I was about fourteen, I guess. It was the beginning of my interest in writing. So, that part of the experience was pleasant. I had a feeling of being involved, that we were sort of doing something, all of us, together. And my mother felt good during that period like she was important. She was for the first time out of the realm of the influence of her family—away from both families, which was probably very good for her. I don't remember us being visited much up there. That was a hard trip for anybody to make.

## HIGH SCHOOL

**T**HEN I WAS in high school in Modesto. That was the beginning of an awakening. I was there long enough so that I could go through high school, going to one school and having a lot of friends, all the way through high school. That was four years in which I developed an environment for myself. I did a lot of reading. The Modesto library was absolutely marvelous. I spent hours and hours there. One of my first readings was Havelock Ellis. That's how I learned about sex, because I couldn't talk about sex with my father, and asking my mother would have been out of the question in those days. And my brother was more ignorant about such matters than I.

My folks didn't know how to talk to kids. My mother would say some things indirectly at times, but they seemed horrendous and scary things. She should have had a daughter, you know. Two boys were just a little bit beyond her ken, and my father didn't know what children were. I remember wanting to talk to my father about nocturnal emissions. I was worried about it, and my friends were

no help. They had gruesome stories about how terrible it was, and how you were going to die. Oh my god. [laughter] What an era!

It was then I ran across Havelock Ellis in the library, a wonderful, fortuitous thing. But there in the most lugubrious and formal language everything is explained, yet put into a moral framework where you better watch out. The devil will get you. Not that Ellis did this, but his oblique exposition with mysterious footnotes in Latin left much to the imagination. I forget the titles of the book or two that I read, but that library was a mine. I read everything. I knew parts of the library that nobody else in my generation knew. [laughter]

That's when I was not only into Havelock Ellis, but learned what little I knew about sex, and a lot of it badly, because you don't learn that way. But at least it put me at ease. I knew that I wasn't going to die or go crazy—that it was all right sometimes—that masturbation was not something one should do, but it happened and you don't go crazy or become a moron, as my family might have told me. Or go blind, yes, like all the kids

that have glasses on at school. [laughter] And your friends telling you what their parents or their buddies said—you know, your dick will fall off and all that. But anyway I think that I got so that I was able to tell others what the facts were. But still, it was a *terrible* time for that sort of thing, you know. You didn't really know. You had to go to a source like that to be told that it was a natural thing. That was a relief. At the same time, it was loaded with moralism, even Havelock Ellis. I remember, there was the admonition, "You must be very careful, you know. You'll have to avoid things," and on and on.

So, anyway, that's why the Modesto library was a great source. Oh, that's where I got into mysticism. I ran across a book called *The History of Oriental Religion*, by Will Durant. I read through this big, thick volume about Buddhism and the various sects of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, et cetera. I was fascinated by all this. It gave me a perspective on Christianity. About that same time I began to read Robert Ingersoll, the great atheist. My parents were reading Harry Emerson Fosdick and all those help-yourself, spiritual-uplift books, and I was reading Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian poet. I thought he was wonderful, and Donald was also reading him after I found his work in the library.

I was also very much involved with Richard Halliburton's book, *Royal Road to Romance*, traveling and doing all these adventuresome things. Then there was Sven Hedin, the explorer in Tibet. I devoured it. I was going to go to Tibet, to Lhasa, if it killed me. I was going to get there. Oh, the *Rubaiyat*, Fitzgerald's translation of Omar Khayam, and then a lot of crazy things like Don Blanding. His poetry from Hawaii got me all involved in Polynesian fantasies. Also James Norman Hall and Charles Nordhoff's *South Seas*

*Adventures*. And, of course, Roy Chapman Andrews across the Gobi Desert! Oh, and the theosophist, Madame Blavatsky. I got very much involved in that. It really fascinated me, because it was so mysterious and wonderful, another language.

So I began to think of myself as something of a mystic, that I might become a Buddhist, or follow a guru and do the early Swami days thing. And there was a couple, the Ballards—their first names I don't remember—who led the I Am Society, and the Rosicrucians were very active at that point. A friend of mine, Pierce Young, and I went down once. We were very interested in the Rosicrucians. They did such marvelous things. We'd see these ads in the paper about how you could influence the world around you. I must have been about sixteen or seventeen at the time. We drove down to San Jose. That's where their temple was. We went into this building where they were having a convention in a great big amphitheater. Everyone was sitting around trying to put a candle out down in the arena. They were all concentrating on that candle. And we sat there respectfully intent, but we always managed to get each other giggling, and somehow or other, after about fifteen minutes of looking at the candle, we looked at each other and we started giggling. We couldn't control it. You know what you're like at that age. I mean it was absolutely irrepressible. Both of us were rolling on the floor. We were led out, and we got out on the lawn and rolled around for fifteen minutes or so. I remember, you know, this double sense one has. The one that you want to believe because it's so marvelous and it fits in with other things you've been reading and thinking, but also you're very aware of reality. That damn candle is not going to go out that way, you know? I always remember that as being a moment of truth,



like telling my grandmother, “Mama, you were sleeping.” It just ain’t so. On the other hand, it was a beautiful experience seeing people trying to blow out a candle. There’s something kind of holy about watching people who believe it can happen.

When I was at Berkeley I got to know Swami Ashokananda. I am not sure of the name, but there was a Vedanta center in Berkeley at the time, and I remember going there quite a bit. Yes, that stayed with me for a while. This part of my interest was mystical. It was a way of handling the religious millennialism of my grandparents. The I Am people possibly were millennialists in the sense they thought there was a colony of Lemurians living in Mt. Shasta who had space ships and all that. At some point, they were going to emerge again and cleanse the world. Aside from fundamentalists like my grandparents, these were the only millennialists I remember. I don’t recall if any of the other mystical groups that I was interested in thought in millennial terms, but they may have.

Nevertheless there was this struggling with religion through mystical alternatives and finding a new level for myself. I remember arguing with my mother about it, and sometimes my father whenever I could get him involved. But all I’d get from him would be these long, lugubrious philosophical sermons that I couldn’t understand, and it ended up where in some way he was always right about something that I had questioned. He loved to converse as long as he could work out this weird, Jesuitical type of solution that he always had. I don’t really understand him, so I really shouldn’t talk too much about it, except that it didn’t register on me. And my mother would argue a lot about these things, you know, how it wasn’t really Christian.

There were these very excited discussions with my mother, and often my brother would be in on it. He was sort of on the side lines being a referee. I think she was glad that I was interested in anything that was spiritual, but she wanted it to be more Christian. She felt that I was moving away, and I was. I was moving into the stratosphere, into the cosmos, where I wanted to be rather than down in those little houses and Sunday schools. She was very bright but very conservative in a way, religiously. At the same time, she understood that there were many ways of looking at things, and she’d done a lot of reading in philosophy, so she liked the philosophical search aspect of it. But she always wanted to bring it back to the fundamental Christian thing. Like her family said, “You’ve got to be *saved*.” You have to believe in Jesus Christ, you have to believe in the scripture and all that, even though you might have doubts, and even though you might have other ideas, fine, but you have to come back to that. Well, I didn’t want to come back to that. I thought I was leaving that.

So I would argue a lot, and I was quite rebellious on that level. I was determined to make my points now and then with my father, but he would just sort of mumble. He didn’t have much to say. He had too many problems about that himself, his whole problem with Catholicism. His problem was trying to absorb the orientation of my mother’s people, and he liked that, and he got along with them, and they respected him. But he wasn’t comfortable with any ideology. He had an awful time with any kind of religious ideology. He would *try* to talk to me about such things, but I could just tell it was like pulling teeth. And as I say, he would babble on in this pontifical way of his that I

always thought was nonsense. It really wasn't, but it sounded to me like he didn't want to face facts, didn't want to face realities. So anyway, there was a lot of that. I got very much involved in that.

In high school in Modesto I have some recollections of people. One clear recollection is an old professor, Willie Brown, who was the physics professor, a great hulk of a man, a big shambling kind of a guy. He had the lab and a classroom. His classroom was full of marvelous things—skeletons and stuffed animals—and the lab was full of test tubes and Bunsen burners. It was a fabulous place to be in. At that point I still had some notion that maybe I was going to go on into medicine, so I had to take physics and chemistry. He taught chemistry and physics, and I really responded to him. He was a very gruff guy. “Azevedo!” he would say . . . . I was Azevedo in those days, because there were too many Portuguese around who had dropped the “d”, and my father dropped his. “Azevedo, what about this, and what about that?” and he'd ball me out for things that I'd do in the lab, but he was always watching because he liked me. He thought I had promise. I found the specific gravity of something, some metal ball that he dropped in water. I don't even know what it is today, but I worked out the specific gravity to his satisfaction. And when we got around to physiology—he also taught that—I remember I was the one who went out to the slaughterhouse and got a cow's eye, a great big cow's eye, and started reading about lenses and the structure of the eye. And I dissected the cow's eye before the class. He was very impressed, but he was too gruff to say so. “Now that's a pretty good demonstration as far as it goes.” I really liked him. He never gave a real compliment. It was always off hand.

I learned one thing from him that I've never forgotten. He used to put things on the board that we were supposed to copy into our notebooks. The whole class would be there copying. And I would copy, and I'd look up, and I'd copy and look up. Then he'd say, “Azevedo, I've got to tell you and the class one thing. You look at that board, and you get a whole sentence in your head before you put your eyes down on the paper. Otherwise, you are going to break your neck!” He was so right. I learned from that time on even when I'm typing to look and get at least six words or seven words, and not to look up every time. Otherwise, you'll break your neck! He was a *wonderful* character.

When my grandfather's medical office was being dismantled, they were taking things out of it and selling them, and one of the items was an old roentgen X-ray tube. I begged for it. A beautiful thing, you know. A big bulb, two terminals on each end. It was still working, and I loved the thing. I made a fine wooden platform for it, and I had it as a kind of a display in my little room at home. I was very proud of it. Anyway, I took it to old Willie Brown, and he said, “Oh, let's see what we can do with that.” And he rigged it up, and he made a fluoroscope. It worked. The whole class was showing the bones in their hands. There must now be a number of people with cancer, you know. [laughter]

My father lost his hair by playing with the same tube when he was a young guy helping his father with the first X-ray machine in the East Bay. So, here we were all looking at our hands, walking in front of it, seeing our skeletons. My brother claims that it couldn't be, that didn't happen, but I remember this clearly. Yes, Donald says, “Oh, it couldn't have happened. He couldn't even have gotten it going.”

I says, "Willie Brown got it going. I was there!"

"How did he get an image?" I said he made some kind of a sheet or a florescent screen. "Well, I never heard or saw such a thing," says Don. [laughter] But it happened. It actually happened, and for two or three days there were these demonstrations going on in that classroom with students coming in. How times change. So I remember Willie Brown very clearly. I liked him a lot, and I learned from him not to look up at every word, not to break my neck.

Then there was Miss Johnson. See, I can remember the teachers there. She was the drama coach, and she was an interesting large woman. These are all "Miss." All the women teachers at that time were Miss. I remember one married one, Mrs. Hardy, who was the music coach. She was a Mrs., but all the rest were Miss, Miss. So, Miss Johnson, a sort of a large, heavy-set woman with a kind of a pretty, big, round face, and she taught drama and put the plays on.

I was reading Don Blanding, this maudlin poet, a sentimental, romantic character. But it was about the islands, and I was all hip on going to Hawaii or to the South Seas. And she let me and my girlfriend, Bobbie Jean, put up a bunch of palm fronds in her classroom. We made a hut, and I got a Victrola, and I played some hula music, and I would read Don Blanding. Miss Johnson would bring in class after class. She got me out of my other classes to give readings to all of her classes. I felt wonderful, and I was reading about the islands, you know, and hulas, and moonlight and sea. Oh! Bobbie Jean danced. [laughter]

Bobbie Jean Miller. Bobbie Jean Miller, who became a friend of both Kathy and me at one time, was an energetic woman and very bright. Her parents had open house where

all the kids could go and do absolutely wild things, where you could get away with murder. I learned to drive in her family's car, that old Ford. You could do anything in her house. It was a southern family. They were kind of rural, Midwestern types, and very nice and all that, but they're a little different from the other people around.

Bobbie Jean was a very bright, energetic young woman, and she had lots of friends. That's where I met Kathy for the first time, through Bobbie Jean. Kathy was staying at her house. I don't know if she remembers *me* then, but I do remember her. A dancer, she was really a gorgeous creature. But it was a little early for me even to be interested in gorgeous creatures. And she would have danced there at Miss Johnson's class if she'd been in my high school. But Betty May Anderson danced there, and Bobbie Jean.



"A dancer, she was really a gorgeous creature."  
Kathy d'Azevedo.

They danced with skirts that they had made from palm fronds, and they did hulas, while I read Don Blanding. Miss Johnson loved it. She thought it was so marvelous and talented of us to have done this. [laughter] So, I enjoyed her class, and I was in a number of plays in school, probably because of her.

Oh, and another thing about Miss Johnson is that she took one summer to go to Tahiti. So, this young maid school teacher went to Tahiti, and when she came back we asked her how it was, and she would look mysterious. We all guessed that she must have had some kind of thing going on, or she wanted us to think so. Miss Johnson made her mark on my mind. And a number of others. Miss Peron, I will never forget her. She was our French teacher, and she was wonderful. I wish I had spent another year with her. I might be able to actually read and speak French with some fluency. Now I merely stumble through it. She was marvelous. A little skinny woman. She looked like a reed, and she had a little tiny mouth, you know, intoning “pum, pume, puce.” And she’d tell us stories about Paris. She would go every summer to Paris and come back with these fabulous stories of food and la Tour Eiffel, and the Musée, the Louvre, and all that. We all thought she was kind of funny, but she taught, and I remember her. Her teaching method was excellent. She knew how to teach a language. I took German with someone else. I never learned any German, and yet I passed the German exam for my degree. Well, I know how I did it, but we’ll get to that some other time.

There was Miss Painter, who was in charge of the school newspaper and the yearbook. I became the editor of the school newspaper. I wrote editorials, which she would edit and change. I fought with her all

the time, because they weren’t mine; they were hers. She would change them. She’d say, “Well, your grammar is terrible, and you can’t say those kinds of things,” when I would talk about the problems in the school and all that. So when I’d look at them, they just didn’t sound like me at all. So, anyway, I was the editor of the school paper.

The one minority I remember is Tsugimi Akaki, a Japanese girl. *Very smart, very hardworking*, and she really did most of the work. She was good. I would help lay out the paper, but she actually would lay it out. Half the time I didn’t know what I was doing. But we had a very good paper, mainly because of her and Miss Painter, who was a “Queen Victoria” about the whole thing.

And there was one African-American. Her name was Samantha Henderson. She was a light-skinned mulatto African-American, who was a brilliant, top student. She got A’s in everything and was very reserved. Nobody really got to know her. I tried to know her, because she was very interesting, and I don’t know, I just had some feeling I wanted to know her. She was very aloof and cool. When she’d leave school, we didn’t know where she lived. Samantha Henderson. Funny how you remember certain people. She reminds me of the story by Gertrude Stein called *Melantha* about a black woman. Somehow or other, I related that to Samantha later, when I read Stein.

There were some Portuguese and Italians at the school. There was Joe Gallo, of the Gallo Winery. I knew Joe off and on. He was Italian, and I was Portugee. Now and then we’d go out to the vineyards, and he would snatch a jug of dago red from the winery. *Really*, in those days, dago red! The Gallos were still doing jug wine. And we’d go out and lie in the grape vineyards and drink. He

would get drunk, and I would just sort of drink what I could of the stuff. But we'd talk a lot about life and things. [laughter]

Joe Gallo was the disgruntled younger son. That was where my friend, Pierce Young, was going, too. And the now lawyer, Nick Stephans, the Greek kid, and another whose name I can't remember. Nevertheless, there were four or five guys. We had a little group which we called the Minks. That was really racy, because we were saying, you know, we were all so *sexy*. We were the *Minks*. So we would fool around town in a car, cruise up and down the main street. Nothing would happen, but we were always talking about women and sex. I don't think any of us, well maybe at that point Nick did, but none of those guys had a real girlfriend or knew any woman they could get real close to. But how we could talk! Could they talk a big line, and you'd think that every one of us was what we called launce-men. Nevertheless, that was good experience.

I liked that bunch. We had a good time. We went to somebody's house every week where our mothers would make dinner for us. My mother made a wonderful dinner, and we sat around being big shots and even had a little wine. And we'd go out to the roadhouse dances together. We'd go to meet girls and dance, because you'd find all these farm girls at the dances. At that time the pop music was crooners, big bands and crooners. If I heard the music, I'd know that that was the period. But it was pre-country music. It wasn't country music. Oh! We didn't listen to that! I didn't get a taste for that till Kathy and I used to go across country to Evanston in the '50s and we'd listen to all this marvelous Midwestern and southern music and got to *love* it. But nobody I knew listened to country music or even the blues. It was just Okie music. Or, music by blacks. It had to be fil-

tered through, you know, like the Presley thing later. White—black, white men with black hearts sort of a thing.

So with this group I really began to get around a little bit, and I had a couple of girlfriends, but I didn't smoke until I was nineteen or twenty. No, I didn't smoke at all. Didn't care to.

Then I was in plays. I was in operettas at the high school, and I was in sports. That dropped completely when I went to the university, but I was a track man. I was pretty damn good! I ran the mile in something or other rather good. And I played basketball and golf. George Porter, a doctor's son, and I, we used to go out and play golf two or three times a week. I got *fairly* good at that, whatever "good" meant, but I could go around the course. But, the track thing, I was pretty good. I was a good runner, and the coach was going to send me to a track meet. Then I got sick and I couldn't go, so I ended my track career. But anyway, those things were going on in high school.

Now, any other teachers? Oh, Mr. Mancini [pronounced Manchini]. People say "Mancini" today, but Mr. Mancini, who may be a relative of the popular screen composer today, was the director of the band, and the band would play for the operettas. Mrs. Hardy was the music teacher and director, and Miss Johnson was the organizer, and I was in two or three plays and things of that kind. So I felt that I was really moving someplace when I was in high school. All kinds of things were happening. And Willie Brown was shaping me up on not breaking my neck. It was quite a high school for a rural area.

And this is about the time that I was exploring the Rosicrucians. That was just beginning. It was something I didn't discuss much with the other guys in the Minks group, except with my friend, Pierce. Yes, with the

Minks we could mention it, but they weren't interested. They had other things on their mind. But Pierce was somewhat philosophical, and he was a musician. He played the piano and was pretty good, and he thought he was a composer. But really, to a composer, he wasn't a composer. [laughter] As they say among sea captains.

Anyway, it was a time of political and social problems. In 1936 was the big longshoremen's strike, the development of the CIO longshore union—the ILWU. And the farm workers were really living in a dismal condition, the so-called Okie period. Hundreds and hundreds of Midwesterners were moving in and camping around the farms and along the rivers. That's when I used to go up to Beard Brook in Modesto. I used to wander out there on weekends. There were hundreds of camps. Okies, migrants living there, and I got to know some of them.

There was a county hospital along the brook, where I met an old Negro man who had two withered legs. He would go out and sit by the brook and watch the people washing clothes or swimming down below from a little cliff. And I got so I'd go out there every week and have a long talk with him. He had no teeth, and we would sit and talk. He was a wonderful old guy, and he would make interesting comments about the people he would see and what they were doing. He would tell me what was happening down there and who these people were, and what that family had done yesterday, and what this person had said to that one. There was a swimming hole, and I used to go swimming there with some of these kids. So it was Beard Brook, another one of those escape places where I went out to see different people. And here was this old man. I used to know his name. I'd talk to him for hours, and for many weeks I remember going out there.

But in 1936 the longshoremen were going on strike, and the CIO was organizing in the Bay Area. They were also sending out contingents to organize the workers in the fields. Well, I can remember one day, when the Modesto editorials and headlines were full of the communist revolutionaries coming up the road to turn the workers against the growers in the canneries and the fields. I would say two or three hundred farmers went out with pitchforks and scythes and put their cars across the road to stop the longshoremen. Well, the longshoremen never marched that way. They just filtered up, you know. [laughter] But, here was this local mob waiting to stop an army of longshoremen that never came.

Actually, they did do some successful organizing later, but it was very hard. These people were so poor, they didn't want to take a chance on anything. There were some summers that I worked the orchards. Donald later did it really very thoroughly. He did a lot of cannery work and picking work. But I did it sometimes for a few weeks at a time during the summer just to earn a little by going out to the apricot-drying sheds.

You carry these great big trays of apricots that the women had cut in half to lay out in the sun. I remember one time I dropped a tray. I was the one non-Okie among them, and I remember them all stopping and looking at me like, "What are you doing here?" I had dropped the whole tray. I felt awful, but I went on working.

I felt I should just leave, but I remember one older woman came up to me, and she says, "It's all right. We have all done it at least once." I'll never forget that. She was being very kind to me.

The others were, obviously, thinking, "Why doesn't this nincompoop get out of

here? We don't need him." So, I worked there occasionally.

*Was that kind of like pick-up work?*

Yes. Just go and ask or stand in line to the foreman. I was getting a couple of dollars a day, or something like that. It was just terrible wages these people were getting and the way they were living.

Then I worked sometimes for farmers. One farmer I'll never forget. I went out to take the job that was in the paper. He needed somebody to clear a ditch, and I went out on my bicycle, way out on some farm. There was this irrigation ditch, which was dry, but it was full of tules about ten feet high for at least a mile. He gave me a cutlass, a scythe, and a hoe and said, "Go to work." [laughter] I lasted about a morning. It was hopeless. Maybe he got somebody to do it, but I remember cutting about fifteen feet of these big things like little trees falling on either side, and I was exhausted after a few hours. They were so hard to cut. It was like trying to cut through tough rubber. I remember just taking the tools up to him and saying, "I'm sorry." He was giving 25 cents an hour. He gave me 75 cents, and I went off. I remember that as one of my failures. I was strong enough, but I just didn't have the knack or the technique. He could get one of these people from the Midwest and they would find a way. They would probably know how to do, you know, thirty-five feet a day or something like that. I couldn't get three yards done. It was swampy with frogs and snakes and scorpions in it.

Anyway, I remember when the long-shoremen came. I thought, "How wonderful." And I was thinking how stupid these guys were that were trying to stop the organizers from coming up. Of course, later on I was

connected with those unions and remembered that. There was a kind of a small local panic. I can remember my family being a little concerned about it. My parents made comments, but they never seemed terribly concerned about events like that taking place around them. But I remember people talking about it, and the papers were full of it. How terrible it was that these people can't mind their own business. They come up and try to cause trouble, you know. Why don't they stay where they are and cause trouble down there? But leave us alone, and that sort of thing.

And of course, the communists were infiltrating everywhere, you know. So, maybe that gave me an inkling about one way to rebel, you know. [laughter] That was about the time I felt like I had to get out of town. This was about 1938. I guess I had graduated from high school and was just ready to go into Modesto Junior College, and I figured I wanted to do something different. I wanted to get out, *travel*. My parents were very busy, and my father had a growing practice. He was doing very well. They were beginning to settle, to have furniture and be able to pay for it and rent a better house and all that sort of thing. We still had an icebox, but one of my great moments was at the little movie house that my brother and I would go to every Saturday and pay ten cents to see the matinee. At a drawing, I won a refrigerator. The first refrigerator my family ever had. The *only thing* I ever won. So we had a refrigerator. So when we were in Modesto, we started out with nothing, but we could have a refrigerator and all that. Yes, things were improving. And when I was going to Modesto Junior College, we had moved and were living right near the college, so that was the beginning of the new era. But I always wanted to do something else.





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## EMERGING SPIRITUALITY

**B**EFORE WE move on, let us pick up some of the threads on your ideas and developing feelings and opinions about religion.

All of this had to do with trying to find my way out of the box of family orientation and to find an identity of my own. And so travel was one thing, getting away, going somewhere else in the world, much as I'd earlier been involved in space travel. The idea of getting off the planet was a terribly compelling thing to me. Finding strange worlds. Oh! And Churchward. Charles Churchward, *The Lost Continent of Mu* about the continent of Lemuria in the Pacific. He had this marvelously elaborate theory that the pyramids could be explained by Atlantis in the Atlantic and Lemuria in the Pacific, and these great ancient civilizations had left legacies throughout the world. This accounted for similarities in writing systems, hieroglyphics, and in sculpture and architecture. It was very compelling to somebody who didn't know anything like myself. [laughter] I thought it made *very* good sense. And it wasn't until years later when I was going to

the university and studying anthropology, that I began to see how ridiculous the whole thing was.

All of that had been tied in with the Ballards and the I Am Society. The Ballards wrote numbers of tracts on the lost continent of Lemuria and how at Mt. Shasta the remnants of the Lemurian society still existed in the bowels of the mountain. And that if you visited there, you could feel the presence of the ascended masters of these great civilizations. If you were very fortunate and there at the right moment, you could see great ships rising from the tip of Mt. Shasta, hovering above the mountain, and taking off toward the Pacific. These were, of course, Lemurians of this advanced society.

That was about the same period as the Rosicrucian experience. Yet I took this all with a grain of salt. My friend—who had gone with me to the Rosicrucian meeting—and I went and we camped at the foot of Mt. Shasta. We spent two nights, I think, and two days looking and waiting for some kind of apparition above Mt. Shasta. Although, it was a very beautiful and wonderful experi-

ence, we had no indications that anything untoward was taking place. [laughter]

I did go to some lecture that the Ballards gave, I believe in Stockton, and I was very unimpressed by them. They were two dowdy, ordinary people, and I thought they sounded rather ignorant. I'm not very clear on that memory. But, I was at that stage, and so was my friend, just checking things out. We wanted to know. We had inquiring minds, as the sly phrase goes today.

My father had very little to say about such things, as I've already indicated, and my mother looked upon it as, at the best, just a phase one of her sons was going through. On the other hand, she was a little attracted by the mysticism of it. She tried to lead me into seeing it as related to Christianity in some way, but that was a very hard sell. [laughter] But the real thing was that I was associating with the wrong kind of people. These were people who would mislead one, because they were loaded with strange ideas, and they were making money from their ideas. This wasn't quite true of the Ballards, I don't think. I imagine they made a living off of it, but I don't think they made any fortunes. These were the true believers of the movement, and they went on for many years. They did well. There were enough people in the United States I suppose, who were swept up by these kinds of beliefs. Today, of course, it's rampant. These were the early manifestations of that, and I feel kind of proud of myself in a way that I was in at the very beginning. [laughter] I didn't know anybody else who really saw this as interesting or important.

My friend, Pierce Young, was very interested, too. We both wanted to believe something. That was the thing. We both *wanted* to have some kind of, not religious, but some kind of spiritual experience that would give us extraordinary insight about the

meaning of existence. For a while my reading was all in that area. I remember having this awful feeling of boredom and contempt for those mind-improving and life-remodeling people like Fosdick and others. My parents were reading a kind of a watered-down Christianity, full of the Protestant ethic, which of course, it would be, and I just felt that it wasn't enough. So, I was doing all this intellectual exploring while I was going to school.

By the way, before that, another aspect of my relationship with my mother's family and my grandparents occurred when I was about eleven or twelve and they were living with us in Oakland. I remember my grandfather having visions. He referred to them as his Visions of heaven and hell, when he and my grandmother would pray and speak in tongues. This very wonderful old man . . . not a Swedish peasant, because he had had some schooling, but he was relatively uneducated and deeply involved in the evangelistic movements of the time. And he would talk to me at length, because he couldn't talk to my parents. They would tell him to be quiet. So he would tell me about these visions. He wrote some of them up in his very scratchy handwriting and very poor English. And he asked me if I would help him make them fine, fix them up. I was about eleven or twelve, I guess.

I remember sitting for hours with him. I was fascinated by these visions. I don't remember having any sense of belief in them at all, but a sense of wonder that a person could have such magnificent dreams. His were so intact, so complete, so loaded with detail. He would come to tears while he was telling me about them, and this affected me, because it meant so much to him. So, I would sit with him and try to write out these narratives. I remember there were two. One was

the vision of heaven, and the other was the visions of hell and things to come. And so I wrote them out in standard English for him. I think I have copies somewhere. They're less inspired than his rendition. If I had only had a tape recording of the old man, they were terribly moving. But when I got through with them, cleaning them up at the age of twelve, they were pretty dull fare.

He was very proud of them though, and took them to a printer, and with what little money he had, he had them printed. He had a great stack of them, and he wanted me to help him pass them out. And I said I didn't want to do that. [laughter] This was the same man who had sent me out in the streets of Oakland at the age of four or five to pick up the horse manure on the streets to fertilize his vegetables in the backyard, telling me that we must waste nothing. Everything must be used. [laughter] And now this old man was telling me to pass out tracts when I was twelve years old. But I really wanted to help him, and I felt I had helped him. And so he would take these tracts downtown to the streets in Oakland, and we would pass out his tracts and preach. While he was preaching, he would feel very, very good. He'd come home feeling like he had accomplished something. We didn't tell my folks. My grandmother had great admiration for his scholarship—that he'd put these tracts together. But I remember that with affection, because it was, again, my feeling of identification with certain aspects of my parents' families.

With my mother's family, I really had a greater identity with my grandparents, who were very strange and different from others in the family but whose lives had been so wonderfully courageous. They had done such marvelous things. They had come from the old country and come here, were dirt poor, had many children and brought them up, and

were able to send them to school. In the family, there was this kind of romantic myth about them and how wonderful they had been. At the same time, the family looked at them askance, because they never really became "American". They retained these strange, peculiar ways, like making hop beer and blowing up the basement. And my grandfather with the clabber that he would make—the odor could be smelled throughout the neighborhood. My mother and her sisters were always upset by the image that they would make for our houses in any neighborhood: they were such peasant-like people. My identity was with them, however, because they were from another time, another society.

On my father's side, it was with my great-grandfather, Joaquim, the seaman, the man who had run a winery in early California. The adventurer again. The one who had left home. The one that had gone out into the world. So, my identities were with the grandparents and great-grandparents, rather than that second generation which was denying its past.

My father never spoke Portuguese in the home. My mother, although she was always very respectful of her parents, was always making fun of them because she was embarrassed by them. When we'd have company, I remember she would spend hours fixing my grandmother up, fixing her hair, putting on a new dress. My grandmother was always frumpy. I mean she was a hard-working peasant woman, and she didn't care about her personal appearance. My mother and her sisters were always fussing over her to make her look better. They even took her to a beautician once, and she came out looking so horrid. [laughter] She was another person that had nothing to do with the grandmother that I knew. So there was this kind of tension always, admiration and yet distance,

maintaining distance, and treating them as children. You know, they just had to be watched all the time and kept from doing silly things. I always felt on their side.

See, it's a terrible contradiction. Here was my very religious mother and her two religious sisters. Her brothers who weren't so religious. They were kind of wild characters. Though they were less respectful of all that, they sometimes were dragged to church and the like. But my mother and her sisters were pious ladies, and my mother also was an intellectual. She read current affairs, she read the classics, and she had read Plato and Aristotle. Not that she understood it, but she felt connected with some line of intellectual development in western society. And, she questioned religion. She wasn't just a true believer. But she was deeply religious, and therefore, she had this respect for her parents' beliefs that had helped them survive in their earlier life. All her siblings respected their parents. They couldn't bear them. [laughter] They were always sent from one to the other. They were always doing these outlandish things, and were always embarrassing their children in front of their friends and neighbors.

So, my grandmother, who would be gussied up for photographs or for company, she would get back to her old ways as soon as they were gone. I enjoyed this. I loved her in that mode. And my grandfather was a hardworking laborer who always had rheumatism, and my grandmother rubbed him every night with these evil-smelling lotions. What were some of them at that time? Vick's Vapor Rub, Sloan's Liniment, Kerosene poultices. Well, anyway, I can't remember, but there were these awful lotions that stank up the house, and he would rub them all over himself at night under his winter underwear. Sometimes I'd have to sleep with him. If we

had company, I had to sleep with my grandparents. I remember this *heavy* smell of strong lotions for rheumatism that my grandfather had.

My grandmother had other kinds of lotions. She would rub herself with flax seed and drink flax seed, and she forced me to drink flax seed, which was the most terrible thing in this world. Then I'd have to sleep with them, sometimes between them. And I remember waking up, feeling that I was suffocating in a cave. These two large people, one on each side breathing heavily—and this aroma. My brother probably sometimes slept with them. He was younger, so he had a bed of his own. But my bed would sometimes be given over to company. Maybe this happened to him, too, but I don't remember. I do remember those long nights. They were very strange and quite memorable. So that was part of the identity I had with these two nurturing, hardworking people of another culture.

On the other side, was this professional, richly ornate, emotive, Portuguese extended family living in a large house with grand ways and wonderful objects around like Chinese furniture. My father's mother and father had gotten wedding presents from Archbishop Nunes, who was Archbishop of the Far East or something of that kind at Macao. And he had sent them these marvelous, carved, Chinese benches and tables. I would walk into their house and feel I was in another world. The ambiance that I felt in my Portuguese grandparents' house was really one of grandeur. Perhaps it wasn't that grand, but to me it was, compared to the life that we lived in my mother and father's house. We were in the deep Depression. My father was a struggling student, and we had scarcely any money. But on the Portuguese side of the

family, there was this sense of grandeur and drama.

I later realized that they really did not have close relationships. My father *loved* his father. Yet the old man was considered by the family to be kind of weak, that he didn't really push hard enough. His practice was declining. My grandmother, was the real power. She ruled the roost with an iron hand. She was a grand lady.

But when I was very young, that was the grand house. That was the place of fascination, where they only spoke Portuguese. They would speak English to me or to others who were there who didn't speak Portuguese, but among themselves they spoke Portuguese. There were tumultuous gatherings with great long tables for all of the family who attended—the Portuguese families from Hayward, from Sacramento and San Leandro. They would all come down. Most were professional people of one kind or another. All were devout Catholics.

But still, the person who stuck out in my mind was Joaquim, my great-grandfather, whom I had not known but heard about. They talked about him with some reserve. He became an icon to me—the man who started it all. The man who had come over and done such marvelous things and sailed on whaling ships and became a gold rush miner and farmer.

So here were the two sides of the family. My empathy was linked to the ethnicity, I suppose. No, that would be too fancy of a word for it. It was with the foreign adventuresomeness of the certain persons on each side, those who had struggled to come through a great deal of difficulty and who were looked down on by the new generation because they had not become full Americans. I felt the ones who hadn't become full Americans were the ones that I liked the most

and were most interesting. I saw the generation of my parents as kind of pallid, as people who were trying so hard to make it in the American society that the connection with their roots had gotten very attenuated.

It was also the exoticism. When you think of the kind of mystical stuff that I was reading at the time, it was exotic. There was Sven Hedin and the expeditions to Tibet. Oh, yes! Tibet! Tibet was very much in my mind. The descriptions of Lhasa blew me away. The film *Lost Horizon* came later, but I was prepared for *Lost Horizon*, because Lhasa was a place I yearned to see. The valley and the society of *Lost Horizon* was right up my alley. So there was all this business of exoticism, I suppose. Wanting to get out of the world I was in to that world of adventure and wonders.

When I was in high school, Richard Halliburton came through Modesto and gave a lecture at a local theater. I had read the *Royal Road to Romance* but he somewhat disappointed me. He was a scrawny little guy [laughter]. I looked at him and thought, "Is this the man that I have been reading about?" Nevertheless, he gave a whale of a lecture loaded with adventure. The right thing for high school kids. But I was swept away and went up afterwards and talked to him and said I wanted to go on the junk he was taking from Hong Kong to Treasure Island, where the San Francisco's World Fair was planned. He had talked about this, the *Butterfly Boat* voyage across the Pacific! I remember him saying, "Well, you know we have a crew, and we're all set. But drop me a line." So immediately I dropped him a line. Then a few weeks later, as I was waiting impatiently, he wrote this very nice letter saying the crew was complete, and that I was a little young and inexperienced, and he wasn't sure that I should go on this thing. Well, the up-

shot is that the boat sank in the Pacific on the way over. It never got to Treasure Island, so I was spared. But that was a great disappointment, and I dreamed of it. Halliburton and the boat disappeared at sea, and nobody knows what happened to it. There were some radio messages of a storm or a typhoon. I'm not sure what year. I think 1938 or 1939. I just felt crushed that I didn't go. Then later on, I was glad I didn't.

So, there was this tremendous desire and need to differentiate myself from my immediate family, even though I had a lot of respect for them. I felt very protective of my mother, who was sometimes very sickly. She was an unhappy woman in many ways, and loaded with a sense of obligation and guilt about her life and lost opportunities. And my father, who was burdened by coming rather late to his career. In medical school he was at least ten years older than most of his confederates and so involved in himself and his work that he was a very remote person to his family. Nevertheless, I admired him. I admired the struggle that he was going through. And my mother would insist that we admire that, even though she saw him and his family as having victimized her early in life. Yet despite this ambivalence, I feel they loved and respected one another deeply and throughout life.

Accepting this role of my mother as the misused woman, I think affected both my brother and myself. Also, her constant obsessive recollection of the betrayal by my father's family was with her all her life, and probably was connected with her stress and her frequent illness. Yet at the same time, she was a woman of tremendous resolve. She read a lot. She did a lot of thinking, analytical thinking, and she'd talk to us about books and about ideas and encouraged us in that

way. So, I have a mixed recollection of her on that level.

My father, as I said, was a more remote person. Also, I suppose, I identified with my mother's sense of lost opportunity, that she had not gotten away from her family. She had not gone off when she was seventeen. She had met a woman who had a dance troupe and wanted to take her with them to New York, but her mother wouldn't let her go. Then, of course, she had this affair with my father, became pregnant, and was thrust into this very strained atmosphere of my father's family. Then there was her own parents' reaction to her "infidelity"—her premature pregnancy. However, to my grandparents that was not a terrible thing in itself. It was that they had not gotten *married* right away. If you do that, it's all right. But to the Portuguese side of the family, there was something deeply sinful or shameful about having had sexual experience and pregnancy prior to marriage.

*Well, added to that, you had pointed out, too, that from your Portuguese side that it was not necessarily a good match, but from the Swedish side, it was a good match, it's just, the timing was . . .*

Well, a good match, excepting they were very upset about the fact that my father had been so impetuous and had taken advantage of their daughter. So, my Swedish grandmother—as I think I told you—went over to the Portuguese grandmother and said, "Look here, we have to *do* something about this." And something was done. They were very quickly given a marriage—a rather elaborate marriage by the Portuguese family—and my mother was put into a kind of seclusion, I suppose, a hush up, until I was born two or three months early. What a pathetic business!

But in those days, to that sort of a family, it was very important, but not to my Swedish grandparents. It had to do with obligation. My father and his family had an *obligation* to their daughter.

*Now, did your Swedish grandparents come to stay with you? The part I got a little confused on was if they stayed with you once you moved to Modesto.*

Oh, they stayed with us frequently, because they were, in a sense, farmed out to various sectors of the family who would take them in turn. But my parents got them most of the time.

*Well, it sounds like Modesto also provided an opportunity for your mother more to forge her own identity.*

In a way. She had more friends, but at the same time, she was a relatively isolated person. And although she did have one or two friends at times, she was an unhappy woman. Always a sense of never having achieved what she wanted and of having been ill used, I think. She was always talking about what she might have done, what she should have done, and how people had to do what they felt. So, that was a contradiction when later I was doing what I wanted to do, and she found it very difficult to chastise me about those things. She would do it on a religious basis. As long as one was living a moral life, one could do these things. And I was sometimes living an “immoral” life.

At this time, my grandparents were still involved with the evangelist Amy Semple McPherson. I forget what year it was that Amy Semple McPherson had become a celebrity, got national notoriety for having been supposedly kidnapped. There was a *wild* story about her being abducted and taken to some desert place, and then later found in disarray rambling on the beach in southern California. It was a strange and yet wonderful story. Everybody we knew was reading the story about Amy Semple McPherson. The cynical speculation was (not on the part of my family) that she had just gone off on a toot with somebody and had an affair somewhere, and the cover was that she had been kidnapped. The other story my grandparents had was that some bad people had kidnapped her in order to get a ransom. There was a ransom note and all that. I don't remember the details.

*But she was a religious figure at this time?*

She was one of the great evangelical preachers of the time, and she had a tremendous following. I recall my grandparents talking about her and wanting me to go with them into Oakland to see her when she came there. I didn't go. I saw her much later under conditions that I'll talk about. But actually seeing the people who were doing these things always was a disappointment to me. They were not what I expected.





## EARLY EXPLORATIONS

**N**OW IS THIS the time period where you said you were going as frequently as you could to the estuary in Alameda?

No, that's much earlier. That's when we were living in Alameda. I was seven or eight years old. I spent hours and hours of many days wandering. There must have been ten or twelve big Alaska Packer ships tied up there, no longer in service. I was absolutely enthralled by them. I can even remember the passageways and the fo'c's'les [from "fore-castle", the crew's quarters on a ship]. When I finally went to sea later myself, I still remembered the Alaska Packer ships and the fo'c's'les and the brass fixtures and the wheel house.

*So did you get on board when you were a little boy?*

Oh, we climbed up the *side*. My brother was with me sometimes, or sometimes I just went alone or with a couple of other friends. We just would climb on, and sometimes we

were driven off by watchmen. But most of the time, nobody saw us and we spent hours. I remember, sitting in the wheel house with my hands on the wheel thinking that I was steering this great ship. So that was an imprint of some significance to me, because I was away, I was on my way to Alaska when I was standing at that wheel.

*And was this the same time period that you could walk home from school along the brook with the hobos?*

That was in Palo Alto. That was even earlier. That was Palo Alto Creek. Yes. That was earlier. And then later in Modesto, there was Beard Brook—the period that we are talking about now. Beard Brook was another larger stream—I think it emptied into the Stanislaus. It ran through the edges of what was then Modesto, which was a very small town. I spent *all* my spare time wandering along Beard Brook.

That was the period, too, in Modesto, when I got some odd jobs now and then. I had the job with the apricot drying shed, then

I mentioned working for that *farmer*, trying to clear his irrigation ditches, which was one of the worst jobs I've ever had in my life. That didn't last very long.

*Were you in junior college at this time?*

No, I was in high school. When I got into junior college, I upgraded. I finally got a job as an usher in the local theater, the Princess Theater.

*Now, when was this when you had the radio program?*

Well, yes, that's about the time. Yes, this friend of mine, Bobbie Jean Miller, when I mentioned before had a number of people around her, and her house was open house. Anyway, Bobbie Jean knew people at the radio station. I believe it was KTRB, but I may be very wrong. She had a chance to get a fifteen-minute program, and so she linked me up with her. We developed a kind of a persona—a Bobbie Jean and Warren kind of thing. She sang songs. I remember most of it was Jeannette McDonald drivel. She wasn't a very good singer, but she could get away with it. I sometimes sang, because I had sung in school operettas and things, and I have a terrible voice. I also wrote scripts. I even have one left, handwritten, an anti-war script. I was very much involved with the thoughts of the coming war, because, I think, my parents were very anti-war and pacifists—as most people were in the 1920s and 1930s. In the mid to late 1930s, as things began to heat up in Europe, and although it seemed very distant, I remember being very concerned about the possibility of there being a world war. So, I was writing these scripts, usually conversations between people about being drafted, or what would happen if they went to war, what

was war like? Recounting the things that I had heard about World War I and all that. I wish I had more of them. They must have been quite a thing on the radio in Modesto in 1936.

*Well, how do you think they were received?*

I haven't the slightest idea. All I remember is we'd go there and do our programs and felt very good about it. Had a lot of fun, and maybe some of our friends listened. I remember my parents heard one, and they were kind of quiet about it. [laughter] So, there was that.

*Was this about the time that the German couple visited?*

Yes. I guess it was about 1938. My father had some patients who were from Germany—a young German couple. They liked him very much, and he got to know them. He invited them over to our house for a visit, and I remember very clearly sitting with them as they were telling us about Germany—what a wonderful place it was, how all the lies told about Hitler in this country weren't true, and that Hitler was really a very *kind* and warm and wonderful man who had helped remake Germany. And they thought we should go and see it. I remember being fascinated by the strong feeling of loyalty these people had to their country and their urgent proselytizing. They were obviously trying to *convince* us of how the new Nazi Germany was the best thing that had happened to Europe. And they, both of them, were very *convincing* people.

I remember my mother and father and my brother talking about it afterwards. My brother has a different recollection of this. He says he wrote a paper for school about the wonderful new system in Germany based

on what he had heard. But I remember feeling very doubtful, because there was the Spanish Civil War going on, and although I had *no* connection with it, I had been *reading* about it and how volunteers were going over there. Again, because I wanted to get *away*, I was thinking I *should*, but I was too young. It just wouldn't have been possible for me. But I remember thinking that I ought to be doing something like that. I *ought* to be taking part with the Loyalists. I didn't understand the political significance very much. I just knew that it was a war against fascism, against Franco.

So that was in my mind as I was listening to these people. I had this great sense of doubt. They were saying that Hitler wasn't against the Jews, though it was the Jews who'd caused the trouble. And everybody was *trying* to get along with them, but it was impossible. They were people you could not get along with. Their whole tradition, their whole life and culture had been so different that they were unable to assimilate in Germany.

I remember later, my mother saying she was very concerned about their view about the Jews, but then she talked about Joe Gray. This was back in her youth when her mother and father were going to these evangelical missions in Oakland, where all sorts of derelicts and other people from the mission were brought to their house to stay and to be fed. Among them was a man who was impoverished but very well educated, named Joe Gray, and he was a Jew. Her mother and father had befriended him and fed him when he was on the streets. He later got a very good job as a butler for a wealthy family, and he was always meticulously dressed. He spoke very well and was a handsome middle-aged man. He would visit the various members of my mother's family, once or twice a year for many

years, with a big box of fine chocolates. They all spoke of Joe Gray, what a wonderful man he was, and he was always thankful to my grandparents. That was something I remember about my grandparents how *grateful* he was to them, what respect he had for them.

So my mother mentioned this. She says, "You know, we knew lots of Jews." They had lived in this sort of semi-ghetto in Oakland. It was a working-class neighborhood in Oakland, and they lived with all sorts of people—Armenians and Jews and Italians, but no African Americans. I don't believe anybody had much contact with African Americans in those days. But it was a very mixed immigrant society. The Jews were taken as just another group of immigrants, and Joe Gray was an exemplary figure, because he was educated, and because he got a good job, and because he came and paid his respects once or twice a year. As she said, "Joe Gray is a wonderful man." I remember her talking about that in relation to what this German couple had been talking about.

Oh, the only bias I remember in my mother's family, was about the Chinese and the Catholics, as I mentioned earlier. [laughter] My Aunt Edith used to say, "Oh, you have to watch out for the Chinese, and you don't eat in Chinese restaurants."

She used to warn me, because I was always eating in Chinese restaurants. Nobody else I knew did, but I was going to Chinese restaurants all the time when I stayed with her. I'd go over to San Francisco. The Yee-Jun was one of the great restaurants. It was down in a basement, a very dark and grubby little place, but it had absolutely marvelous food. I loved it, and it was *cheap*. I could eat for twenty-five cents, fifty cents, I could eat all I wanted. And then I would go to the theater, the Chinese theater in San Francisco. I'd sit there for hours. I was the only non-

Chinese in this large, old, ornate Chinese theater on Grant Avenue, and I'd sit there listening to these very elaborate Chinese operas. I didn't understand a word, but you know, I got the idea watching it. [laughter] The audience was all eating and talking, and it was like a Shakespearean theater. I loved it. Every time I'd go to San Francisco *alone* I would go there. My aunt would constantly warn me, "Be *careful*. It's terribly *dangerous*, and don't eat that food." And I would tell her how I was eating the food all the time, and the people were wonderful, and I liked it.

There was also the Oakland Chinatown. Later when I was going to Cal, I would go down to the Oakland Chinatown and spend a lot of time at, I think it was called, the Imperial Palace—an old, very exquisite Chinese architected two-story building. I think it's still there, but it's now a run down hotel. They had modern Chinese floor shows. I'd go there with twenty-five or thirty-five cents and have enough rice and vegetables to fill me up. But all of this was taking place while the Spanish Civil War was on. I felt very remote from that, but it was there.

*Was there discussion of it in your family?*

My family didn't talk much politics. I think most [conversations about] politics were around the early 1930s when Roosevelt was elected and the New Deal and when Prohibition was lifted. I look back with surprise that my parents thought it was great when they repealed Prohibition. And we all drank beer. I was sent out for beer. Roosevelt and the New Deal was a positive thing to them, because Hoover had been, to them, a terrible president. He had *caused* the Depression, and everybody would speak cynically about his slogan—a chicken in every pot and a car in

every garage kind of thing. That's the only politics that I remember. It was an apolitical family really. The Spanish Civil War was a very remote thing, but it would trickle through to me, and I was aware of that. Also it was a way to get *away*. I wanted to go and do something important.

*Well, is this about the time that you tried to go to sea?*

Yes. I had gone to visit my wonderful Aunt Edith and Uncle Armand. When I'd go down to the Bay Area from Modesto, I'd sometimes go down and stay a few days with them. And while I was there, I'd spend all of my time in San Francisco, Chinatown mostly. And one time, I was *determined* I was going to go to sea. So I went over and I got my passport, and I still have that, my first passport. That must have been 1936 or 1937. I couldn't have been more than sixteen or seventeen, and I got the passport, and I went around to the union halls just *desperate* to try to get on a ship. I was *scared* to death, but I went to the Sailor's Union of the Pacific. I think I maybe went to the NMU, but I don't know if they had a hall then.

*What's the NMU?*

The National Maritime Union. It was just beginning actually and had been formed after the 1937 maritime strike. I even went around to some of the shipyards to see if I could just get on. I didn't care if it was union or non-union, I just wanted to get to sea. But it was a very tight period. There were guys lined up—I felt terrible—a block long to get jobs.

*Because you were competing for jobs right?*

Yes. I tried for two or three days, I remember, and I just felt like a beat dog. I was stuck. I couldn't get out. And if I had gotten a job, I think I would have just gone. My family would have been very upset, but I was determined I was going to do it if I got the job. I was still in high school. Yes, 1936, 1937. And then junior college in 1937.

*Well, would they have been upset if you hadn't even finished high school?*

Well, yes. I didn't care.

*It sounds, actually, like all your elders had to do was to tell you that something was not a good idea, and you knew the next thing you were going to do. [laughter]*

Well, I don't think I reacted that way. I don't think I reacted *against* them so much as it was a matter of my own inner drive to, to do my own thing.

*Well, you were in such a wonderful setting to explore the exotic and be curious about other people. I mean the time and the place that you were.*

I don't know about that. I think sometimes one discovers the exotic where one is. It's all around everywhere. These things were available to anybody. It's just that they suited my disposition at the time and what I wanted to experience. It was experiential, the search for experience—the search to prove oneself. I don't remember it being *against* my parents or anything, it was just the idea that I was doing it apart from them.

*Also, it sounds like with the two major influences you had there, that you may have felt free to kind of create your own identity.*

Well, that is something that interests me too. And maybe I have mentioned this before, but my brother and I were left pretty much alone. We had a lot of space. If we got out of line, we got into real trouble and there would be long, long lectures and harangues by my mother, and *occasionally* a spanking from my father, but mostly just disapproval. The look of disapproval was enough. But most of the time we were pretty free to wander about and do our own thing.

We had a lot of free time as I remember, which I think was a very good thing. I remember being *oppressed* by my family only in terms of their attitudes and the crowdedness of my mother's family. You were just surrounded by extended family and you were in that world continually, and I had this feeling of being trapped and wanting to get out of it, wanting to be *out* of that world. I didn't hate it. I just felt smothered. I wanted to do other things. So, it wasn't against my family . . . .

I had more freedom to wander about and time to myself than I think most kids have today. Both my folks were busy, busy. My mother was busy with her own thoughts and her own life and doing a lot of sewing for the family. She sewed everything for the family. She made our pants or altered clothes passed down to us from her family throughout our childhood and also made her own clothes. She hated housework, but she did it. She felt she had to, because the place had to look nice if people came in. She was very *attuned* to having a nice-looking house. She also spent a lot of time by herself, reading, and since my father was away all the time, my brother and I were pretty much on our own.

When I look back, it was probably very good. I did a lot of reading. I was able to wander around the landscape. I remember doing a lot of hiking when we were living with my aunt or when we were living near her in

Oakland later on, in Rockridge. We would hike up into the hills, really wild in *those* days, all built up today. There were forests, there were woods and streams and lots of animals.

I remember we'd hike up to Joaquin Miller Park, named for Joaquin Miller, the California poet. His daughter was there; I think her name was Juanita Miller. She had his books of poetry, and she would sit there talking to visitors, and I remember talking to her for hours. She gave me copies of his poems and she would read them to me. She was a strange lady. [laughter] But again, it was a wonderful thing to be able to do and wander through those eucalyptus groves. And there were streams up there. There were no houses. Today, it's all houses out in that direction.

Being gone all day, sometimes for two or three days in a row, was just sort of taken for granted. That was a good thing as I remember. I did a lot of personal thinking, and my brother and I, as I've mentioned, did a lot of talking about the family. And even though we fought a lot, and we were quite different, we had a mutual interest in the kind of family we had. We were always sort of analytical about our family: what they had done at the last get-together; why this argument had gone on; and what was wrong with this person or that person. We did a great deal of thinking about the family.

There was no mass media, although later when we were in Alameda, we had a radio and we used to sit together as a family, which was nice, and listen to something called the *Cockeyed Parrot*. I remember, it was a serial, a marvelous mystery, horror story. [laughter] And we would sit there getting very frightened and horrified at night. This little tiny radio was where we also heard Roosevelt's speeches and things of that sort. But aside from that, there was no impact from the mass

media of ideas, news, advertising, or faddish stuff.

We *chose* our sources of information. I spent a lot of time in libraries. And we had a fairly interesting library at home that my father had brought from his parents' home. So, there was a lot of reading and then a lot of space just to wander around.

But we also had to do a lot of housework. We'd always do the dishes. My brother and I fought about that for years. My brother always saved his money, and I would borrow money from him. The way I would pay him back was I'd do his turn at the dishes, and he was meticulous about it. He knew every penny that I'd owe him. [laughter]

We had to do the wash once a week on this old ringer washing machine. We did the family wash and hung it up and sometimes scrubbed floors and things of that sort or worked in our little gardens. So we were expected to do housework, but most of the time, if we were gone, nobody asked about it. I remember we'd wander. We'd do a lot of wandering.

Now, as far as the media is concerned, even when we had our first little radios—which were very bad—there was nothing on them except dance music at night from some hotel in San Francisco or sometimes little news broadcasts and sometimes plays. *Oh*, before that, I got a crystal set. I don't know if you've ever seen one. It's a little crystal set in a box, and it had a little handle or gadget where you'd move a kind of a wire, a feeler over the crystal. You had earphones, and you'd keep messing around with the crystal until you'd get a station. To me, it was a marvelous thing.

You didn't know what you were going to get. [laughter] I got Mexico a number of times from Modesto. Certain nights at a certain

time I'd get this *faint* sound of Mexican music and blues coming from Tijuana. My brother tells me now it couldn't have happened. [laughter] "It's impossible."

And people'd say, "Oh you couldn't . . ." But I *got Mexico*, and I had this wonderful, thrilling feeling that I was really reaching out into the world.

I remember *blues* programs. Nobody we knew listened to country music or blues or African-American blues at that time. I mean, you just didn't do it. I didn't get to like country music until years later when I was driving across country and used to go through the Midwest and hear these great country singers. And jazz and blues were something that came later in my life as an appreciation. But then, I remember hearing this weird, wonderful blues music coming from Tijuana.

I can remember one of the songs that I much later saw on a disc that some friends of mine had. It was somebody like Sophie Tucker singing "Hot Nuts." [laughter] It was also very scatological, and I wanted one. I had this feeling that I was really out in that wonderful world out there.

That crystal set is also connected with another aspect of my youth—the mystical and the spiritual readings that I had done. I had the feeling that maybe I would pick up something from outer space. I was probably one of the first scanners of outer space for messages. [laughter]

I was thinking that maybe there was somebody sending messages from a spaceship or something like that, and maybe I'd pick it up. Or maybe they were picking up my fool-

ing around on the crystal, you see, and I would move the crystal to make strange little noises and things.

*How wonderful you could just pick up things. That, too, was kind of an exploration.*

Yes. Because it was always accidental, unless you really knew your crystal. [laughter] Sometimes if you hit the same spot, you'd get a similar station. It didn't have much range, but on certain days, if the meteorological conditions were right you could get San Francisco or, now and then, Mexico. So that was to me truly exotic. And, of course, I'd report things that nobody would believe.

About 1938 is when, on our little radio, we heard the *War of the Worlds* with Orson Welles. I was the only one I knew who had heard any part of it. Later when there was this big flap in the newspapers and on the air about people running into the streets and getting in their cars and getting out of town, I remember while I was listening to it, I knew it was a drama, because I had read H. G. Wells. I thought it was kind of marvelous, and I just heard the tail end of it, I think. Then all of this happened, and I remember feeling very superior. I knew. I knew *all* the time. What's *wrong* with these people, you know? They're just ready to believe anything. Of course, I had to tell myself over time later that it's very easy to believe anything if you're not careful and if you don't develop a reasoning mind, an informed skepticism. So, yes, about 1938 I guess it was.





## LIFE IN MODESTO

WHEN I LOOK BACK, I have a very nostalgic, romantic feeling about that whole area in San Joaquin Valley and the town of Modesto at that time. It was a very bucolic experience, living in this rural environment when I'd been growing up—up to that time—in highly urbanized environments. And there was something about the space, something about the great expanses of farmland, rangeland, the long, very, very hot summers one felt would never end. And the sun was scorching, and you felt terribly hot. But I can remember going into these irrigation ditches to swim, and the contrast between the air and the heat and these cool irrigation ditches.

And the fact that so much produce was available. I remember we used to eat tons of peaches and oranges fresh off the trees, and grapes all summer long, and plums, and pomegranates that I had never dreamed grew on little bushes, and here they were almost wild. You could pick off ripe pomegranates. I've never been able to eat pomegranates since, because the ones that you buy are wrong. They're just not ripe. They just taste bitter

and green. They can't ripen off the tree or off the bush. But here there were these cracked, splitting, ripe pomegranates everywhere.

And long hikes that I would make into the ranchlands and up to the creeks. The Tuolumne and the Stanislaus River banks, and all those little towns—*Knights Ferry*, *Ceres*, *Turlock*, all of those rural villages at that time—a feeling of really having lived in a bountiful area. In fact, across the train tracks and the main highway, through Modesto, there is an arch, something like the Reno arch “Biggest Little City in the World.” I think it's still there which reads “Water, Wealth, Contentment, and Health.” We used to joke cynically about that. It was one of the ironies of our young lives. We felt that was so very funny—water, wealth, contentment and health. How hokey could one get? And yet, it *was* that. There was this wonderfully verdant, productive area, and it was slow and calm and hot.

And also, I remember Modesto was the first time I had run into such a variety of people, or had the opportunity to. I men-

tioned the so-called Okies, the people from the Midwest that were driven out by the great droughts and the dust bowl experience and came west, and how they flocked into this area, into the orchards as workers, into the canneries. A stranger group, different than people that I had known. And I had this desire always to know them and to get to talk to them and be among them, which I did occasionally, but I was very shy and I wasn't very outgoing. I was really afraid to intrude. Nevertheless, I tried.

Also the Mexicans. There were not a great number. They also fascinated me, and after my later trip to Mexico, they became a very important ethnic object for me. I was fascinated by their little camps in the orchards and near the canneries, their foods and their appearance, the way they dressed, and the expressiveness of their speech and gestures.

And the hobos. We had hobos coming through town. This was in the midst of the Depression when we first went there, but it continued through the 1930s, streams of hobos off the freight trains. One of the major train links came through Modesto, north-south, and every time the freight would stop, all the hobos would come piling off and others would go piling on. I used to go down and watch them coming and going, and I'd go out and hang around their campsite. I never had the courage to go into the camps and meet the people, but I remember standing off and watching these camps, as the people were cooking and washing their clothes, trying to hear what they were saying. But I never had the courage to actually confront them.

In that period, just as earlier in Oakland when we were living there and Palo Alto, the tramps as they were called—these were legitimate hobos, people without jobs, job-

less men with some women and kids—would come around to the back doors of our house and other people's houses asking for food or work. One thing I remember about my mother, she never turned them away. She always had something for them to eat, or she had a little job, because she didn't like to just give things out. She'd have a little job like clearing the yard or carrying something out back or something of that sort. She would say, "Please do that." And they would work for fifteen or twenty minutes, and then she would fix a plate of food for them. If there were two or three, she'd always do it, have something, a sandwich or something. I always admired that. That came of course from her, from my grandparents, her mother and father, and their experience in the mission where they took care of dozens and dozens of derelict people. Their house was open to people to stay and to sleep and to eat, and she felt that very strongly. I never remember her turning anybody down. She would sometimes complain that some of them looked like lazy people who wouldn't do anything or were just looking for a handout, but she'd always give; she'd always give out.

*Did you ever want to jump a freight. I mean, was that a part of the wanderlust?*

Oh, yes, of course. [laughter] One of the fascinations of watching people jump off and get on freights was I wanted to do it. I never had quite the courage to do it. I thought about it many times. Just to make a little pack and meet one of these people and go on the freight with them, wherever that freight was going. That was a kind of day dream. Oh, yes, that's true. That was one of the fantasies.

Like trying to get on a ship in San Francisco, or getting on a freight and going

someplace, or stow away—fantasies of stowing away, and stow away on airplanes. There weren't many in those days, just little prop planes. But oh, yes, I wanted to go up in a plane. Go somewhere, just to go somewhere.

*So, part of the fascination of these hobos even though they were out of work and . . .*

They were itinerants. They were adventurers. They had been places and were going places, and they seemed so self-sufficient. They seemed to be able to live on so little. They were able to get along.

*Is your impression, when you're talking about these hobos, are they mainly on the freight trains? Is that how they moved in and out of Modesto?*

Yes, there was hardly any other kind of transportation, you know, unless somebody had a car or a bus. No, that was the best transportation there in those days. And, a few years later, towards the end of my time in the San Joaquin Valley, Steinbeck's book came out—I think 1939—*The Grapes of Wrath*. I read that just before I left. I was *deeply*, profoundly struck by what I had missed, because here were the people I had been seeing and working with occasionally, and seeing around town, the edges of town, along the river. And here was the in-depth study.

*So, his book really resonated with you?*

Oh, yes, Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* and later the film. That had a tremendous impact on me. Yes, really. And the idea of people starting with nothing and working and struggling to maintain themselves and to survive under enormous obstacles, that resonated with my view of my grandparents on my mother's side, that they had done that. I felt

that they were in a sense, as immigrants, very much like the so-called Okies coming in, that they had been like that. So, that had a powerful effect on me. But when I read it, I felt, "These are things that I missed," the things that Steinbeck had shown in great detail about the thinking and the lives of these people. the heroism of some of them, the strength, the great power that they had as people.

You once asked me about any contact I had with Indians. Well that's interesting, because I had read some about Indians, the usual things in school—Longfellow's *Hiawatha*, and all the usual, *the Last of the Mohicans*, of course. So I had a romantic and mythological notion of Indians. I remember at one point in my life in Modesto—it was around 1935, 1936—I began to wonder, "Where are the Indians?" I never saw any there. Also I was wondering where were the African Americans in Modesto? That one wonderful young woman, Samantha Henderson, who was at high school—an "A" student, top of the class and terribly withdrawn. She would not talk to anybody, and I always wanted to have more to do with her. I don't remember there being any others in that whole area. And the same thing with Indians, if there were Indians around, I was not able to distinguish them.

*Did you ever find any arrowheads or anything when you were wandering around?*

No. Never thought to look. First place, I don't think I would have recognized them. I don't think I had that much savvy at that point. I mean, I was interested in *people*. Who were they? What were they?

I now know that there *were* Indians living around that area—a few, scattered Tuolumne Indians, living out in the various

ranchlands. There were little camps, indistinguishable from that of the Okies and others, but they were there. I didn't know how to identify them. However, I ran across a book in the Modesto library. By the way, talk about strange and marvelous synchronicities, I also ran across the book *here* in the university library just a couple of months ago, the same book. I would never have been able to find, because I couldn't remember the author or the name of it. I was going through one shelf, looking for a certain kind of material, and there was a book on Stanislaus County in California. I just picked it up, and there was a whole chapter on the Indians of Stanislaus County.

That's the one I had seen in Modesto when I was a kid. I have it here, *Stories of Stanislaus* by Saul P. Elias. There is a chapter on the Tuolumne Indians who were contacted in 1848 by miners. And they were attacked, rounded up, and put to work. One of the groups was called The Jose, the Jesus Jose Mission Indians living out by Knights Ferry where I used to go all the time to swim and to fish near Modesto. There was in the 1840s a large camp of these Jesus Jose Indians who were among the first to be disrupted by miners. Some of them worked for the miners, panning for gold, and others just disappeared into the foothills to the east. By the 1860s, they were practically exterminated. There were hardly any of them left. Heizer had written about the destruction of the California Indians. Well, they were part of it. By the turn of the century, this writer Saul Elias says there were hardly *any* of the old Indian groups. He has names for the various tribelets that existed in that area, whole lists of them, strange names. I don't think anybody today has ever heard of them. And I looked through the *Handbook of North American Indians* for California, and I found

a few names that might be like the ones that Saul P. Elias mentioned. He had long lists, from treaties that were made in the 1850s with the Indians.

The treaties meant nothing, because twenty years later when the so called "rabbit hunts" were in vogue, the Indians were scattered and killed or died from disease. But I remember reading Elias when I was in Modesto. Much of it didn't register on me, but I was thinking, "Oh, there *were* Indians here. Why can't I find any?" I didn't know anybody who knew anything about Indians. Oh, some said, "There are no Indians around here anymore. You have to go to Sioux Country and the Plains."

*Texas!*

There might be a few in other parts of California. Also the "Semetes"—which was what Elias called them—the Yosemite Indians that had been driven by a Colonel Johnson in the 1850s back to Yosemite. That's how Yosemite was discovered. And there was a man named Savage, of all things, a rancher who had a camp just east of Modesto. He hired hundreds of Indians, and then when he was through with them, he would send them off with nothing. Most just died. Horrible stories. Later he was the first to raid Yosemite Valley.

So, I remember having this feeling of, "My god, all this had happened long before I was here in this country." When I would go out hiking along the rivers, I was thinking, "This was their river; this was their place; this is where they'd been." When I'd go to Knights Ferry, I would look to see if there were any around, and of course there weren't. It didn't occur to me to look for evidence of their existence, which any of us would do now. We'd

walk around seeing if there's any indication of habitation sites or whatever or ask locals.

I wasn't an anthropologist, whatever that might mean. So, anyway, that was in my mind at the time.



## YOSEMITE AND TAHOE

WHEN I WAS a little kid, we used to take trips up to Yosemite. I'd usually go with my Aunt Edith and my Uncle Armand.

*Now, would they drive, or?*

Oh, they drove in these horrible flivvers. That's what they used to call them, flivvers. These were little Ford flivvers. But my uncle had a Chevrolet, and it was a great open car with a vinyl top and side panels and plastic flaps that you could see through. You could take off these panels, and you'd have an open touring car. They would just rattle and squeak, and you had to start them with a hand crank. As I remember the tires were very small. The tread was small, and they were always going flat. You had to get out and pump them up. You always carried extra tubes and patching. It was a *job* to go any place.

I remember going to Yosemite. It was hair raising, because you'd go along these *narrow* little roads, dirt roads. I remember looking out the side of the car and looking straight down into great gorges, and seeing the tires

of the car kicking up the dust on the edge of the road, and saying, "We're too close, Armand," to my uncle. "We're too close." He was too busy keeping us on the road. And so we'd go to Yosemite and camp. There was also a place called Big Basin, and that had been a large Indian encampment in previous times. I didn't know this. To me, though, the mythological presence of Indians was everywhere whenever I was out in the mountains. Somehow or other, their spirits were there, and you know, you could see feathers sticking up out of headdresses everywhere you look. It was wonderful fantasy.

But I remember when I was about ten or eleven going to Yosemite and wandering around the valley and coming upon this little Indian camp. That was the camp of Chief Lemhi, who was a Mono or Miwok Indian married to a Yosemite woman. They had a family of about seven or eight people, living in what he called a wigwam, but it was a little bark shelter the Washoe would call a *gális dāngal*, a little lean-to. There were two or three of these little lean-tos. They had some flat rocks that they would build fires under,

and they would take acorn flour and make little cakes. They'd sell them to the tourists. And little trinkets, they had little things made out of white deerskin and turquoise—watch fobs and things of that sort.

And I sat around. These people *fascinated* me. I couldn't leave them. I'd spend all day there. If anybody wanted to find me from where we were camped a mile away or so, they knew where to go. They would send my brother to find me, and there I'd be sitting, getting to know Chief Lemhi and his wife and his two daughters, two lovely young Indian women. This was to me the epitome. I had found Indians. I helped them over a period of about a week when I'd come up. I began helping them sell their watch fobs and their acorn cakes, which I loved. I don't know if they were any good, but I decided I loved them. I would take them and hand them out



"These people fascinated me. I couldn't leave them. I'd spend all day there." Left to right: Donald d'Azevedo, Chief Lemhi, and Warren d'Azevedo.

to the tourists, and say, "Would you like one?" or something. I forget what they cost. And then I'd take the money back to Chief Lemhi, who was always dressed in a very fancy, embroidered vest with some kind of silver amulets all over it. He'd wear a feathered headdress with feathers sticking straight up, proper style for that area. I don't know what kind of feathers they were. He wore a black shirt and a kind of leather apron and moccasins. He was dressing up for the tourists. Now and then they would dance. They would do this kind of shuffle, pounding, stamping dance, like a circle dance, just the four or five of them. The sad little group dancing around the fire, and then I would go around with a basket and pick up the collection. [laughter]

I was so *proud* of myself. I felt so wonderful being part of that group. So, I saw them maybe two or three times later before that family disappeared. We'd go up every now and then. They were still there. He'd always remember me and have a gift for me, old Chief Lemhi. I gathered, later, that he came from Mono. He was one of the western Monos perhaps. I'm not sure. But very untalkative about where he came from. "Yosemite, I'm from Yosemite." You know, he was being a Yosemite Indian, and maybe he was if any of them still existed.

So, that was one thing. And the other thing was Lake Tahoe. We'd go up, occasionally, to Lake Tahoe, two or three times in my life. And in *those* days going up to Tahoe over what is now Highway 80—which was then 40, I believe—most of it was dirt road when you got up there. Then there was that winding section now that's closed off when you come down from Donner Summit. Have you ever been on that snaky road? That was a dirt road. And *really*, for those old cars! It's absolutely amazing that they were able to do



the things that they did, to either go up or down the grades with the kind of brakes they had. It was frightening. I think of my uncle, who was a very nervous man. He was a very strange and agitated man who liked things quiet and peaceful, but here he was driving the car crowded with people. And my aunt, being a great front-seat driver, telling him what to do every minute, and him telling her to be quiet. [laughter] We'd finally get up and stay at South Lake Tahoe, I think near what's now Camp Richardson, in that area.

*Did you camp?*

We camped. Oh, yes. We couldn't afford . . .

*With tents?*

Oh, yes. We'd put up tents, drive stakes, and have a camp fire and cook. People just did that in those days. There was a lot of that sort of camping, and hardly *any* tourists. There were other people around, but you didn't have the feeling of being crowded by tourists—a lot of space. I recall wondering where the Indians were. They were *there*, but I didn't know how to recognize them. And if I had, I wouldn't have known what to *do* about it. But that's the period when people I now know of were there, the basketmakers, and, my gosh, Captain Pete and Ben James and Maggie James.

*Well, wouldn't that have been when Siskin was doing some of his research?*

Nineteen thirty-six. Siskin, Heizer, Lowie had been up there, and earlier Kroeber and Barrett. But I didn't know about these people.

*No, but it's just interesting to think that . . .*

Oh, yes. Siskin and Stewart were down in the valley. They were with the new Peyotists. In 1934 to 1938, I think, they did their first fieldwork. Yes. Well, that was a little later than when I was first up to Tahoe.

*Oh, right, as a child.*

Yes. I was there probably when I was eight or nine years old the first time. That would have been in the 1920s, late 1920s. And it was so absolutely beautiful up there that people would be in a state of awe. I remember people were silent there. It was so beautiful. You go up now, and your heart breaks looking at what's happened there.

The *water* was really what they said it was, crystal clear straight down a hundred feet. You could see things on the bottom, enormous fish swimming around. Even by that time the fish were pretty well fished out of Tahoe, but nevertheless you could *see* them. And you had all these wonderful myths that the waters of the lake were so light that you sank. You'd never come up again. You would sink to the bottom if you drowned. Also, that you'd get pulled down by currents.

All of this, I now know, had to do a lot with Indian mythology, Washoe mythology, about the lake, about the dangers of the lake; because *they* didn't go out in the middle of the lake. *They* didn't like to swim in the lake. They stayed around the shores. They had these stories about the bottomless lake and being pulled down by water babies in the lake. Well, a lot of this was picked up by whites who adopted the idea of the bottomless lake, et cetera, and later the tale about a hole at the bottom of the lake. All these were part of Washoe legend. But I didn't know. I don't think I even knew that the people up there were Washoe. And yet, there were dozens of Washoe people working around there. Right

where we were camping was the father of my wonderful friend, Roy James. Ben James was leading pack trains up behind Tallac, but I wouldn't have recognized him as Indian.

*Were you aware of them selling baskets?*

They did, but I don't remember. And it would have been to me just a quaint thing. I wouldn't have thought of it as . . . I don't know. I would have seen it just as tourist stuff.

*Like the Yosemitees?*

Yes. But if I hadn't gotten to know Lemhi and felt so proud of being in his family, I would have just seen them as a tourist attraction. It didn't register on me. When I thought of Indians, I was thinking of my idea of Indians, not these poor bedraggled Washoe, living or working around the lake. So, I may not have seen any. It's possible I didn't see any.

When I was about sixteen, just finishing high school, I had a chance to get a job at Lake Tahoe. Although I had been there occasionally with the family, it had been at South Tahoe. But there was this camp in north Tahoe, a camp with girls, young, from very rich families in the Bay Area—I don't know, fifty, seventy young girls, quite nubile, quite wonderful creatures. And there was a woman named Birch, a very severe, tall, hard-nosed lady who ran the camp. She was looking for two guys to go up and act as factotum, I suppose. A young fellow named Red who I knew at school was going to be the swimming and sports instructor, and I was going to be a sort of general handyman.

So we went up there to north Tahoe, somewhere in back of what is now King's Beach, probably just west of King's Beach, back against the mountains. It was all for-

ested at that time, hardly any houses. And there was this large area that was Camp Tallawanda which Birch had named. It had something to do with Indian mythology. She was loaded with Indian myth. She used to recite Hiawatha ad nauseam.

She brought us up to this camp which was a lot of little cabins—screened cabins where the girls stayed. I was set to work emptying the trash every morning and burying it, cleaning up the camp and, in general, being a handyman—fixing things which I didn't know how to fix, but I fixed them one way or another.

The whole camp was based upon some notion of how Indians were supposed to live, according to this woman Birch. The girls had to get up early in the morning and bathe in a stream or at the pump. They had to stand in a circle and hold hands and say things like, "Oooga, oooga, oooga." [laughter] And Birch would sing the *Indian Love Call* that she thought was the greatest song ever known. It had been in the film, *Rose Marie*, with Jeanette McDonald. That was about the same time that Nelson Eddie and Jeanette McDonald were down around Meeks Bay, I think, or Camp Richardson, filming *Rose Marie*.

So, Birch would sing the *Indian Love Call* atrociously. [laughter] It was one of the worst experiences that one could think of early in the morning to hear this woman bellowing the *Indian Love Call*, and the girls all standing in somber attention. The whole day was sort of that way. They would come to eat and there was always something Indian, you know, like corn or I don't know what else. She assigned me one time—and I was quite willing, because I believed that I could do anything—to have an Indian feast for the girls outside the camp, up in the woods somewhere. I found a place, made a nice circle,

and we built a fire in the center, and I went around trying to find Indian things that I could serve. I found manzanita berries, for I had read that the Indians ate manzanita berries. Oh, yes! Chief Lemhi's family had had manzanita berry cakes. And I thought, "Gee, I can do that. I can make acorn cakes." But I couldn't get the acorns, so I'd used oatmeal. I had a whole menu planned of wild things. I had no idea what I was doing, but I was going to make an Indian feast. Well, we had the feast, and we had a dance where everybody held hands and jumped around in a circle and did the *Love Call* while I drummed. [laughter]

That night and the next day, and for two days following, the whole camp was at a stand still. Everybody had diarrhea. [laughter] Berries that aren't totally ripe and haven't been leached and pounded dry are very potent laxatives. So everybody was sick and mad at me, and Birch was berating me. But I had given a feast, and they were eating oatmeal cakes baked on rock. I felt very proud of myself. And I didn't have trouble. [laughter] Maybe I didn't eat any of it. However, the upshot was I was told to take them on a hike, a long excursion up into the mountains nearby. I was supposed to be the expert, because I had spent two nights on top of a nearby mountain by myself, very Indian, and built a fire up as a signal to the camp down below.

*Oh, that you'd got there.*

That I was up there. And I slept on this barren rock. I remember how beautiful it was, the sky and the moon. And I had felt very adventuresome up there sleeping all alone, with all the wild animals around and all that. And building a fire and knowing that they knew I was there. Boy, I was a hero for that.

So then I was told to take them on a long hike. Well, we went on a long hike to a place that we named Bare Lake. It was a beautiful little bowl-like lake way up in the mountains, and it took us about two or three hours hiking to get there. Then here was this long line of young women, young girls—I guess they were all twelve to fifteen, sixteen—and very mischievous.

For example, there were times at camp when they would *very purposefully* leave their used menstrual pads in the waste baskets that I'd have to pick up in the morning, and they would be watching from their windows and giggling. You know, young women can be ruthless, and they were. But I got along pretty well. So did Red. We were sort of their mascot pets.

But anyway, we hiked up to this place we called Bare Lake, because they didn't have any swim trunks, and they told me I had to hide behind some trees. Then they all stripped. I peeked, of course. What a beautiful sight, seeing, you know, twenty or thirty lovely young girls cavorting about in this mountain lake. It was absolutely beautiful. I had the feeling that I was really living a very wild and wonderful life. I peeked for an hour or so. It was quite wonderful. I was a true Peeping Tom. Then they all dressed, and I started to take them back. But of course, I got them lost. [laughter]

We wandered around *all* afternoon. I kept thinking, well, I just need to go down. I know I should go down. I couldn't see the lake or anything. It was a very thick forested area in those days. And we just wandered, though I could find no paths. I had to act as though I knew where I was going, but they began to suspect that something was very wrong. And they were getting hungry and tired. Some of them were crying. It was a terribly anxiety ridden afternoon. I'll never forget, and I

thought, that's what I get for acting as though I can do something I can't do. Eventually, however, we found a little cabin. It belonged to some summer people. Here was, at last, civilization, and they told me how to get down to the road. I went to see them alone and didn't tell the girls. And the people told me how to get down to the highway, the old dirt highway, and then from there I would be able to find my way to Tallawanda. Well, I did that, and I told the girls, "Well, I know exactly where I'm going." [laughter]

We got to camp three hours late, and Birch was *absolutely* furious. "What have you done? They were suppose to be back at three o'clock or four o'clock, and it is now past dinner. These girls are hungry and tired. What have you done to them?"

But most of the girls were very happy with it, and they were defending me, saying, "We had a wonderful day. We went to Bare Lake."

"Where's Bare Lake" says Birch. [laughter] "Where was Warren? What was he doing?"

Oh, she was Queen Victoria! She was not amused by anything.

So anyway, I remember wondering where the real Indians were. Of course, this was north Tahoe, where there would have been very few Washoe. But again, Captain Pete and one of his wives at least, were making baskets, and he was doing something for tourists in that period. But, you know, three or four Washoe Indians at most, and how would I have known of them?

There was the old Cal Neva Lodge. At that time, it was just a small place sitting right

on the border between California and Nevada. We used to go down there and illicitly drink beer, myself and Red and maybe two or three of the older girls. We would sneak down there. So, it wasn't far from King's Beach. It was one big room with a line in the middle, which was the California-Nevada border. We used to drink on the Nevada side. And there was a slot machine, one slot machine.

But you couldn't drink on the other side. And that lasted all summer. It was to me quite an experience. But, again, my experience about Indians was all through this mishmash mythology of Birch, our leader, who had developed a ritual all of her own.

Yet they were in the area, but nobody *thought* to go out and find a real one. [laughter] I mean, that would have spoiled everything if they'd ever met old Captain Pete, because later I knew his son, Hank Pete. Old Captain Pete was a rugged old guy and didn't look like what an Indian was supposed to look like, and they would have been very upset. So that's Tahoe.

*Did you ever at this early time get into Carson Valley, Nevada? Did you have any notion about Nevada?*

Yes, just once or twice. Once I went to Reno with my parents when I was a young kid, but it was Tahoe mostly. All that was part of the Modesto and pre-Modesto experience.

## IN AN IDEAL WORLD . . . .

**I**T WAS IN MODESTO around 1936 or 1937 that I realized I was not going to go into medicine. I made this sort of crucial life decision that I was not going to do it and let my parents know.

“Well, what are you going to do, Warren?” I hadn’t the slightest idea in this world except I wanted to get out in the world and have adventure and maybe be a writer. And I was writing. I was writing *masses* of poetry. [laughter] Very bad poetry.

*So when you were keeping journals you did have some notion of being a writer?*

Yes, in a way. To me, it was important to write. It was important to keep a record of what I was doing and put down my impressions and my thoughts. I did that at home. There was one journal I kept for years. It was a ledger—a great, old bank ledger, very thick old thing, with the marbled sides. Gosh, it was about eighteen by twelve inches, big old ledger. I kept record of the new society I was eventually going to build. I had a notion I was eventually going to find an island some-

where in the South Seas, because I thought that was the ideal place in the world. I was going to find this small island and start this new society. I had it all organized. I wish I had that thing now. I had *every* detail, the whole structure of a totally unworkable society. [laughter] But it was delightful. It was wonderful. There was free love, nobody married.

*Is this while you were also reading the Ballads?*

All these things went on in phases. No, this was when I was reading the South Sea materials I’ve already mentioned—Herman Melville and James Norman Hall, all those South Sea tales. I was even reading Peter Buck—Te Rangi Hiroa. How I ran across him, I don’t know, because later, when I was at the University of California and in anthropology, I rediscovered him. But early on I had run across some of his work on Hawaiian culture and Polynesian culture, and the fact that he was a Polynesian was enough for me. Later I met him when I was going to sea, and this stuff all came together.

So to me, that was the place that if I had my druthers I wanted to be. I dreamed of becoming the grandmaster of a new society, the wise director of the new way of life. And it was going to begin with some Polynesians, but anybody else could come if they could qualify. I had a whole list of qualifications. I was very concerned about not only order within the group, but also with reproduction—you know, how the next generation would be born and taught and raised properly. I don't think marriage was involved. A certain kind of ritual commitment had to be made between people. I thought of everything. Not only food and agriculture—which I didn't know anything about, but I had ideas about it. [laughter] And fishing—oh, a lot of fishing, because I liked fishing. We were going to do a lot of fishing. We were going to have certain ceremonies and rituals, but they were going to be spiritual rather than religious. And that was one of the . . .

*At that point how were you distinguishing between spiritual and religious?*

Well, mystical. By spiritual I mean philosophical and metaphysical rather than any kind of religious system or order.

*So, when you say religion, you're really talking about the established . . . ?*

Organized. Christianity. [laughter] But I think a little Buddhism was all right, a little Vedanta and Hindu culture was allowed.

When that old question, "What are you going to do with your life?" would come up, it would be extremely disturbing to me, because, I didn't have the slightest idea. I just knew that I had these great, powerful urges to do something important and different and get away—actually to get away. Freight train,

spaceship, anything—off the planet, into a new, another world.

Which reminds me—the ideal society that I planned in this ledger had incorporated all the things that I thought would be the way human beings ought to live, and that somewhere in the world there must be people like that. Of course, there aren't. There could never be people like the ones that you construct under these conditions.

I also wanted to be a writer and a traveler. That was Halliburton syndrome. That was one possibility. I thought of some other things. I'd go to the South Seas and live there for the rest of my life like Paul Gauguin. And Stevenson—Robert Louis Stevenson—was another one of my heroic figures.

Then there was the idea of becoming a monk. I suppose this is where kids pick up their parents' lost chances or lost desires. My father would say how, when he was in his early teens, because he was Catholic, he admired a certain priest named Brother Leo at the Catholic school he had gone to. He thought how wonderful it would be, to be like that, or even to go into a Trappist monastery to contemplate and do good the rest of your life. So I was thinking, gee, I could be a monk. Also, it would fit in with my idea of philosophical development and spiritual excellence and all that. It wasn't a serious thing, but it was there. In fact later, when I got to Cal, I did explore the Pacific School of Religion as a possibility. Also Swami Ashokananda's Vedanta church, right near the university. I think it's another kind of church now. But that sprung out of exploration into these possibilities.

Anyway, all those things had come to my mind in my early teens. I remember, I was writing poetry and keeping journals. I must have written more poetry at that time than I wrote since, though I wrote much better

since. [chuckle] But I wrote a lot—all those episodic, sporadic journals, my experiences and thoughts at that time. So, I had the feeling that I wanted to do some kind of writing and new thinking, being an original person. I even thought I wanted to go into the theater, to be an actor. I even had a very short, fortunately, brief episode of deciding I was going to enter the ballet school in San Francisco. I was very interested in dance but soon discovered my limits. I hadn't met Kathy yet, but when I met Kathy, my interest in dance increased quite a bit, as a non-performer, as an art form. All those things were going on, a sort of a stew at that time.

I remember we went down to the 1938 San Francisco World's Fair where I had once thought I would sail in with Halliburton on the junk. I was very depressed by the fact that I would not be coming that way, but I would be going with my *family* on Treasure Island. Treasure Island became a naval base two or three years later during the war, and I was stationed there as a cadet in the Naval Reserve. But anyway, we went to the World's Fair. My memory of it is very dim, except that it was kind of glitzy and impressive. My brother and I sneaked in to see Sally Rand, because we had some time to ourselves, and here she was with her great feather fan. She was a celebrity in that period, and here she was one of the attractions at the World's Fair!

*Was she an exotic dancer?*

She was called a fan-dancer, a bad exotic dancer. She had this enormous ostrich fan which opened up six feet, I'm sure. She was a little lady, a little blond, rather cute and not a great body. She was mostly naked. She probably had on a body suit, but it was considered very daring. She would come on, and everybody would scream with excitement, because

here was the famous Sally Rand. She would play with her fans and hide behind them and do all these . . . . It was really, when I come to think of it, a terribly, terribly stupid show. But, we had seen her, and that was important.

And I remember the folks asking, "Well, what was it like?"

"Oh, gee, it was great," you know. But it was actually pretty *boring*, because she really didn't do much. And you didn't see much, because her fans were in the way. But we had seen the famous Sally Rand.

Now what was the other thing we saw that I remember that was impressive? Oh, yes, Martha Graham was there. Martha Graham had a little show that was put on in a little theater, and I talked my brother into going. I wanted to see Martha Graham. I was interested somehow in modern dance, and I had heard of her. Maybe I had met Kathy by this time in Modesto when she went through with her troupe at Bobbie Jean's house. It is possible I had met her by then, and maybe that sparked my interest in it. But, I must have had other . . . . Well, of course, I had gone with Betty Anderson, this tap dancer in high school, but she wouldn't have known about or cared about Martha Graham. Whatever. I wanted to see her. So we went into this tiny theater, and we were among about four people in the audience. Well, you had Sally Rand down the street, why would you go to see Martha Graham?

*This is a World's Fair?*

At the San Francisco World's Fair, indeed! But my brother and I still remember it. Don has a magnificent memory. He remembers things in tremendous detail. He puts everybody to shame. He remembers everything that happened there. All I remember

was she did that wonderful dance enveloped in this drapery. She danced all in place. It was extremely intricate. I can't remember the music, or maybe there wasn't any. Then my brother says that she did a snake dance, or they did a snake dance. Everybody was snaking around the stage, and it was remarkably fascinating how they moved. We weren't familiar with modern dance, and here was an early modern dancer.

That was before modern dance was really known. I remember thinking how wonderful it was. Oh, we knew about Isadora Duncan. She had been well known. My mother was fascinated by Isadora Duncan. We never saw her but heard everything about her. It was like Amy Semple McPherson, Isadora Duncan's life.

So when I saw Martha Graham advertised at the fair, I remember thinking that this is what Isadora Duncan had introduced into dance, this kind of free flowing expression, modernism in dance. So I was already thinking about those things. And then the other thing we saw . . . it's the only other thing I remember. I really don't recall much of that fair at all.

*Would you stay with your aunt?*

Yes, we'd stay with them. We drove down from Modesto. So, the other thing was an evangelist who had *crowds* coming to his show. He had a remarkable show, an electrical demonstration. He had all kinds of equipment that made long sparks between poles, and flashes of light. It was a light show with dazzling electrical phenomena. And as he went on, he would preach about the wonders of God, what God could do. This was proof of the Bible. This was proof of the validity of religion. He was one of those weird

guys who was trying to use science to confirm religious views.

I don't know how Don felt, but I remember feeling, "This is just a lot of bullshit." [laughter] It was fascinating how he was using all this equipment, but I was thinking, "Hell, I've used an x-ray in my physics class." Old Willie Brown, my physics instructor in high school, had demonstrated these kinds of phenomena, and there's nothing mysterious about them. And here was this guy *using* this quackery and giving this table-thumping sermon. So I remember coming out of there feeling vindicated. Here is what these crap artists do. This is what some people believe.

*Did you ever get into, or was your family ever into, that side of the occult? I mean, the table tappers and the spiritualists?*

No. The closest I got to it was trying to help put out a candle in San Jose.

*The Rosicrucians.*

The idea of spiritualism, perhaps. I was intrigued by the occult. I can't remember them, but I read *extensively* in occult literature. I'd go to bookstores in San Francisco. There were occult book stores, and I would wander through them. Now and then I would buy one. *All sorts* from strange little cults in England and Europe and the United States, and I would glance through them. I was interested in it, but it always seemed to me to be contrived and somehow elite. It was elitist, in that the people who were doing it seemed upper-class dilettantes. I was beginning to question, "Where did they make their living?" Or, "Where do they get the time to do this sort of thing?"



*You know the I Am Society always smacked of that to me, because I thought it was no coincidence that all the Beings were golden haired and blue eyed.*

Oh, yes. It was not only elitist, it was subtly racist. The Caucasians were top of the heap.

*Supreme.*

There was really no room for anyone else. [laughter] I mean, that was it. Whatever society they envisioned was sterile. Those Lemurians had to be all blue-eyed, fair-skinned, blond-haired Caucasians. That occurred to me. I mean, I was aware there was something very isolated and constrictive about their view. A constricted world view.

*Because, even then, that's definitely what you were fighting against all the time?*

Yes. It was too small, and I began to get the feeling that all these people that wrote

these books and pamphlets—including Madame Blavatsky—were all from well-to-do, upper-class, wealthy circles. It was a kind of hobby for wealthy, bored people. This began to occur to me later. And all this was really before the great fad of Eastern mysticism and all that has since hit the fan. It was just beginning, the early seeds of it.

So anyway, I remember this electrical evangelist at the fair, because I had a very strong feeling that one has to watch out for this crap, you know.

*Did you have the sense then that most of the audience he was drawing was interested in the phenomena, the electrical phenomena?*

I don't know what all of them felt, but there were a lot of people shouting and saying, "Amen," and, "Hallelujah," and, "How wonderful," and, "Praise the Lord!" But there must have been others like me there, too.



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## JUNIOR COLLEGE

**A**FTER I FINISHED high school, I went to Modesto Junior College, and when I graduated from junior college, I refused to go to the graduation ceremonies. And this probably was, to me, at that time, an overt message to my family that I was not going to do the things that they did. I know my mother was crushed. I don't think my father cared much; if he did, he didn't say. But my mother wanted to have pictures of me at graduation. She wanted to show her friends, because it was so remarkable, I suppose she felt, that I graduated at all! But I was adamant. I was not going to go to graduation. I felt that it was hokey, that there was something . . .

That, as I look back, was a moment of clear adolescent rebellion. I felt very badly that my mother was so upset about it. At the same time, I just felt I could not do it; and that's something that stuck with me the rest of my life. I always avoided ceremonial situations when I could. Somehow or other it seemed to me always to be . . . I have no idea why I felt that way about it. It just seemed wrong; I didn't want to wear a gown and a

cap, and parade and receive a diploma. In fact, I went and got it at the office of the college instead of receiving it in line. Even when I was teaching in universities, I didn't like to go to graduation ceremonies, mainly because I didn't want to wear a cap and gown. I always felt they were so silly. [laughter] There was something so silly about a cap and gown. And, of course, that's a very nutty way to look at things, because also . . . there's something wonderful about people gathering together and wearing the emblems of their trade and of their status. In a way that's kind of nice, and a couple of times I have been able to enjoy it that way, particularly if I had students who were graduating. Then I'd feel obliged to go, and then I could find myself enjoying the situation. But mostly I avoided such things. I didn't like it; I didn't want to.

But, anyway, my mother was so unhappy about it, I remember that one day I said, "All right. Let's go take a picture." And I put on my cap and gown and walked over (we were only a couple of blocks from the college) with my brother, and we went over there. And I sat on the steps . . . I have the picture. I

looked *very* dolorous, my head hanging down, looking very resistant, and my picture was taken. I gave that to my mother, who was not satisfied at all, as well she should not be. But that was about the same time that I was alternately using the name d'Azevedo with Azevedo. I tried to think earlier today, when that started, and it's hard because I'd alternate using it.

My father's people were d'Azevedos. My grandfather, who was a doctor in Oakland, and my great-grandfather, were all d'Azevedos. At least they wrote it with a *d* with the apostrophe. And then they began to drop it. I suppose that when my father went to school, and about the time he was getting married, it was a burden to constantly spell out that name, d'Azevedo.

And it also seemed to be a little uppity—most of the Portuguese had dropped it. In fact, today most of the Azevedos I know come from families who were de Azevedo or d'Azevedo. It wasn't a status thing; it was just the way it was written.

When I went to the Azores some years ago, I went through the archives at Horta, and it was just like that wonderful anecdote told by Steven Hawking, the physicist in England who wrote *A Brief History of Time*. He opened one of his books with a little story about a talk he once gave about the beginning of the world. And some woman in the audience asked, "Well, what happened before that? What I have learned is that the earth sits upon a turtle. And the turtle is what holds the world up." And so Hawking says—he was being very smart-aleck—he says, "Well, what's holding the turtle up?"

And she says, "It's turtles all the way down." [laughter]

Yes, "Sir, it's turtles all the way down!" [laughter] And so I told my brother when he argued with me the family had not used the

*d*, that I had discovered not only that they did, but it was d'Azevedos all the way down . . . [laughter] all the way down to the beginning. So somewhere back in the early 1920s, my father had dropped the *d* just to make it easier to sign his name and to join other Portuguese who had dropped it. And my grandmother, who kept the *d*, was one of the reasons why I use it, because she was telling me how important it was to maintain this tradition, of d'Azevedo. I was influenced by that, and I at times would sign my name d'Azevedo. To me it was rather important. My father never commented on it, but I don't think he liked it because it put me in a rather unusual position within the family, you know. Donald Azevedo, my brother, and Warren d'Azevedo and all . . . [laughter] And my father, Joseph d'Azevedo/Azevedo, et cetera. But I did find my birth certificate, where my father had signed his name d'Azevedo, but he made me Azevedo, because it was the transition, the new way. My brother was askance at that; he didn't really believe it till I showed him.

*Now, your brother has kept Azevedo?*

We had that on our birth certificates. I was able to change my birth certificate later, a few years later, to d'Azevedo without paying any fee. I wrote to Sacramento and said, "You have made a mistake, and see, my father's name is d'Azevedo, and you have not put d'Azevedo on my name." They changed it without a qualm. [laughter]

So I became legalized that way. But even before that I was using the name. Part of that had to do with the influence of my grandmother, whom I would go to visit whenever I was in the Bay Area—my Portuguese grandmother. She would not only read me Portuguese poetry, which I didn't under-

stand . . . and she would then roughly translate. Particularly, her uncle, da Gloria, the great Portuguese poet whom she admired and loved. That's Guilherme Silveira da Gloria.

And she thought he was wonderful. She would read his poetry, and then she would tell me, "You see, da Gloria and d'Azevedo—you must keep those things because those are the tradition." And her husband, my grandfather, had kept the *d* on the placard outside his office almost to the time he died. But he finally changed it because his Portuguese relatives had all become Azevedos. And then my grandmother, years later, when she was an old lady living in Alameda in an apartment, somewhat destitute, changed her name to Azevedo. I thought, what an irony of life . . . a tragedy.

And I said, "Grandma, why?"

And she says, "Because I'm all alone in the telephone book." [laughter]

There was a whole page of Azevedos, you know, and also in Sacramento—another page of Azevedos. You had to go to the D's to find Amalia. All by herself. She began to feel lonely there! [laughter] And I felt very sorry for her. Quite a poignant story.

*Do you think part of your going back and forth with the name was that you were sort of experimenting with a pen name? I mean, were you thinking of your identity?*

Maybe. It was mainly in terms of identity—who I was. I was the great-grandson of Joachim d'Azevedo.

*Yes. Well, one thing interests me a great deal about what you said in terms of your graduation. Refusing to take part was sort of a statement, an initial statement that you were going to craft your own way.*

Yes. That came about the same time. There was no hostility between me and my parents. Sometimes my parents felt a little vexation toward me because of my behavior and my interests. But, no, we were a fairly companionable family.

I mean I had very strong emotional problems about my family because I felt contained and walled off from the world. And I began to be very irritated by the extended familial crowd, the stew of family, and the constant bickerings and things of that kind going on.

And, also, though I liked and admired some members of the family like my grandparents, my Swedish grandparents, I didn't want to *remain* with them. I didn't want to remain in that world. I wanted to remove myself from that world for a while, anyway.

So all these little attempts, like the refusal to go to graduation, the ambivalence about the name, were identity things. Also, it was a subtle critique of my father that I wasn't really quite aware of. For example, the fact that he never spoke Portuguese in the house. And then when I'd go to his mother and father's house, the Portuguese household, I felt estranged because I didn't have the language. Why can't I speak it? And I think my very early problems about language learning probably came there—the feeling of being separated.

Later when I went to Mexico, in my letters home I mentioned all the time that I wish I could speak Spanish. Yet I kept saying, "You know, you don't really need to; people are so nice that if you are friendly and polite to them, they understand your gestures; they understand the way you are . . . you understand them."

And the name thing had to do partly with my feeling that my father had betrayed his heritage, had given up. He never talked about his relatives; he never talked about the his-

tory. I had to find it out. I used to go and take notes at my grandmother's house; take notes on genealogy.

I have a file that I kept up all my life—genealogical records of the family. But when I'd ask him, he would put it off. He seemed to be disinterested. Now and then he might hold forth a bit, but it was always as though it was a burden.

*Yes, and maybe irrelevant to what he was trying to do for himself?*

I think so. I think he had to struggle against his family in the same way, in a way that all adolescents do. And his marriage to my mother was . . . I don't think that was a rebellion; I think that was a deep and powerful detour in his life. That problem over my birth and all that, I think it had *shocked* him into the reality that he had to be on his own. And he did. He went out and decided not to be a doctor, which is something I too decided, but I stuck with it. He became a bookkeeper and did some work in banks and in insurance for a number of years before he finally went back to school into medicine, when I was very young. He had a great struggle over that, a great struggle over what he was going to do and be.

And he was married and had kids. By the way, my great struggle was also after I had married and had kids and the war was on. So later I had a lot of sympathy for what he went through. But when I was a kid, when I was getting ready to leave home and go to school I felt a deep sense of loss—the feeling that I didn't have continuity with his side of the family. It was all with my mother's family. And he in a sense had tossed in his fate to my mother's family and in some strange way found an accommodation with them. He

admired them, too. He admired them as gutsy people.

*Do you think there is something also natural about your fascination, your interest in him and his family and his heritage, also, because you were a boy, a young man, and you look to your father for that kind of identity?*

I didn't get much of that.

*I think one of the fascinations in studying "other cultures," where things seem simpler because you're at a distance, is that those signals you were supposed to get from your own older generation always looked clearer to me in other cultures.*

Yes.

*That seemed to be what the transmission of culture was all about, was from your immediate elders. And if you don't get that, it's . . .*

Well, yes, but the identification was often with those elements within a family that are not necessarily the ones that your parents admire or feel strongly about. My identification was with my grandparents on my mother's side, who were simple, fundamentalist religious folk, whom I could feel distance from, but love, and have a positive feeling about the struggle they had in life. And others in the family admired that, too. But I had a very special connection with that. As for the generation of my own parents, I looked upon them as people who were trying so hard to fit in, to be Americans. I didn't want to be part of that.

On the other hand, my father, I suppose, was much more aware about that sort of thing. He wasn't able to maintain that kind of relationship with his own family, because

for all of their wonderful Portuguese-Latin exuberance and expressiveness—which I had loved and admired—actually as I’ve learned since, it was a rather cold and dysfunctional family. But within the big extended family they did. *Always* those gatherings were the most rambunctious, exuberant, hugging, kissing kind of thing, which I took on as part of my identity from that side of the family. That’s the way the Portuguese are. That’s the way I must be, and I always was in that sense a rather outgoing person. Physically I would touch people and hold hands and shake and hug, because to me it was admirable.

In my mother’s family, they were affectionate, but there wasn’t much embracing.

*It almost seems like in your own heritage you had that Ruth Benedict Apollonian . . . [laughter]*

Apollonian versus Dionysian.<sup>1</sup>

*Yes. [laughter] And you could just pick which mood you were in.*

In a way, one could say that, excepting there are Dionysian elements in both and Apollonian in both. The Lutheran and Catholic aspects for the Apollonians, but the fundamentalist church-going and Latin romanticism was Dionysian. It was wild and woolly.

But, anyway, it was that part of my father’s tradition he had separated himself from, in order to create his own independence and identity. Yet his father stood as a model. His father . . . he loved his father. He had a closer relationship with his father than I had with him.

*Right. Well, he actually helped him in his practice.*

I think he felt sorry for him. I think he felt nurturing . . . . That was a great burden for a young guy. And then he had the problem about marriage to my mother and having a child early.

*Well, don’t you think that generation, that really saw itself as quote “becoming Americans,” felt responsible for their parents?*

Oh, yes.

*Also, they were buffering . . . .*

Yes. They saw their parents as dependents. And their parents were. Except my father’s parents remained custodial until he was on his own and going to school. By then his father began to decline; and his mother was a very poor financial manager, and things just went to pot. So they became a problem for him. And then he had his younger brothers and sisters that he felt obligations to, and was always irritated by what he viewed as their lack of ambition or goal in life.

He always saw his younger brothers and sisters as hapless. And I think part of that was transferred onto my brother and myself, that the family was a problem, and we were not always doing the things that we should do. He expressed this in subtle ways; it wasn’t something that we learned through words. I could just feel it, that he felt us to be inadequate, just as his brothers and sisters were inadequate. [laughter]

◇

*Do you not want to go into the other topic that we’d brought up before, your Philippine girlfriend?*

[laughter] Did I mention that? Well yes, that’s when I was in junior college, too. There

was a young woman named Pasing Todtod, a Filipino woman. She had a wonderful voice, and she'd give little local concerts at various doings around Modesto, mostly Filipino dances. And I got to know her in class and all that, and she invited me to some of these things, so, I got to know her. But then one time, one of her cousins visited. Her name was Loling. I don't recall her last name; Dolores was her American name, and Loling was her Filipino name. I thought she was absolutely, fabulously beautiful.

I became obsessed by her, and I remember that whenever she'd come up, I would ask Pasing to invite me over. And one time, she invited me down to Stockton where there was a Filipino marriage celebration, and I drove down to Stockton with her family. We danced together. She was extremely shy, a very young girl. And I remember this *wonderful* gathering of Filipinos, most of them day-laborers from the ranches and farms, all dressed up to kill, in their rather elaborate attire, American attire—but you know, flamboyant ties, pinched coats, and sort of *pachuco*-like pants and all that.

“*Pachuca*”?

Well, it's a word, that's a word we used to use, *pachuc*. What was that? It was the urban Mexicans mainly.

Kd: Well, it was for Mexican/Americans out of L.A.

*Is that like a Zoot suit?*

Yes, and the slang was the *pachucs*, or the *pachucos*—I'm just using it very freely here. They were dressed something like that, sort of a mod style of the period but very nice. There were very few women, mostly these

young men looking for these few women, and lots of Filipino food, which I thought was fantastic. But most of it I had never seen before. Whole chickens, innards and all, and rice, of course, mixed rice dishes. Then there was dancing to a kind Filipino pop music, and Pasing would sing. She was the celebrity for all these people, and she was always called in to preside.

I spent the whole evening that one time with Loling, and felt that she was my girlfriend and all that. She was terribly shy and gave me no encouragement really. [laughter] However, she didn't drive me away.

My friend Watson Lacey went one time with me to one of these parties in Modesto, and he fell madly in love with her, too. So the two of us had this adolescent competition over this lovely, exotic creature. He wanted to go down to San Francisco to bypass me and see her at her family house, and I remember being absolutely *outraged* that he would *do* such a thing. So, what I did, I remember picking some magnolia blossoms from the park and putting them in a box with tissue paper around. Of course, overnight they would turn black, but I spent my last cent sending this package with some kind of note to her about how I wanted to see her and all that and sent it down to San Francisco. [laughter]

Well, that affair slowly withered away like the magnolias, because obviously her family had decided that this character, this honky white man was not going to mess around with their daughter. And Pasing told me that her parents said that she was not to write to me. She wrote me one note, that she must not write to me and all that. And that was a tragedy. I remember Watson and I would sit, talking to each other about this terrible tragedy of our joint love affair with Loling that got nowhere. But anyway, that was a whole



different world that I guess I wanted to be a part of, but I didn't know how. And it was through Pasing that I was able to touch on all that. So, that was my Filipino girlfriend.

Years later, my brother met her, knew her husband—a Filipino man that he had known at Stanford who had become a medical assistant of some sort. In San Francisco he ran across these two people in a car. The woman who was with him said, “Are you Warren's brother?” And so there was a connection. [laughter] This was at least ten years later. He said she was a nice looking woman, nothing fabulous. But boy, she was a fabulous looking young lady.

*Well, ten years is a long time to remember someone that you're not allowed to write to.*

Well, because obviously it was an event in her young life, as it was in mine.

*Were you introduced to, or interested in, in anthropology at any point in junior college?*

Anthropology, as such, I didn't know anything about. Maybe I knew what the word meant, but I don't think that I connected it with anything that I was interested in. History and archeology I knew a little bit about, but anthropology as a study of culture and all that, I don't think I knew anything about that until I got to Cal.

*Were you writing poetry at this time?*

Oh, yes. I was writing poetry all the time. I wrote scads of poetry, probably from about the time I was eleven, twelve years old.

*Both of you sort of have indicated to me that it wasn't that unusual. A lot of people read and wrote poetry, and it wasn't that unusual. But,*

*at this point, isn't it becoming a little more unusual, to be writing poetry through junior college?*

Well, I only knew two or three friends who wrote at all. I knew people like Watson Lacey, who was a *brilliant* guy who later became a psychiatrist, and he was the *genius* of my class, you know.

*Did he write also?*

Yes. Jotted poems, and we'd read poems to each other. And Pierce Young was a pianist and also wrote poetry—very good poetry and later went to Stanford and wrote poetry—but then became a judge because his father got him a judgeship. He went into law and died early. And who else? Pershing Olsen who didn't write poetry but essays and plays. I don't know of anybody else who was writing poetry at the time. But there was this stimulus from others who were interested. But, I just wrote all the time, and I had, you know, sheaths of notes and poetry.

*At this point, what are your expectations for yourself? What do you think you're headed towards?*

I didn't have the slightest idea. I wanted to travel and be an adventurer and write about it like Richard Halliburton. That sort of thing.

*A travel writer that would have . . . ?*

Not necessarily. Just do fascinating and interesting things and somehow make a living at it. As I mentioned, I had started out deciding I was going to go into pre-med, early when I was still in high school. But then when I got to junior college and started taking pre-med types of courses, preparing for

that, I realized it wasn't for me. I was interested in it, but I just didn't connect. My friend, Watson Lacey, was a brilliant student throughout. He went easily through courses in genetics and zoology from a Dr. Kurtz. He was very good at all that, and he used to work with me and try to get me to understand. [laughter] Somehow or other, I just couldn't apply myself that well. I just began to feel that other things interested me a lot more. My brother went on trying to get into medicine and got into Stanford and all that.

*What things are you reading now?*

Well, I was reading all kinds of things: Ralph Waldo Emerson; Thoreau was *very* meaningful to me; also the travel books, things like Sven Hedin; the Greek philosophers, Locke, Hume, and Berkeley; and Bertrand Russell.

*Well, tell me about Thoreau.*

Well, the *Walden Pond* period and the Emerson period, I think I came upon that at junior college, had some professor or some teacher who turned us on to that—the Transcendentalists. And I loved it.

*Are you, are you at this point aware of Karl Marx?*

No, I don't think I'd even heard the name.

*Freud?*

I'd just heard, now and then, the word communist. Freud? Maybe, but if I did, they didn't register. It wasn't important. No, Marx came a little later and pretty heavy. There was James Norman Hall, I read all of those Polynesian tales, travel books of his. And he wasn't Kathy's relative [Kathleen d'Azevedo], but his co-writer was. He had been to Tahiti. Then someone else—Charles Nordhoff? I read all that sort of thing. Spent a lot of time in the local library searching travel books.

*Are you exploring more along the religious, philosophical themes, too?*

Both of those went together in phases during that period, and I maintained that interest even when I got to Cal. I even went to Swami Ashokananda's Vedanta church for awhile in Berkeley, and the Pacific School of Religion, because I was toying with the idea of going into the church.

*Oh, you were?*

I was. I was wandering around in a daze. What was I going to do? I was *trying* all these various things.

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#### Note

1. Controlled, measured, and logical (Apollonian) versus uncontrolled, prone to excesses, and spiritual (Dionysian).

**T**HEN I WENT to Cal. I went with my friend Pierce Young whom I'd known all through high school. We decided that we would go to Cal. We went down and found the grubbiest little rooms I can imagine right on Telegraph Avenue, down about five blocks from the university, just below Dwight Way. Actually, right near Dwight, in this four-story barn which is still there. It was almost falling down. There were long passages with little rooms, like a prison, on each side, and we had a room looking over Telegraph Avenue. There were two rooms, so he had one and I had the other. We had a little kitchen and an absolutely filthy, broken-down bathroom. Our plan was . . . . It was my plan really, because I came from a frugal household. He came from a rather free-and-easy, better-off household, and he had no idea about how to save money, and I had very little money. In fact, I was always borrowing from him—maybe that's why he was my friend—and he had a car. [laughter] The idea was we were going to cook, take turns cooking something. We'd just go out and buy stuff and have sandwiches. I'd even make spaghetti, which I always felt was my forte. I could fix spa-

ghetti. I thought we were going to eat it everyday, I suppose. So he agreed we would do that, and then we'd take turns cleaning up the kitchen.

*Now, when you were at Modesto when you went to Modesto Junior College, you lived at home?*

Yes.

*So, this was your first time living away, setting up a household?*

Yes, so I was very determined to do it right. I think we were paying something like eight dollars each a month for these rooms. You can imagine what they were. Even then that was low. So we started out doing that for the first three or four days. I did some cooking, and we ate, and the person who had not cooked was to do the dishes. Pierce was lazy and did not do them. I got mad, and I said, "Well, then, I'm not going to do them either," and it ended up with a great mass of dishes from my spaghetti sprees. We closed the kitchen door and never . . . .

The kitchen, with its flourishing mold farm, was closed and not mentioned the rest of that year. And we had this little bathroom with a tub and a toilet. It was always filthy, because I was the only one who would clean it.

Pierce *was* a very spoiled young man, and he thought himself stupid for these things. He got quite a large allowance from his family every month, and at times, it was all I could live on. I only had occasional odd jobs. I didn't have any steady jobs, because I guess I was too busy experiencing. I'd get fifteen dollars a month from my parents, and those were the days when tuition at Cal was twelve dollars a semester, I think, for California residents. It was extremely low. It might have been more than twelve—twelve or twenty-five. I think it was only twelve dollars. I'd get fifteen dollars a month now and then and have to explain what I spent it for. Well, part of that went for rent and the rest went for . . . I was a very skinny guy at that time, believe it or not. I didn't eat very much. I was more interested in enjoying what I was doing than eating. If I needed the money, fifty cents or ten cents for car fare rather than eating, I did.

I loved Chinese restaurants, as I've already said. Even in Modesto next to the theater I worked in there was the one Chinese restaurant in town. I ate there all the time. And of course in Berkeley, I found the Chinese restaurants, and that's where I ate most of the time. I could eat on thirty-five cents a day very easily.

So, anyway, one of things that I remember about that place I lived in aside from Pierce's rather extravagant way of life . . . He always had money in his pocket, and he always dressed well. I dressed in stuff that I had brought with me, hand-me-downs and all that, and *very* seldom had more than small

change in my pocket. I'll deal with school in a moment, but one thing I have to deal with is this. Below us, on the first floor facing Telegraph in a storefront, was the studio of Chiru Obata, who was and is now a very well-known artist. I don't know if he is still living, but his work is, and he had the studio under us, two floors below us. He had piles of Sumi paintings that he would sell. Sumi brush. Sumi can be in color, but his was mostly in black ink. There are little stone mortars that you rub the ink stick on with water. I was fascinated by seeing his work in the window and talking to him. He was teaching a class at Cal. I don't remember much that I did at Cal that first semester, but I do recall that I had this class with Chiru Obata. Totally absorbing. To this day, I still do some Sumi painting.

We would go out with our brushes and our little easels, ink stones, and pads of Sumi paper. We'd go out painting around the campus. I was fascinated by it, because it was so *beautiful* to watch this man. He could, with a stroke, make a bamboo stalk and then the leaves with just a few little movements of his brush. He'd get shadow and shading by the way he laid the brush on the ink. I learned some of that, not very good, but I learned to be able to do it, and I loved line drawing with Sumi brushes. I did a lot of drawing. Later on, I even won an award, the Seaman's Art Contest in San Francisco and had my painting in the show. It was a kind of a pornographic painting.

*It sounds very structured. I don't know that much about it, but is it related to calligraphy?*

You mean formal?

*Formal, yes.*

It's very formal in its technique. You learn very formal strokes. You learn stroke by stroke, and you do it over and over and over again. It's very highly formalized at the beginning, but once you have that, then you're free to use it in all sorts of ways. He had hundreds and hundreds of his works in his little studio that went through progressions. I mean one would follow another and develop from the last. He did mostly bamboo, you know, but he did some animals, deer and rabbits.

*But the one you won the prize for you said was pornographic?*

Well, it wasn't classic Sumi. I used to do a lot of line drawings. The one that won was of two nude women kind of wild and fantastic floating in the air like clouds, and it sold immediately.

*And a Sumi artist would have recognized the strokes that you used?*

I wasn't using classic stroke, but they would recognize the line, the Sumi line, because I was using the shaded line. But I didn't have any bamboo in it. [laughter] No, and I wouldn't have been able to do a good Sumi painting, but I got the feel for that kind of line. I loved that line. I did *a lot* of painting over the next two or three years, off and on at Berkeley, and later, when I went to sea.

*Did you do water color?*

Mostly water color. Also ink, ink wash. I liked a dark, black line with Sumi brush with ink, and water color.

*Did you take more instruction?*

That's all I ever had—just handling the brush. Even when I was a little kid, I could draw well. In fact, one of the things that I liked most about the school in Alameda was there was the art class I think I mentioned to you, where you brought leaves to school in the morning, and I was one of the best in the class. I was very good at drawing things. So anyway, I worked with him in that class. I don't know what else. I was taking classes in English at the time. You know, the required courses. I don't really recall them. I know I was reading Keats and Milton and Shakespeare and Shelley and all that, so I was taking some class probably in English literature. I was doing some themes and stuff of that sort, and I don't remember the classes at all.

The only teachers I remember were a little later, when I had Lowie and Kroeber in anthropology. This was my first experience with them. Oh, and Heizer when he was a teaching assistant in the Archeology and History of American Indians. That was a little later, but it wasn't my first semester, I don't think. Anyway, whatever was going on there, Chiru Obata sits out in my mind, you see.

And oh, the great tragedy. I came home one day to our horrible little apartment up there, and Chiru Obata was at the door as I came, absolutely furious, screaming and shaking up and down. "Come see, come see, come see." Apparently, my friend Pierce had let the bathtub over flow, so water had dripped down through two floors onto a big stack of his Sumi paintings. And I went down with him. I felt just *terrible*. You know, a few times in your life, you can remember feeling utterly beat, utterly beat, terribly embarrassed and unhappy. Because here he was, all of his work wet, and he was flailing his arms. I remember calming him down and telling him how sorry I was, and what could I do?

“What, what can I do?” he says. “What can I do with all these? They’re finished.” The water had stained them all the way down. So you know what he told me? He got calm, and he says, “Just keep coming to my class.”

And I remember thinking what a *wonderful* man. He says, “You can’t do anything. You can’t pay for these. They are priceless. You can’t pay for these.” Then he said, “Well, they were just practice ones. They were just practice, just practice.” And he came down off of the fury he was in and the terrible sense of loss, and he was very kind. I will always remember that, because I really felt that I was going to kill myself, you know. This is terrible.

*So were you taking classes from him at that time?*

I was. He didn’t really know me. I was one of the people in a large class. And when I came back, or was in the class, he singled me out and give me special instruction and all that.

*Was he famous at this time?*

He was known. In the Bay Area, he was very well known. Not doing too well until later when his work was renowned. My brother has one in his house now that I encouraged him to buy when he got married as a wedding gift to his wife. And it’s still there, so one of us bought his early paintings.

*So, you don’t have any?*

No, I don’t have any.

*Not even one of the water stained?*

I couldn’t have afforded the paper it was on.

*Do you have any of your own from that era?*

Yes, I have a lot of my drawings and things that I did. Well, maybe I do from that period. Yes, I have some drawings of friends and things that came out of my sense of confidence with the brush.

*Are there any that you’d be willing let the department take a picture of?*

Oh, I have some that are marvelous in a way, that I’m very proud of, but I don’t see how they really fit in with what we’re doing. But they might.

*How about the music scene there?*

Well, of course, in that time, I was *all* involved because Pierce was a pianist. Oh, yes, bringing his piano up the four flights of stairs. It almost killed four men to bring it up this old rickety stair and down into this room where he couldn’t play, because all the neighbors nearby were screaming and yelling, “Stop that. Stop it!” So he had to play at certain times of the day. He was very much a ne’er-do-well about things like that. He was talented and very smart and things came easy for him, but he didn’t work very hard.

*Was he in a group?*

No, no. He was going to be a great pianist. But yes, he was going to be great at a lot of things. Oh, gosh, we were eighteen years old, you know. [laughter] And I’d have to tell him that when I was studying, he couldn’t play his damn piano, because the whole building would rock. The floor wasn’t strong enough to hold the damn piano.

Anyway, that incident with Chiru Obata was very meaningful to me, about somebody

who could turn a very bad situation into a warm and friendly and helpful situation. And it's almost as though he decided to help me and like me, because I had been responsible. Well, he knew that I hadn't done it. My roommate had done it. But after all, I was up there. It was my place. Yet he sort of forgave me, and oh, that was wonderful. I had this great sense of relief and admiration for him. In fact, I brought people who I thought could afford it to buy his stuff after that. My brother was one. But I think he paid twenty-five dollars for a painting that later would have been worth thousands. Well, probably is now. He was a wonderful old man. So my first semester at Cal, that's really all I remember, except that I was reading a lot of English literature.

I had been very much involved during college with Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian poet and writer, and Fitzgerald, that whole series that he did based on Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat* that he not only translated but actually recreated and developed. Things of that kind, romantic history.

*Sir Richard Burton. Were you reading that kind of adventure?*

Not yet. I wasn't reading that kind of thing at that time.

*Yes. Well, I was thinking of the Arabian Nights, but, of course, those were . . . .*

Oh, T. E. Lawrence. Oh, god, yes. T. E. Lawrence was another person. I had begun reading Dostoyevsky at this point and Thomas Mann. I had read the *Magic Mountain*, and *Jean-Christophe*—those long magnificent rich novels that Mann had done.

*Was this part of your curriculum, or were you just continuing to discover?*

I think it was triggered by some courses I might have been taking. I'm not sure. Anyway, that semester passed, and I'm not sure I went another semester.

*You recently found some of your class lists of that year you spent at UC, before you went to Mexico. And you said you had taken some anthro classes?*

Well, as I mentioned before, when I went to UC that first semester I roomed with my friend, Pierce, and . . . .

*And learned Sumi. [laughter]*

Yes, and met Obata. I worked with Sumi brush and got this feel for line drawing, which I'd always enjoyed, anyway. I also did some painting. And later on, I even won the United Seaman's Service Awards for a short story and a painting. [laughter] So it all came to some fruition somewhere along the line.

But, yes, that first semester at Cal . . . I had totally forgotten what courses I had taken. I ran across a transcript, hallelujah, in which I see what I did in 1939-1940 at Berkeley. I took four anthropology courses! Except for one, I had forgotten them all. Here is what my transcript says for 1939-1940, for those two semesters: Anthropology 1 A and B. That was Introductory Anthropology. I'm not sure who taught that. Anthropology 101—Ethnography. That was Lowie, a course we used to call "cross-cousin marriage around the world," because Lowie was involved in cross-cousin marriage, and that's all we heard about.

And a few little excursions into other people's literature, like Curt Nimuendajú who had worked in Brazil and was a friend of his. He had a tremendous admiration for this fieldwork; the anthropologist had studied the

Tupi, a very obscure Brazilian peoples, a forest people. And things like that would be among the few little bright points in his *interminable* lectures on comparative cross-cousin marriage. And they were thorough, I'm sure. I even have some notes left. He covered I think every known ethnographic group that had been reported in literature on cross-cousin marriage. He covered it all. We used to have the greatest time imitating him and doing charades on that course.

Lowie's lecturing style was very sonorous and pontifical. And he was a very proper man, always in a derby and a suit and tie, and talked with great deliberation. Always very polite. He would bow to you and take off his hat if he met you on the pathways at Berkeley. That class was something that we all remembered because we just felt like we were in never-never land! [laughter] *However*, later on I recall things about his class that were very valuable. I recall how important it was to make these kinds of comparative cultural connections—that, though he was able to weave this marvelous web of the relations of people, their movements and the development of types of society . . . material I would never be able to reconstruct now. Only later did I realize how useful this was. While it was going on, I was just a yokel in my first semester at Cal. I just thought it was absolutely . . .

*Horrendous.*

. . . not only horrendous, but hilarious, you know. [laughter] And yet I took very good notes. I have lots of Lowie's notes.

And there's another course that I took at the time, 105, American Indian. I believe that was with Barrett—Sam Barrett, who I did have a course or two from. It must have been that first semester or two. And, there-

fore, I had an earlier kind of academic connection with American Indian studies that I had forgotten about.

Oh, and Primitive Art—Anthropology 127, from Kroeber. That's the one I *did* remember. And I have written about that elsewhere. But that was a mindblower. Kroeber was very busy at that period. This was in the mid-1940s. He was at the peak of his productivity, doing all kinds of things. But he had this course that was all slides. It was show-and-tell. Here was this great man, all he does is show slides and make passing comments about them and put them into categories. And because I had worked with Sumi brush, I was *very* good at quick-take drawings. I have a whole notebook of my drawings from the slides, and Kroeber's little remarks which were sometimes a sentence or a couple of words. And we were supposed to make sense out of this damn thing.

It was impossible; I don't think there was anybody in that class that I talked to or knew who had any idea what Kroeber expected us to get from it! [laughter] It was wild, and it wasn't "primitive art". It was show-and-tell slides about sculptures.

*Now, in those years how big were the classes?*

That class might have been fifteen, twenty. That was a big class.

*And, see, that, compared to what . . . .*

Oh, god, years later when I taught at Cal and when I was an assistant professor there, I had a class of over a thousand—Introduction to Anthropology. An enormous hall and microphones.

*Did you show slides? [laughter]*



No, no. I hate slides. I never showed slides. I'm not a show-and-tell person! [laughter] I don't show slides. I don't particularly like to watch them unless they're *really directly* connected with something someone's saying. But just a series of slides, they bore me—which is *my* problem. They *can* be done very effectively.

But, anyway, I had four teaching assistants. This was in the late 1950s, and a thousand students. I was bowled over by the experience. Jim Downs was one of my teaching assistants in those courses. But in the 1940s, classes were small.

The department was housed in an old Quonset-like building that I think was held over from World War I. And there were barracks. Later they moved into some World War II barracks over on the other side of the campus—a two- or three-story barrack, the department was there. But when *I* was a student, it was in this enormous Quonset hut. And I'll never forget, in the middle of it, as you walked in, was a great totem pole. Somebody had brought that down from work in the Northwest. But this was laid down the middle of this great hall, and it was the most imposing feature. It was on its back. And later it was put up outside, I think. It was erected.

But the lower floor was all open like labs where students would collect things and do work. And then up along the wall toward the ceiling was a causeway, a walkway, all around the top. And there were little offices there for the staff. And who were they? There was John Rowe; there was Kroeber, Lowie, McCown, Barrett, Heizer. Heizer, who I think was a graduate student assistant, and I think he taught the class that I took with him in introductory anthropology. A very dapper young lad, as I remember, a lady's man. [laughter] A collar-ad guy, good-looking, and very arrogant. Later I got to know him when he

got older and mellower, but I used think, "Who is this guy? Who does he think he is?" because he would sort of strut in front of the class. And he was just a kid, a student, a little older than me, but nevertheless an instructor. I got to know him well later, but at that time, I just recall this sort of a dapper, arrogant young man. His lectures were stiff because he was new at it, but he always gave them with the air of knowing it all.

*Authority?*

Tremendous authority.

So there were all those offices and some graduate offices up along the top. So you'd go upstairs and walk along this long corridor up there, an open corridor looking down totem pole to find . . . to meet your professors.

I remember Kroeber's office, a little, tiny office, *loaded* with books and papers right up to the ceiling—terribly messy. In fact, they all had to be, they were so small. I've never really complained too much about small offices since, because I remember what they were in.

Kroeber had a little cot. It was sort of a jury-rigged cot. I think it was two boards on bricks or something at each end. And at a certain time of the day, I think it was 12:30 or 1:00, the door would be closed, and he would take a nap. And that was true when I came back later to Cal. You didn't bother him during that period. He did it regularly; not long—half hour or forty-five minutes—but you didn't *dare* knock on his door.

*Boy, how civilized. I think that's wonderful.*

Yes, oh, I thought it was . . . . In fact, I tell people now—my colleagues, you know—"Get yourself a cot in your office, by all means, and close your door." [laughter]

*Get a blanket and . . .*

Yes, so anyway, that's amazing to me that I took so much anthropology that first semester. I wanted to know more about people like this, and my two Japanese friends and my desire to go to the South Seas. All these things coalesced, I think, to get me into anthropology. I don't think that was my major; just optional choices. The other courses, *these* are the ones that I loved: Oriental Languages, Chinese Civilization and Chinese Literature from Professor Boodberg. And I really loved his courses. His main course was the one on Oriental Civilization. We went through the history of early dynasties, the beginnings of Chinese civilizations up until the last century. I've forgotten most of that now, but I still have some notes which are still very interesting. And fortunately, one doesn't toss away all this information, because I really dug it; I loved it. But the one on Chinese literature was even more exciting to me. I remember Mang Ho Wan, one of the great Chinese poets and philosophers, and Yee Bok . . . we read those works in great detail.

And so Boodberg was a tremendous influence on me, and I got A's in his courses. I wrote long themes, and they probably were extremely romantic and idealized. [laughter] But he thought that I was an interested student—that I really cared. And I did. I hung on every word. He was a colleague or student, or both, of Owen Lattimore, the Asian scholar—the scholar of Asian history and political life, who had been attacked . . . when was it? He was attacked a little later by the McCarthy Committee. But he was under some kind of criticism at the time. I remember Boodberg would talk about the great Owen Lattimore, who was so badly treated, even well before the McCarthy period. During the McCarthy period, or

maybe just before, Edgar Snow and others . . . that whole group of people who had commented, as liberals, on Asia. And so I had an admiration for Boodberg as a man who had spoken up on these matters, but I didn't know too much about it then.

The other course was Chinese Literature and something called Recurrent Types, Philosophy 102. I haven't the slightest idea in the world what that course was about. [laughter]

Now, some mentors that I didn't mention before. I took a marvelous class from a Professor Lutz in Semitics. This was to me a great experience, because he dealt with the whole history of wars and changes of dynasties and interrelationship of tribes in the Levantine. One thing that I still recall—if I went back to my notes, I might be able to refresh my memory—but one thing I recall is he spent at least a couple of lectures on Hammurabi and Ashurbanipal. Ashurbanipal (and I remember how he pronounced it), who built a mound as high as a temple of the prepuces of the enemy army that he had circumcised. [laughter] A mound of prepuces as high as a temple, I remember very clearly! [laughter] And there were some wonderful books that we had to buy. Books were cheap in those days. They were expensive for me and some others, but when I compare them, you know, two or three dollars for a book as against thirty dollars now . . . They were very well printed and large books—textbooks. The ones on the Near East, the history of the Near East, were wonderful.

I remember Lutz's office was at the top of Wheeler Hall, *way, way* up at the top in a little garret-like office, with a little room next to it where we had our classes. And I always had that feeling of ascending into a marvelous world of never-never land, and old Professor Lutz with his glasses—a very sort

of wizened . . . very European type. And Lutz, I don't know what his background was. He talked with a very thick accent, but he was very, communicative and articulate. We had to write many papers.

And then the other person was Radin. Paul Radin was around. But he wasn't really on campus; he taught at the extension division because he had problems with members of the staff. He was the bad boy of the era. I don't think I took a class from him, but he used to have students over to his place, and we would have sort of soirees over there. But later on that was more so. I did know him at that time.

And then I had forgot something about Lowie. Lowie was a controversial figure to some degree, because he had come from Germany. There had been some problem about whether or not . . . . I want to be very careful here. One of the students wrote a paper denouncing him for having not been very clear on the Jewish question, et cetera, and having accommodated some right-wing views earlier in his life. But I don't know anything

about this, and I shouldn't be talking about it. But, I do remember, that there was one time where he was responsible for inviting Ernest Bloch, the composer who had just come over from Germany. He's the one who wrote *Schelomo*. It was a sort of symphonic piece, *Schelomo*. And there was this very large reception for him, where he talked about music. Lowie introduced him. And I remember being very impressed by the fact that Lowie knew this man and that they had been friends.

So all that sort of thing was going on at Cal at the time. I wish I could remember more about what the criticism of Lowie was, but I don't want to go into it because I'm not sure. But I always felt an admiration for him. I felt that he was a very sound scholar and a good man, but there was a lot of controversy around him at that time.

So that was my curriculum that first year at Cal, which was to me a very fertile year. All kinds of things were going on that were important to me.



## AMALIA AND OPERA

**N**OW I HAVE MISSED talking about going down and seeing my grandmother once a week at least while I was at Cal, my Portuguese grandmother, and really doing genealogical work with her. I wanted to know . . . . And she was very helpful; she remembered quite a bit. But I'm sure she was biased, and she romanticized and dramatized a good part of it. But I had this *enormous* sense of the importance of . . . .

*Now, how would you get there? I mean did you have a car or . . . ?*

Oh, by streetcar. A car! Nobody in those days . . . nobody except my friend Pierce, and one of the reasons why I hung around with him was he had a car and a little extra money. [laughter]

He was on his folks' teat. Mine was really dry. And so, no, I would go down there and have lunch with her. And she would . . . .

*Now, where is she living now? Just for the record.*

At that point she was still in the old house on Lake Merritt, and my grandfather had

died. He had died a few years before, and it was now a great sort of barren, empty house. And she even had to sell some things in order to get along. It was in the process of being sold . . . creditors being paid off and all that sort of thing.

But we would sit there in that living room with some of her things around her—the crucifixes; the Raphael paintings, good prints—large, ornate frames; various icons, Catholic symbols. But one enormous photograph of Amalia when she was a young girl in the Azores, before she had come to this country and just before she got married. An *absolutely stunning* Portuguese beauty. I mean with those little hips, you know, where the corsets would pull the . . . . Her waist was about two inches, and a great, bountiful bust and lace. And her hair piled up on top of her head like the turn of the century. The rose in her mouth. [laughter] And I remember thinking, "There's nothing like that since early Hollywood." [laughter]

She was a stunning woman! And she had that up on her wall, always, so that I was looking at it when she was holding forth, reading poetry in Portuguese and then translating it

for me. And then playing these old 78 records, scratchy records, of opera. She loved Caruso and Galli-Curci and people like that. And these arias would go resounding out of one of those old phonograph horns. And she would cry, and the tears would roll down from her eyes. She was quite a character, a marvelous character. And I was always enthralled by her!

*Now, you'd just go for lunch?*

Oh, you know, a snack, and we'd just talk. And sometimes she'd bring out a little wine for me, which was pretty racy, and she always had wine around. And she'd have to bring out her little cut glasses and things like that—what was left of her finery. And she would tell me how important it was to remember my heritage and all that.

She had a manner that hid a world of contradictory feelings and emotions that she had toward my mother and others, but she always had this front of magnanimity and generosity. But because of her I remember that Pierce and I went over to see an opera. In fact, he came with me to visit with her a couple of times and also found her enthralling. She really put us through our paces. And we would leave there kind of stunned in wonder. [laughter]

*How wonderful!*

She had a powerful personality, and I can see why my father had trouble with her. She made life miserable for him as she got older. She was such a nag, a complainer, and *demand*ed his time and accused my mother of keeping him from her and all those ridiculous things. You know, the typical family . . . Well, you hear about that everywhere.

So, anyway, we went over to the first opera I ever saw—at the San Francisco Opera House. I think we paid thirty-five cents for standing room. I couldn't afford anything more, and so Pierce decided to stand with me. I hadn't eaten for days. I was very skinny at that time; it was just before the war, and I had been turned down for ambulance service because I was anemic. I'd eat rice and Chinese food now and then and whatever I could put together in my room. And now and then Pierce would decide to take me to dinner, so I always enjoyed that. [laughter]

So we went over to the opera house, and I remember standing two hours getting dizzy and weaker at the back of that hot opera house, watching *Tristan und Isolde*. It was Melchior and Kirsten Flagstad—two enormous people. They looked like they weighed two or three hundred pounds each, singing the "Liebestod." I remember that I lasted until the "Liebestod." Here, they were, bellowing out with their magnificent voices from these fat, rotund bodies. Flagstad had to lie down on this bed of roses for the death song. But she couldn't get down very easily because her corsets were so stiff. And she struggled and finally went plop! [laughter] Nobody laughed, and I couldn't contain myself. I was giggling.

And then Melchior, with his magnificent tenor voice, a little, fat, round man. He had to kneel to get down beside her, and he slipped and fell flat! [laughter] The two of them were the most ridiculous-looking pair I have ever seen. In fact, it was magnificently ridiculous. It was beyond ordinarily ridiculous.

Anyway, so I remember that about that point . . . it wasn't over yet, because it takes a long for them to die. They were at the top of their operatic powers about that time. And here they were on their backs, and then sit-

ting, you know. [laughter] And I got so dizzy, I had to leave. I went out in the hall, and I went into a telephone booth and fainted. I crumpled up, and I must have been out for ten minutes or so. And when I came to, Pierce was pushing . . . “What’s wrong? What’s wrong? What’s wrong?”

And I said, “I got to get out of here.” [laughter] It was too much standing for two or three hours. And listening to the “Liebestod” finished me off. I’ve never been able to take Wagner since. I added my feelings of repulsion, I guess—revulsion—for Wagner during the war. I mean, it was made

to order. Wagner was to me the epitome of everything that I looked upon as being pre-Nazi. But it was unfair; it’s not really the way it was. But Nietzsche and others, whom I had admired so much when I was younger, and Wagner, and Strauss waltzes began to irritate me, you know. People were dying and being killed while the Viennese were dancing Strauss waltzes. All that sort of thing came just a year or two later. But I hearkened back to Melchior and Flagstad and the “Liebestod,” and the fact that I had stood through that whole damn thing.





## SOCIAL LIFE AT BERKELEY

ALL KINDS of things were happening at Cal. I think, “What a year! What a wonderful year.” I met this family, the Phillipsborns, a Jewish family of a psychiatrist and psychologist, both husband and wife. They had three very beautiful daughters. I and a number of my friends, we hung out at their house up in the Berkeley Hills. It was a very charming, intellectually oriented house, very European, and I suppose very Jewish in that sense. And there were continuous discussions! We’d get together and cook and eat together, sometimes six or seven people—students and others, visitors coming in from Europe. And I got very close to this family. I felt, you know, they were really another family to me. And I had a strong identity with that family—actually an identity with Jewishness.

I remember Ellen, the older daughter that I knew best and first, would say to me, “Warren, you are a Jew.” [laughter] And she said, “d’Azevedo has got to be some kind of Sephardic . . . it’s got to be a Mediterranean Jewish name.” She was adamant about this.

*Was this before or after you took the course from Lutz?*

It was maybe around the same time, but I don’t think . . .

*Yes, I was wondering if one lead to another.*

No, I don’t know if I made the connection, but maybe so. But this was purely a matter of friendship, you know.

And I would say, “Well, you know, Ellen, maybe it’d be good . . . I wish it were true, but I have no evidence. We need evidence.”

And she said, “We don’t need evidence. I can just *tell* by the way you act!” [laughter]

*A high compliment.*

It was. She wanted me to be Jewish. And I took on a lot of the feeling of that family.

And the two younger daughters, Nora and Renata, I sort of got crushes on in turn. Then two of my friends, Earl Kim and Leon Kirschner, who were composers . . . student

composers at the time who went on to Yale and Harvard as professors of music and composition. But they also were totally enamored of at least one or another of these daughters. And so we just went around like, you know, honey bees. [laughter] This beautiful family, very European, very, very open and warm, argumentative, and all those things. The parents were wonderful people. The father worked at San Quentin as a psychiatrist when he came over. That's all he could get, and . . . . He could have done a lot more. And the mother did psychological consulting and therapy.

*Do you have any memory of how you met them?*

How did I meet them? I met them through Doris Woodhouse, who was kind of a girlfriend. Doris Woodhouse was a friend of Ellen, and then just on campus and . . . .

Oh, yes, I remember now. I was trying to put together a literary magazine, because I was very angry at the *Grizzly* that was turning down all my friends and never published them, and they accepted what I considered to be utter crap. Their material was so immature and asinine, school-boyish and school-girlish.

*Pedestrian.*

Well, it was just naive, we thought. We were very snobbish. A number of us were writing poetry and stories. We had some things we wanted to get published. [laughter]

And so we—myself and Doris Woodhouse—began to talk about this. Doris was a very active, highly charged young woman. She was rather large and imposing, kind of big, and I remember that she had a fire of a head of red hair down to her waist. And that red hair was always flying around.

And she dressed rather . . . for Cal at that time she took on a kind of bizarre attire. She wore black boots underneath a red skirt. And she would go loping around campus . . . .

*And she was a student?*

Yes, she was a student, and *very* smart. She later became a psychiatrist in San Francisco.

*Now, was Ellen . . . ?*

They were friends.

*But were they also students? Was Ellen a student?*

Oh, yes, they all were. This was all student life, in the early 1940s. And off-campus student life, too.

She lived in a place called . . . it was a big, four-story, old Berkeley house, right there on Bancroft Avenue. It is still there—two houses standing there—student housing. And what did we call it? We had a word for it that escapes me now. Gray Gables or something of that kind. And Ellen and Doris lived there. They roomed together; that's how it happened, how I got to know Ellen, and then got to know her family. But it really happened because Doris and I were . . . .

And, oh, man, I keep forgetting George Leite, who I was then rooming with, because Pierce and I didn't get along. His lifestyle was just too difficult for me to keep up with, though I always kept friends with him. [laughter] But when I came back from Fresno I roomed with George. He was a Portuguese kid from San Leandro. I got to know him through Pierce. George and I hit it off very quickly on a highly competitive adolescent level. And we were, I guess, rather fond of

each other but also *deeply* competitive. We'd watch each other severely and often with deep envy—if one did something the other didn't and who could be the most macho and outrageous. It was something that I'm glad I got over. But George didn't.

Anyway, when George got wind of what Doris and I were talking about, he somehow got in on it. And so the three of us were planning this magazine. I came up with the name *New Rejections*—rejections from the *Grizzly*, I suppose. The great literary magazine of that period was *New Directions*. So our takeoff on that was *New Rejections*. And we finally got the first issue out. It was mimeographed, very *well* mimeographed by someone who donated the work in one of the old bookstores on Telegraph. It was about thirty pages with poetry and stories. There was George Eliot; there was Jean McGehey; also Jordan Brotman and Robert Horan—a number of people who went on to write, but also a lot of others. And good work. I still think it was not bad for student work. And our explicit purpose was to show the conservative, conventional magazine on campus, the *Grizzly* and one other, that they were just so much trash. "Here's the real writing, and you have rejected it, or you don't even know it."

*So even then, in those years, did Berkeley have kind of an aura of a counter-culture?*

Not so much as later. It was there, but it was pre-Beat. There were people like Kenneth Rexroth, who were writing poetry in San Francisco long before the Beats came in in the 1950s. There was Robert Duncan and Josephine Miles, a very well-known California poet. I'd also taken classes from Benjamin Lehman in English, and he sort of encouraged us to go on with doing something

like this. But we had our differences with him as well.

So Doris and I had a lot to do. Then George Leite got into it. He was something of a street kid from San Leandro, a Portuguese kid, whose father was an immigrant scholar—an older, declining man who George had problems with, I think—and a mother who was a schoolteacher. So they were quite strapped financially.

So we had a certain understanding between us in that we were not well-to-do kids. But George very quickly caught onto the literary scene. It was amazing. He began to write poetry—rather interesting, good stuff. Oh, and he took off for a couple of months and went to sea, which I was terribly jealous of. He got on a tramp steamer and went down to Panama. He wrote me postcards, you know, and I was absolutely beside myself with envy! [laughter] And then he came back, and Doris and I mainly put out this magazine. But we didn't put our names as editors on it because we felt that was hokey, too. We didn't want to do that.

We got out one issue that year—that was 1939-1940, and one in 1940 and one in 1941. The last issue I think was 1942 or 1943—during the war. We kept putting it out. Later when I came back from sea, I would go to Berkeley and stay with the Phillipsborns there, Doris or . . . . And we would put together this . . . .

*The Phillipsborns. So that friendship you maintained after the war?*

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. In fact, I met Kathy again seriously during the war. She and Ellen Phillipsborn were very good friends at that time, but, oh, it's all very convoluted actually.

I'm trying to find the things here that I can pull together. And so *New Rejections* was

something I was very proud of. And, by the way, for years afterwards, various libraries would write and ask for copies, and it became a kind of a minor collector's item, you know.

And so we were very proud of ourselves. And I remember we put those issues out for . . . we'd get donations and put out an issue of a hundred for thirty-five dollars. I mean those times were wonderful! [laughter]

And we'd assemble them at the Phillipsborn's house. We'd all get together . . . this was in the fall of 1939-1940, I guess, the first one came out. And we'd go up to the Phillipsborns', about a dozen of us, friends of ours. And we'd take all these pages, and we'd assemble them and staple them and put the covers on up there at the Phillipsborn's. Then we'd all go out and peddle them for fifty cents each on campus. And they'd go like hotcakes! They'd go so quickly, we'd always say we should have put out three hundred or four hundred; we never could manage that. Each issue ran about a hundred, a hundred and fifty.

*Do you have any of them?*

I do have some copies. Those few issues, yes.

And, so, now, where are we? Oh, things that I was doing at the time. I mentioned Boodberg. And things I was reading . . . maybe I've mentioned before: Thomas Mann, Thomas Wolfe; Steinbeck had come out with *The Grapes of Wrath* and later the film which deeply impressed me. It threw me back on my experiences in Modesto.

A course in the Bible as Literature was very important to me. I devoured the Songs of Solomon. [laughter] And Jonathan Swift and Chaucer, Whitman. You know, that's the period when you're doing all this marvelous wild reading.

I had three friends who were composers: Leonard Ralston, I've mentioned; Leon Kirschner; Earl Kim. I knew them very well. But this jumps the gun, because they were most significant when the war came.

I was also going through all kinds of philosophical explorations and concerns. You know, a person going through transition like this in adolescence, late adolescence, trying to think out what they want to do. They pick up strands from not only their own heritage and family, but new ones. I was—what would you call it?—a new-wave Christian in a sense, on the one hand, and what might now be called a Gnostic. But I had a feeling that I was a kind of a Christian.

And so I was thinking, "Maybe I should go to Pacific School of Religion," after all this charging around. The Pacific School of Religion was right up on the hill, and it looked so peaceful up there. The students were all so well behaved, and they were all so serious and quiet. I used to walk on that campus and look around and go into these monastic settings.

Somewhere within me was the idea that this would make a kind of a sop to my parents, that they would be pleased if I did something conventional like this, though I was certain in my own mind that I would be a very unconventional Christian academic. [laughter] And yet, you know, that this could be something that would be equivalent to being a doctor or something. I think somewhere within my mind was this notion of accommodation and providing my parents with some solace. But it wasn't serious. It was just one of those things that I thought about.

The other was, of course, the Brahman and Vedanta themes from my interest in Tagore. I was reading Nehru, and some of the early Indian intellectual figures. And there

was this little meeting house down near the university—Vedanta, the Vedanta Center, I think it was called, where Swami Ashokananda held forth. And I used to go down there oh, every now and then. I'd stop in or listen to the swami hold forth in these very quiet little ceremonies with this little handful of Berkeley types in there! The Berkeley types in those days were sort of middle-aged women with flat shoes and gray skirts, and men very casually but very carefully dressed. And there were a few Asian students of some kind. And we'd sit around, and I remember these quiet, philosophical talks and discussions. I read some of the Vedanta materials, and so I had that, too, along with Pacific School of Religion—there was Vedanta!

*This mystical Indian stuff, right? Vedanta?*

Yes.

And, oh, I speak of those little asides and detours of one's parents affecting one's children. My daughter is *deeply* involved in Asian philosophy and Vedanta and the work of some leading swamis and gurus, you know—much to my chagrin, when it happened, because I was and had been a hard-hat Marxist and here my daughter is interested in transcendental meditation and that sort of thing. We'll go into that later . . . it's fascinating. We had a meeting of minds. [laughter]

*And also, I just was struck by the fact that your son is an artist and . . .*

Yes, what I didn't pursue, he picked up. What more are kids going to do? I mean, unless something else happens to them in their lives. Yes, that's exactly it. And I've always had really a great sympathy and kind of

a pleasure in the fact that they did that, even though it wasn't the best course of action, necessarily, in order to survive in this world. Nevertheless, I didn't worry about that, either.

So there was this exploration; getting seriously interested and taken by some of these ideas. I was writing poetry at the time and seeing some of the films that were terribly meaningful to me. Certainly *All Quiet on the Western Front* had been earlier, one of the most powerful films that I had ever seen at point in my life, and affected a lot of other people, too; great anti-war film, *extremely* powerful. And then *The Grapes of Wrath* came out as a film—I'd already read the book—was also an extremely affective thing to me.

And then, of course, [laughter] there were things like Dorothy Lamour and *Hurricane* when I was at junior college, the heroine of all times. And who was the other one? Hedy Lamar in *Algiers* . . . [laughter] in *Algiers* in the desert. And who was that guy with the accent who was her sidekick? [laughter] Who was that?

*I can't help you with the . . .*

Oh, you're too young to remember any of these people.

*I should know them anyway.*

Anyway, Hedy Lamar, I remember.

And there were a number of very important films that I saw. I remember seeing a film, a French film, called *L'Affaire Blum*. It was at the time when I knew the Phillipsborns, and here was a film about a French Jewish family during the period Hitler was beginning to become more important and *powerful* in Germany during the early period of the Nazi

putsch activities. And they (the Blums) are well-to-do Jewish people, and he's in business. And all around them are these crises and these attacks upon Jews in the streets. Kristall Nacht had come and all that. And they're sitting at their table at the end of this movie, I remember. They are not leaving Germany, because I remember they were sitting at their nice dining room table having a toast at the end of the evening and looking at each other and saying "We shall stay because it can't happen in Germany." It was one of the more powerful films that I've ever seen. I've never seen it referred to since. It was a great film.

*Can I just interject here and ask how much of your writing at this time would you consider to have been political? I mean your poetry and the stories you're writing at this point.*

Oh, it probably was not. But I think the story that I did on Mexico, "Sepeyano Orozco", was in a sense political, like my letters from Mexico later, you know, recognizing and praising the strength of another culture, as against modernization. Social, at least. Political—I wrote a couple of poems which were political, but I was ashamed of them, because they were not too clear. [laughter] They were far from PC. But political, no. More social and having to do with human relations and problems of class, things of that kind. But not overtly political.

*Not overtly anti-war, for instance, or . . . ?*

Not yet. That came just about this time. I was pretty much involved in academic, intellectual, literary . . .

*And is that what drew you to UC in the first place? The intellectual . . . ?*

No. I just wanted to get away to the big city, and Berkeley was the mecca. Berkeley was the place where every . . .

*To live?*

When you were from the rural sticks of San Joaquin Valley, Berkeley was the place, not necessarily to live, but to go. I mean, that was the big city. That was the place where everything was happening. And it was the easiest place to go to. I mean tuition was twelve dollars a semester, and rent eight dollars a month or something, you know! It was cheap if you were a Californian. [laughter]

*So you weren't necessarily aware at the time that it was the academic and literary figures that you were drawn to, or . . . ?*

Yes, in a way. But I don't think that was very clear in my mind. After going to Fresno and with Earl Lyon as a mentor, I came down. And there were two or three people in the English Department who were doing some writing; I don't remember. But, no, I saw it [Berkeley] as the place where you could get exposure to some of the more powerful ideas that were going on, and it was true. It was a California center.

Everything was happening, and it stimulated you to do things. I was becoming political. I was talking about films and things. I saw a Russian film called *The Gypsies*, which was again one of the more beautiful films I'd ever seen, about the Soviet attempts to move the gypsies onto farms to become agriculturalists. I had thought it extremely perceptive—whether it was or not, I'm not sure what I would think now. I thought it was done with tremendous understanding of the meaning of gypsy life.

Now, I gather that it wasn't quite as nice as this. But nevertheless, the film gave the impression of this *marvelously* aware culture in the Soviet Union, and aware intellectually and in terms of the literature and of the culture of ethnic groups. And, of course, that was the old problem of nationalities and ethnic groups in the Soviet Union and how to deal with wandering people, the gypsies, the people of the steppes and all that. How to ruralize them, how to bring them into the land.

And it was, to me, so beautiful. It was a great film—propaganda or not, it was magnificent. Like *Potemkin*, you know, one of the great films of all time [the famous Soviet film *Battleship Potemkin*, 1925]. And I was also taken by *The Gypsies*; it made me drunk for weeks—the beauty of that film and the way it ended. It ended in one of the great scenes of all movies, as far as I am concerned. Where this one man and his wife and kids do settle after a great deal of difficulty. They don't want to; they like to wander; they like to do what they wanted to do. And they finally have—with the help of some of their comrades and the village commune—a field of wheat, and you see them at harvest time with this great high wheat going for a long distance away. And they're standing, looking at it, and you're looking at their backs. And then that wonderful troika goes on [hums tune]: da, da, da, hum-da-hum, da-da, da, da, hum-hum, num, ba-dum-dum-dum, dum. I'll never forget that one. And as that is being played with the Red Army Chorus at full blast, they go pushing the wheat aside and walking into their wheat. Wow! What a film! I'll never forget it! [laughter]

And I had some friends who were getting to be very left, sort of intellectual left, quasi-Marxist and all that. Or anarchists or Trotskyites and whatever. It was quite a stew

in that period. And I wasn't discriminating between one or another. There was a place called the Twentieth Century Bookstore, two, three blocks from the campus. It was the "red" bookstore.

*Was this on Telegraph or . . . ?*

It was right off Telegraph. I forget what street it might have been. But it was about three blocks down from Sather Gate and just off Telegraph. The Twentieth Century Bookstore had *all kinds* of things that I had never seen before. It had booklets on the Spanish Civil War. When I was seventeen or eighteen I thought should have done that; I should have gone, but I couldn't have done that any more than fly. And so, you know, I really read into the history of the Spanish Civil War. And I got records called *Songs of the Spanish Civil War* that had these wonderful German and Russian and English songs that were sung by the Lincoln Brigade . . . that's it—*Songs of the Lincoln Brigade*, is the name, which I still have. Marvelous songs.

*Now, what's the Lincoln Brigade?*

The Lincoln Brigade was the group of foreign Europeans and Americans who went to aid the Loyalists in Spain.

*And why was it called the Lincoln Brigade?*

That was the American version of it. The American group that had gone to fight against Franco.

*Was it a name referencing back to Abraham Lincoln?*

Yes, it was the American contingent, and I'm not sure that it didn't cover others as well.

And then later I knew seamen, people in the union like Bill Bailey, who had been in the Lincoln Brigade.

And so anyway I began to get very, very interested in kind of a rarefied political view of things. I also came upon Stravinsky. There was a Soviet edition of about ten records in an album of 78's, of his chorale, *Les Noces*, the wedding, which was to me a wild and primitive thing. He had taken the singing style and the themes from rural Russian life and used them, as only Stravinsky could do—these wonderful Slavic women's voices—*Les Noces*. I bought that; I spent my last . . . I think probably eight dollars for that album.

And the *Songs of John Doe*—they blew my mind. The Almanac Singers—did you ever hear of them? This was an early folk group, and they were very left. And the *Songs of John Doe* were songs of the Dust Bowl, songs of early labor movement. Things like I used to sing all the time to my friends. [sings] “It's C for conscription, and it's C for Capitol Hill. And it's C for the Congress that passed that g-d- bill!” [laughter]

[laughter] *That's great! The Almanac Singers?*

The Almanac Singers. I still have them. *Songs of John Doe*. Well, they were very popular with that set of people I knew at that time. The Twentieth Century Bookshop, you'd hear those all the time on the wind-up Victrola.

And what were some of the others? Oh, [sings] “Franklin Roosevelt told the people how he felt.” (This was before the war.) “We damn near believed what he said. He said, ‘I hate war, and so does Eleanor, but we won't be safe till everybody's dead.’” [laughter] Well, those were really anarchistic, wild, left, anti-war. And they were wonderful, and they blew me away.

*“But we won't be safe till everyone is dead!”*  
[laughter]

Most folk music and what is now called country music, no one that I knew really listened to it. But these songs came in at just the time, when we were starting to think about these problems. Here were witty, sharp, satirical critiques of American life and thought. Of course, these songs were also . . . songs that the Communist Party promoted because this was prior to the rapprochement of the Soviet Union with the United States before the war. There was a great deal of anti-war feeling and hands-off Russia views on part of the Left. And the Russian-German pact, the idea of not joining Germany against the Soviet Union. I have to check my chronology there, but it [the anti-war feeling] was really aimed at defending the Soviet Union and keeping us out of the war. And then, of course, a little later, the Left was all for the war, because the Soviet Union had been attacked by Germany. [laughter]

So it was in that very tumultuous period that those songs had resonance. And then after . . .

*This is really, really interesting. There wasn't a feeling among the political Left at the time that there was some sense of responsibility for fighting fascism? I mean it's sort of interesting that you were very drawn to the idea of helping to liberate the Spanish, but . . .*

Anti-fascism was a principle, but not going to war for it. There was a lot of anti-war feeling. I would say that the feeling of the pacifist . . .

*So the Spanish Civil War was great because people volunteered who wanted to go?*



Well, yes, but not everybody agreed with them. Most of those who went over there had a sort of a left ideology. The Lincoln Brigade weren't heroes to most Americans who were kind of mixed up about who Franco was and . . . .

*No, I was trying to get at how you were sorting that out for yourself, not the mainstream.*

Well, yes. Oh, the Phillipsborns had a lot to do with this. It was through *them* that I got a picture of what was going on in Germany in 1939 and 1940.

*But did you feel ambivalent? I mean, did you think we should go to war to stop Hitler?*

I was a pacifist. I was planning to be a conscientious objector. In fact, that was one of my struggles a little later. At the same time I had very *strong* feelings about fascism and—with my relationship with Phillipsborns—about what was being done in Germany. So, yes, I was very ambivalent on this.

*Well, I was just interested because you've said twice now that you had feelings you should have gone with the Lincoln Brigade.*

Yes. Well, that's because I felt that was very heroic,

and I was anti-Franco, and I had the feeling that Franco was a ruthless dictator who had done terrible things. Like Mussolini, you know. This wasn't a very developed political view, or orientation, just a feeling about values and what was wrong with what was going on there. So, no, I can't give myself credit for any kind of developed political views, though I had a couple of friends who were very ideologically sophisticated.

One, I think, was probably a communist at the time, and led me to *The Communist Manifesto*, and thought it was a *great* document. I *loved* its courageous denunciation of about everything that everybody stood for! [laughter] With great clarity, and speaking for a class, you know, the down-trodden of the earth. "What have you got to lose but your chains?" kind of attitude. That appealed to me; I loved that and still do! [laughter] I mean I think it's a beautiful literary and political document, and social document. It has a scriptural quality to me.

So, anyway, I was listening and reading stuff of this kind, and that little bookstore was the place where I met some people—I mean, had conversations with a lot these left-wing types that were around Berkeley at the time. I wasn't particularly attracted to *them*, but I did like the atmosphere of the place. It was a rebellious atmosphere, and now that I know it, a lot of them were members of the Communist Party. And just like that restaurant that I went to in Mexico City, people were constantly coming in and out, with pamphlets and leaflets and things of that sort. And I liked that. I thought that was good; that was *activity*; people were expressing their views.

I also went over to San Francisco. There was a record library over there. You could go in, and for, I don't know, five cents an hour or something like that, you could get any record that they had and play it in little rooms. I listened to *all* kinds of music. And I got hooked on Delius and Debussy, Mozart, and everything there. You could, if you could afford to, buy records, or you could rent them. It was a rental library. So I had a little wind-up Victrola in my room—this was my last semester where I had a room of my own, twelve dollars a month. I was really swinging

high. Way up on Ridge Road above the university. And I would go up and play these records. In fact, you see that crayon wash there? [Points to art on wall of study] Take a look at it. There's a seaman sitting on the deck playing records on deck in the moonlight. Well, that's mine. And that's the same Victrola I had at Cal. That's where I would play these records. And in my mind I'm playing Debussy's *La Mer*. [laughter] And I did. I actually took it to sea.

And I'd sit on a deck all by myself, because none of my crew mates could stand the sound of that music. I would play *La Mer* with the wind blowing and the waves splashing. Quite wonderful. There's my work. [Gestures to art]

So all that was going on in the space of a year. When I think of it, it's enormous. Enormous. And I think it happens to people at certain points of their life. This was a period in which, I don't know, there was that fertilizer being injected into the soil that I was in, and *everything* was happening. And I was moving in ten different directions at once.

And you feel this wonderful sense of power, like you're absorbing up all this wonderful information. The world's your oyster; you can do anything if you really wanted to. And putting out a magazine at the same time, and meeting all these wonderful new people, and yes, it was a great time.

Oh, during that semester at Cal, my friend Clyde Moller, who had been our neighbor in Alameda when I was very young . . . . He had visited us many times in Modesto, because he'd come up when we were just kids after we'd left Alameda. He'd come up and visit us in the summertime. He and I and Don would go camping, and we'd go hiking together and all that sort of thing. He was a

rangy, funny kind of kid. I don't want to say not very smart, but not very interested in the kind of stuff I was interested in, but he was an old friend. And we used to have a lot of fun together, swimming and hiking. So I hadn't seen him for two or three years, and suddenly he visits me in Berkeley. The last time I'd seen him, he'd come to Modesto, and he was in the navy. He and a friend of his were in the navy, and they came in their navy garb. This was about 1937, 1938, and I remember feeling so *jealous* I could hardly think. [laughter] Here he was in his sailor's uniform with his friend, and the two of them were talking about all kinds of racy things I didn't know anything about. I couldn't enter in. Places they'd been in and gone to and the various ports they'd been in, and I remember this *awful* feeling of *true envy*. I can remember that. I mean the kind of envy that gnaws and eats, eats you up, you know. [laughter] I had to cope with it and handle it and still be a host to these two guys, and I really wanted to kill them and get them out of there.

So when Clyde came to visit me in our rooms at Cal, here he was now out of uniform and about to get married and looking very tired and old to me. He couldn't have been any older than I was, but my impression was he was no longer that adventuresome, glorious figure who had come in uniform who was doing all these wonderful things. Here he was just a dowdy, ordinary civilian. [laughter] Of course, this would be the counter phobic reaction to jealousy—I remember feeling sorry for him. I thought I would put that in as a psychological point. One feels sorry for people that are no longer your competitors. It makes one feel good. Fortunately, I understood that early and fought that particular emotion.

## THE MEXICO TRIP

CHRONOLOGICALLY, that first year at Cal preceded my going to Fresno in the spring of 1941. It was after my first year at Cal that I worked all summer at a theater in Modesto with the idea that I was going to go to Mexico. The fall of 1940, I had not gotten enough money together to go. I just took a semester off. But it wasn't till October of that year that I went to Mexico for three weeks. It took me those months to earn the seventy-five dollars that I needed to go to Mexico. [laughter]

*Oh, that's a fortune! [laughter] Because you've got to live, too. [laughter]*

After my first experience at Cal, I was determined to take a trip to get *out* of the country, to go to some other country, to *do* something. I'd failed at going to sea; I couldn't get on a ship, so I worked all summer at the theater, at twenty-five cents an hour, and saved seventy-five dollars. For me, it was remarkable I saved *anything*. I was always spending money.

I just told my folks and went. Oh, I tried to get my friend Pierce to go with me. And he said yes he would, and then at the last minute he backed out. And I felt, "What a sellout artist."

But anyway, I took off on a Greyhound bus and went down to Los Angeles first, where I saw the sister of a friend of mine, Watson Lacey from junior college. I stayed with her for one or two nights and then with a friend who was a poet at Cal. This had to have been a little later—1939—that I did this.

Anyway, Amy Semple McPherson's temple was downtown, and my grandparents had begged me to go see her. I thought the one thing I could do for them was to go see her, so I remember going into town and going to this very large—what would you call it?—like a theater. It reminded me of the early temple, or tabernacle, in Salt Lake City.

I went inside, and it was very crowded with a great number of seats and a stage down at the bottom. I remember sitting down, and people were singing hymns and all that. Then

suddenly, the lights went down, the stage lights went on, and the curtain went up, and Amy Semple McPherson came on in a white flowing, gold-striped gown with a golden Bible in her hands.

She walked out on the stage while the whole audience breathed great sighs of appreciation and *awe*, and she came to a golden podium, and she laid this book on the podium. She started preaching, and people were *enthralled*. I don't remember what she said, but she was quite an orator. Then they sang hymns, and she said, "Now we shall see what the Tabernacle has for us." The curtain went down behind her and she left. And then up rose the curtain and chorus girls came out dressed as milk-maids with their beautiful legs showing and their fluffy milk maid costumes. [laughter] It was a chorus! There were, I'd say, ten, fifteen chorus girls. I'll never forget part of the song. "Fishing for Jesus" was the song.

They were milk maids or farm girls, and they had fishing poles. And they came out dancing in a real chorus line like the Rockettes. "Fishing, fishing for sinners," was it, "Fishing for Jesus." And then they would come upstage and toss their lines into the audience, and the audience would tie money on, and they would reel in the money. There were wires across the ceiling with baskets, and at the climax of all this, with all these dancing cuties, you know, the baskets would come from in back of us down over the audience's heads for more money to be thrown into. [laughter] And the girls called, "Just the green, the green." So you were expected to toss in bills, not coins! And boy, when they reached the climax of that song, the orgasmic climax of fishing for sinners, people were throwing money in there. There must have been thousands of dollars. [laughter] Then Amy came out again in her gown and backed

the girls up in the name of Jesus and all that. And I remember being absolutely not only enthralled, but *overwhelmed* by what I was going to report to my grandparents. How was I going to explain this to them? [laughter]

*So, how did you explain it to them?*

Well, I remember, eventually I would just say, "Oh, it was a great show. She put on a"—I would use that word "show"—"she put on a great show. And she was dressed in these kind of gowns," and they were nodding appreciatively, "Oh, yes, Amy is, you know, she's a great preacher. She's a wonderful preacher for the Lord." They knew.

*Was she on the radio?*

Oh, yes. She was the darling of the airwaves. She traveled too. And then she had this wonderful abduction. [laughter] These days she would have been abducted by aliens, but then she was abducted by mysterious strangers who took her into the desert. I happen to believe that she was just having a wild, wild old time.

There were rumors that she was a heavy drinker and all that sort of thing, but I don't care. Who knows? A great scandal, it was. All I know is that she put on a *great* show, and she made lots of money.

So, that's how I stopped off at Los Angeles. Then I went over to El Paso on the bus, and from El Paso I took the train from Juarez—the most decrepit train one can imagine. I was third class, and it was just packed with village people and their animals, traveling down through the state of Chihuahua on wooden benches. I think I was two and a half days on that train. It was hot, and dust poured in from the desert.

I was sitting across from two very beautiful, young Mexican girls. There was a Mexican kid coming from Los Angeles. We got talking, and the four of us made a kind of a group. I was next to the window, and the girls talked only in Spanish, and this guy would act as my interpreter. We had lots of wonderful conversations, and I had this feeling, "I'm in Mexico, I'm *there*." The smell of the desert and these little towns where you'd eat right out the window—tamales and all kinds of things. Lord knows what I was eating. All I know is that I'd get whatever they got and then bottled juices.

All the way down, we ate out. The john was impossible, because everyone was standing, holding on. You had to go in the bushes when the train stopped or just wait.

*Where were you going?*

To Mexico City, to the heart of Mexico. So, that lasted about two and a half days. But those girls kept laughing. They were looking at me, and they were laughing, giggling. I was thinking, "Oh, they're just thinking of me as a gringo." We'd talk, and then they'd look at each other and giggle and laugh at me.

So, I got to Mexico City. This guy had recommended El Globo Hotel, an inexpensive little hotel. We each got a room. He had to get himself ready, because he was seeing relatives outside of town and he had to clean up. I went into my room, and when I looked in the mirror I saw what they were laughing at. I had been sitting next to the window, and one half of my face was black—I mean, literally, just black, like one of those minstrels. It was surreal. [laughter] *That's* why they were laughing. I hadn't been able to wash. There was no water for two days—no mirror!

I took a bath at the hotel and went out roving through Mexico City. I just had this feeling of marvelous freedom. You know, I was *there*. The smells, the wonderful smells of corn and fires—cooking fires—and everything smelled different and looked different. Mexico City was relatively small at that time and clean.

*This would have been like 1939? Before the war?*

Yes. And I remember going to the Zocalo, the great plaza, and watching the old women on their hands and knees climbing into the cathedral, doing penance, you know. And sometimes crippled people pushing themselves with crutches along the pathways. And I had this feeling, "Oh, I *am* in a different world. It is *truly* a different world." Nothing looked terrible; even these people at the cathedral were wonderful to me.

*And you got along fine without the Spanish?*

Yes. I had a little trouble but I was able to get along, and I picked up a few words. Often there were people who were bilingual who would help you. It didn't worry me too much as I remember.

*Were there other gringos there?*

Yes, but I didn't know them. I was just wandering around. Oh, I finally met an old guy from the Kellogg family. He was a train watcher, an absolute nut.

*A train watcher?*

Yes—his hobby! He kept records of *all* the trains coming and going at different stations, and he had a whole book of his notations

about train times. He was obviously eccentric, from a wealthy family. [laughter]

*A remittance man?*

He helped me, at the train station one time, find which train I was to take, and so, I went with him to Cuernavaca, but that was a little later. First I went all around Mexico City.

*Were you always at the El Globo?*

Yes. The El Globo was cheap. I think I spent thirty or fifty cents a night, but money was going fast. There was a restaurant a family friend's relatives were running, this rather famous Mexican restaurant in Mexico City. Sanborns, I think. That's where that bit of pottery on the coffee table comes from. I carried that back with me. The broken dishes from old haciendas were made into little planters and were cheap enough so I could buy one. That's what I brought back.

Anyway, I went to that restaurant and got a free meal, twice. Good, but gringolized Mexican food. There was another place I went to that was near the hotel, which was a very mysterious place. It was a long, narrow place with little tiny tables and mostly working people eating there. But, oh, the tamales. The food was wonderful. And while I was there, these strange men were coming in, and they'd go back and upstairs, and they'd keep going back and forth. It turned out that was the headquarters of the Communist Party. I was *thrilled* when I learned that.

*Well, how'd you learn that?*

Somebody told me. Someone, I think at the hotel, said, "Oh, don't go there. All those communists are there," or something like

that. "That's their headquarters." And, of course, I ate there all the time. It was just wonderful.

*Of course. [laughter] Well, did you know . . . ?*

I didn't know what a communist was, really. I knew that they were strange and wonderful. I mean, they caused a lot of consternation and that was enough for me. It was one of my earliest contacts with even the idea of communism. I don't remember the word "communist" coming up in my family, but it must have.

*Well, you had spoken earlier of witnessing the reaction in Modesto when the longshoremen . . .*

Yes, of course. Everybody talked. The press talked about the notion that the communists were coming to town, but I don't remember my parents being too concerned about that. I don't think we really knew what communists were. I certainly didn't, but I knew they were people who caused trouble and made everybody very upset. [laughter]

*And they did mysterious things? [laughter]*

Yes, like these guys going to these mysterious meetings upstairs in this restaurant.

Then from there, I knew I had to go beyond Mexico City. Oh, I also went to the ballet, to the Palacio de Belles Artes, I guess it was called. I saw the [Diego] Rivera murals and a number of others. There was a place outside of town that had a number of Rivera's murals, and at the Palacio, there were murals by another artist—I think of Orozco? I went there to a ballet, *La Paloma Azul: The Blue Dove*. I used to know the name of the composer. Oh yes, Carlos Chavez! Wonder-

ful music. I loved it. I remember seeing this magnificent, wild, foreign ballet by the Ballet Troupe of Mexico.

*Was it flamencoesque at all?*

Well, in a way. Their movements were like that, but this was a classical ballet with all of these Spanish and Mexican-Aztec elements in it. The music was fabulous. It was just beautiful. *La Paloma Azul*, I think, was probably based on an old Aztec myth or something. I'm not sure.

*So, it was relatively inexpensive?*

Oh yes, I couldn't afford anything, but I don't think that cost more than ten or fifteen cents. I was up in the rafters.

*So that was something that the common people could do?*

I'm not sure what the audience was like. I think it was more upscale, because it was the ballet.

*Did you find some companions, or were you pretty much just on your own?*

Pretty much on my own, except now and then running across people I could talk to, like this old Kellogg guy, who offered to let me go along with him to Cuernavaca, because I wanted to go there, because I had heard about it. In those days, Cuernavaca was a beautiful little village with a few old palaces on the hills, and one of the old haciendas had been turned into a hotel. For thirty-five to forty cents a day, I was able to stay and have a veranda of my own looking over the valleys of Cuernavaca. I felt like a god.

*Were you attuned to or interested at all in the fact that you were on an old Aztec city? I mean, were you interested in the anthropology?*

Later. That's coming. Anyway, I had this experience in Cuernavaca. I went down into town and wandered around and met two young guys who had donkeys. They hardly spoke a word of English, and I had no more than a word of Spanish, but they showed me around town. I remember spending like half a day with them and then going down a long road into a valley where their little houses were. And they had some animals—chickens and I had some tortillas down there. They gave me tortillas. Little things like that would happen.

I went to Quatla which is, I think, the name of the town near Cuernavaca. where I stayed for a day or two in a little room that opened up on the plaza. There was all kinds of music at night and promenades and things of that sort. But I kept pretty much to myself, because without the language it was hard. But I was enjoying myself quite immensely and feeling very good about being there.

*So you weren't lonely? You were just interested?*

No. There were times when I wished I could talk to and know more people, but when I couldn't, it didn't bother me too much, because there was so much that was fascinating to me.

Then I went back to Mexico City and then went down to Xochimilco and the Pyramid of the Sun. That really got me. Xochimilco was the old lake system outside of Mexico City where there used to be gardens. Well, there still are gardens to some extent from the Aztecs who planted little island-gardens in these lagoons. From there,

I went down to the Pyramid of the Sun and walked through the area. It hadn't been completely excavated to the degree it is now. Now, you know, that whole plaza is opened up, and the buildings on each side have been resurrected to a degree. But here was this enormous pyramid, and I knew a *little* bit about the Aztecs and the sacrifices and the great processions and Cortez and Montezuma. That was not very clear in my mind. All I knew was I was looking at one of the most marvelous things I had ever seen.

I climbed to the top of the Pyramid of the Sun and looked out over the whole area where the Aztec had been. That was an extremely *profound* experience for me emotionally. I just had a feeling I would have loved to have been there. I wish I had been able to see this, the way it was, and how lucky I was just to be there, just standing, and looking at this place. Then I came down, and I was walking down this long plaza that had been the route of the processions before, and I found a little amulet, a little terra-cotta figurine. Today, they're museum pieces. They were the amulets that people wore when they came in obeisance to the temples. And here I found one in the dirt that had just been uncovered, a little one. I gave it to a girlfriend when I got back. I have always regretted it, because she and I didn't last very long. [laughter] But that gave me a sense I had really found something wonderful, this bit of archeology.

*And this is before there were organized tours or anything?*

I wasn't on one. There may have been some, but there were very few tourists around at that time.

*So had an acquaintance or somebody told you that maybe you should do this when you were down there, or had it been a destination?*

No, I *knew* about it. I had done a little reading, just scanned some reading. And in Mexico City at El Globo, they told me.

*You told me—and I know it was in good humor—that sometimes the people that you'd read about or authors that you admired would turn out to be a little bit of a disappointment, but it sounds like your first travel to another country was not in any way a disappointment.*

It was marvelous. It was marvelous. I mean, I had the feeling I was doing what I wanted to do.

*So, did you just stay until you ran out of money?*

Well, that didn't take long, seventy-five bucks. [laughter] But imagine, I was three weeks in Mexico on seventy-five dollars, including the trip down and stopping off in Los Angeles. I had to be very careful, which was hard for me. But I managed to put in the two and a half weeks in Mexico itself, wander around a lot, feeling that at last I had escaped my own world and was in another one.

I went back to Mexico City after Xochimilco and the Pyramid of the Sun and then took the train back up, a *long, dusty, horrible* trip again to Juarez. I loved those little villages, though, in the desert. Those old, *sprawled* out villages that the train used to go through; people with their two or three cattle and some sheep and pigs and little huts, and the food. I loved the food, because I was hungry, I guess. And I didn't get sick, you know. I ate everything.



When I got to Juarez, I stayed two nights in a *wonderful* little hotel because I didn't want to go back over the border. I didn't want to get back to the states, but I was getting broke. I was down to five dollars or something like that. I stayed at this place for fifty cents a night. It had a little courtyard with rooms along the sides, a really old Mexican-type of hacienda hotel. Every night there'd be these wandering minstrels who'd come by and beautiful women dancing. I stayed pretty much to myself, because, again, the language was a problem. Then I went to El Paso and stayed at a really grungy room, because I was getting broke, and it was more expensive there. I was hungry as hell, and I didn't have enough really to eat, so I *had* to write . . . no, not write. Did I call? I forget. I sent a telegram or something home and asked for fifteen dollars to get home. And I felt, now I'm back in my own country, and I feel awful. Look what I'm doing. I had started borrowing again. I had wanted this to be entirely my own. And the money came with very terse words like, "Well, please get home as soon as you can."

And I got on the bus, and I came up across the country into San Joaquin Valley, and I stopped at my friend Pierce's house in Merced. He had bailed out, and I stayed overnight with him and his folks, lording it over him. I just felt wonderful.

*Well, you're probably tan and dirty and . . .*

Well, and skinny and foreign looking with all my marvelous stories. And that was a great moment for me. But poor Pierce, I had really put him down. Then *he* drove me back to Modesto. I got home, and everybody was glad that I was home, but nobody was very excited about what I had done. That was

the kind of a family I had. "Oh, well, so, that's interesting."

*Maybe it was a little threatening if they showed too much interest. Too encouraging.*

Could be, but all I know is that I didn't have a feeling that the conquering hero had returned. It was just this guy who's always doing weird things is home. And, "Now, what are you going to do?"

And I said, "Well, I'm going back to school."

*Don't you find that true a lot when you've gone—including this recent trip to Liberia—that when you come back, there may be two people you can even talk to about your trip?*

There were two people who asked me about it. That's all. Nobody else brought it up at all. I felt it was because they thought that I'd had such a terrible experience they didn't want to disturb me. But the more I think of about it, it has to do with the fact that they don't want to be disturbed by hearing about it. [laughter]

People do sometimes feel that you don't want to talk about it. I think that might have been true about the Liberian trip for example. [In 1997, d'Azevedo joined a team sponsored by the Friends of Liberia to observe Liberian National Elections.] Other people, I think, couldn't believe I had done it. You know, "How did you manage?" I'm such an old guy, and in some cases, I think they're a little mystified that I would do such a foolish things as to go over at my age. Because a couple people said, "But do you think you should do it?" before I went. "Do you think you *should*?" You know, that sort of thing. And then in other cases, I think it's because they don't

want to hear about it as a challenge to themselves. There are all these possibilities. But I don't think there's more than two or three people even *asked* me about what happened on my trip, and then when I'd start to tell, change the subject.

*So when you got back from Mexico, was it the same? What about your brother? Could you talk to your brother?*

My brother. My brother was always a little askance at me, because he really did the right thing within the family, worked very hard to accommodate. But, actually, he and I were close enough so that he did ask me to talk about it and was curious. But again, there is no framework to put that kind of information into. Once you've heard the person went and they did that and that and they came back, that's all there is to it. And my folks, I think, they didn't want to encourage me to do anything like that again by getting excited about it.

*But then they did tell you about this contact? I was just intrigued by the idea that there was a family connection to a restaurant there?*

It was a very remote connection. Somebody my mother or father knew was related to the people who ran Sanborn's restaurant in Mexico City.

Kd: Which was *the* restaurant in Mexico City at that time.

When they heard I was going to Mexico, somebody told my folks, "Have him go to Sanborn's and see so and so." And I did. I had two free meals there. Excellent, the best, the only real meals I had while I was down there, except what I got on the streets.

I find now that I did have a much richer experience in Mexico than I suggested earlier because I'd forgotten a lot. But I now discovered just by accident some letters that I wrote home to my parents while I was in Mexico. And the thing that sticks out, in the first place, is the sense I had of environment and atmosphere that I mentioned earlier, but I see in the letters that that's mainly what it was, and that I *did* meet a lot more people than I had remembered.

My letters indicate that I had made friends—people, I suppose, I'd had a chance to talk to and get to know and who were helpful. A lot of them were Indians in the villages when I'd get off the trains, and we'd be two or three hours waiting for the train to continue on going down to Mexico City. I had in my letters how I would sit and try to talk with people in the villages, and now and then one of them might be able to work things out with me in English, and then everybody would stand around, and these wonderfully curious and beautiful people . . . . I thought they were absolutely beautiful; they were so different than anybody that I had known. And the food that I had—I ate everything, and I never got sick, and I don't know why people were saying that people get sick in Mexico. [laughter]

And I would wander out into the little farmlands in these peasant villages with somebody who would show me the *milpas* where the corn was growing and their cattle. I have one section when I talk about people caring for their cattle with heavy brushes and picking the ticks off of them with great warmth. They were tender toward their cattle, and that impressed me. And they were relatively quiet. They were quiet and easy-going and tolerant people, and they treated me with great goodwill.

Then later, when I was in Mexico City, I wrote a letter. I have to read a section from two little letters here. I suppose it is the first indication I have of distancing myself from my own culture and a feeling that I really *wasn't* a member of my culture and that I wanted to be a member of another and that I was very irritated by Americans that I met. "The Americans who come here are as a whole a rowdy bunch. They spend money riotously and make general fools of themselves. The Mexicans take them for all they have and think them asses."

Some friend of my parents in Modesto had said I should meet Mr. Gray, who would be very helpful to me. So I said, "Mr. Gray and Mr. Sanborn," who had had this restaurant I mentioned earlier, "have been very kind to me. I like Sanborn; he is a cultured man and knows everyone. His establishment is the most beautiful and modern store in Mexico City and quite reasonable. Mr. Gray, however, is a loud man and does nothing but play dominos and cuss like a schoolboy—quite foul mouthed. He hangs around the American Club, and they all argue politics madly. Americans in foreign countries are quite disgusting creatures. I had lunch with him (Gray) today. He told me what night-clubs to visit and what girls to leave alone. He knows *nothing* about Mexico!" [laughter]

And then here's another in the same day. This, obviously, was very much on my mind. I'm defending the Mexicans from the kind of scurrilous information I received before I left, when people were advising me to be careful about this, be careful about that. Don't do this; don't do that.

I'm writing here from Taxco, which I am terribly taken by, and I say, "I'm staying at the Hotel Victoria, an old castle made over into a hotel. You eat in the patio, which looks down two thousand feet over the gorge and

the village. Well, I had beautiful food. I had breakfast—that is, sweet lime juice, wild raspberries, and chocolate a la mexicana, and papaya with lime. The people were leaving for the fields. Burro caravans wound around the mountainous trails; goat herds call to one another and sing strange songs while they wander about the hillside. Everything is green and moist, and every now and then the great brass chimes of the cathedral peal out the quarter hour. The sunrise was almost unbelievable. The air was sweet and exhilarating and filled with early morning sounds of chickens, braying burros, the clip-clip-clop of horses, and the pat-pat of tortilla making.

"The hotel furnished horses, and I took long rides down the ravine with a young Indian called Chu-Chu. He speaks just enough English so that with a few signs we got along. We rode all day along the streams and bought lunch at a little hacienda farmhouse for five centavos. That's about one and a half cents, I believe. We had chicken tacos, big red bananas, and gigantic sweet green oranges. All we could eat. I spent twenty-four pesos for three days, including transportation to and from Taxco by bus. About five pesos a day at the hotel—room, laundry, meals, guide, horses, and rub-downs at the hot springs. They cost about four pesos to travel a hundred miles, about sixty cents each way. This was really paradise. I am certainly coming back here again and stay for a long, long time.

"There are no tourists this time of the year. [laughter] Taxco would be the perfect place for you," I told my parents. "I certainly have a lot of contempt for those people who warned me about Mexico. I think it's all propaganda or something. That's what they say here, anyway. Everyone eats *everything*! [laughter] Water in most hotels and restaurants is a special spring water. The water in

the faucets is only for washing. And as for it being dangerous, that's a lot of bunk. According to most people I met here, they say that if anyone goes home with talk of fights and being chased up dark alleys, it's either because they got their noses very dirty in other people's business, or they come to Mexico to do things they couldn't do at home. It is as safe as anywhere I have been or as anywhere in California, at least. But just as you would stay out of the rowdiest places in San Francisco, so should you here." To me, that's my early little touch of relativism, you see, although I think I already had it, naively enough.

"I have walked around Mexico City at all hours and also in little villages alone, and everywhere I was always met with nothing but courtesy. The Mexicans and Indians are extremely well mannered and generous, even the lowest classes. Only once or twice have I been overcharged, and that was so little that I wouldn't bargain.

"How terrible American tourists must seem to the people here. They will fight over ten centavos—that's two cents American—as if it were a fortune. When you think how much cheaper you're living here and how poor most of the people are, I can't see how they can be so small. I am so disgusted with the majority of spindly legged American women and blustering men I have seen crouching and gaping around the streets of Mexico, that I am almost ashamed to admit that I came from the same place. They seem to be waiting to be cheated. Everything is unpleasant to them; nothing is as good as at home. The trains are all uncomfortable; the food is badly cooked; the hotels are dirty; the people are crooked. In reality most of them have never lived better in their lives and are sloppier and dirtier than even the lowest peon in Mexico! This isn't exaggeration, either.

These people here are extremely clean in their personal lives. And considering their primitive living conditions, sanitation is surprisingly well ordered. Of course, there are a lot of unusual odors and sights, but we have as many that we are just merely used to."

I kind of love those little sections, because in a way they wrap up for me the way I was reacting to Mexico at that time. It was a great experience, a moment of escape from my own culture. And that's a distancing very much like I had done with my parents and family. Slowly distancing, getting some kind of objectivity, being able to criticize and to be critical, feeling that I was different, that I was away, outside that world. And a lot of my relationships with friends, I think, really were stimulated by that kind of interest and drive. Oh, I suppose this business of distancing from family, distancing from one's own culture in order to fully appreciate in one's own way another is a part of growing up.

*I was also really struck by a comment you made earlier when you were talking about your return from your trip to Mexico, and you'd said that that really was your first experience with culture shock. I think people usually think that you have culture shock when you go to exotic culture, but you had it when you came back.*

Reverse culture shock is when you come back after being gone and find your own culture strange. Well, to me it was pallid, that was the main thing. I mean, they're so *dull*, and, "Is this where I grew up? Is this my world?"

*Well, your description of your trip is so colorful, and deals with the senses. The other thing I was wondering about is since you didn't have the language and you weren't communicating on that level, do you get the sense that you were more*

*susceptible to all the other impressions that were there?*

Maybe. I remember that. You see, I've always known, and I admit it freely, that I just am not a linguist, and I didn't get the training in linguistics. All through my fieldwork, I fortunately found places where I could work mainly in English or with interpreters. Actually learning to speak a language, learning to converse in it and inquire in it, was more difficult for me than I would struggle with. I *should* have, but I didn't. But I don't remember feeling that I was in any way *impaired*. I felt so much involved in what I was seeing. I felt I understood what was happening.

I remember on the trip to Mexico I had written notes where some women were talking in a square. I guess it was in Cuatla, in one of the little towns. I *knew* what they were saying. I just could tell, because they were so expressive. I could see their faces. And they were talking to one another. And I felt I could have entered right in and talked with them, but they didn't know English, and I didn't know Spanish. But I understood what they were talking about, because I had that sense all through. I didn't feel any impairment.

Sometimes it was difficult finding my way, finding out how to take a bus or a train or where to go to eat or something, but I always found a way. And I always had help. People always were anxious to help. I had a lot of fun sort of playing with language and words, and I learned a few words in Spanish and I would use them and everybody would laugh. We would have a lot of fun, and I remember it just being glorious.

I didn't feel that anything was missing at all. The whole thing was musical to me—the images, the smells, the sounds, all meaningful. Of course, you can't rely on that later to do fieldwork. You can't just rely on your impressions, because your impressions can be very wrong, but it didn't bother me then. In fact it energized me.

There were many other places I wanted to go. South Seas was one of them, and I did want to go to Europe, and to Rome. I did want to go to Athens. I wanted to go to the Levantine. *Oh*, Africa—*north* Africa. I wanted to go to Egypt. You know, all the classical places. Or Tibet. *Oh*, god, yes, Lhasa. If I could get on a little donkey and climb up the mountains to Lhasa, to Shangri-la, no one, nothing could stop me, you see. But yes, all that was there.



AND SO WENT the Mexico experience, and when I came back from Mexico, I thought about going to Fresno State. I had itchy feet. I don't think I felt too good about my first semester at Cal. I decided I was going to go to Fresno State.

Of course, my parents by this time were just giving up. "Now, he wants to go to Fresno," kind of thing. "What's he going there for?" The reason I was going there is my friend Pershing Olsen was there. He was a friend of long standing. Kathy just loved him. He was a very prim kind of a guy but wonderfully eloquent. His vocabulary was magnificent, and he talked with great elegance and flourish.

*Now where, how did you meet him?*

At junior college in Modesto, and he was very much interested in English literature and poetry and the arts, and so he was part of our little circle of eggheads. He was a very staid guy, but a magnificent sense of humor. What he was really into was nineteenth century and eighteenth century British plays and literature, particularly. You know, Wilde, Shaw,

Coward—highly stylized comedy. He would write plays. Oh, what else? Any stylized literature he was interested in, but he also had . . . .

*Satire?*

Yes, and satire. And he had a *remarkable* memory. He could recite whole sections of Shakespeare. But a very prim guy, and somehow or other he always fit well into any group because he was raconteur of a high order. He became a school teacher in Turlock, of all places, near Modesto.

He was something of the monastic figure, and he never married. I don't recall that he even had any sex life at all. He had girlfriends, but mostly that was platonic, intellectual. In the group he sort of stood for an old man well before his time.

He looked older, and he acted older, but he was extremely articulate and eloquent in his speech. And as I've mentioned earlier, he liked to write these cynical, ironic plays very much like Sheridan and some of the earlier English playwrights, and very much out of

date. But that was his world, and he stood for something among us.

He loved to travel, and he traveled more than anybody I ever knew. He was something of a typical high school teacher when he started teaching in Turlock. Every summer he was off to some distant place in the world, some group tour of some kind, and he loved this. He would send us postcards and letters about the dinners he had aboard ships and the ports that he stopped in, and, of course, we enjoyed that, thought it was quite wonderful.

At the same time he lived a very reclusive sort of a life. I couldn't imagine somebody with that kind of a head and those kind of interests teaching in a small high school in a small, rural town, as he did in Turlock, which was near Modesto, my hometown. I used to wonder about that, what his life must be like, but he seemed very satisfied with it. He had many students, and he slowly upgraded to become a kind of a assistant dean. The thing that was said about him was that he gave all of his classes themes. Now, anybody who has taught, they know what it means to have essays and themes by the hundred in a semester and having to read them. *He read* them, and *he thought* over them, and he talked to the students about them. He gave guidance not only on basic grammar but writing style and turned them on to reading.

When he died, there was a *great* ceremony for him—all his ex-students. He was a classic example of the English teacher who stays on for years and years and who people learn to *love*, because he was so helpful. He corrected themes and taught people how to *write*. He was *exciting* in his lectures and had so many interesting experiences, because every summer he'd take trips and come back and tell his class. We went down to his funeral and there were *hundreds* of people, ex-students

and colleagues. And I thought, my god, he had a successful life.

I used to think, "How can he bury himself . . . ?"

*And how many minds he must have turned.*

Switched on in some way. And that's what people say about him. "I began to think when I took his courses." So he was the classic small-town teacher.

The ceremony was really a remarkable experience for us, because people were telling us, when they heard that we knew him, "Oh, you are the friends from Reno that he would talk about." And we then would hear these paeans of praise about what he had done for them personally, how they had read and wrote and studied because of their connection with this man. Well, I had some idea that he was a good teacher, but then I realized that he was more than that. He was exemplary. He was the paragon of high school teachers. [laughter]

And he enjoyed it. That would make him a good teacher, I suppose. In the first place, he was profoundly involved in the subject matter, and he *loved* English literature. He had read everything, and it all had resonance inside of him. I'm sure he projected that to his classes. And on top of that, a love of teaching, which not all of us have.

I know many people who teach who don't *love* teaching. They do it as part of their job, and they might get some secondary benefits from it and some feedback that they enjoy, but it's not necessarily a glorious experience. I've only had a few classes at a few places in my lifetime where I felt that to me it was a great experience, a marvelous experience, and that I felt that I was gaining a great deal. But he seemed to have that all the time. Every year, every semester, he was being fed by his



relationship with students and his excitement about his work. So I consider that's one of the factors that make a good teacher.

*So there's a real interchange in dialog that takes place between the teacher and the student.*

That was his concern. He could talk about life; he could philosophize about the meaning of things when he was dealing with literature. I don't think that spread much over into other elements of his life, but he was very acute about the relationship of literature to the way the people he met in the world acted and behaved. It was a kind of a model for him of human behavior.

You know, there are limitations to that. At the same time it's an extremely potent tool when you're a teacher in a high school, where most of these kids in this rural area had never been exposed to ideas, the outside world, to what literature stood for, and what various plays and poems and important personages in literature stood for. To suddenly have that world open up to them by this committed, dedicated person who could be very witty . . . . He was very acute in his observations, inventive. He had the makings of a playwright and a writer but had narrowed himself down to this focus that he ended up with in his life.

So to find him at the end of his life, having gotten this kind of memorial from all those students . . . . I remember telling some of my friends about it, and my colleagues, that any of us, I think, would be very happy to have this kind of reaction from any students from the past. Most people probably would never remember us.

*So you really went to school in Fresno because he was going to school there?*

Well, we were both students at that time. He was going there. And he had written us—Pierce and I—about Earl Lyon, a great teacher, who had a dozen disciples up there. Students who stayed on or came back.

*This is in English?*

He was in English and Semantics. Who were some of the semanticians at that time? Korzybski and Hayakawa—oh, there were others that he had worked with. And he was on the new wave. He was avant-garde in the teaching of English and writing and all that, so I figured I had to see this guy. I had to do it.

*Now, Pershing Olsen was one of the students in the Earl Lyon group?*

He was one of Earl Lyon's students, and he was editor of the *Caravan* while I was there, which was the college literary magazine, pretty good, in fact. And I was the assistant editor while I was there. In fact, I was the assistant editor after I left. I was doing some editing and choosing of materials for the next semester while I was in absentia.

When I went to Fresno, my folks cut out my fifteen-dollar-a-month allowance. They said, "It's time for you to figure out what you're going to do with your life. We're not going to subsidize this knocking around."

So, I went down on the bus with all my stuff. In those days it went in two little bags. And the first thing I did was go to a theater and get a job as an usher, because I had had experience in Modesto, and that's all I knew. I mean, I wasn't going to go out and work in the canneries anymore. It was hard work, and I wasn't good at it. I got this theater job that was walking distance from the college. I was

getting twenty-five cents an hour, which was quite a bit, or maybe by then I was getting thirty-five cents. I don't know. I was a uniformed usher for the whole time I was down there and was able to pay my rent and eat somewhat and now and then beg for ten bucks or so from the folks.

*Now, were you still rooming with Pierce?*

No, I had a place above a garage. A very nice family had this tar-paper garage with a little room above, with a little stove and bathroom, right on the tracks. It was ten feet from the railroad tracks. So when the freights would go by, everything shook, things fell off the tables and everything. And I'd open the door, and I could see these trains going by, and I could have almost reached out. There were hobos on it, and I could almost reach out and touch one. [laughter] And I loved it. That was a great place. I loved the place.

So I was holed up there. What did I pay? I think I paid six dollars a month for that place. It was probably too much. And I had to do my washing and all that and cooking. Oh, that's where Pershing would come over from his place, and we took turns cooking. With Pershing, it worked, because Pershing was a meticulous guy, and he could cook. He also washed dishes. [laughter] That's where I really got to know Pershing. He was, of course, a top student and all that sort of thing, and I learned a lot from him.

Oh, that's where I started smoking. After we'd eat, I would watch Pershing blow his smoke. He was having such satisfaction. He'd say, "You want to try this? It's very good." I always kidded him about that, a very prim guy, and I kidded him about being my pusher. [laughter] And so, I would start having a cigarette after dinner.

I was nineteen, I guess, by this time, and it wasn't two or three months before I was hooked, and I was smoking. [laughter] I blamed Pershing for that. Always after dinner we would have our smoke and talk about classes and all that.

So there was Earl Lyon. In fact, that's all I think I took, was his classes. On semantics. English literature. American literature. Writing, creative writing. Not just creative writing. It was English grammar. I don't know much about grammar, but what little I knew, I got from him—at least style. And he was remarkable. He was a charismatic teacher.

He was a young guy. I guess he was in his thirties, early thirties at that time, or maybe even younger. And there were about seven or eight young guys who just hung around him and took all of his classes. There was a kind of—what would you call it—a salon. We would meet once or twice a week at his place and talk over literature, and it was fabulous, just wonderful. And I did a lot of writing there. In fact, I had two or three stories published in the *Caravan*, which was the college journal. And Pershing was the editor; later on, John Hultberg, the artist, who became a very well-known artist in New York. And every issue had something of mine in it, a poem or a story. My story "Sepeyano Orozco" based on my Mexican trip was published in that. And it was a *good* story, excepting my trouble with the language. I spelled my main character's name as "Sepeyano Orozco." Well, there's no such thing as Sepeyano, you know, s-e-p-u-. I was trying to write Cipriano, you see. I had heard "Sepeyano."

This has been with me the rest of my life, you know, not to trust my non-linguistic ears. [laughter] Kathy has a better ear for language than I have. But, you know, I keep thinking back to my shame. Nobody ever brought that

to my attention. They just said, "That's an unusual name." And I learned to say, "Yes, it is." But it was Cipriano that I was trying to write. Anyway, that was one semester.

*And what were you reading at that time?*

Oh, god, let me see, what kind of things? Oh, that's where I was reading Thomas Wolfe and some American writers, oh, and I re-read Steinbeck. I think Saroyan, Dreiser, O'Neill, and others. Saroyan was writing at that time. But *Wolfe*, I was very much involved with.

Kd: Dos Passos?

I probably did, but I don't recall that. I undoubtedly did. But I was also reading a lot of English literature. I was reading plays, early English plays.

*Was Hemingway writing at this time?*

I read Hemingway in retrospect later, because I knew that he was a major figure. I don't remember reading him then. But I was reading a lot of English novels. The Brontë sisters, and Jonathan Swift, Henry Fielding and . . . I loved Jonathan Swift. There were a couple of other satirical writers like that that I was reading. A lot of that was due to Lyon but also this group that we were in. Everybody was reading everything.

I think I was reading more Thomas Mann. That really got me, because, I mean, Mann really touched me. *Jean-Christophe*, and oh, *Tonio Kröger*. That wonderful story about an artist writer, a tragedy that rich and powerful, you know, the hero's life kind of thing. By god, how did that come back into my head?

But the *Kreutzer Sonata*, was that one? The *Kreutzer Sonata*? No, I don't think so.

That's a title of a strange novel, by Tolstoy. I was reading stuff like that, a lot of it. I probably did more reading in those two or three years than the whole rest of my life except what I was a gung-ho student in anthropology. But more free range reading of all kinds.

*Well, how wonderful to have found a group of peers that you could really . . .*

Oh, it was a wonderful group—Stout, Englander, John Hultberg, and Steinberg became a psychiatrist. They went on to do very good work. We were just young kids around eighteen, nineteen years old.

And Lyon, I wrote a number of papers for him. I have one of them still. One of the papers was primarily concerned with unraveling the "assassination" of Walter Krivitsky, head of the Soviet secret police, supposedly by the Bolsheviks. And to compare other uses of the word "assassination" with "murder," "killing," "bump off," whatever the other terms were. Trying to place in context or give "frame of reference" to the uses of a particular word like "assassination," rather than the other alternatives.

I can't recall now what my other papers were, excepting that I was totally involved in them for weeks at a time. I spent *hours* in the library searching through the newspaper files and asking people what they thought, how they would use the terms. I was primarily involved in historical context, what was going on at the time these reports were made about either murders or assassinations. I remember that the feeling of discovery was magnificent. I had a sense that I was really exploring untrodden turf, that I was into something that was very, very important.

That kind of approach is commonplace now, but at the time it really wasn't, and Earl Lyon turned us on to the idea, that it was so

important to understand “the word.” He used to say, “The word is the beginning”—not in the scriptural sense, but in terms of the reality. And you can’t understand the word unless you understand when, how, and under what circumstances it was used. And that stuck with me a long time.

Now, I have not mentioned that one of the members of that class was Kyoshi Hamanaka, who was a very close friend of all of us in that group. I had great admiration for him. He was a hard-working, young fellow. He wanted to go on, I believe, either in medicine or one of the health fields, and he was *terribly* bright. He probably was one of the most receptive and quick students in that class. I remember him because just shortly after that, when I had left Fresno State, it was *obvious* the war was coming on in Europe and that our relations with Japan were getting more and more difficult. I have some early letters that he wrote me when he was leaving Fresno. He saw the draft coming on, and he saw his position as an American-Japanese, a *nisei*, as very precarious.

He was one of the first people, at least that I knew, who was aware of that kind of a problem. He was a profoundly dedicated Christian on a philosophical level and spiritual level, and he was a conscientious objector. And he wrote me letters about trying in Fresno to get conscientious objector status.

*Was he an American citizen?*

He was an American citizen. Oh, yes, it made no difference at that time. But he felt the pressure of discrimination occurring already, and he was advised to get out of California by some of his Japanese friends. So he went east to Chicago and into some camp for C.O.’s [conscientious objectors],

where regardless of his intended status, he was given military training and put into what was essentially a concentration camp setting in Illinois. I’m not clear on just what was going on at that time, what the American policy was with regard to Japanese, but as a C.O. and a Japanese, of course, he was in a very serious situation.

But one of the things he wrote me about was that while in Chicago he had gone to visit Hayakawa because of the relationship with Earl Lyon as a student in Fresno. And he found Hayakawa an utterly charming man, who, he said, was so much like Earl Lyon that he saw them as two twins. He had hours and hours of discussions with Hayakawa and was sort of taken into his family, became a kind of a family member and met his daughters.

*Is this in Chicago?*

This was in Chicago. That was the end of the letters—that last letter in which he was so happy about finding someone he could discuss his *nisei* status with, Hayakawa telling him that although it’s important to remember your heritage, it’s also important to remember that you had two, and, secondly, that that’s a hard row to hoe! [laughter]

*Now was Hayakawa in any kind of internment?*

I don’t know—maybe so. I’d have to look into that. I don’t recall. He was being criticized. He’d written a book which was accused of being anti-American, because he had made some critical comments about the British. He was attacked by Westbrook Pegler, that infamous journalist. He was reported to the FBI and all that. So something must have happened to him, and I don’t happen to recall what that was.

*Now, Westbrook Pegler . . . ?*

He was a predatory McCarthy columnist searching the world for communists, and I think he was in New York. He had a syndicated column, and he was very well known. Westbrook Pegler, what a freak of the times! He had attacked Hayakawa. I vaguely recall when that that was going on, but I don't recall what happened to Hayakawa and what his trajectory was after that. But I do recall that the Kyoshi was terribly happy about having made the connection. I also don't know what happened to Kyoshi. After this I lost track of him, and lord knows what went on in his life, because he was gone when that great move against the Japanese in California took place in 1941 and 1942.

*But you do think he was in some kind of camp in Chicago?*

He was in a camp for a while.

*Do you think he was in the camp because he was a conscientious objector or Japanese-American or both?*

My vague recollection is that it was a camp for Japanese who were not necessarily considered a danger. This was just before Pearl Harbor. That's when I was getting letters from him, just before Pearl Harbor. Apparently it was a camp where he and others were being given some kind of military and patriotic training. I don't know who the others were. This is something I would like to look up and find out more about. But I lost track of him.

At the same time, and why this comes to mind at all, is that I had for about a year been corresponding with a pen pal, Francis Motofuji in Hawaii. This was going on even

before I knew Kyoshi Hamanaka, and so there was a kind of thin connection with the Japanese community and, of course, my admiration for the young woman who had been my assistant editor on the *Broadcast* when I was editor at high school. Somehow here and there these Japanese friends and acquaintances sort of came forward. And Kyoshi Hamanaka in Fresno was one of those.

*One thing that you said that's intrigued me about Lyon's class and group was that it was taught like a seminar?*

Yes, there were about twelve to fifteen people, as I remember.

*Wasn't that unusually small for an undergraduate class?*

Well, it was in a classroom, but when I think of it, it was more a colloquium. Well, that's not so unusual. It isn't so unusual in universities, and it depends on its rigor and the subject matter. And I don't think Lyon could have taught any other way. He'd come out of the University of California, and he saw a classroom, really, as a forum. And he would lecture, but at the same time he was always open to interrupting any lecture to allow discussion, or sometimes whole classroom periods were given over to somebody's work, to their papers and what they were doing. I remember I had two sessions with my essay on "assassination". [laughter] And, yes, it was more of a colloquium and a forum. But he was such an *exciting* individual, an exciting mind, quick, alert, and aware of where we were at at any time, what we were working with. He introduced us to what was then very new stuff such as—Korzybski, the semantician, and Hayakawa, who were at that point beginning to be known.

*And he was at the University of Chicago?*

Yes, he probably was at Chicago, and a very controversial figure. Even semantics was controversial at that time. So anyway, that to me was a very rich semester I spent there.

At Fresno I took English Literature again, because I always had a major in literature and always a minor in anthro until later. (I switched to anthro when I got back to Cal.) History of Drama, History of English Drama, and Mythology; a course in Mythology. I remember now reading Frazer for the first time, *The Golden Bough* at that time, and a number of other things. So, again, the content of that course other than Frazer, I don't recall. This was at Fresno. And then Earl Lyon's course, which I mentioned before, mainly in "semantics". And then World Literature. And I took Educational Psychology for some reason or other; maybe it was a requirement.

*Now, you went to Fresno purposely because of this Earl Lyon, right?*

Because I'd heard about Earl Lyon, and two of my friends, Pierce Young and Pershing Olsen, had spoken so highly of him and what a terrific character he was. And by this time, my parents, my folks were at their wit's end about me. When was I ever going to decide on what to do? And they decided they weren't going to subsidize me anymore—fifteen dollars a month—and that I'd have to go on my own. So when I got to Fresno, I got an usher's job, and that put me through the semester at Fresno State. And then at the end of that, I went to summer school, and back to Cal in the fall of 1941.

Now, that's a whole new era. I put out another issue of *New Rejections* and was carrying out a lot of the other activity that I've been talking about. But things were heating

up in terms of the imminence of war; all sorts of things were going on. And, of course, that was the year of Pearl Harbor and our entering the war at the end of that semester.

Something I haven't mentioned was the time in Fresno, while I was working at the theater as an usher and going to school there, the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo came through the area. It was a very exciting event for me and some of my friends. This little town with that entourage arriving on a train; they had about five or six cars. And this marvelous ballet circus got off the train and came into the theater and set it up for performance. And I was there, of course, and also my friend Pierce Young who was in the area, and we saw an acquaintance of mine, Jimmy Starbuck, who was one of the dancers of the Ballet Russe. We had a chance to see Jimmy, and they wanted us to fill in as extras in the ballet orchestra. We weren't to dance; just sit there pretending to play instruments.

But I couldn't do it because I was working, but a couple of my friends did. Anyway, it was during that exciting little interlude in this rural town of Fresno at that time, the big city and Europe had come through town. It was kind of a scroungy ballet company at that point, when I look back. Their costumes were old and worn, and it wasn't making too much money.

But they had that marvelous dancer who now is rather aged, "Donilova" [Warren and Kathy do not remember this person and suggest using quotes to show this was "as spoken at the time"]. I remember going back stage and seeing her sitting, taking off her ballet slippers at the end of the performance, sweating; her dress looked as though it was almost torn off her, and she had gray circles under her eyes and mascara dripping. The poor lady—she must have been well in advanced age at that time, but she was dancing mag-

nificantly. She was an amazing person. But seeing that sort of crumpled ballet dancer—you know, like Degás may have drawn somebody like her—gave me a sense of great sadness.

And there were a couple of the male dancers who were quite old as well. I remember seeing one of them on the street, and he walked splay-footed, the way ballet dancers do. He walked down the street with his toes turned out, and he looked very spindly and was dressed in a kind of bizarre European way with a beret and a cloak. He was walking down the streets of downtown Fresno. I remember thinking, “What a marvelous and wild moment this is to see these dancers off the stage, where they are magnificent and beautiful in the lights and with the music.”

*Gaiety Parisienne* was the name of that ballet that my friends participated in. Jimmy Starbuck had a major role in that. Anyway, I remember we went to a bar afterwards and sat and talked to a number of the dancers and Jimmy.

It was through Jimmy that I heard more about Kathleen, whom I later was to get to know. And I knew who she was, and I had met her, but she was on tour with a ballet troupe. She had been to Mexico, and they were touring all over the country. And he gave me reports of this magnificent woman whom I had met. And I stowed away that bit of information, as I remember. [laughter] Her name came up, of course, in this glorious

moment of seeing the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in all of its splendor and in all of its ugliness as well! [laughter]

I remember we went to see them off on the train where they were all packing, just like circus performers, into a few compartments in the three or four or five cars that they had, with all of their . . . well, they had to take care of their costumes and their equipment, and they were piled in like sardines, and it smelled. [laughter] And it was *hot*, and they were all very, very irritable and yelling at one another. I just thought, “Here is . . . this is art. This is the way it is. Out of all of this madness and confusion come these marvelous moments on the stage, you know!” [laughter]

*How many performances did you see?*

They had about four or five performances while I was there. And I forget what the other ballets were. But the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, which had split off years earlier from the Diaghilev group in Paris, had done fairly well for a while. But I think it was sort of getting on the skids about the time I saw them. The dancers were old; they were poorly paid; there weren’t many performances; but I thought it was magnificent. I thought it was wonderful. And then as I say, I had word of Kathleen Addison [later d’Azevedo], who was this dancer that I had met and later was to know more of.





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## POLITICAL RUMBLINGS

I HAD MENTIONED receiving letters from my friend, Kyoshi Hamanaka, the conscientious objector who had left Fresno to go east. So, anyway, you asked about what were my political views at that time, and I must say I'm rather dim on them, because I don't think I was political. But I did have some political reactions and was aware of what was going on.

This was the period when Germany was beginning to invade. The invasion of Poland had taken place, and Germany was one by one invading the eastern European countries. And Italy, under the fascist regime of Mussolini, had gone into Ethiopia. All these things registered on me and the people I knew, and we looked upon it as alarming, but distant. We didn't feel that it was immediately affecting us.

Most of the country in that period was isolationist for one reason or another. There are many kinds of isolationism. There was religious isolation. There's political isolation—the right-wing, conservatives—“let the earth take care of itself, and let's close our boundaries to all the troubles from out-

side.” And there was the large sector of staunchly racist groups who saw this as an opportunity to separate the United States from the undesirable peoples of the world. There was a great range of types of isolationism, and the country was generally isolationist. When Roosevelt tried to push his policy of lend-lease and aid to England, he received enormous, very active, opposition from within the country.

Now, as for Roosevelt, I made comments, you know, like the John Doe songs and things of that kind. We were very ambivalent—I remember I was. In the first place, Roosevelt was the only president that I had known. I mean through all my life that I can remember, Roosevelt was the president. Before him was Hoover whom we all thought was a very funny man, and glad to get rid of. And so a Democratic administration under Roosevelt was the political world we knew in the United States.

However, the war in Europe began to heat up there was this pressure for the United States to become involved: Germany was sinking our ships, and there was a tremen-

dous amount of anti-German feeling. But also anti-Japanese feeling, because for years the Japanese invasion of China and southeast Asia had been progressing rapidly. And there was this underlying feeling that we were . . . the whole world was going to pot, and the United States had to defend itself against all that.

And the isolationist view was just that here we were, surrounded by two big oceans—stay out of it and take care of ourselves. And so the Roosevelt policy of aiding England—in particular his rapprochement with Churchill and the role of Eleanor Roosevelt, who was *very* much in the picture calling for mobilization of citizens for defense and for the development of industry and work—all of this was strongly opposed by large segments of people in the United States.

As for my feelings about the Roosevelt administration, I remember the positive feelings my parents and people that I knew when I was younger had about the New Deal, and the positive changes that were taking place during the early Roosevelt administration with regard to the Depression. There was a feeling that he was the kind of leader that was needed in a time of crisis, and that he was a progressive, et cetera. And I had those feelings, too.

At the same time I was sucked along by the very radicalized view that the United States not only should stay out of the war, but that all the efforts that were going on in Washington by Roosevelt and his group within the administration were really leading us to war, and that he was setting us up for war. There was that aspect of my feelings, as well as of some of the others that I knew.

It was a very ambivalent, mixed up, and very tumultuous period in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Because things were advancing in Europe toward not only war—the war was

going on—but really horrendous kinds of events taking place. And then I knew people like the Phillipsborns, who knew about the Jews of Europe under Hitler, and things that weren't talked about very much in our press. Somehow or other the American people weren't so concerned about that. They didn't hear much about it; it wasn't talked about very much. I don't know if that was suppression so much as just disbelief and . . .

*Well, were you aware of an anti-Semitic factor in the American social scene or . . . ?*

There was the endemic anti-Semitism that was always there. Jews were always looked upon or used as a kind of scapegoat for everything. This was, you know, the same as in Europe because . . .

*It's almost on a level of folk . . . .*

Yes, it's almost a folk level of anti-Semitism that was sort of spread throughout the culture. That was there. And overt anti-Semitism was being expressed by pro-Nazi groups in the United States, and that was a different kind. It was a highly polemical, direct assault upon Jews that became very much in evidence toward the end of the 1930s and the early 1940s.

*Was it in evidence in the Berkeley?*

Not among people that I knew. I would say the intellectual, academic set seemed *not* to . . . . As usual, they seemed to be a little bit abstracted, a little bit distanced from such views. I don't remember it came up very much, except in my relations with people like the Phillipsborns and certain left-wing people that I would run across who were strongly aware of anti-Semitism and also the similar

role of the Negro. I was beginning to think in those terms at that point.

Oh, yes. I suppose my first contact with overt racism and anti-Semitism was from an old philosophy professor when I was at Modesto Junior College. His name was Stickle, Professor Stickle. I had a very, very negative reaction to him; so did my brother, [Donald] in fact, who later took a course from him. He would attribute all the ills of our civilization to not only race mixture and the effect of not maintaining a pure tradition and a pure genealogy, but to Jews.

And my brother tells the story how one time he was on campus talking to some friends of his and waving his arms while he was talking, and Mr. Stickle came up to him and said, "Are you a Jew? The way you are waving your arms?" Well, this is such gross anti-Semitism and racism, and I remember in classes he would reiterate this. However, none of the people that I went to school with were aware enough or sensitized enough at that time to object—this was back in the mid-1930s—we were just uncomfortable and felt that he was silly and foolish.

It didn't occur to us how viciously stupid this old man—he was not an old man but a middle-aged man—was with his pontifical discussions of Plato and the New Republic as ideal society. [laughter] And in fact, now I remember one of my later feelings in reading Plato, was the possibility of interpreting in it a kind of an innate fascism or national socialism! [laughter] The New Republic became something that I felt, and others that I knew felt, was an example of how society should not be ruled and run. So it goes all the way back to old Professor Stickle. But that kind of endemic racism was there throughout the society, of course. There were a lot of people who thought in that way, just as there are now. But somehow or other it didn't reg-

ister on us as anything that required a great deal of thought. It was just something we looked upon as ridiculous and silly and stupid.

*Was there in retrospect maybe some awareness, then, that he was misusing his position and . . . ?*

No, because he had a right. I mean in those days you felt that somebody who was a teacher, unless they were absolutely incompetent, had a right to do what they wanted to do.

*And express their opinions?*

Yes, excepting you just groused about it and you told anecdotes about it, and the person got a name. And old Stickle had a name. People would have to take his classes—it was one of the required classes, as many were in junior college. And they'd go in and sit ready to snicker and write epithets in their notebooks and tell tales outside. We would grouse about it, "Why is he teaching? He's such a silly, old man," and all. But he had a certain power, and he had tenure, I think. God help us! [laughter]

But I just mention that because it goes back to the level of political consciousness that many of us had. However, toward the end of the 1930s and in the early 1940s, we were *forced* to think about these things; very serious things were happening; very horrendous things were happening in the world, and they were impinging on the United States. So my feelings about the Roosevelt administration and Franklin Roosevelt were ambivalent. They were mixed between these new kind of radical views that I was developing, and particularly with my connection with the Twentieth Century Bookstore and some of the people I met there, and . . .

*Well, you said earlier that the radical identification in those years was fundamentally anti-war. I mean pacifism, was very . . .*

At that juncture. That was during the period of the Munich Agreement [1938], the appeasement of Hitler and Mussolini by Chamberlain. A lot of people that I knew felt Chamberlain had done the right thing—trying to make some kind of a accommodation to Hitler. Only later do I remember thinking how awful that was, what a terrible betrayal that was. I think when it happened, we just looked upon it as, “Well, England is trying to accommodate.” Of course, then right after it happened, Hitler makes his next great moves, and within a few months England is at war; England and France are at war with Germany. And *that*, I remember. Nineteen thirty-nine, yes. Right after Poland and the Munich Agreement had taken place.

But, you see, there was this sort of understanding between the United States and England to leave the Soviet Union out of the treaty it developed around the Munich Agreement. The Soviet Union felt isolated and that we were conniving with Germany to leave them out there as a sitting duck for German aggression. I think what was happening right after England and France entered the war, and the post-Munich Agreement, when the Germans went into Poland, was the Soviets were worried that Germany was going to be moving too close to its own border so they moved into eastern Poland, as I remember. So that’s where the divided Poland came in. It was during that period that the Left and I imagine the Communist Party in the United States and in Europe didn’t want England and the United States to go directly into war with Germany, because there had not been some

kind of accommodation for the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union was feeling very isolated, and it had to maintain its own defenses and feared a conspiracy that we would allow Germany to go into the Soviet Union. There is good reason to think that this was what we were doing.

And it really wasn’t until 1941 when . . . oh, that’s right, there was the Soviet-German pact of nonaggression, and it was during that period, the Left was supporting a no-war stance on the part of the United States. But as soon as Germany attacked Russia—invaded Russia I think in 1941, after it entered Yugoslavia, and then it attacked Russia directly and almost without warning—it was at that point then the American Left, particularly the far Left of the Communist Party, made a *great* switch in its propaganda. The idea was, “We should go to war to defend Europe and to defend the Soviet Union, and we should fight fascism in Germany.” So there was this famous switch that was used against the Left for years afterwards.

I wasn’t following all this very closely at the time, because I hadn’t yet become that interested in the ideology and the politics of it. But when I look back, it doesn’t surprise me at all. I mean, the countries are out to defend themselves and to play all kinds of hanky-panky games to do so. And the Soviet Union was defending itself against what it thought to be a concerted effort on the part of the West to undermine it and maybe play Hitler’s game if we could, to bring about a complete change in the Soviet Union, which has finally happened now many, many years later—decades later! [laughter] But I don’t think I was thinking in those terms. I began to get interested in these matters about 1941, about the time when the Soviet Union was

suddenly our ally and our friend. And Stalin was Uncle Joe. In the press—"Uncle Joe," the benign and wonderful figure, who was our ally and helping us defeat fascism in Germany, and Italy, and throughout the sections of the world they conquered, as well as Japan, which by this time had pretty well occupied a good part of the East.

And I remember Boodberg, this Professor Boodberg, this man that I had so much respect for; a good part of his courses were directed to the problem of Japan and China and how little we were concerned about that—that we had not done much about it, and that China was being devastated by the Japanese. Then there was the Manchuko period. The Japanese set up a puppet state, from which the Japanese controlled a good part of China.

Owen Lattimore, who had been the mentor of Boodberg, and Boodberg himself, *very subtly* (they had to be very careful) about how they talked about the people's rebellion in China—and they really meant the communists out in the western part of China—who were trying to oust Chiang Kai-shek, who was actually in league with England and also the United States, and was making deals with Japan, et cetera, et cetera, while he was fighting Japan. He really wasn't so interested in getting Japan out of China as he was of getting the communists out. And I remember that Boodberg kept playing with this theme, but he was very careful about it. So those are the kinds of ideas that I had begun to develop at that time.

Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang Kai-shek had come to the United States and been treated like royalty, great celebrities. Madame Chiang Kai-shek became suddenly this beautiful Asian woman, this gracious Chinese woman. All the women's magazines had articles about her. I remember my par-

ents, and my mother in particular, talking about Madame Chiang Kai-shek, this wonderful woman. The people who had hated the Asians, suddenly began to love the Chiang Kai-sheks. [laughter] They did a great propaganda job of turning American interest to the defense of China—the China of the Kuomintang and the Chiang Kai-sheks. And all the while, of course, Chiang Kai-shek was spending most of the funds for armaments and aid in the fight against the communists and a number of east Asian groups that were struggling against the Japanese.

So, again, this ambivalence. I mean, I remember feeling, that Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang were terrible betrayers of their own culture. In 1939 and the 1940s, I remember thinking that I had been completely misled. And part of that was coming from left literature I was reading and from people like my mentors—Boodberg and others—who had painted this rather full and detailed picture of Chinese culture, all through literature, and then wove in the thread of the Japanese—the Japanese who had done the destruction of Chinese culture. And the role of the right wing—I don't know the terms that he used—the role of the conservatives, the Kuomintang, and others, and the peasant uprisings were coming. So, you know, it was a very roiling period for ideas and thought. And I don't remember . . . I wasn't very politicalized.

*When was the first time you voted? I mean who . . . ?*

Oh, my god, Penny, I don't remember when I first voted. I probably voted as early as I could.

*Yes, it would have been at age 21, which is . . . .*

I don't think I started voting until I got married and had a family—had some kind of a domicile . . . . [laughter]

*Well, you know, you turned twenty-one in 1941. That's when you went in . . . .*

I don't think I even thought about voting while going to sea and during the war. I don't know if anybody I know would know. [laughter] Or whether any of them were voting.

*The FBI might know. [The d'Azevedos later were to learn that they, like many liberals of their generation, were under surveillance by the FBI]*

Yes, they might. I don't know of anybody that I knew voting at the time.

*I was just curious because it seems like the mainstream political theme, like between the parties and Roosevelt, wasn't really an issue that was very engaging to you or relevant, because if you were interested in radical politics, then by definition it was separate?*

Well, my parents voted, but, see, I wouldn't have been voting until the war. And then . . . well, gosh, I'm trying to think what kind of elections were going on that one would have voted for? I'm quite sure that after Roosevelt's death I began voting.

Along with any political interests I may have been developing at the time, I was also maintaining this strong feeling about Asian thought and philosophy. And I remember I was very much taken with Mahatma Gandhi. And that was the period, I think, when he was calling for passive resistance against some of the large Indian states and calling for democratic reform, et cetera, and was jailed. He was one of my heroes, as well as Nehru—

Jawaharlal Nehru—and his writings. So all these things were going on, and politics was only one of many things that I felt, along with everybody that I knew at the university, and others, a slowly impinging threat, you know, the coming storm kind of thing that was *there*. We kept feeling it and probably denying it.

Now, in that last semester at Cal with that summer session and last semester of 1941, I was taking three anthropology courses. One, "Races of Man—Anthropometry," which I vaguely recall as one of the more disturbing courses that I had ever taken. Because that was the period, really, when racial theory was very much the standard in anthropology. And we went through hundreds of races and sub-races and quasi-races throughout the world, I mean, the world was one map of these racial groups, and we had to memorize them. And cranial sizes and dentition, length of femurs, the cranial index, and all that sort of thing! [laughter] Things that *nobody* later ever talked about again were one of the major things that you had to learn. And I have forgotten most of it, but I do recall the intense boredom that I had in that course because I just felt that it was highly formalized and elaborate theory that nobody could really put their finger on. I remember it changed—every time somebody would talk about racial types, the types would change; you'd have a different set of types. And this was just before the new genetics, the new physical anthropology. Later I had a course from Sherwood L. Washburn, when I came back after going to sea. The whole scene had changed. Nobody dealt with anthropometry, only seven, eight years later.

*Do you mean measurements?*

Measurement, yes, yes. Those intricate physical measurements, and thousands of

studies about the minutiae of the brain size, and the . . . .

*Did you have a sense of it as pseudo-science then?*

No. I just thought this is something anthropology does, and one has to learn something about it. But I thought it was one of the dullest . . . a dead end for me. However, I didn't have enough knowledge to critique it. But I just remember the man who taught it was a racist. As I remember, big brains were very . . . I wish I could remember his name. He became a cause célèbre because he would walk along the front row and brush the knees of the young girls. And they would talk about it later, how his hands would rub against their knees. And so we used to talk about was he really an anthropometrist of first order. He was just testing the size of the knees. [laughter]

So what was his name? Well, just as well not to remember. But, anyway, he always made the point about Caucasian superiority and sizes of things, bones, height; even intelligence quotients came in there to some degree. And I remember reacting against that and thought that it was just his personal predilection. But, nevertheless, the anthropometry part, I supposed to be important. Even Boas had done some of this work.

So I had that, and I took an extra course, the "Semitics of Ancient Mythology," from old man Lutz, because I found him so mysterious and marvelous. [laughter]

*So that was the second course you had from him?*

Yes. A gnomish little man up there on top of Wheeler Hall. And I used to enjoy just climbing the stairs and going up there with these few students who would sit and listen to him. Then I had reading courses in anthropology and a course in primitive invention. I have no idea who taught that.

"Primitive invention". It may have been Kroeber; I'm not sure. And "Culture Growth," which was an early term for culture change, I guess, or evolution. [laughter] And then I wanted to take a course from a Professor Lessing. I don't remember his first name, but he was a very well-known scholar of Asian literature and Asian culture, and particularly on Buddhism. He was giving a course on the influence of Buddhism in the Far East. I didn't get to take it, but I have written down in my early notes that I wanted to take that course. So there's where my head was in that last semester.

I was also putting out an edition of our famous magazine, *New Rejections*. And I was very much involved socially with the Phillipsborn daughters and the family, and with a number of others, and poets and writers, early ones in the Bay Area. And I was going over to San Francisco frequently to readings and events; and visiting Josephine Miles, whom I had a great respect for—the poetess—and seeing her sometimes frequently. We'd go over, and three or four of us would sit and talk to her. We read Robinson Jeffers, the California poet. We read everything that he wrote—the dark, romantic poet of the West Coast.





## PART TWO

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REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR

**I** REMEMBER in the fall, in December of 1941, I was on campus—I forget what I was doing, but I was on campus near Wheeler Hall—and suddenly it was just like everything was electrified. People were running around. And the newspaper boys by Sather Gate were shouting. And I asked what was going on. Somebody said, “The Japanese have . . . the Japs have bombed Pearl Harbor!” And there was a tremendous undercurrent of excitement everywhere. People were running around and trying to get information.

Then I saw a headline. So I went to Wheeler Hall where I knew my friends, the three of them—Leon Kirschner, Earl Kim, and Len Ralston—were composing. They were working on a chorale which Leonard had written around a Whitman poem. They were working at the two pianos, and they were terribly intent. Earl was a Korean who had lived in Japan and in Honolulu. And I remember walking into the Wheeler Hall auditorium, and they were *way* out at the end, this little group playing the pianos. I said, “Do

you know what happened? Pearl Harbor has been *bombed!*”

They stopped a minute and looked up at me and said, “Oh,” and went back to work! [laughter] I’ll never forget that! It was just absolutely marvelous because they were *so* intent upon what they were doing. “Oh, really?”

Earl was saying, “Oh, well, that’s terrible,” and went back to work. [laughter]

I went out and tried to find some of my other friends, and we sat around talking about it. But I consider that a turning point in the lives of everybody I knew at the time. This was the critical moment and nothing was the same after that. In fact, within *hours*, there were reports of Japanese bombing San Francisco, that subversives and “Japs” were spying and preparing to subvert industry. Everybody *knew* that there were submarines right off the coast patrolling. In fact, Eleanor Roosevelt was coming up with somebody else on a plane from Los Angeles and was told by the pilot that San Francisco was being bombed. [laughter] I mean it was hysteria. It

was an amazing thing, because every time the papers came out, there'd be a new wild story of this kind.

And then the anti-Asian feeling, anti-Japanese feeling, became intensive within days. The "dirty Japs." Some of the epithets were unbelievable.

*Did you know any Japanese people at this time?*

Oh, yes, there was my friend from Fresno (Kyoshi Hamanaka). I didn't know any at Berkeley. There weren't many, and I didn't know any. But I was also corresponding with my pen pal, Francis Motofuji in Honolulu but didn't hear from him for a long time after. We regularly corresponded, and suddenly it stopped after Pearl Harbor. I later found that he just thought that I didn't want to talk to him. But in Honolulu, the Japanese there managed to maintain themselves.

*Have you ever thought it was possible that he might have known some major event was going to take place and that he wanted to get out of California?*

No. It's just that for two or three years there had been a growing anti-foreign feeling. The Germans were treated very well compared to the Japanese. Later on, the German camps were palaces compared to the Japanese camps. But there was a lot of anti-German feeling developing, as well as pro-German feeling—that was part of this whole pre-war gestation.

*But somehow pro-German feeling was more permissible socially on some level than any pro-Japanese sentiment, would you say?*

Oh, yes, there wasn't that much interaction, social interaction, between Japanese

and . . . in fact, in California, they were competitors in the produce and farm market. In fact, I saw figures that the Japanese were responsible for 40 to 50 percent of the fruit and vegetable production in California in those years. With their small farms they were terribly effective farmers, so this also created a lot of animosity and jealousy for non-Asians and whites who saw them as competitors.

They were effective, and they were pretty much to themselves. I suppose they felt they had to. So there was all of that preliminary setting for attitudes about them. And I think in the early 1940s something else was going on. It may have been some kind of registration that had to be done about conscientious objectors.

*It would make sense.*

And that's how Kyoshi, my friend in Fresno who had applied for C.O. status, got picked up and taken east. But the idea that the Japanese saw what was coming and should have moved eastward as Hayakawa said—I think that was probably a general feeling among them.

"We should get out of here because if anything happens, it's going to be very difficult here in California."

And it was. It began just hours after Pearl Harbor. There were attacks upon Japanese farms and households; the people were yelled at; there were the riots about them. Some of them were driven from their houses and their farms. It was a real vigilante kind of an atmosphere. And I remember the idea that San Francisco at any moment was going to be bombed; that we immediately went into lights-out at night, and the whole city was blacked out, because the Japanese were . . .

*How long did that last?*

That lasted all through the war—blackouts—in the coastal cities. Through most of the war, the night blackouts. They may have been lifted at some point. I don't recall when, but as far as I know, blackouts were common in the city. Dim outs, at least; there were dim outs and blackouts. Oh, and that happened almost immediately after 1941. Scurrying around and all sorts of little vigilante groups and neighborhood defense groups searching out subversives, saboteurs. It was wild.

Well, as I remember, on campus, it was like living in never-never land. Suddenly, all of us living in our intellectual ivory towers were faced with the reality of an entirely transformed society, a militarizing society around us. Whereas weeks before, it was fashionable to be anti-military, it now became not only unfashionable but dangerous to be anti-military. I mean, "My god! What kind of a patriot are you"? And "Who do you think you are"? And "What kind of a life have you led where you think that you can live like a parasite off of our society"? And on and on. [laughter] Oh, there was some rough stuff going on. I remember it really hit the campus hard, because almost immediately people . . . young men were signing up; students were signing up for the armed forces then.

*Did any of your friends or people you knew sign up?*

Not immediately. Oh, yes, Watson Lacey did, but he wasn't at Cal; he was at San Jose. And, yes, he did; he volunteered. He was a lot more conservative than I was—wonderful guy, terribly intelligent. But he felt that it's his duty. And I began then this few months of struggle about what it meant to me. I remember feeling that the whole campus and everything that I had been

doing—and others felt this—was an anachronism.

What kind of world do we think we're living in? What was the meaning of anything that we were doing there? There were other sorts of things we should be doing. And I remember reflecting back on the Lincoln Brigade, you know, that, "I wish I had done that; I should have done that," because that at least was a noble cause.

I wasn't sure that this war was a noble cause, though the fact that Pearl Harbor had occurred, Japanese had attacked first, made it very difficult to be opposed to the defensive posture of the United States. Of course, there were right-wingers and isolationists saying that Roosevelt had actually engineered Pearl Harbor in order to get us into the war so that he could help England—you know, this kind of thing.

*So that idea had currency then?*

Oh, I remember hearing it. I don't know how general it was. I mean these things would come up, and much more later during reflections on the war, you'd hear that. But yes, I remember that Roosevelt seemed happy, you know, when he gave that famous speech on the eighth of December, "This is a day that will live in infamy."

And I remember some sort of sarcastic statements like, "And he's happy as a lark," you know. [laughter]

*This is almost a total non-sequitur, but I'm just curious if anyone was aware how debilitated Franklin Roosevelt was during that time from polio.*

To an extent, but the main idea was what a heroic figure he was. There was great admiration for him generally. When anybody

tried to speak against him he was immediately put down because, you know, "What would you do? How could you do something like . . . ?" I remember my mother thought what a courageous, heroic person he was. And he was, you know.

And there was also ambivalence. I mean, my gosh, you can see what was happening. All of a sudden, you know, the world was changing, going through this great internal transformation. And ugliness. Suddenly everything was military.

Uniforms began to appear on campus, and I remember the revulsion I felt and I am sure some others did, "What is going on where we now have the army stationed on the campus, and former students are now in uniform?" There were mixed feelings about this that you felt, "Well, maybe *I* should," and yet on the other hand, "No."

*Well, were you in contact with your parents?*

Yes, but I don't recall what was going on between them. I was so involved in this down where I was.

*But there was nothing . . . you don't remember any exchange with them about what you should do?*

No. Later, when I was really up against that problem, yes. But, no, not at the time. I was doing it pretty much on my own. Then I remember there was a draft. They had the conscription process on campus. And the whole gym—now the Phoebe Hearst gym—that enormous gym was turned over to conscription. I remember the *strange* and peculiar way that it was done. *Hundreds* and hundreds of us—not women, of course, only men—would go in at one end and strip, and you had to leave your clothes there. Then

stark naked, you'd stand for an *hour* in these long, long lines going through various physical exams, that seemed to me to be very inept. And with long lines of others, like a kind of audience standing by watching, you know, and commenting on us as we went through. I mean I remember that as one of the more . . . I was more angry about that than almost anything else. [laughter]

"What a demeaning, dehumanizing thing," I was thinking. "What are they *doing* to us in putting us through this?" But I went through and got my draft status, which was 2-A. But there was one where you didn't have to be drafted.

*As a student?*

Well, you could get out of it for various reasons if you had . . .

*Student deferment was 2-A during Vietnam.*

No, but there was a 2-A and there was 2-B. And I don't know what it was, but 2-F or 4F, [laughter] whatever it was you were not required to go into service. Well, of course, I was the best, you know. [laughter] And so here I was facing draft.

*OK. So you knew you were going to get drafted?*

I knew that something was going to happen of that sort. But how long was not clear. Because it was a matter of your numbers being called. That was a period in the next month or two of tremendous soul searching.

*Did your brother also get . . . ?*

Oh, he was younger, and it was a little later and was a little more orderly. In fact, he volunteered for the air force.

*So he wasn't someone you were in contact with when you were doing your soul searching.*

Not at that time. Later on when he was deciding what to do. And he went into the air force at a rather glorious time during the war—an air force navigator. He was the cream of the crop.

*Flying over his brother. [laughter]*

Yes, with his long silk scarves flying in the wind, you know. [laughter] So I think it was a little later. No, I don't recall having any direct contact about this with my family. I surely did, but I don't recall.

*Because it seems like such a huge thing.*

Yes, well, there was a large crowd of people who were as confused as I was, and we spent a lot of time with each other.

*Were you in contact with the Phillipsborns at this time, too?*

Yes, yes. And a lot of those friends . . . many of them were just leaving, leaving town, because they were drafted and going home to see their families, or volunteering. It was a breakup of a society, really, of campus society. And an *awful lot* of propaganda on campus and a lot of patriotic parades and flag waving and then a lot of anti-foreign feeling and anti-Asian feeling.

*Do you remember the Christmas after that? Did you go home?*

I probably did. I probably did go home. But I don't recall that. I have a feeling that I was pretty much involved down there in Berkeley on the campus with what I was

going to do. I know that I was desperately trying to decide what was best for me to do. Was I going to declare a conscientious objector status? That was one of the main things on my mind.

*Did you have to research that yourself, or was it pretty easy to find out about it?*

Oh, no, you had to do certain things. You had to get declarations that you . . .

*So how did you find out about that? I mean, had you known all along about those alternatives?*

Well, because, other people had done it. I mean Kyoshi had done it earlier. It wasn't something that they would tell you you could do.

Nobody was propagandizing you to become one. But I do recall that I knew about it, and my main feeling was—just like Kyoshi had originally done—"I'm just going to say no. I'm just going to refuse. And then I will be arrested." But actually then I found out that it was very important to have some kind of background, this was not just a way to get out of your draft status, but was something that you had as an orientation a good part of your life, or at least for a few years, which I think I went about doing.

I think I asked my folks to do this for me. I think I asked them. I think my father was willing to, but he thought I was silly to do this, that it was going to get me into a lot of trouble. On the other hand, they couldn't really argue; this is something they *can't* argue against. [laughter] This is their way of looking at the world. On the other hand, there was this *real thing* of the threat to the United States from Germany and from Japan. And that was the hanger. I mean, how did you resolve that?

So I remember I got actually sick thinking about this. I mean I didn't eat; I was feeling terribly lost and deeply troubled. It was one of the more tortured periods of my life. I wasn't afraid of war. I wasn't afraid of the army or the navy. I just felt that my own integrity was involved, that these are the things I believed in, and how was I going to handle that?

*And if you can't live and actualize your beliefs, then what good are your beliefs?*

Yes, and at that age you feel terribly strongly about these things. You're willing to die. And I wasn't alone. I remember a number of people that I knew were going through real trauma about this.

*Were you actually enrolled in classes?*

Yes, I was enrolled. I didn't go. I mean this is early 1942. I think I was enrolled in Greek and Latin, German, because I had to get my language requirements. But I just didn't go. I think the university practically closed down; people weren't going to class. I recall just living around the campus, trying to get my bearings.

And one thing I'd heard about was the ambulance service. This was a period when the British were being attacked in North

Africa. The Germans, I think, had practically taken over North Africa. I'm not sure whether this was the Rommel period or what. Nevertheless, there were ambulance services sending ambulances and personnel independently to north Africa (and I don't think elsewhere). Well, I went to the office—there was one little office in the university—to sign up. You know I was noncombatant, and this was the way I'd do service.

My idea was I certainly didn't want to avoid danger—in fact, the adventure was one of the appeals of it—but that I would not be a combatant.

So I went to sign up, and I got a kind of a consultation with two or three people, and they were taking a sample of blood from me. I remember just getting dizzier and dizzier and dizzier, and fell over; and crawling out the door. They did some blood tests on me and said I was anemic, that I was terribly sick, and that I should eat and see a doctor, and all that sort of thing. And I probably did weigh less than I'd ever weighed in my life at that point, because I was not happy and terribly troubled. So I couldn't get into the Ambulance Corps because of that. And there was an indication of mononucleosis.

So, anyway, that finished the Ambulance Corps thing. And I kept searching around for things like this.



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## THE MERCHANT MARINE

**I** REMEMBER at one point I saw a poster. If the military wonders if the contents of their posters are effective, in situations like this, when people are desperate, they *are* effective! [laughter] And I saw this poster with Uncle Sam pointing and saying, “We need you! Merchant Marine Cadet Corps Training, U.S. Naval Reserve.”

And I thought, “There is shipping. There is noncombatant status.”

I must have done this in January or February. I went to the recruiting office and got papers for the Naval Reserve cadets and signed up. I had to get some letters from people in Modesto who knew me, and there was an acquaintance of my father who had been in the Naval Reserve, and he wrote a glowing letter about me, and I think I signed up as Azevedo rather than d’Azevedo.

I must have been conferring with my folks at that time, too, because I was in Modesto getting these papers. As I remember, I think that they felt that this was a good idea.

*They were probably relieved then.*

Maybe my father, I think, would rather I had gotten into one of the regular services so he could tell his friends that I was in the regular armed forces. But at that time this merchant marine cadet training was the armed services; it was Naval Reserve. It was sort of an adjunct to the regular navy. And so I signed up, and I think within weeks I was on Treasure Island.

*Now, just to clarify for me, this is explicitly a noncombatant branch.*

No, no, they would never say that. I saw it as noncombatant, because I was not supposed to . . . I didn’t think I was going to get military training, or be in situations of direct armed conflict as part of an army or navy situation.

This was a little bit naive on my part because the minute I got to Treasure Island . . . oh, wait a second. Just *during* this period I’d *also* gone to a union hall, the Sailor’s Union of the Pacific, to see if I could just ship out, if I could ship out, because the merchant marine was begging for people to go to sea.

The trouble was, we didn't have enough ships, and there was this great worry that the United States had not kept its merchant fleet up. All the building and the liberty ships followed during the first few years of the war—thousands of ships were made. But, anyway, there was a great drive on to get merchant seamen. And they were assured, you know, they would be part of the armed forces, that they were being considered as doing their duty. In fact, if you went to sea, your draft status was OK, you see. So I tried to do that, but there was just no way for me to get in quickly at that time.

*Because of the shortage of ships?*

A shortage of ships, and it was just at the time the transition was taking place. If I had waited long enough, if I'd hung around, maybe I could have gotten in within a few weeks. But there was a lot of pressure on to do something quickly, as I remember.

I think there was a kind of a deadline; I had been called and all that sort of thing. I had to declare a C.O. status now—and I had thought about that seriously. At the same time I felt, "I'm an anti-fascist." I had the beginning of this kind of political view of what was happening in the world and what the meaning of the war was. Even with my feeling of dissent from American policy, I nevertheless felt this was a legitimate war, if ever a war was. And yet I was a pacifist, and I wanted to be a noncombatant.

Very difficult position to hold because at that time, to be a conscientious objector, you had to declare a very strong, specific religious position, which I couldn't honestly do. I was just a pacifist, you know! [laughter] And it was not until later on that you were able to do something like that—during the Vietnam War. The definition was a little more fuzzy.

So, anyway, I had this attempt to go to sea, and I even went to a little seamen's school, run by this sailors' union. Over a period of three or four weeks, I would go over two or three times a week to learn rope knot tying and . . . .

*Now, where was this?*

This was over on the docks in San Francisco. The sailors' union had this little school for people who wanted to go to sea, but the waiting for ordinary seamen was quite long. This was the end of the Depression, and there were still a lot of guys who wanted to go to sea. The situation was beginning to look good because not only were there jobs, but there was going to be a little raise in the pay and all that sort of thing. For some reason or other I couldn't get on right away.

And then I got accepted in this merchant marine cadet training at Treasure Island. I don't have the dates handy in mind, but it must have been April or May. Suddenly I was on Treasure Island in uniform! [laughter]

*With your hair cut?*

With my hair cut and taking basic training, involving marching and handling a gun but not shooting. So in a sense I could feel that it was noncombatant because there was no pressure about handling arms, but a lot of military discipline. It was intense discipline. And then the classes and training in seamanship—which wasn't very good, because when I first went to sea, I was the dumbest ordinary seaman that ever appeared. So for a number of weeks, we were there getting this basic training. In fact, I got top in the class as a signalman.

*Was that literally flags?*

Yes. I was pretty good at flags, and dot-dash Morse code. I was fairly good at it—I forgot it very quickly. [laughter] But I mean I was good at it at the time, and I was a row-boat man, got a certificate lifeguard and rowboat man.

I began to feel kind of good that I was getting along, but I didn't like the military discipline. Actually it was a very mild kind of military discipline, and we had a congenial bunch of guys.

*Was there anybody you knew?*

Not in the same unit. I was in a completely other world. But I could go back and forth to Berkeley. In fact, I even put out an issue of *New Rejections* while going back and forth from Treasure Island to Berkeley. [laughter] And, you know, I saw a few people who were still left around. San Francisco was nearby, and whenever I had leave, I'd go over to Chinatown for Chinese food and the Chinese opera. [laughter]

Oh, I knew a little bit about seamanship before all this, because the Mollers had a thirty-foot yacht, and I would sail on the bay with them frequently. I was their sailor actually, and they were going to take a trip around the world on this yacht.

It was just before Pearl Harbor, and here I was going out on weekends, and my friend, George Leite, as well. He was with a group that had a small yacht, and he'd been on these yachts before. And so here we were sailing on the bay and going to these yachting regattas, where all these drunken yacht owners, small yacht owners, would go out to Angel Island.

There was a sort of a resort area there, and I remember one night, a big bash of hundreds of drunken people—*absolutely* sloshing drunk—with their boats all anchored outside

with guys like me to keep the boats from bumping into each other and all that.

But George and I had gone in, and he got terribly drunk, and I said, "You better get back to the *Carlita*" (our yacht). And George couldn't move but he had to go back to his yacht. So I had to carry him out, and then he started a fight with some people on the docks, some guys, and about five of them jumped on him. They were beating him up and almost beat his head to a pulp. I was fighting, too, trying to fight them off, and finally they left, and I dragged the drunken, battered George onto the boat that went out to the yachts, and took him home. [laughter] So I learned something about seamanship!

*Not how to tie knots! [laughter]*

How to not get too drunk, so I could take care of the drunks. Nevertheless, I did have a little experience, but it wasn't enough. So, anyway, that four or five weeks at Treasure Island was the prelude to be put on a merchant ship as a cadet, an officer-in-training cadet. This bothered me. I didn't like that role. I didn't like the funny caps . . . .

*I just have to interject here because I don't understand the relationship at this point between the merchant marines, the merchant seamen that you'd initially wanted to ship out with, and the military merchant marines.*

Good question. It was a wartime thing. There was merchant marine, which was based upon either union or non-union labor, that carried the merchant trade throughout the world and United States. And that was still there.

*But this was private enterprise.*

Well, the ship owners, yes. The war shipping administration took over a lot of ships from companies and gave them great subsidies. But there was a lot of political conflict about what the role of the unions would be.

In Congress, they wanted to militarize the seamen, and that had nothing to do with this Cadet Corps. Their idea was to create a merchant marine corps, a seamen's corps connected with the navy to run the merchant ships. Well, the unions put up enough of a struggle to stop it.

Nevertheless, that was always there, that tension between the old working class unions of seamen and the navy. There'd always been that tension with them, you know—the idea that the navy was going to take over merchant ships. Well, by that time the CIO and the NMU [National Maritime Union] were pretty active.

They had taken a position in Congress. “You are going to destroy the American merchant marine if you do this, because they know how to run the ships, and the navy can't run our kind of ships, and we can do ten times more work.” Oh, that wonderful line we used to have, looking at a navy ship near us when we were docked, where there were ten guys pulling on one line, and our ship had one! And we'd be pulling on a line and saying, “Hey, you guys! How about sending a few of yours over here!” [laughter]

But the Naval Reserve marine training program was for officers on merchant ships during the war. They needed more officers. There weren't enough officers—Masters, Mates and Pilots. We used to call them “masturbating pilots.” [laughter] So their union was overwhelmed by the demands of new shipping and things that had to be done in the war.

*But prior to the war, had there been naval officers on merchant ships?*

No, but a lot of naval officers in retirement went into the merchant marine. But it wasn't a formal relationship, no. There were a lot of people who had been in the navy in the merchant marines.

*So World War II kind of . . . I mean this is a new thing you were . . . .*

A new thing altogether. The idea was to train officers for merchant ships because you had to have trained people running these ships. The unions weren't doing it. The Masters, Mates and Pilots couldn't do it all. They were even for this program because they couldn't supply enough men for the ships.

So that's what I got in to begin with, was this cadet training program. It actually was a good period, because I got acclimated to the whole milieu of the war and what was happening.

And yet I was able to maintain some connections with the people I knew and the life that I had known.

*As part of your boot camp, was there political indoctrination or sort of an attitude check on your patriotism?*

Not at that point. Well, I think we had to take oaths of allegiance and all that sort of thing, but I don't recall that there were very many of these things. Right there at that time, the idea was get people in and trained, and get them out of here, you see.

You had to be a Japanese or something to be really looked upon with suspicion. No, I didn't have any trouble of that kind then.

That came after I left the outfit and went into a union.



ON THE *BRET HARTE*

**W**ITHIN A FEW weeks—and I'm not sure just what the dates are—I got my marching orders, as did all the others of that particular contingent. We were assigned to various ships up along the coast, or in fact, all over the country, and we were to go in as junior officer cadets, the lowest of the low.

For my first assignment, I was sent with my shipping orders to the *Bret Harte* and Captain Rogenes, that wonderful old man. He was a real fatherly captain.

The *Bret Harte* was a new liberty ship. A few had already been turned out. They came out so fast, like popping out of ovens.

Anyway, I remember going out, extremely timid and worried about what I would find, to what seemed to me an enormous ship, a brand-new, sleek, and shiny liberty ship. They weren't really very well built, but they did their job. And I went aboard. I had my first taste at sea as a junior officer. I was shown up to the room I was going to stay in. I had a sidekick—an American-German guy. What was his name? [Schuller] Big, heavy-set guy who was sent up with me. He came up later,

and the two of us had a fo'c's'le together, an officer's fo'c's'le. And he was a very, dutiful, hard-working, serious guy. He had learned to navigate and do engine room work very quickly, and in fact . . .

*What's a fo'c's'le?*

A fo'c's'le is a forecastle. The officers had staterooms. It's a little room that you live in. That's your bunk. [laughter] It used to be in the forecastle area of a ship. The fo'c's'le was one of the places you lived in. You went to your fo'c's'le.

So I went up there. It was a nice, little, a very small six-by-eight room with two bunks and desk and all that, and quite new, spanking-new. It just seemed to me like, "Is this where I'm going to live now?"

But that was awful. I didn't meet anybody, and the crew was looking askance, crew down there working on deck, and looking up at me, "Oh, here's another one of those gazoonies coming aboard." I had this feeling of being in the wrong camp, you know, that I should be down there learning what they're doing.

With my seabag opened up, I got settled in this room and then was told to go see the captain. And I met this *marvelous* old man, Captain Rogenes—a small, sweet-faced, calm, quiet, little man. And he greeted me; it was like Santa Claus! [laughter] He greeted me, didn't tell me to sit down, let me stand, told me what my duties would be—that I'd have to go with the first mate in the morning, certainly when we left dock I would be in the wheel house, and watching what's going on, and I'd go out with the second mate and take some sightings as we left the dock.

*Sightings of what?*

Well, for position. And if the sky was clear enough, navigation with a sextant; you go out with a sextant. I never did learn to adequately navigate with a sextant.

*Oh, you didn't?*

I tried. I learned to do it, but I never could do it well.

*You didn't trust your own . . . ?*

Well, it's not that. I could never get the figures right! [laughter] I didn't apply myself that much. Then I was to go with the mate down on deck and watch the men work while he gave orders, and I was to meet the bosun, and all that. That was one of the more embarrassing, humiliating experiences in my life, to go down on deck in my little monkey suit and my hat, with these hard-working seamen.

And doing the job of overseeing, while they wonder, "Who is this character? What's he up to?" Then I was told that at various points along the way I was to put on my dungarees and go down with the crew where the bosun would put me to work with the crew



*"That was one of the more embarrassing, humiliating experiences in my life, to go down on deck and be in my little monkey suit and my hat, with these hard-working seamen."* Warren in his cadet uniform.

just so I could learn. [laughter] Oh, my god, it was so awful! I mean when I look back, the terror and humiliation of it, because when I . . . I cannot stand even to look back. I remember the day that we left, I was to put on my dungarees and go down and work with the men. And the bosun was a *big*, hefty, brawling kind of Irishman. Well, he didn't treat me badly, but he treated me with a kind of contempt. [laughter]

*That you probably felt you deserved . . . .*  
[laughter]

It's like, "What am I going to do with this character? What can I do with him?"



The rigging totally confounded me. You know, the booms would be out, and you had to bring them in and purchase them, get them secured for sea. You had to put the hatch covers on and then put the canvas on, and all these long steel girders that you had to belay in with the wood. Well, I would watch this process, and I would try to get in, but they'd just kick me out of the way. I was just like a lump of clay being pushed from one place to the other.

I felt utterly useless, and I was, with the bosun yelling at me, "Hey! Hey, Daz!" (That's where I began to be called "Daz,"—instead of d'Azevedo, "Daz" or "Whitey" sometimes.) "Hey, hey! Just stand over there!"

It was just awful the first few days I spent like that. Rather than up in the wheel house or in the chart room doing the job I was supposed to be learning up there, I began to spend my time down in the mess room with the crew and on deck watching and learning. There's where I felt the challenge. I felt I *had* to conquer *that*.

By the time that trip was over, I was a pretty good ordinary seaman. I knew my way around deck; I knew where to stow the lines; and I knew how to handle purchase; and I could climb the rigging, and even do look-out. *That's* what I wanted to do.

*So did these liberty ships have sails?*

No, but you've got booms because you're loading cargo. You've got all these purchase lines out. You know, the booms had to go over the side onto the dock, and you got winches that bring the cargo up and take it back. It's a pretty complicated bunch of material that you work with, and so you learn it. It's a spider web; you have no idea where you are sometimes.

*But were you doing what you were supposed to do?*

Well, I was doing a little more of that than I was supposed to be doing. On the other hand, nobody stopped me because the officers didn't give a damn; they didn't care whether I'd pass my exams when I got back to port or not. Their view was as long as I was doing something that was useful, it was all right.

I got very friendly with the crew. I remember when we took off—that horrible two or three days I was getting acclimated—I was out on the bridge with the first and second mates as we're leaving the dock, and I was watching the whole process. That fascinated me—leaving the docks and letting the lines go, watching the way lines were rolled up and made fast for sea, and how all of those booms had to be in and in their cradles and tightened, made secure for sea. That was what I was watching all the time I was supposed to be watching the first and second mates do their duty, so that I could take over. [laughter] Somehow that just didn't interest me. I also was very interested in being able to handle the wheel in the wheel house, like a good seaman is supposed to do, because all seamen took turns there.

*I always thought the officer . . .*

Oh, no. Officers never touched the wheel. [laughter] You went up on your watch. You put in your four-hour watch, you put in an hour or an hour and a half at the wheel.

*So you actually handled the wheel?*

Actually steered the damn ship.

*Oh, that's great! I didn't know that!*

Oh, yes! That's part of your duties as a seaman, as a naval seaman. And even the ordinary seamen had to learn that. You take orders; the mates, the skipper are yelling orders at you—a hard right or three degrees left, that sort of thing. But you do it. Oh, that part fascinated me, too. But all the business of cargo, and stowing cargo in the hold, all of the records that had to go into the log about this or that and the other thing—I *did* some of that, but I wish I had done more.

*Where were you going?*

Well, we didn't know. Nobody told you anything. You were way out at sea before you knew where you were going, and we were three or four days out before we learned that we were going to Australia. And that was my first trip, down to Aussie land.

*Were you excited about going to Australia?*

Oh! I was excited about being at *sea*. Oh, yes. In fact, we also went to the South Seas and everything, but the fact that we were going to Australia, yes, I had never intended to go there, but, my god, you know, Australia!

And, of course, we were on sub alert as soon as we got out of Seattle. We were convoyed for a short distance, about two days. The convoy was going further east, and we went part ways with them.

*That was an escort of military ships?*

Well, also other ships, and some were navy, but groups of ships. And then we were on our own.

Also, all liberty ships at that time had gun crews. We had a navy gun crew—that is, a gun aft and a gun fore. What were they? Thirty millimeter, fifty millimeter? There was

a gun crew of about twenty guys on almost every ship during the war.

So we were on our own as we left this convoy, and I had to put in my time in the program like everybody else, and I liked that. I liked anything that made me feel like part of that group down below. That was terribly important. I had a peculiar bias. [laughter]

I was ashamed of being an officer. Strange thing. That's a strange business, where that came from. After the first two or three days, I began to feel a little less humiliated by my ineptitude.

*Did you get seasick at all?*

Never.

*Was it ever very rough?*

Well, I was on the verge of it, but I learned very early by being on a small boat, what you do about seasickness. I knew how to hold myself, and I never would eat for the first day out. I never would eat a damn thing.

*That's a good idea.*

Yes. Well, it was told to me by people who were supposed to know. [laughter] And always to be alert about the position of your body in relation to the ship—that you would never go with the ship. You never sit and allow yourself to move with the ship. But you always had to move . . . if the ship's going this way, you move that way. [opposite] You always keep yourself erect in relation to gravity, and that process somehow keeps you from that nauseating feeling of swimming and vertigo.

*Oh, did you ever learn to swim? I mean as part of your training?*

Yes. I always was a swimmer. But, yes, they had swimming training at Treasure Island, and life boat drill.

*I also wanted to ask you what books you took in your seabag?*

I don't know if I took any on that first trip, but every trip thereafter I had one bag that had tons of books. If I can remember what they were. [laughter]

No, that first trip I was too involved in just getting along, and not knowing what was expected that I should have with me on a ship and all that. I took only what I was told, and just bare necessities in one seabag. But then later on, I was taking two or three seabags.

*So you were told to take only one seabag?*

No, but whatever it was, it was sort of the standard equipment that you keep with you. I might have had a few other things that I don't remember. I know I had writing pads; I did a lot of writing on that trip and a journal.

*Yes, you weren't taking your [music] records yet?*

No. I had a journal on that trip. A very naive journal I wrote on that one. I was very patriotic and very much the doing-the-right-kind-of-guy, which I didn't feel. I felt it, but it wasn't deep. It was something that was part of the patina of the whole thing, the excitement of going to sea. However, it wasn't the way I *wanted* to do it, you know. But, nevertheless, I was there. And before that trip was over, I was not only a seaman, but I knew exactly what kind of seaman I wanted to be, and I was getting along very well with crew.

The *Bret Harte*, was a liberty ship, one of those early liberty ships. In fact, it was one of the first that had been built. And we were heading south. And now I recall that when the ship was in San Francisco, it'd come down from Seattle and Portland. In fact, as I remember now, I and my fellow cadet, Schuller, had missed the ship in Portland. We were sent up to Portland. It wasn't our fault. The ship had left earlier than our papers had told us, and then we had to come back and get the ship in San Francisco. The ship loaded at a couple of docks in San Francisco, then went over to Oakland and loaded on some more materials. As a cadet—I was the deck cadet, and Schuller was the engine cadet—I had to help the mates, the first mate in particular, work on the cargo inventory.

And it's there that I got a hint of where we might be going, because many of the crates were labeled "Sydney" and "Melbourne," et cetera. And, therefore, it was quite clear that that's where we were heading. However, there were supposed to be *very* strict rules during that period about knowing anything about your cargo or where you were going. I remember myself and the mates being rather disturbed that we were allowed to see where the material was going and that it had been so plainly marked. Because at that time, of course, everybody was very concerned about submarines; and there were daily reports of sinkings in the Pacific.

In fact, San Francisco and the Bay Area, all the cities on the coast and all the inland towns, were practically in a state of siege at that time, with the blackouts, and concern about Japanese attacks. Rumors were horrendous and fictional and highly exaggerated about the possibility of Japanese attack upon the coast. Sightings of submarines off of the coast were made all the time by people who either lived on the coast or were driving along

the highways, and suddenly—it was like flying saucers—they saw a submarine and they would report it and everybody would get very excited.

Nevertheless, for people like ourselves going to sea, and me for the first time, it was a real source of worry about how far out of the Golden Gate could we get before we saw a sub or were attacked by one. And, also, that wonderful slogan, “Loose lips sink ships,” was posted everywhere.

All of us were keyed to that and were very concerned about it. Watching the cargo being loaded and seeing these marks of Melbourne and Sydney, I remember the captain expertly and judiciously saying, “Oh, well, that’s to deceive us. We’re not going there. We’re going somewhere else. They wouldn’t do that.” And, of course, he knew all the time where we were going. [laughter] He was probably very upset that we had gotten this hint. So he said, “No, I haven’t gotten my papers yet. I haven’t gotten my directives, and they wouldn’t do this. This is the way they keep people guessing.”

*So this is your first experience with misinformation?*

It was my first experience with the stupidity and the lack of organization going on! [laughter] That awareness grew all during the war. I was aware of, in the first place, the *amazing* amount of organization it took to do just what was being done—across the Atlantic and across the Pacific in the war. The fact that anything was being done, considering the lack of experience that people had, on the one hand, was amazing and remarkable. But on the other hand, there were goofs and problems in organization and directives that in some cases made you feel that

you were in a position of great danger, and we were.

But, anyway, we got loaded, and I didn’t have a chance to go ashore to say good-bye to people. That was the period, of course, the newspapers were loaded with reports of the war in Europe. I think that was the period in which the British were being driven back by Rommel in North Africa. And in 1942 the British finally were able to drive the Germans back in North Africa. But, also, the Germans were pushing on Stalingrad and had pretty much overrun most of eastern Europe and were pressing on France. For most people, that was a very upsetting period when a lot of Americans thought that we were really, for the first time, in jeopardy; that the United States, though not getting involved in a large-scale world war, was in danger of attack itself, which was an unusual experience, I think, for most Americans to think that was possible. So the paranoia and hysteria was sometimes extreme, like on the West Coast, in particular, about Japanese submarines and Japanese attack.

*Is that pretty credible? I mean did you personally acknowledge or live with the idea that the Japanese could actually invade the West Coast?*

I think most of us didn’t know. All you had was the media and rumor. And at the same time some of us felt there were a lot of exaggerated reports and that we wanted to be cool and not appear to be too worried. So we would always say, “Well, let’s wait and see.” I think that somebody woke up early and saw some lights someplace in the ocean or saw an accidental light on a fishing boat, and that becomes a submarine. I remember all these back and forth controversies. And,

of course, seamen and people in the armed services were supposed to be very cool about these things and not take too much too seriously. Nevertheless, that was the atmosphere. The atmosphere was one of being on the verge . . . .

*And you also said that there was a lot in the papers about the war with Europe.*

Well, because that was the main one, in the . . . .

*But not in the Pacific.*

Well, yes. The Pacific was just heating up. Pearl Harbor had taken place, and, you know, the Japanese had become a very serious threat. But at the same time, the war in Europe got most of the attention, except on the West Coast where what was happening in the Pacific was important. Nevertheless, that was the period in which the United States and England and France were having a great deal of difficulty with the Germans. The Germans were moving in all directions. It was very clear that they were planning to invade the whole of Europe and even England.

And then the fact that Russia was now attacked put another level on it. We were suddenly becoming friends with the Soviet Union. That registered on a lot of people. I remember even my parents—not only my parents, but that world of people in which my parents lived and who were very conservative politically, and yet to some degree knowledgeable—they had been very *anti-Soviet*. Suddenly there was this whole new picture where we had to look upon them as allies. And it created confused atmosphere about who were the good guys in world and who were the bad guys? The Soviet Union

began to be among the good guys—“Uncle Joe Stalin” and all that sort of thing was going on. [laughter]

And, of course, for the Left, which I wasn’t too involved in at that time it was a major shift. I knew people in it, but I wasn’t myself part of any movement and I hardly knew what the Communist Party was, except that it existed. I’d been reading on socialist relations at the Twentieth Century Bookstore, et cetera.

Nevertheless, I didn’t see it as part of my own orientation, excepting in a general, social sense. I was very pro-socialist, pro-Soviet Union; angry when I’d hear people talk about “commies” and all that sort of thing. Because I felt that this was an extremely advanced, progressive orientation in the world.

*When you say that your parents’ generation and the world that they moved in were primarily pretty conservative up until this point during World War II . . . .*

By conservative, I mean they would represent conservative American opinion, except they weren’t necessarily right wing.

*Well, was conservative American opinion at that time sympathetic to the overthrowing the czar and czarina? I mean was that part of it?*

Oh, no. No, no. No, they weren’t sympathetic at all. The so-called Bolshevik revolution was an anathema that had bred the wave of communist influence around the world.

*Well, and bred anarchy and . . . .*

Anarchism, and as I was beginning to learn, the IWW and the great wave of strikes and movement among labor in the 1920s and

1930s—all this—created some division of opinion in American society, and it *remained*; it's still here, still with us. People took sides, and I would say most ordinary, average American people were anti-communist, anti-Soviet, and felt that our values and way of life were threatened by these movements elsewhere in the world.

That would be up until the time when Germany attacked the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union became an ally of ours. And then, I would say rather quickly, people who had been anti-communist, anti-Soviet, were on the defensive. And that I found fascinating, a very fascinating turn in American life.

*Well, were you conscious of it at the time, or are you talking about something you thought about in retrospect?*

No, I was conscious of it happening, but I wasn't particularly partisan, and I wasn't politically oriented to the far Left. However, I felt sympathetic to those views. I felt that this was really the answer to fascism. I was, in a sense, a kind of unread and unskilled socialist. I just felt that that was the way society was moving and should be—the only really effective answer to fascism.

And, of course, a lot of the commentary was that the far Left and the far Right really meet and are one, you know. But, oh, very early I knew that wasn't so. The far Left, with all the mistakes it might make and all of the effects of contemporary society upon them—that would be the Soviet Union and the socialist-oriented countries—that they nevertheless represented something *opposed* to the kind of atrocities, the kind of elite-centered organization of the fascists. National socialism, to me, expressed it. National socialism meant the control of society within quotes "socialism," under the guidance of the

wealthy, under the guidance of great corporations, of the elite of a society. Whereas socialism, ideally, was not that.

See, this was very important now when I look back. I hadn't thought all this through. I just had as an emotional acceptance of the idea of socialism. I think I had a socialist orientation ingrained in me. I still am a socialist. I still believe something like that has got to take place in the human condition of this planet if we are to survive.

*In the society.*

Yes. And, you know, without *that*, the alternatives are horrendous and in a sense almost predictable. [laughter] So I've always felt that way. And that wasn't new for me at the time, excepting what was happening in the world confirmed certain assumptions I already had.

So I began to have this positive view of the Soviet Union as at least the standard bearer of a socialist orientation in society, and only later became aware of how it had deteriorated within. Nevertheless, that didn't change my view that that way of looking at the world and that sort of social relationship was and is the most positive one that our society, the Western civilization, has known.

*Is Chinese communism in the picture at this point at all?*

Not really yet. That was really a post-war phenomenon.

Nevertheless, things were going on that we didn't know about, you know. [laughter] And then Japan had moved into China very early. But somehow or other the resistance to the Japanese and what was really going on in Chinese society, I wasn't aware of at the time.

*Right. Well, I'm not sure anybody . . . . I don't think it was part the . . . .*

Well, some people may have, but I didn't.

*Yes. But I mean it wasn't in the papers like . . . .*

It wasn't a general concern. China was that great big, spacious, populous area of the world that the Japanese were moving into and threatening to take over. They also threatened to interfere with our trade and our activities in the Far East; and were making it very difficult for us to develop a fully confident strategy in the war.

*Do you think even then, though, that people might have had—and this might have been an unconscious trend in the general media—more identification with atrocities against Europeans because of our European orientation and the dominant political and social scene then, and that the Japanese were messing with the Chinese and . . . ?*

That's very true. Particularly in the area that I grew up in on the West Coast. You know, the idea was, "A plague on all their houses." On the other hand, there was a kind of a sympathy for the poor Chinese peasants who were being overrun by these wicked Japanese.

My understanding and feelings about the role of the Japanese as Asians was affected by my relationships with Japanese friends that I had at school and what had happened to them in the first stages of the war. So there was in me a feeling of sympathy, not for the Japanese regime as it was developed during that period, and certainly not the military aspect of Japan, but certainly a feeling that the Japanese *might* have had some sort of justification in the feeling that their need to

expand, their need to develop, was being overlooked by the Western world.

I was anti-the Japanese military and anti-the Japanese government, certainly when they made their alliance with Germany. I mean, this was a very serious thing for it meant that they had joined in a fascist contract with Germany. But that wasn't the only thing. Later on, when I actually got to Japan almost at the very end of the war and after I had met my Japanese friends in Honolulu I was almost equally critical at that point of the United States and the West for its role in Asia as I was of the Japanese. Then there was Hiroshima! But *no one* could overlook the kind of atrocities the Japanese and the Japanese military were involved in.

The kind of theocratic orientation of the Japanese government and the role of the emperor, et cetera, were things that I began to think about more seriously later on. But at this point, the Japanese were a threat *directly* in terms of ships being sunk in the Pacific, as far as I was concerned, and to the seamen that I was with on the ships.

So we left San Francisco. As I've already said, we got through outside the Golden Gate, and there were a number of sightings of what were thought to be submarines. When I was on the crow's nest one day . . . and I remember that wonderful feeling of swaying back and forth on a watch for two or three hours.

*Was it during the day?*

It was day and night. As a cadet I didn't have a regular crow's nest watch, but sometimes if there was something special for the crew to do, I'd be asked to put in time on the crow's nest. And to me it was an absolutely remarkable experience.

*Did it bother you at all climbing it, or did you just . . . ?*

Yes, but I loved it. I took to climbing the rigging very quickly. I didn't do it very well at first; I was a stumblebum at sea for at least that trip. I learned the hard way. But I remember that day making a report to the bridge. You had a little buzzer that you could report to the bridge.

*Oh, from the crow's nest?*

From the crow's nest. I reported that I had seen this object. It was early in the morning—I guess it was dawn—and I'd seen this object skimming along some distance from us that looked to me like the periscope of a sub. I reported it, and I remember that the order went around throughout the ship, "Not one light, not one match, and the portholes down." It was terrible at night because the ships are very hot, and the engine room turns out a great deal of heat. And when you have the portholes down, particularly in the tropics, it can be deadly.

So my report called all the portholes down. The guys had to be awakened and drop their portholes shut, because even an accidental match—all that sort of thing might attract a sub, or let them know exactly where you were. We never confirmed that sighting, but I was praised for reporting it, and the captain had seen it. That was the good thing; otherwise, I'd have been up the proverbial creek. The captain had seen something he thought probably was a porpoise even though that wasn't the area where you expect them. Or it might have been a whale. But we didn't see anything again till later. We got many sub reports later. And there were reports of sinkings along the Northwest Coast up into

the Aleutians. And ships were being sunk around Australia and the Solomon Islands.

*Now at this point you're not part of a convoy?*

We were not convoyed this trip. Another thing that worried us: we were sent out all alone. [laughter] Lonely little ship, the *Bret Harte*. And I remember Captain Rogenes, this fine, old man, saying on the bridge one day, "Well," he said, "all my friends," (meaning his skipper friends on other ships) "are in convoys. And here I am an old man, a lonely, old man, out on this new tin bucket liberty ship and with no convoy." He said, "It wouldn't take a bomb; a torpedo could get us with just a good blow."

It wasn't because there just weren't enough naval ships, and it depends on where you were going. Convoys had to be pulled together, and there had to be an organization of all the plans of the navy in the area. If there weren't a few small destroyers available, or other ships weren't ready to go, you went out alone.

*Well, do you think, also, maybe whatever was going to Australia wasn't as high a priority as . . . ?*

It was fairly high priority because all of the materials, the cargoes, were being funneled through New Zealand and Australia and the South Pacific islands for all the impending problems that we knew we were having in the Solomons. There were many ships going down. We just didn't happen to be at the time when enough ships were together to go, and there were navy ships ready to patrol. There also was the view of some people that sometimes it's better not to go in convoy; you're not as likely to be seen. Never-



theless, destroyers running around on the outside like little guard dogs, sheep dogs, were nice to have. Well, one did have a sense of security later on when we were convoyed. You're in a convoy, fifteen to twenty ships; I mean the feeling was sometimes, well, maybe they'll get a couple of ships, but it won't be you.

*Like a school of fish. [laughter]*

Like a school of fish. Yes. One takes the hook, and the others get away, or any animals that flock together. Deer and ungulates, crowding together and running, being chased by carnivores, and only one of them is got. And they stop and look and watch and say, "Oh, it wasn't me!" [laughter] So there was something of that feeling.



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## POLITICS ON THE HIGH SEAS

**T**HAT TRIP DOWN was my first experience being on a ship, and now I think it's rather important, as I reflect on it, that when I'd gone into this maritime cadet school at Treasure Island with the idea that this was going to the merchant marine, it really had not dawned on me that I was in a kind of officers' corps, an elite corps, and that when I got on the ships, I was going to be with the officers. Well, I learned it that first trip, and it had a great impact on me. I really was more interested in talking to and living among the crew than I was with the rather stuffy officers' mess.

*Was the crew generally more ethnically diverse?*

The officers were not. The officers on most of the ships that I was on were almost entirely Caucasian. But yes, the crew on that first ship was white; and this is where I began to learn about the difference between unions and a union orientation.

The crew that I was with was from the Sailors Union of the Pacific, and the Sailors Union of the Pacific had halls in most of the

ports on the West Coast. And because the crew that I first worked with was essentially SUP, that was *the* seamen's union to me. I wasn't really aware of the National Maritime Union, the CIO union. I was aware of it, but it was fairly new. It wasn't until in the late 1930s that the National Maritime Union had come forward as an important seamen's union and had a hall on the West Coast. But somehow or other the Sailors Union of the Pacific was what I knew about. It was the older union that'd been there a long time.

The crew of the first ship I went on was all white. The deck gang was all white. The steward's gang was mostly black and some Hispanic, some Filipino. The black gang was mostly white; "black gang" is the engine crew. This was the old division of ethnic groups on ships and in the unions up to that time.

Only later did I learn, through the kind of literature that came aboard our ship or that I saw in ports that the National Maritime Union was this new, progressive union that was calling for the end of discrimination and for integration on their ships. It was the source of a great deal of contention even the

first ship that I was on, in which the word “nigger” was commonly used. The idea of any kind of mixing of the crew was considered to be against *all* of the values and the laws of the sea. [laughter] You know, “How could you bunk with a nigger?” and all that sort of thing. This bothered me a great deal, and had a great impact on me at that time, because I was thinking about what this meant in terms of the war and the future. And I, of course—not at that time but a little later on other ships—was reading NMU literature, which was *very* left wing. The NMU was not led by, but had a great number of active members of, the Communist Party. It was considered the “red” union.

*Hot beds!* [laughter]

It was a red-hot union. But it took me a while to get fully aware of that. I mean, I wasn't that politically savvy at the time, but I was socially oriented in terms of learning a lot about what was going on, not only in the world, but just among average people. I spent all my spare time with the crew rather than studying and reading and doing my assignments for the cadet corps that I was supposed to do, in order to be elevated to the next grade—from cadet to something else. When we got back to the States we were to have all of these lessons done on seamanship and navigation and so on. Well, I sort of ignored those completely, and I spent most of my time with the crew! I ate with them if I could.

I remember the captain and first mate admonished me a few times, saying, “You know, ‘D’ . . . “ (I think I was known as “D” on that ship. There were a number of ships I was both “D” or “Dee”—“d’Azevedo”, nobody could say that—or “Daz.” [laughter] And also “Whitey.” For some reason or other I was referred to as “Whitey.” I guess I was

blonder in those days.) But, nevertheless, I remember the captain talking to me in a very fatherly way . . . he was the only fatherly captain I sailed with. All the rest were absolute bastards. [laughter] No, not all—some—just most of them were. But he was a very kindly, old-time sea captain, who'd been to sea on sailing ships, very tolerant and very easy going, and he said, “You know, D, after all you are a cadet, and you're supposed to be up here with the officers. You're supposed to be learning the manners, behavior, and the knowledge of seamanship up here on the bridge. And your stateroom is not a fo'c's'le up here.” [laughter] And this again was that kind of rebelliousness that I had in those days; maybe still do in some ways.

I felt much more identified with the motley bunch of the deck gang, the steward's gang, which was mostly black, and the black gang, the engine crew. And whenever I got the chance I would go down to the mess with them or hang around the mess hall. I was fascinated because these were people of a kind that I had seldom had any connections with. It was all new to me. I have notebooks, scribbled notebooks that I find I still have—almost unreadable. But these notebooks are just loaded with observations about the things they would say. To me, wonderfully fascinating, eloquent cussing and scatology, which to me was not necessarily new in content but new in its marvelous inventiveness. I mean, I can still remember some of them, but I don't think it appropriate for me to repeat them here. [laughter]

Anyway, to me it was beautiful language. I was interested in language; I was interested in writing. And I remember telling a shipmate of mine somewhere later in my sailing, that—he was also a person who was writing—“The language is Chaucerian, you know; [laughter] it's marvelous; it's classic. It's a clas-

sic and wonderful language.” And I was taken up with this.

I remember writing notebooks full of observations about not only what people said and did in their lives, where they’d come from and how they had gone to sea, and what they were doing now—but their language, the way they talked. And now all that’s old hat. I mean everybody would be familiar with some of the richly larded and brilliant observations, particularly of people, you know, a crew of thirty, forty people over a period of weeks or months.

There’s a tremendous amount of interchange and of openness about their lives. And the boredom stimulates one to create, to fictionalize, not only their own lives, but the situation, to elaborate verbally on what they think and do. To me that was a highly stimulating period.

Well, for example, I’m thinking of Sparks. Sparks would be the name we always gave the radio operators on the ships. The Sparks were usually, in all the ships I was on, strange guys. They were the intellectuals, or at least they were the technicians. They knew something very, very special, like how to run a ship’s radio and how to communicate. And they’re the ones you got news from, because they could pick up short wave, and they’d tell us what was going on in the world. And so we’d hang around the radio operator’s quarters—the “radio shack,” is how we referred to it.

*Was that common parlance? I mean, the “radio shack”?*

Oh, the radio shack? Oh, yes, “the shack”, “up in the shack”, and “Sparks works in the shack”, yes.

I remember the Sparks on this first ship that I was on. One time in the mess room he

blew up at one of the seaman, one of the A.B.’s . . . I was just a cadet. And as I say, I always felt I wanted to be an A.B., an able seaman, working on deck, not a guy who went ashore in the monkey suit I had to wear. I was *ashamed* of my uniform. But I should say, [laughter] I wore it with a certain pride when I went home, because of my parents and their set. People they knew were impressed by it, but I personally felt awkward in it. And particularly at sea, I *didn’t* want to wear it. And all I had other than that were dungarees that had been issued me. And the dungarees is what I wanted to wear all the time! [laughter] But when ashore, I was ordered to wear my uniform, and that spoiled so much of my shore leave for me, to go ashore . . .

*It was probably meant to! [laughter]*

. . . to go ashore with a crew or to see the crew ashore and to be wearing this damned outfit. I remember getting a hotel one time later in Melbourne and going and buying an old pair of pants and shirt, wearing that ashore, but putting on my uniform to go back to the ship.

Nevertheless, as I said Sparks was down there in the mess room, and the ship made a tremendous roll; had been hit by a very large wave. I would say we tipped forty-five degrees, and when that happens, of course, *everything* falls off the tables and out of the racks. The mess room was a total mess, because the mess men had laid out some dishes and cups and things like that, and everything crashed to the floor. And one of these A.B.’s, an old guy, bursts out laughing. He thought it was the funniest thing in the world. He was screaming with laughter and pounding the table. And Sparks yelled—a little guy. Sparks was really a little, skinny guy with a long hawk nose and beady eyes, and intense and intel-

lectual. And he *pounded* the A.B. and yelled, “*Shut up! Shut up!* Goddamn it, you bastard! It’s people like you who are ruining the world! What’s funny about things that the human ingenuity and human effort has created being *destroyed!*” And he gave a speech about how the world was going . . . “If this goes on and people like *you* are in the majority, the world is going to hell! But it’s people like *me* . . . the more of us there are, people like you will die off like *weeds!*” This *wonderful* speech! He *pounded* the table, and he went back to the radio shack, and we were all very impressed! [laughter] We sat there quite impressed.

*Well, do you think his status gave him a little more free reign; he could get away with that?*

No, it wasn’t necessarily status. It was just that he made a point, and we were impressed by it. There were a lot of these kind of people, constantly preaching and yelling to each other and calling . . .

*And that was permitted? I mean it didn’t cause a fight or . . . ?*

It depends. Oh, it might, but it didn’t, because everybody felt that he was right! [laughter] He was basically right! And it was a mess. *Everything* was . . .

*Well, sometimes that makes people madder, though, the righter you are.*

Well, somehow it came off; it came off. And he was such a funny little guy anyway that nobody would want to hurt him. And you just listened. He had us all sort of back on our heels. Nobody wanted to laugh about that anymore. In fact, it’s very much a part of a pattern. There were a lot of men on early

ships that I was on, particularly the SUP ships, a lot of the older sailors who had been Wobblies, had been IWW members way back in the 1920s, or even earlier; some of them were old enough to have been . . .

*Are Wobblies the term for IWW?*

IWW, International Workers of the World. And they and the early SIU, Seamen’s International Union, were one of the first national seamen’s unions which eventually became extremely conservative and reactionary. The CIO, in a sense, grew out of the National Maritime Union, out of reaction against the Seamen’s International Union. But they had been, at an early stage, very radical with an anarchistic orientation among the workers of those unions. The Wobblies were in a sense anarchist. I guess they were anarchists, against all big business, against all centralized control. You know, everybody should be free and do what they please, and the hell with the governments and all the business. [laughter] And you’d hear these old guys sounding off sometimes about this, that the ship owners, the bosses (all that language of the early labor movement) had finks and stool pigeons everywhere, even on the ships during war. “We got government finks”; “We got ship-owner finks on this ship, and they’re listening to us.”

By the way, my notebooks were a problem, because here is a guy taking down notes. “What are you writing, Whitey? What have you got there?” And I’d have to show them. I’d just say, “I’m just putting down ideas; I’m just writing to my friends at home; I’m just writing to my folks; I keep it as a diary.” But there were some old guys who just thought there’s something suspicious about even writing at all! [laughter]

One of the things that had gotten this Sparks earlier was that one of the old guys, who was known for when he'd get mad, he'd throw tools over the side. A chisel, a chipping hammer, or if he was using a paint bucket and brush, and he'd get mad at the mate and he'd throw everything over side! And this was, of course, an old Wobbly anarchist technique of protest. You wreck the tools that the ship owners need to earn their great evil wealth. The way to get back is to destroy the tools, you know! When Sparks heard about what this guy was doing that, he also flew into a rage. "Here again, you see, these people have no respect for human ingenuity. It takes thousands and millions of years for human beings to develop tools . . ." (And by the way, with my early experience in anthropology, this made some sense. [laughter] I mean, "man the tool maker," you know.) "And here's this bastard—he's destroying what the human mind was able to create and produce. And the people like that will end up by destroying the world."

And then, of course, there would be arguments about that: "Well, what do you mean? Are you going to let those guys suck your blood and take everything that you got and then give you a goddamn hammer and tell you to take the rust off of a ship?, and then complain when you don't do it exactly the way they want! The hell with it! Throw it all overboard!" [laughter] And there was a lot of that kind of early Wobbly feeling, very strong among some older guys.

On this first ship there were three or four old guys—*wonderful* old men, tremendously skilled. They were good seaman, and they were respected by the officers because they did the job. But don't get them mad. They'll throw everything over the side! [laughter]

*Right. And it's kind of the ultimate protest because you're not getting it back! [laughter]*

Yes, the ultimate protest. "Hey, Lars, where is that bucket of paint you had out here yesterday?"

"I don't know. I don't know. I guess it's deep-six. It might be deep-six." [laughter]

Well, those things registered on me. I had a tremendous interest and fascination with these various kinds of people. There also were, because it was wartime, ex-professionals—a lawyer, men in their thirties and forties who had gone to sea because they didn't want to be in the army. And a number of teachers. I remember on my first or second ship, there was a teacher or two. Many kinds of people together, so that the conversations and the disagreements were wonderful, were rich. And I'm glad I have reference to some of them in my notebooks. They're just magnificent. That one of Sparks—I just love that—the speech.

Well, Sparks also—this same Sparks—was known by one of the guys that sailed with him on another ship, and they'd stopped at Los Angeles where there was an earth pendulum, Foucault's pendulum. I forget where this was, someplace in Los Angeles, a museum or an observatory, and the crew had gone out to look at it with Sparks. And one of the crew had reached out and tried to grab the line of this great metal ball that it's swinging on. And Sparks blew his cork. This former shipmate of Sparks told me, "Yes, you should have seen him when this guy tried to stop that earth pendulum. He went crazy. He went absolutely crazy! He said, 'Do you know what you're doing? You're interfering with one of the more brilliant, scientific inventions of our time?' [laughter] It tells us about our planet and what's happening in the earth around us?"

And *you*—you little pip-squeak—reaching out . . . .”

I can't repeat . . . . I couldn't believe what he had said. A wonderfully eloquent sermonizer. And then he made up this fiction, that *if* you had stopped it, there would be a great earthquake. And that was his way of . . . . The guy who was telling me about it said, “That got to everybody!” He said, “We didn't believe it, but nobody wanted to take a chance!” [laughter] So, anyway, that's what was going on.

And also at the same time, I was learning a lot about seamanship. I was very proud of myself; I had a great sense of accomplishment when I learned a new knot. I knew a little about splicing, but when I could turn out a good eye-splice on half-inch to two-inch, to an inch and a half of manila rope. I was able to do those basic things: I was also able to chip paint, which I hated to do, and chip rust. Chipping rust had gotten *passé* before the war. They had pneumatic hammers to chip the rust off of the bulkheads of ships. But during the war, apparently that was not allowed, because of the danger of the sound and the use of electricity. I'm not sure, it was something to do with the fact that you had to do it by hand. And so we'd be out there chipping with hammers, and these great flakes of rust and old . . . .

*Literally with a hammer against the metal, or did you have a chisel?*

Chisels and wire brushes. And you never got it clean because that rust was deep. Even on this fairly new ship, the rust had already begun, so that you're *always* chipping. Somebody was always chipping—buck, buck, buck—somewhere on the ship. But I remember feeling very productive doing these things. Later on, of course, I got like every-

body else. On later ships, the whole thing was a terrible bore.

It never occurred to us that the red lead paint was dangerous. We were *breathing* red lead and dust, and the rust from the ship; and, oh, my god, later, when I think of the oil tankers that I worked in with others. The fumes and nobody ever worried about what was going to happen to us. They worried about what's happening to the oil, to the ship, but not what was happening to us. But, anyway, here we were breathing all this red lead all the time. We were *loaded* with lead and probably still are, but no adverse effects that I know of.

Anyway, all that splicing . . . . I never learned to wire-splice, something I used to watch these old guys do.

*You mean like cables?*

Yes, very heavy wire cable. A lot of the supports and the lines for the booms you had to splice around an eye. And it was *very* hard work and it took a lot of skill. And I used to watch these old guys, but I could never really get the hang of it, because it took a tremendous amount of skill to work the strands of the wire. Firstly, it took a lot of strength to get them through and braid them properly, and then they used a mallet to hammer them down so they were smooth. I never could get the hang of that. I always avoided that the rest of the time I was at sea, because I couldn't do it right. And by the way, very few could do it, but these old guys could do it, and you better not get under their skins if you're an officer, because they'll take that whole spool of red cable and throw it over the side. And all the tools would go with it! [laughter]

I was very proud to get my first fid. I think I still have it. A fid is what you use to splice.



It's a pointed, wood kind of a . . . what would be the name for it, alternate name? Anyway, it was a pointed object that you pushed through the large, heavy line, to open it up in order to splice strands into it.

*Oh, OK, so you'd sort of wedge it open?*

Yes, a wedge. It really was a wedge, a very beautifully polished wooden object, hard wood object. And I have one with my name scratched into it. It was given to me by one of the seamen. I was so proud that I had my own fid, you know. [laughter] [Note: A fid is more like an awl.] All those little things added up that first trip that made me feel highly identified with the crew.

I also was beginning to be aware of the separation between the steward's gang and the deck gang—the steward's gang doing all the serving and the cooking and the cleaning of the inside passages and all. We were concerned with the deck outside; steward's department did all the cleaning inside, prepared all the food and did all the serving. Though there were some Caucasians among *them* they were mostly black. There were no blacks among the deck gang. Any white who was in the steward department was always looked upon as somebody who was probably the dregs of humanity, you know. So I became very aware of that distinction.

However, I was also aware that there was a great deal of camaraderie on the ship. Never off the ship. I mean you never *saw* these guys off the ship. There was some degree of camaraderie, but not to the extent of . . . I mean the guys would play cards together; they would bullshit together and all that. But the steward's gang actually ate after we did, but that just seemed to be understood; it wasn't anything that anybody did anything about. However, you had to be careful with the

steward's department, because if they didn't like you or like the officers, there's no telling what would be in the food or coffee.

I can remember just one mate—maybe it was the next ship I was on—that was really hated by most of the crew, but particularly the steward's gang. He complained about everything that he got—food and everything that came to him. The coffee was bad, and everything was bad. Sure, the coffee had to be bad because it'd be pissed in as it went up to the bridge. [laughter]

Everybody would take turns.

*It would have been pretty awful if he'd said, "Now, this is a good cup of coffee." [laughter]*

The joke was he liked it better that way than not! So there were ways to get back at people. I mean it was always good to keep on good terms with the steward's gang.

Oh, yes, the name of the chief cook on that [first] trip was Honeysuckle. A great big, very good-looking black man. He wasn't a steward; the steward was white. Honeysuckle was in charge of the whole steward's gang. He was the chief cook, a proud, dignified man. I had a lot of respect for him. He always dealt with people with dignity, and he handled difficult situations with great skill, a knowledgeable southern black. He knew his way around.

*Was he an older man?*

I thought he was probably in his thirties, forties, but he just had style. I remember having a great deal of admiration for Honeysuckle. And we'd all break out sometimes when we liked the food; we all sang "Honeysuckle Rose," you know. [laughter] Yet he was always very distant, very dignified.

*Now, could you eat with the crews that you wanted to, or did you have to stay segregated with your own?*

Well, I was supposed to eat with the officers. But I wouldn't; I would break away sometimes, particularly if I had some duties on deck, and eat with the crew. And they would joke with me about that.

I felt this great uneasiness, that *I didn't want to be an officer*; my goal became to be an able seaman, an A.B. I thought, "Well, I've got to go to sea as an ordinary seaman and become an able seaman," which is the next thing up, because you had to show certain skills to become an able seaman. And I remember feeling very strongly about that, that I was *not* doing what I wanted to do.

I had no trouble with the mates. I liked this old captain very much, and I also learned a lot from him about the ship's inventory and stowage. The second mate helped me learn to use a sextant. I couldn't do it today, but I got to like it; actually take a reading, and find position. And I'd often make mistakes, but I was able to get the idea and do it. I learned to handle the log, which is what you write into, like the ship's diary. But I was told what to put in it.

*Oh, I see, there was a formula.*

I often wrote out the log for the captain and the mates when they were on duty. And I'd go into the chart room and make out the log according to their specification. I learned to read charts—all those things that I probably couldn't do very well now, but I got so that I was able to cope with that sort of thing. And, oh, I was able to use my semaphore training. I had gotten a certificate as a semaphore man, and I was able to signal other ships later on.

*Now, what's a semaphore?*

The flags, where you where you actually work out the letters of the alphabet with flags. And I was fairly good at that. I was able to do it. I knew a little Morse code—not well, but I was able to do it if I had to. Oh, I knew something about the various flags and pennants that the ship used for signaling. I had learned something of that kind on the bridge and as a cadet. I learned something about navigation, though I must say that a lot of it was beyond me, and I was not going to apply myself in learning some of it. But, nevertheless, I picked up a lot in that one trip, with the help of a very helpful mate.

But my heart was down there on the deck. And I used to watch them as they worked, because I wanted to learn so that I wouldn't make a complete fool out of myself like I had done in San Francisco before we left.

I was worse than any ordinary seaman, even though I had been in cadet training. They hadn't really shown us how to handle a ship or how to work on a ship. And, I'd had that brief stay in the Sailors Union of the Pacific training school for a few weeks, which was helpful; so I had an idea of what the tools were and what was around. But when I got out on that deck the first night when we were leaving San Francisco Bay, and I had to put on my dungarees, and I went down—as the captain said I should, to see what the crew did, and to work with the crew. But I was in the way.

I remember one of those old guys was pushing me aside and saying, "Get out of the way, move!" [laughter] Because all the spaghetti of lines, I just thought I was in a spider web of lines and ropes. I didn't know what was happening to the booms, and I was in a total, complete panic, in a fog. I was so embarrassed and ashamed about that, I would

watch every time the crew went out on deck. Even if I wasn't among them, I'd watch to see how they handled things, what they did. And so little by little I was able to join them and be a little useful.

I was no worse than the average ordinary seaman by the time I got off that trip. But I'll never forget the shame, the utter humiliation, I had first worked among the group. I suppose that really spurred me, my basic predilection for wanting to be one of the gang, one of the work gang, to be worker, rather than an officer or a member of the elite.

That old problem I had about my background, and this great yearning I had to be accepted by a group of workers, you know, and to know what to do, to be able to handle myself.

*Were you writing letters at this time?*

Oh, I was writing letters to send when I got to port, and I wasn't getting letters. This was a period when the mails were very un-

certain. People writing you didn't know where you were.

*When were you told where you were going?*

When we got there. A day out [from their destination]. And we began to guess, and the word would start coming down from the bridge. I knew as a cadet—that was one of the few things I had to offer the crew—they'd ask me what was going on up there? [laughter] You know, "Where are we? How far are we? What latitude and longitude are we? What are we near?" And I would know on the charts, and so would others; I wasn't alone, but the word would sift around the ship.

But on that trip, we didn't really know for sure where we were going until we were really past the equator. So I was writing a few letters, just keeping them until I was able to send them, and didn't know from where; I had no idea where I was going to get to send them.



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## KING NEPTUNE AND THE ALBATROSS

**W**HEN WE GOT to the equator there was this great extravaganza, which I later learned happens on every ship that crosses the equator or the international date line. There is this ceremony of King Neptune and his queen and his minions initiating all the slaves on their first crossing. And the scenario was different on every ship, depending on who was there. And I got all involved in this; I thought it was just wonderful. And I remember I drew—I still have it—I drew a very nice line drawing of mermaids and porpoises that was used for the celebration menu, and it was highly praised. Especially with my very seductive mermaids.

In fact, I guess one of the things that I felt made a contribution, that was appreciated by the crew in general, was that I would make drawings, for various events, like holiday meals or crossing the equator. And I'd make drawings and run them off on this gelatin pad [a way of making reproductions that preceded the mimeograph machine]. I got a certain degree of prestige for that. I felt good that I was recognized as an artist, indepen-

dent of being cadet or another member of the crew.

The ceremony of crossing the equator is recognized on every ship, and even today has become a tourist thing. Anybody crossing the equator on the Atlantic or the Pacific oceans goes through a kind of a ceremony with King Neptune and his queen. But, I'll tell you, on cargo ships, they're kind of marvelous, because the scenarios vary from ship to ship.

Later, I remember on troop ships that I was on, you'd have a thousand men, raising hell out in the middle of the ocean, all dressed in weird costumes and playing out the scenario of King Neptune giving orders and making slaves of everybody who has not been across—the “shell-backs” and “throw-backs” who have not been across the equator. Sometimes the hazing would be very serious; there were reports of people being accidentally thrown over side and lost at sea or being badly maimed. I saw things that got close to that, particularly on crowded troop ships, where you had wild, lonely, mixed-up guys on their way.

No, on this ship it was a fairly sedate thing. But Neptune had to be dressed up in some kind of a king's outfit with a crown, and then his wife had to be chosen. And that was always a wonderful thing to the . . . There was a young kid, who was in the firemen's gang, I think. And he was chosen to be the queen. [laughter] Of course, that was a subject of much joking. And I remember they put halved grapefruits on him, and somehow or other constructed a brassiere, a woven brassiere, and gave him some kind of a costume. And his hair was a mop. That was very common, using a mop as a wig.

*How did they select Neptune?*

Neptune? I'm not sure. I think in this case it might have been the bosun, who was a big, heavy-set, ugly guy. And everybody thought he was very funny.

*So it was sort of voted . . . agreed on?*

Oh, yes, it was . . . The whole idea is that Neptune takes all these neophytes who have not gone across the equator and teaches them a lesson and initiates them into this new world of being one who has done this. And the hazing can be very rough. But usually they're just sent on errands, cleaning all the johns with their hands, and not using any brushes or anything. Sweeping up the decks, or kissing the queen! [laughter] Kissing her breasts and all these kinds of wonderful charades. I can't remember all the details, but it really was a quite marvelous, wild event. And if there was any liquor aboard, it got drunk then.

*But was that pretty controlled, the drinking liquor and . . . ?*

Well, because people would run out. [laughter] I mean there would be a few who would stow away a couple of bottles and bring them out on occasion or hide them and take a sip now and then. And I remember the captain—he had four or five-fifths of liquor in his cabinet, and now and then he'd break it out for the officers. But, no, people just ran out. And anybody who was addicted to alcohol or even tobacco and hadn't taken along enough with them would get pretty shaky before the trip was over. But if there was any alcohol aboard, it was drunk during these celebrations, and there would be a few drunks. And, of course, people who acted out their strangest proclivities, and you'd learn who was slightly weird, in those days, "queer," you know, by how they behaved.

And often somebody was chosen . . . either a very young kid was chosen to be queen, and that was a wonderful joke—a queen, you know—or somebody who was not only suspected, but gave every impression of being either a homosexual or close to it. And this was an allowed time. This was when everybody celebrated. It was like the Mardi Gras, you know. I'm putting this together from a lot of different ships, because that happened on different ships, not on this particular ship. I think it was just a kid who was very embarrassed, but did very well. Stood there while he was being fondled, while his grapefruit were being fondled. [laughter] With his mop hair. OK, I went through it, too. I was one of the neophytes; I had to go through all of this.

*What were your errands, do you remember?*

My task was to . . . what was I supposed to do? Oh, oh. To move the slops. You couldn't throw garbage over the side; it had

to be kept in barrels in the back, because of submarines, not because you were polluting the sea, but because it could be detected.

So there would be these barrels of slops, they call it. I had to move slops from one big barrel to another, and bring some part of it to the king. I forget what it was—something I had to bring to King Neptune.

*So you had to find it . . .*

I had to find things.

*. . . in the slop?*

I forget what it was, but it was a messy job. It stank. And maggots were just . . . a mass of maggots. In fact, there must have been thousands, just a solid mass of maggots in some of the barrels. And I had to bring back maggots. Anyway, stuff like that was going on.

*Well, so what did you do with the slop? I mean later.*

Oh, it had to be done as you got close to shore. There were places where you could dump. Not in harbors, but near harbors we'd throw all that over and watch the sharks follow the ship. And it was all a great sight to watch not only sharks, but the dolphins would apparently come to play around with the garbage—the seagulls, albatross, all that.

That's another thing: I'll never forget, oh, before or just after the equator, seeing my first great white albatrosses, that *wonderful* moment. I've even dreamed about it since—being in the crow's nest and swaying back and forth on a beautiful day with the clouds, with these marvelous thin clouds scudding by, a blue sky, and moving down and up and down, back and forth like a great swing in

the crow's nest, and having a feeling that I was being watched by something close to me. And looking out to my right, and seeing this great white albatross just floating with the tip of its wing within about four feet of me.

It must have had a wing span of six to eight feet. It was very large and with a big head, a beautifully white thing with those black eyes, and just gliding—gliding next to the ship, next to the crow's nest—and looking at me!—[laughter] cocking its head and looking into the little slit that we had to look out through in the crow's nest. And for about ten or fifteen minutes, this damned bird hung there, and finally it just sort of glided away and went swooping out to sea. Well, the mythology, of course, of the albatross really got to me. There were many, and they skim for weeks without landing on the sea. Later, when I went to Midway, there were hundreds and hundreds of these great white albatross, and sea terns—those white sea terns with black, forked tails. And when we saw those, often we'd see them as a kind of compass needle. They'd fly in a V shape. And you'd see them going by; they are *very* fast and fleet little birds. And sometimes they'd land on the ship and perch, you know, and then they'd rest, and then go on. And gooney birds. Those are the lower classes of the albatross.

*They have great big feet or something?*

They have big feet. They're kind of brown and black, and they waddle. You'd call somebody a "gooney bird," at sea it meant he was a clod.

*Did they ever land on the ship?*

Yes, well, one time one fell on the ship, landed and couldn't get its bearings to take

off. It went waddling around on the deck for a while. We were all trying to help it get going, take off, and it would just waddle about and squawk at us. A rather big bird. Eventually it managed to get itself together and fly off. They don't seem to land, either. And albatross tend to skim the sea.

*Right. Like you said, for days, sometimes . . .*

Oh, the big ones will feed at sea in some way. They can land on the water and take off, and they do fish from the sea. But I never saw them do that. I always saw them in the air.

And then at the equator and below, we began to see the lights in the ocean. That, to me, was fabulous—looking down and seeing these great searchlight-like phosphorescent clouds turning on and turning off. Some called them “dishpan lights.” They were

either groups of jellyfish, or sometimes there were enormous, large ones. They'd be under the water ten, fifteen, twenty feet, and they'd turn on their bioluminescence. And when you had a *crowd* of those around the ship, hundreds of them going off and on, it was one of the more fantastic sights that I had ever seen. You felt like you were sailing on air, because you could see these lights under you, going on. And at other places you'd get the small jellyfish that would float around in thousands, in clusters of thousands. And they would twinkle and just go off and on under the water. So the whole sea sometimes was luminescent. And being in the crow's nest, and seeing—as the ship went, it would excite these bioluminescent creatures,—the whole sea would be on fire around you. So those were all new experiences that I found terribly meaningful and quite exciting to me at the time.



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## HEADING TO AUSTRALIA

**G** OING ON were arguments, political arguments on the ship. I remember the different views about trade unions, and some of the old-timers so angry at the young guys because they didn't know anything about all the terrible times during the development of unions among seamen back to the early part of the century. The old Wobblies were particularly political about this and the development of the Sailors International Union, SIU, and, you know, the great struggles that had taken place. They would argue and preach and berate us, because we were so stupid and ignorant. We didn't realize what it had taken to even have a union at all.

"What do you think they'd be doing with us during this war? We'd be *slaves* on these ships. They could do *anything* to us. They could throw us over the side; they could *kill* us, and nobody would know the difference. They'd just put in the log 'mutiny' or 'refusing to obey an order,' and throw you over side. You had no rights at all; they could work you twenty-four hours a day and you couldn't

argue. You guys don't know!" I was very impressed by this kind of . . . .

*Well, were you generally impressed that working conditions were pretty reasonable?*

Well, I had nothing to compare it with, except what I was told.

*Right. But I mean were you told that things were pretty reasonable?*

Oh, yes! Oh, and when we complained about the food, I remember a couple of the old-timers would yell at Honeysuckle, the chief cook, "Hey, you belly robbers! Look at what you're giving us!" And then after they'd do it, they'd say, [in a low voice] "We never ate like this before." The food was really not good. It was wartime food.

Not on that ship, but we got served sheep testicles. They were called mountain oysters. And that steward had a bunch of them in the freezers, and he just served them. And they were like golf balls. [laughter] I mean

they were tough! And the crew raised hell on that ship about that, serving mountain oysters without telling them. You couldn't cut them. And he said, "They're good for you! They make you strong; they make it stand up," you know. [laughter]

But, anyway, these old-timers would say, after they'd complain, it was just part of their nature to complain. If you don't complain, things will get worse. But they'd say they could remember eating—this was five, ten years earlier—meat with maggots in it, and everything was rotten. The vegetables would be rotten and full of bugs. And everything stank. But you either ate it or you didn't. And they'd say, "You guys can't complain. Look what you're getting. You can even get a steak once a week; you get that." Yes, there was a lot of that kind of talk.

And argument about the value of unions. There were always some right-wingers aboard. There's always somebody, some conservative, you know, "Well, what are the unions doing for us, anyway? I mean, really? What can they do? It's wartime, anyway. You can't complain about anything."

And the others would say, "Well, if you didn't have the union, when you got home, you would have *nothing*. You would have *no* place to complain. At least you got a patrolman coming aboard. You can lay out your beefs and all that, and at least somebody will hear it."

But then some old guy said, "If you raised any complaints, you never got a ship again. You were blacklisted, in the shape-up lines in the ports, where you had to stand in line and wait for a job. And the guy who was calling the shots could pick out the people he wanted and just send them to ships."

We heard all of that, and it registered on me. I think I began to—I never was anti-union—feel a very positive sense of the role

of unions as a means of protest, a means of making a statement, a political statement.

And then news was coming from Europe and the Japanese theater of war, about submarines and ships being sunk. By the time we got close to New Zealand, we had passed through the Solomons, I guess. We came south near the Ellice Islands and then on south. By that time we had heard about at least ten, fifteen ships being sunk, and that Japanese subs were claimed to be all through the waters that we were going into. And in fact, on one ship that was sunk, I knew the cadet that was aboard, and apparently it was sunk and everybody lost. That was just north of Australia. By the time we got within a day or two of New Zealand, we knew where we were going. We were going to, if possible, stop at Wellington, New Zealand, which we eventually did. We didn't really get ashore that time. Then we went up to Auckland, where I did get ashore. And that was wonderful. Auckland was magnificent.

*And you said this was about a month at sea?*

Oh, at least a month—a month and a half getting down, because we had to take a round-about way. Let's see, what did we do? After New Zealand, we went around Tasmania. Oh, it took us a long time to get to our final destination. But we stopped at Wellington briefly; I guess we unloaded and loaded some cargo.

I keep forgetting that we had a gun crew aboard. We had twelve navy men, who were in a sense part of the crew. They ate with us but sometimes by themselves. And they manned the two guns we had fore and aft—what are they? Thirty-, fifty- millimeter guns. Whenever there was an alert of any kind, they had to run up to the gun turrets.

*You know, one thing that you haven't really dwelt on was the fear factor. I mean how many alerts did you have?*

Oh, we had an alert at least once or twice a day. They weren't always serious. If anybody felt they saw something, nobody was going to question them. So, you know, alerts and hatch-downs and all that sort of thing were frequent. And then a serious one, on the way down, I'd say five or six times.

We actually saw planes along the horizon sometime, and weren't sure if they were Japanese or ours. You couldn't signal them. You couldn't do anything. You just waited, and you'd see these planes. I saw them on lookout once—two planes skimming along the horizon at quite a distance. They undoubtedly saw us. And, of course, then, for the next day or two we were sure that those planes could report you to submarines. So there was a lot of that kind of anxiety, but it's amazing how you get into a kind of a groove where you can't think about that all the time.

*Right, there's no point.*

You just go on doing your thing, and the ship certainly has a life of its own. You get very worried and frightened sometimes when you are expecting something to happen. But young people are amazing, you know? It doesn't last long. It's part of the adventure, too, plus a sense of, "It's the way it is," and, "Ain't we got fun?" kind of thing.

I remember Charlie, my co-cadet who was with me, saying one time, "Would the people back home believe this if they could see us here now? Wouldn't they wish they were here?" You know, we'd joke about that. "Having a great time, wish you were here," and "Wouldn't they love to see us right now sitting in this fo'c's'le looking out at the sea?

Who could get a view like this?" Be a lot of that kind of joking. "Who could ever have a vacation like this? I mean it'd cost you hundreds of dollars to do this!" [laughter] So there was a lot of that kind of youthful good spirits that carried us through.

But there were a few times when we were scared as hell. I mean, when for hours or a couple of days we'd be waiting and looking—everybody was out watching the horizon and looking at the ocean. The lookouts were not the only lookout; everybody became a lookout. We were looking for any sign of a periscope or a plane, because as we got closer to New Zealand and Australia, that's where it was happening.

By the time we got past the equator, we were pretty sure where we were going; we were going to go to New Zealand and Australia. What ports, we weren't sure, but we knew that probably Auckland and Sydney were among them. At Auckland, I went ashore, and I had a wonderful time. I got on a train on leave—I had two days off. And I got on a train and went up to Lake Rotorua . . . Whakarewarewa. I wanted to see the Maori, you know. I had read about them; they were mentioned in one of my classes, and I had to see Whakarewarewa. And so as I was on this train going up to the mountains, a middle-aged guy, a heavy-set New Zealander, was sitting next to me, and we got talking. And he said, "Well, you're going to stay with *us* tonight!" And he took me to his ranch, which was near Lake Rotorua. And he and his wife, you know, gave me a room and told me to enjoy myself, and in the morning he drove me around, took me to the lake. I saw the Maori settlement at that time. It was not really a tourist thing, as it's become. But beautifully carved buildings or facades. And I remember I got some beautiful carved boxes at the shop that they had.

And beautiful people. I just remember thinking what beautiful people they were. And now and then they'd do a dance. I guess there was some, not tourism, but some kind of ethnic center that they had at the time.

I forget the name of it. There was a school, and there was a cultural center. And they would perform so that the young people could learn dances and other things.

*That's really interesting for that time.*

Oh, yes. But now I understand that you go up to Lake Rotorua and Whakarewarewa regular tours, and they put on great displays and sort of fake Maori dances and all that sort of thing. [laughter] But I was really moved by that.

And then I remember this rancher, in the morning he got up at four or five o'clock, and came back with six or seven enormous, beautiful trout from the stream right near his house.

And we had trout and scrambled eggs and fried potatoes. And I hadn't had a meal like that in months! And they were extremely nice people. They were very cordial and happy about Americans and how wonderful it was that we were coming to help and all that sort of thing. While I was in Auckland, as well, I went to the university, and went to the English Department and met one of the professors whose name eludes me right now, but somewhere in my notes I'm sure I have it. He was a young guy who was teaching English literature. And he told me all about Australian literature.

One author was John Lawson . . . Harry Lawson, something like that—sort of an Australian outback writer, something like the western writers in the United States. He'd written some very popular stories and poems. He gave me that book, and then a book of

his own essays. It's terrible, I don't remember his name. He was very nice, showed me around the university, and we talked literature and art. And I went back to the ship. [laughter]

*Now, did you seek him out specifically because you were looking for things to read or did it just happen?*

No, I went to the university not because I was looking for things to read; I wanted to know what was happening in those circles there—what the New Zealanders were doing and thinking, what was happening. And because I had taken courses in English, I thought I'd go to the English Department. I met this guy who was extremely nice to me, and showed me around and talked to me about New Zealand literature. And I used to know a lot about it, but I've forgotten. I knew quite a bit about what was going on in New Zealand and Australia in the local literature at the time.

*Were there some things that were very different that you could characterize from what the scene was that you were used to?*

It was provincial. I mean, even this guy, as an English scholar, interested in classical literature, didn't really have much of a hang of what was happening now. Later on, two or three years later, one of my stories in a magazine that my friend, George Leite, put out, got banned in New Zealand and Australia. But that was before I really was thinking in those particular terms. But, no, when I say "provincial," I mean that it was an out-of-the-way area. But he was remarkably intelligent and eloquent kind of a guy, well informed on classical literature. I was very interested in what was happening in

New Zealand and Australian literature, the writing that was going on. And what struck me about that was it was very much like Western American writing of the early part of this century. A lot of the cowboys-and-outback kind of stories about men against the elements and all that sort of thing and kangaroos, but surprisingly little about the local indigenous people.

I remember asking about the Maori—"Oh, aren't they wonderful" kind of thing. But nobody knew a Maori—and more so in Australia.

*It was so brief, but was your impression that maybe somehow these people had literally disappeared or been assimilated or . . . ?*

No, they were there, but they were segregated. I don't remember there being any overt antagonism or anything; they just were the native people. As I know now, in fact there were a number of Maoris who had gone on to higher education, who had important positions in government later on. But at the time you had the feeling of segregation, of separation, and yet a very benign attitude about the Maori as a wonderful people, except "they're lazy"—the old . . . the young ones . . . .

*Well, you could be benign. There was no threat; I mean there was no . . . .*

No, there weren't really enough to be a threat as the abos [Australian Aborigines] later became in Australia. So, anyway, then we left Wellington and were ordered, as I remember, to go back around the southern part of New Zealand and around the southern part of Tasmania. And I knew a little about Tasmania from my earlier reading—the utter destruction, the wiping out of the

Tasmanians. I remember having arguments on the ship about that. "We wiped them out, we wiped them out," and somebody saying about them "What are you talking about? What use are they anyway? They weren't doing any good. They probably died out because they weren't strong enough to put up . . ." There was a lot of that social Darwinism attitude. [laughter]

The reports were that the Japanese submarines were thick in the northern part of the sea between New Zealand and Australia and on the northern Australian coast. So we were ordered way south. And I remember the officers and our captain being very upset, and the crew also, when we heard from Sparks that the British in Australia had learned through the wireless the report of our ship and of other ships. Where we were, watching out for submarines, we thought it was the most ridiculous and horrible thing we'd ever heard of. They named the ships exactly, told anybody who was listening where we were, and then told us to watch out. So our captain was furious. I'm not sure just exactly what was said by radio, but our position had practically been given.

*Broadcast?*

Broadcast. So there was intensive look-out all through this whole trip down around Tasmania to Melbourne.

*Were you in sight of land going around?*

We went way out and came back around, I suppose because subs were most likely to be closer to the coast. Then when we came down under Tasmania, we were close enough so I could actually see Tasmania. I'd at least seen Tasmania!

Of course, we were now in the southern seas, remarkable, too, for sea lights. My god, *loaded* with phosphorescence and bioluminescence. You couldn't move in the ocean at night without these great flares—these dishpan jellyfish. And they'd go off and on like searchlights. *Great* big things. And you'd look down, and you could actually see some of the insides of these great creatures. And they'd go flash, and then they'd go dark, and flash, and another one would be flashing nearby. It was really quite wonderful. And then, of course, dolphins following the ship or leading the ship toward land. And they were wonderful creatures. I saw lots of whales. It was to me a marvelous time when I think of those good things.

So we got to Melbourne. I don't think we stayed there very long. Probably just to get orders or something.

*Were you unloading?*

I don't remember. We may have. We may have had something from Melbourne, but I don't recall Melbourne very well. We then moved on to Sydney, where we did spend a week or so, and unloaded, and took on a load of . . . what was it? I don't recall. I was partly in charge of it, and I can't remember what we loaded. Something that was going across the ocean when we left. Anyway, we docked at Woolloomooloo—I love the name. Woolloomooloo was the sort of slum dock area in Sydney, the kind of place that “you do the things that you generally don't do.” [laughter] One of the older seaman made up that song after Gilbert and Sullivan. [laughter] [sings] “Oh, Woolloomooloo is a place that you do the things that you generally don't!”

And so, you know, there were a lot of drunken nights in Woolloomooloo, while

myself and two or three others—those crew members who were interested in such things—went to see Gilbert and Sullivan.

It was great. The D'Oyly Carte troupe was down there at the time. And they were wonderful, as I remember.

*The D'Oyly Carte?*

D'Oyly Carte, I think, was the name of the Gilbert and Sullivan opera troupe from England. They were from London, it was a fairly well-known troupe, and they were doing wartime tours and were in Australia. We saw *The Pirates of Penzance*, and a number of others I don't recall now, but two or three others. And we hung around the bars in Sydney; the Australians were so much *like* Americans, and yet so different. They were like Western Americans in the nineteenth century; they gave you the impression of being early westerners, pioneers; a very rough and tumble group.

And Sydney, which has a beautiful harbor, a beautiful town, a small town in those days. Australians were extremely nice to us. Everybody was cordial—invited us to dinner and invited us out. And we had girlfriends hanging around and inviting us to dances. It was a lively time.

Oh, yes. And I was very interested in the Aborigines. I got in a number of arguments with Australian soldiers and navy men in bars about, “Where are the Aborigines? Where are the tribes out there?”

“Oh, what do you care about them for? They're out there; they're doing all right. Leave them alone! Don't bother them; they won't bother you!”—[laughter] that kind of attitude. I didn't see any, and I wanted to. And, “Ah, they're way out there. They're out there in the bush. They're out there in the outback. Leave them alone! Don't worry

about that. What about your niggers and your Indians? What about them? Tell me about them!" You know, there was a lot of that kind of banter going back and forth.

I remember that the black guys on the ship didn't go ashore very much. If they did, they would go with the white members of the crew, they sort of went in, looked around during the day, and came back. I don't recall them really hobnobbing around.

*Well, weren't Aborigines at that time called niggers in Australia?*

They may have; I don't remember. There were all kinds of names: nignogs, wogs, and all those wonderful British terms, too, crept in. But I don't recall the details about that. I think the word *nigger* was used throughout the world for the whites against any dark-skinned people.

*I'm just wondering how the American blacks were treated on shore in Australia.*

I don't know. All I know is that they did not go ashore much, and I didn't pay much attention. I wasn't really *that* hung up on those problems. But I recall that Honeysuckle stayed on board all the time. "Yes, I don't need shore leave. I got work to do here." That kind of thing. And I don't know if I really understood at the time how to interpret that. I don't remember seeing him ashore.

And, oh, there were wild and woolly times. I mean those bars in Sydney. There were ships from all over the world. Oh, my god, there were British ships, all the New Zealand, and Australian; there were South American ships, and there were British ships from India and Indonesia with their crews—there were Asian crews. The place was just packed with a wonderfully strange assortment

of people, having wild and exuberant, desperate kinds of good times, mainly drinking themselves sick. That Australian gin was horrible.

And people were being dragged to the ship, taking taxis—taxis with gas bags on top of the hood. Gasoline was almost impossible to get, and they were using natural gas, in great big balloons. And you'd see these taxis careening along with a balloon. And so these taxis would roll up to the ship to the gangplank and just dump two or three guys out on the ground. And they would be slobbering all over; then we'd go down and pick them up and bring them up. And that was before we were taking off for lord knows where. And there was this great feeling of desperation and, "Do it while you can."

But, also, just having a good time after being hung up all that time. And I'm sure the prostitutes had a very busy time during that period. [laughter]

There was a lot of prostitution, I mean why wouldn't there be? There were thousands and thousands of new people in what had been a rural town, pretty much, a small town. So then we took off and . . .

*Did you have a ship's doctor? I don't know why prostitution makes me think of doctors, but it does. [laughter]*

No. The third mate knew how to put on bandages, and give laxatives, and . . . [laughter] Oh, yes! The third mate, Phillips, I forgot about him. A *strange* guy, who really thought he was a doctor, a medical man. He wasn't anywhere near it, but one of the . . . who was it? It was the electrician—a young guy, a very interesting young guy, very witty—got a swelling in his groin that was undoubtedly venereal, and it was enormous. And as a cadet, I was supposed to help the

third mate do something for him. I remember when I went into the third mate's cabin, he had the electrician propped up like a woman about to give delivery on a chair with his legs apart, and he had this enormous swelling in the groin—very red, painful. It looked something like a hernia, but it was obviously an infection. And he had had gonorrhea earlier but thought it was over, and this could very well have been a later complication. And here was the third mate boiling up some lancets and knives, because the electrician just said, "Look, it hurts so much—do something." And here is the third mate sweating, you know—sweat's dripping down on his hands and onto the tools, and this poor guy splayed out.

I was supposed to hand him the instruments while he lanced it. And it was *loaded* with pus. There must have been a cup that came rolling out and spraying all over everything. And I remember feeling very sick, terribly sick! And all I remember was the third mate standing back and said, "*Well*, how do you feel?" and the electrician saying, "Oh, that's a relief!" [laughter] And, you know, this *terrible* thing had happened to him. I was thinking the guy's going to die of an infection; I thought this was just terrible. Leave him alone. But the third mate loved it, and he kept working on it, squeezing it and getting stuff out and dabbing peroxide, and the peroxide was foaming up, you know.

And the guy said, "Oh, that hurts, but, gee, it feels a lot better. Thanks. Thanks, Third. Thank you, Third." [laughter] And as far as I know, he healed. He hobbled around for a few days, you know.

Kd: No antibiotics?

No, peroxide, and there may have been some other things that were smeared on it,

but, no, nothing taken internally. Oh, that's before antibiotics, 1942 . . . . When did the first . . . 1943, 1940?

Kd: Well, that began with the war.

Yes, but not on ships.

Kd: Probably not.

Penicillin was the early 1940s, wasn't it?

Kd: Yes. We heard about this wonderful drug, but you couldn't get it.

By 1944, 1945, it was common. In fact, everybody was using it for everything. Every time you went into a commissary, you'd get a penicillin shot.

Kd: But even if it was just a cold, it was used for anything.

For anything. But in the early 1940s, I'm sure that even if it was available, it certainly wasn't on our ship. And the third mate wouldn't have known what to do with it, anyway. He liked what he was doing. He loved his old, sharp instruments and things, and he felt very, very wonderful that he had made the guy feel better. The electrician had a hard time getting out of there that day, because the third mate was enjoying every moment of this. [laughter] And the crew was lining up to watch, you know, smoking and coughing, and the electrician was the . . .

*It's unbelievable.*

. . . was the star of the afternoon. And I felt really nauseous about that, and worried. I mean I liked this guy; the electrician was a nice guy. I remember he went hobbling, and



everyone was joking that he had just been screwed, you know. "Look at him," you know, "Look at the way he's walking. He's really had it, boy. The third mate's given him a full dose."

And he went hobbling up on the deck and hobbled around on deck for a few days and then began to feel fine and said that he

really was grateful to that third mate. "The guy ought to become a real doctor, because he's good," you know. And when I think of that young mad man standing there with that gleam in his eye! I mean, you felt that he was sort of a Hollywood villain, sweating and his eyes glazed! [laughter]



## LATIN AMERICA

SO, BACK ACROSS the ocean through the southern sea. The main thing is it's a different kind of ocean when you get down there close to the Antarctic. And although we were far north of the Antarctic, there's something about that absolutely spacious sea—very flat, very leaden looking. The sun was a dark orange and gold; the skies kind of hazy. And you knew that you were a thousand miles from anything all the time. Lots of albatross; lots of terns, when you were near land. When we saw terns, we knew we were near islands beyond the horizon. Polynesia was just north of us, and I'd always think, "Oh! Why can't we get *there*?" you know?

We were south of Tahiti, south of the Tuamotu Archipelago and all that.

*And at this point you don't know where you're going?*

We knew we were going to South America.

*Oh, you did know.*

Well, that we were going east. [laughter] And then about halfway across, I remember we had three days in which the engine stopped. Something went wrong with the screw and with the steam pressure. And the engine gang was in a real sweat to try find out what was wrong. We just rolled. We had to put out a sea anchor to keep us going into the current.

*Now, that would be the black gang, right? The engine crew?*

Who were responsible for keeping the engine going, yes.

But I remember there were three days of the most strange and most awful silence, a sense of remoteness and isolation. Everybody felt it. There was very little talk on the ship; the ship just rolled quietly. No, when you're hearing engines for weeks at a time, there's something reassuring about that thump, thump, thump of the turning of the screw and the prop. Then sudden silence, and you're just rolling. You're at the mercy of

every wave. And so you put out a sea anchor, which is a long line in back with a kind of a . . . oh, it's the same principle as a parachute. It's a large, circular kind of a pan, that gives a drag, so that the ship then faces into the current rather than rolls with it. So that would stop that rolling, but before the sea anchor went out, you just rolled, and you felt that any moment the ship was just going to roll over.

There's something about even what appears to be a quiet sea, those swells—the ship just turns and rolls. And half the crew got seasick. I didn't. I'd get sick leaving port if I'd eaten too much or drinking.

*Were you totally dependent on that engine crew to fix it, because you couldn't get help?*

We would have been out of luck. We'd have just been floating around and probably ended up either on the icebergs to the south, or . . . [laughter] I used to fantasize, "Maybe we'll just float to an island."

*Yes, to Tahiti! [laughter]*

Float to the Marquesas and something fantastic like that! [laughter] Or find a little Tuamotu island and wash up on the reef. But, no, I guess a signal could have gone out, but that could have been sighted by a submarine.

We were far south of any of the sea routes. We were the only ones that we knew or that Sparks knew in that area.

*So you're still on your own? No convoy.*

Oh, no, we didn't have a convoy. We had a convoy going from New Zealand to Wellington. And we had a convoy part of the way out after we left Auckland, but then it left us going north to Solomon Islands,

because that's when the Americans were opening up the Solomon Islands, and so the convoy went north, and we went on—our lonely, little ship.

I remember not worrying about the dead engine until about the third day; then, "This is too long," you know. It was kind of interesting up until then. Finally, they managed to rig up something, jury-rig something, and get that old screw going. And, boy, what a feeling when I could hear that "hrrmmmm, hrrmmmm"; the great big prop, the screws finally moving. And the engine crew—I could hear screaming down below—letting out a great cheer, there was a great yell going up on the ship, and everybody was relieved. Certainly I remember the captain and the mates, you know, they had been *really* worried. The crew wasn't so worried because they were just eating and playing cards and sleeping; they weren't concerned. But the officers, who were really thinking about where they were going and what they had to do, were very tense. And I remember feeling that way. And we were moving; we were being slowly floated south, I guess, which meant in over a week or two we'd be in the Antarctic and in very bad weather. There were no big storms. We were quite lucky at that particular point, with a quiet, oily kind of sea all the way over.

We ended up in Antofagasta, Chile, and that was a strange place. It was a little village, really, with a couple of great, rusting iron buildings. It was the copper port, where copper was brought down in ingots, slabs of copper.

We had an empty hold; that's right. I don't think we unloaded anything. We had to have something for ballast—it was water. Nevertheless, we loaded all three holds with copper ore. It was beautiful, these slabs of copper. I brought some home, but I gave it away. They looked as though you had drizzled

copper, molten copper, on the ground, and then let it cool, and then lifted it up; like lacy slabs, really. And the holds were just full of this copper.

*Well, do you mean it looked like Swiss cheese, or was it full . . . ?*

Yes, it was full of holes and lacy. While I was in Antofagasta—this was my first time in South America—I went around this *strange, little village, this town of Antofagasta, full of these workers from the mines bringing the stuff down from the mountains. The second day we were there, a couple of shipmates and myself, we decided to go up-country, and there was a path that went up to the mountains—I can remember the appearance of it—up to the mountains to the ore, to the mines. And we went up there, and there were sheep all over, and it was very much like the trip I made to San José, Guatemala—same kind of going up the side of the mountains. But all around there were steam vents coming out of the oceans. Chile was an extremely volcanic and active area for geysers. So as we came to Antofagasta, we saw all this long line of geysers all along the coast, hot steam coming up, and earthquakes like every fifteen minutes the ground shook, but nobody paid any attention to it. So we went up, and we looked in one mine—there were many mines further back in. Here were all these very repressed-looking peasants and workers—women and men and children—bringing these buckets of slabs out from the foundries. First the ore had gone from the mines into foundries and then came out. They carried the slabs in buckets on their heads or by their sides and put them on a little railroad that went down to the docks. So we went up and*

saw that, and drank around the little bars, these little, horrible open-shed bars.

*What was the food like?*

I don't remember eating ashore there. It was a pretty depressed-looking place. There were some buildings. I guess it did have something of a town, but as I remember, there was nothing there, nothing to do. [laughter] But I was fascinated by it. And we'd go along the beach and look out along where these vents were coming out, and every now and then not only the ground would shake, but the sea would shake, you know. It would get glassy and start to shake like Jell-O. [laughter] And nobody thought that was very important—something that happened every day, I guess.

*Sounds kind of hellish, really. I mean the steam and the earth shaking . . . .*

Oh, yes, it was Dante's Inferno. We went north along the coast and saw these steam vents, these geysers and steam vents, all along the coast. And there were reports of real earthquakes and of villages being destroyed, even while we were there. It seems that apparently it was an ongoing thing in that region.

We went north up toward Panama, and went ashore there. It was my first real impression of very, very volatile black life.

*Did you go through the canal?*

Yes, yes. Right. That was quite an experience for people who hadn't been through it. The Panama Canal is a remarkable thing. And Panama City was a small town at that time. But two or three times I went ashore and wandered through the big black ghetto.

It was an enormous ghetto of not only Indians in some places, but of black South Americans. And I remember at night there would be sounds of this wonderful music. What would it be like? It was a mixture of American jazz and blues. It was a heavy kind of wild, early, not jazz, so much as South American . . . I guess it would be rumba, and some of the other South American music that I had never heard?

Kd: Black flamenco, yes.

Yes, lots of drums and these wonderfully wild voices. I remember going up one night on a third or fourth floor of a large building, and the lights were on, and something was going on up there. I went up this stairway, and these black couples, very well dressed, were coming down. I'd never seen this—kind of really dressed to the hilt in glorious attire, and beautiful women, you know.

*You mean satins and . . . ?*

Yes. Yes, the works, but elaborate and very overdone—party stuff. And we were going up the stairs, three flights, and coming into this room with all this dancing. I came from an area where you never saw . . . you know, really marvelous and wild rumba and all those various movements that later were going to be African dance and South American dance. I wish I remembered the names of these kinds of musics and steps. But it was a wild, orgiastic kind of scene—the *crowds*, the . . .

*Was it really mixed, or is this all basically black?*

Well, it seemed to me all black; there might have been Indians there. But it was black Indian, whatever the Panamanian aver-

age class is. And a big band playing. Mainly the drums got me, the big, heavy, loud drums, and guitars and singing, and all this dancing going on. It was a wild and wonderful scene. And I came down out of there, and I thought I had seen Panama! [laughter] I remember this night particularly, when I was walking back along the main street, there was a horse pulling a buggy, like those Russian droshkies, you know—an open cart where people lie rather than sit. There was one man in it, and I remember he was very white, very thin, emaciated looking.

I'll never forget that sight. A young guy in his twenties or thirties, with an open shirt, well dressed, but very casually, with his arms dangling out on each side of this thing, being carried through the streets. He was fanning himself. He either had malaria or something, but he was obviously from a very well-to-do, rich family. And he was out taking the air. And he looked sickly and awful. And I remember the contrast of coming out of this wonderful wild and woolly party going on with this music, and then seeing this white kid taking the air in his carriage.

*Yes. So were you ignored or acknowledged, or . . . ?*

I don't recall that anybody paid any attention to me. After all, I was, you know, a twenty-one, twenty-two-year-old kid, and I was dressed very casually, and I was wandering around, and I'm sure . . . "Here's another roustabout; here's an American wandering around." When I was upstairs at this big party, nobody paid any attention to me at all.

*Yes. Did you dance or . . . ?*

No, *no*, I was too intimidated by the sights. At that time I don't think I'd ever

danced anything, you know. [laughter] Maybe a waltz. And I'd never seen anything like this, not until I got to Africa years later.

*Well, did you leave just when you'd absorbed enough, or . . . ?*

When I felt that I might be in the way or about to be noticed . . . . [laughter] I was never aggressive about those things when I was younger. But I observed, I watched, and I listened, and I appreciated.

So I went back to the ship and went through the canal. The canal was to me a great experience, too. And most people today haven't seen it or gone through it, but it is pretty impressive.

Then we went up through the Caribbean, which was really frightening because there were sub reports every hour or two the whole time we went up through, past Cuba, in par-

ticular. I remember we were getting reports all the time of German subs infesting the area. Apparently dozens of ships had been sunk just east of Cuba and even along the Atlantic coast of the United States. So we were in convoy—thirty or forty ships with a number of destroyers. We saw a ship sunk. There was a big explosion *way* out on the edge of the convoy, and the destroyers were zipping around. There was a ship on fire and smoke pouring from it. It had been hit by a torpedo. We weren't able to stop; we just moved on, and apparently that ship was left behind, and a destroyer was looking for the submarine around it. We never heard, never learned later what had happened. But the ship was hit, and it was out on the edge of the convoy. We felt very safe; we were in the middle. [laughter] Everything was all right; we're in the middle of the "school of fish." And then we arrived in New York.





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## SUBS AND OTHER TERRORS

SOMETHING that I didn't mention that I just sort of take for granted, was in coming down to New Zealand and Australia, in the area that was so richly infested with Japanese submarines, that we were unescorted most of the time. We'd, as I had mentioned, come alone, which I've been told was fairly unusual, but it really *wasn't* unusual. I can remember a lot of ships were going off by themselves when convoys could not be assembled in time. And there was some notion that was bandied about that sometimes you were safer as a single ship than as a convoy. Of course, in a convoy you were like a school of fish—it would appear more likely that one would be enough to appease the carnivore, and the rest would go off free. [laughter] But, nevertheless, those differences of opinion did exist.

But one thing I do remember, was the first time I ever heard depth charges when we were near New Zealand. And this went on *all* through the period that I sailed during the war, the sound of depth charges from destroyers in convoys. And when you heard that, you knew that they had sighted something;

they had sighted a sub or felt they had sighted a sub. And sometimes they'd be far off on the edge of the convoy, and, as I say, when we got to New Zealand, we had partial convoys from there on around Tasmania to Melbourne. And sometimes an air convoy . . . air patrols would follow us and search around. So that gave you a feeling of safety. *But* when these depth charges go off, if they're anywhere near you, like, say, a quarter of a mile, the sound was one of the most ominous and peculiar sounds that I can remember.

You'd be lying in your bunk or at work, and you'd feel something like an earthquake. You'd feel not only the ship shake and everything rattle in it, all the bulkheads seem to be straining; it was a kind of a pounding, deep moaning, pounding sound. And if they dropped off a number of charges, this would last for minutes, this peculiar sense of being on a volcano. And sometimes very loud, because it would reverberate through the ship. All the metal in the ship seemed to respond to it.

And then later on in the war in the Caribbean, as I remember, two ships at dif-

ferent times were torpedoed, and, of course, they were left behind with a destroyer or two. Some of the convoy would search out the sub. But the sound of a torpedo hitting a ship, blowing up a ship, if the ship, particularly, was carrying fuel or carrying combustibles of that kind, was a terrible thing to hear. You just *knew* that it was a ship being hit. There was something about that sound and that blast out there at sea, where things were, except for the sound of the ship, relatively quiet. And that happened a number of times. So that although I was in this kind of adventure, this youthful frame of mind, and everything being kind of wonderful and romantic, I had forgotten in talking about it, that a lot of the time we were in this state of tension, working or sitting in the mess rooms or lying in our bunks, wondering if at any moment, you were to hear that. *And* if you were convoyed, in particular where there had been some worry about the sighting of a sub or a distant plane on the horizon, thinking that any moment your ship may be the one that blows; and that you would have very little warning, if any, and suddenly there would be this enormous explosion and conflagration, through which you might live, but you'd end up in the drink. That was nightmarish.

But it wasn't all the time. There were long periods of voyages, particularly on merchant ships, where things were very quiet and went on like some sort of a vacation, in a way. We were working hard, but there was routine and you had the sense of being safe and far away at sea. But the moment you had any indication of problem, then all these fantasies—they were terrible ones—would take hold of you for days at a time, wondering, "Is it going to happen?" And you got so that you learned to put those things aside. You learned to think of other things, and it didn't bother

you even when there was something to worry about.

*Do you think there was a code among the crew in general, just as a way of coping, of not discussing fears and apprehensions?*

Oh, well, yes, but the code wasn't that kind. There was a code of, of course, coolness. Not only Americans, but any group of men working under dangerous or difficult conditions, don't show their fear. The idea is you appear nonchalant, and you may talk about other things. On the other hand, you may tell horror stories. And I can remember . . . [laughter] And that's a kind of counterphobic activity, you know, when things are very, very dicey, and you're under a pall of concern. Some members of the crew were stimulated to sit around telling these terrible stories that they knew of other ships that had sunk. Oh, like, the ship that came into San Francisco; it had been a troop ship, and it limped back; it had been hit by a sub, but it barely limped back to San Francisco. And in the hull were hundreds of dead soldiers floating in the bottom of the hulls. And stories like this were told; old stories by old seamen about people dying at sea and being put in casks of rum to preserve them. And then the sailors who didn't know that there were bodies in the casks would go out at night and drink the rum and get drunk. I mean these wonderful stories. And one story was about a seaman who, when he heard what he'd been drinking, jumped over the side and went into Davy Jones's locker. [laughter] And, yes, this kind of thing would go on. The code was, "Show your nonchalance by talking sometimes about the worst horrors you can think of." And there were a lot of raconteurs. A lot of these guys that you shipped with, even though it was early in the war,

had been through some rough times . . . . One had been to Murmansk already, in the Atlantic sea, where all the ships were being sunk.

*Now, Murmansk had a particular aura about it of real danger. I mean wasn't that one of the . . . ?*

Well, that was the famous Murmansk Run across into the north Atlantic, around occupied Norway, Denmark, and Finland, et cetera, and all the way around, way up to near the Arctic Circle, to Murmansk. A *terribly* difficult run, and merchant seamen . . . hundreds were killed on that run. And it was legendary. So later on you'd hear about the Murmansk Run frequently. I was only on part of that; I never really did much sailing on the Atlantic—a little. I would have gone on that run, but you never knew where you going. Most of the East Coast seamen were the ones taking the Murmansk Run.

I had forgotten that. I was sort of dealing with the romance of sailing and the wonderful adventure, being off on my first trip and all that. But there were long periods of time which were terribly strained and difficult and new. But just like everybody else, you get used to it, and except for some things—some crisis that occurs suddenly, and is very frightening, like seeing a sub or something of that kind—there wasn't much fear. I had it at times, and others had it, but didn't show it. You went about your work, or you tried to appear as though it wasn't important.

*One thing I was interested in when you were talking about being on watch and reporting that you'd seen something, you just made the comment that no one ever questioned somebody else's sighting.*

Not when it happened. Later they might say, "That son of a bitch was half asleep, and he was dreaming," or something like that. [laughter] I mean if nothing happened, you *always* had these wonderful stories about the characters who had reported. Nevertheless, nobody *ever* took lightly *any* report, no matter how crazy the guy who reported it was thought to be, or whether he was considered to be drunk, or whatever. You took it seriously; it could very well be. Oh, yes, I mean lots of times, at night, particularly, in southern seas, you could see streaks of light on the water, and, of course, that's one of the things that tells you about a sub with its periscope out, going through luminescent water. There would be a streak, almost like fire. Well, many times streaks like that were reported, but they were either dolphins or whales or flying fish. Schools of flying fish can make a tremendous fire in the sea. But you reported them, because you didn't know, for sure.

*That accommodation with a certain amount of background tension all the time . . . did you develop more or less of that through the war as you went, on these ships?*

Of detachment? Not right away. I mean you tend to see it in others, and there were other new people aboard, too. If any of them began to show a kind of . . . oh, what would you call it, uncontrollable fear or terror, or talk too much about it, or panic, nobody said anything to them. They just ignored them and looked away and made them feel embarrassed by really isolating them or paying no attention to them.

See, you know, any group of men, and I suppose with women, too, where they worked, develop a kind of understanding of things that are projected through group behaviors that way, small-group behaviors. Where

there's a way of telling somebody something without saying a word.

*Well, it's part acculturation, too, isn't it?*

Yes, yes. It's an acculturation. And you can be very embarrassed by the looks on the faces of your shipmates if you said something that would seem to be silly or childish or fearful. However, you could express fear in all kinds of ways: you could express it by telling horror stories, which some of the old-timers were great at. And some during our worst times, sitting in the mess room, the guys playing cards in these hot, dank mess rooms with all the port holes down, and the engine room odors coming up from below, and all the stink of the galley and the garbage that you couldn't put out. Then you get word that something had been sighted, and sometimes an automatic alarm would go off. And everybody had to run to their fo'c's'les, pick up their life jackets and get ready for some kind of alert. Under those conditions, walking hurriedly but nonchalantly was extremely important. You did not run through these narrow passageways, you moved with a sense of duty and a goal, and with awareness of others around you. You helped them if necessary, and all those little things. But there would always be somebody who was an absolute nut and would run freaking and yelling through the passageway or going up to the officers deck and asking, "What's happening? What's happening? What's happening?" They would just be ignored, but everybody *knew*, and they were talked about later, but seldom to their faces. The idea was, "It's a small world we're on, and everybody has to sort of get along."

That's something over the years I have learned, and it becomes part of your nature after a while. You *know* what to do; you know how to handle yourself. Working under those

conditions, if you were on watch out on *deck*, you were really aware of the ocean around you, and you were looking. But you didn't say much about it. You just went about your job. You did your job. And that style of behavior was acceptable by everybody. You were not supposed to be distracted by these things from doing your job, because your job was first. That had to be done, and particularly during a storm.

I mean some of these storms . . . sometimes we'd welcome storms, because we knew a sub couldn't do much in them. But I remember going through storms where if you were in your bunk, you could be thrown out, because the ship would heave to to such a degree, and sometimes poise on the edge. And you just felt, "Is it going to go on, or is it going to come back?" [laughter] Because a ship can capsize, particularly if they get one of those very large fifty-, sixty-foot waves. If a second one hits after the first one has keeled you over, and a second one comes—*wham!*—it can capsize a ship, particularly if that ship isn't well balanced. So, I mean sometimes I can remember being in my bunk and thinking, "Uh-oh! There is one." *Everything* inside the bunkhouses and the galley and everything crashing, and, you know, it was like going upside down. And then *slowly* that ship—you'd hold your breath—would start to come back, and you'd roll the other way. And if you were out on deck during a storm like that, you *had* to go out. You weren't sent out unless it was absolutely necessary—something is breaking loose, and you had to secure some barrels or whatever it was that might be loose. That was sometimes the most, not only frightening, you just felt you were close to death, because when that sea would come over, you could be washed over so easily. I mean you're just a little feather, and the size of those seas. So often you'd tie yourself. You'd

have a line to tie yourself to go out and do something. And I remember being swept from one side of the deck to the other by big seas. But then the largest ones coming over would snap your line if you were out there. But I can remember joking about this . . . we felt better when it was like that than if we were in calm seas and somebody reported there was a sub in the vicinity, because at least with the sea you had some kind of a chance of living.

In fact, those old liberty ships, were known to split in half, because they were made in such a hurry—although they were *great* ships; they actually saved the war in a way, particularly during the lend-lease period. If it wasn't for the liberty ships, we wouldn't have had enough ships. They were put out in a hurry, but they were remarkably good ships and stable ships, excepting the riveting and the joining of the sections, the bulkheads, et cetera, would give way, usually about mid ships. And some liberty ships were known to break in half—just two halves! [laughter] So when we'd hear a particularly loud crunching sound or grinding sound or this kind of rending sound that metal makes when it's tearing, everybody would say, "Uh-oh, there it goes," and we'd have to go around down to the hulls if we could get to them and see whether there was any break.

I remember being on a ship that had leaks from that sort of thing and splits, but I never was on one that was seriously cracked. But there were fellow seamen and crews often who had been on some ships where they actually cracked and water came pouring in. So all those things are on your mind when you're out there at sea. It wasn't just a glorious trip, as I may have given the impression earlier, because that was going on, too.

Everything was glorious to me in those years. I was, you know, twenty-one, twenty-

two, and the world was just a magnificently fascinating place, and everything was new, and everybody I met—even the screwiest, wildest member of the crew, the most far out—was to me a fascinating individual. They *all* were wonderful, and I had my notebooks—full of conversations with the various guys, and the language, the terms, the wonderful colloquialisms that were so new to me and to me so marvelously expressive. I've notebooks loaded with those things! Because that's where my head was. I thought I was being a writer, and I was pulling my material together, and at the same time I was, by virtue of being what I was at the time, fascinated by everything.

That fascination and sense of adventure carried me through all that with these other things being there as a kind of . . . I guess the drums and the bass fiddle underneath. They would come forward every now and then in experience—I mean frightening, disturbing and terrible moments—and they were frequent. But one tends, looking back at it, to gloss over those things and see only the part that was glorious. And so, in thinking about this, it keeps coming back to me that it wasn't all glorious.

There were some terrible and ugly times later on, some very ugly times, in places like Okinawa and Bikini, and the Ellice Islands. During the war not only did we *hear* horrible things that were happening in the war, we saw the results of it—the troop ships that I was on, bringing back wounded soldiers and dead soldiers; and taking them on, then hearing about what had happened to them after we left them off. So, you know, there were these terrible things, but at the same time, I think when you're young, you tend to see it all as a great drama. And I tended to do that—something that's a fault, I guess; at the

same time I think it got me through a lot. [laughter] I felt so lucky to be a part of it.

*Did you have a sense that you were collecting material for a future creation that you were going to write?*

I think all through my early life I thought that I was experiencing something that I wanted to do something with later.

*You were going to interpret it later, or . . . ?*

I was going to write novels. Early in life, I guess from the time I was fourteen, fifteen years old, even earlier, I had a sense of being an alert observer. I kept a rather disorderly journal, little notebooks, with ideas in them for things that I was going to write about, or poems that I was going to write or *did* write. Now, that's the kind of a role one gives oneself ideally, that one is the observer of the world, all that. But for me, I felt I had such a great, empty void in me to be filled with experience. [laughter] I mean that my job in life at the time was to experience and do, and to try to understand and interpret what I saw, mainly about people. I wanted to know about various kinds of people and why they behaved the way they did. I wanted also to *know* them and to interreact with them and even to be accepted in other groups and people, different from the ones that I had grown up among. This business of getting away, of distancing—finding another group, finding another world, learning to *live* in another world among other people—that was a very exciting kind of thing to me. That was a sense of achievement or real accomplishment, because I felt that I was getting along in a really different, strange group of people. And going to sea was really that! [laughter]

*But among the officers, among the people that you no longer wanted to be a member of, do you get the sense that maybe it's because they weren't strange and wonderful enough?*

No. They were also new and interesting to me. I guess it was a status thing. I didn't want to be in the position of command or authority, particularly if I felt I hadn't experience enough or know enough. I had this awful feeling sometimes while I was a cadet on ships, "Who am I to be out there making even a slightly better wage than these guys down there?" *They're* doing all the work; they have the knowledge, and some of the new officers didn't know.

Nevertheless, my feeling about that was just a matter, I imagine, of class. I thought the officers were in a different world from the one that I wanted to be in on ship. I didn't dislike the officers, though I did have problems with authority, as will come out later. I did have problems with what I considered to be the unearned authority of ship's companies. These are litmus papers—the feeling about the ship owners. One old-timer used to talk about the goddamned ship owners. One old-timer used to talk about the goddamned ship owners and somebody being a company stiff, somebody who's always praising the company or overworking, doing more of the job than had to be done, trying to impress the company. I dug that. [laughter] And in a way, most of the officers were company men in that sense. They had to be. That's what they were; they were paid by and hired by the company to do a particular job. And there were very few of them that I liked personally, although I was very interested in them. I tried to get along. I wanted to be part of that too. But my *real* interest, during my first trip was gravitating toward this motley

crew—all these fascinating, different characters down there. The fact that they could work so easily and so efficiently in as complicated a situation as a ship during the war . . . the engine crew, steward's crew, the deck crew. Somehow just the romance of the work situation, had a great appeal.

The officers were connected with authority, were connected with the institutions that also, in my growing radical political frame, I saw as being the causes of war. Governments caused war; people in authority and bureaucracies mindlessly created wars for their own interests. And all of those things that later became jelled into a political view, were sort of pre-political, proto-political views that I had that were feelings of class differences. And so I was very easily influenced by the notion of “us against the ship owners.” [laughter] And later on during the strikes that was a very important basic view I had.

*Now, you didn't go to Hawaii on this first trip?*

Oh, I forgot while I was in Australia . . . . I'll just throw this in, because it was kind of iconistic and romantic. I found in a little pawn shop in Sydney, a little dusty place. Looking into one of the cabinets, I saw this beautiful, large, black opal, and it was in a funny pin setting, a silver pin setting. And it was just beautiful, a terribly beautiful thing. I wanted to bring something back like that

with me. I gave it to Kathy, but I'm not sure that I had her in mind when I first got it, but maybe I did. I have the idea that I was going to give it to somebody. Anyway, working on a ship, I had about seventeen dollars, and that was a lot of money in those days, and that was a good part of the payoff. And the guy wanted twenty, and I got him down to fifteen. [laughter] For fifteen dollars I bought this magnificent black opal, and now it's one of Kathy's prized possessions. I had it reset later; it's very beautiful. So that's one thing I recall. I brought that back with me.

And then in New York, coming through New York, while I was there getting ready to come west, there was an auction of the William Randolph Hearst collection in New York. It was in a great big, sort of rambling auditorium, kind of a dingy auditorium, where *thousands* of things that came out of whatever collections, whatever warehouses that Hearst had, were laid out on tables. And they were being sold off; sort of, I guess, the minor things of their collection. And I didn't have any money, you know, what could I buy? And I remember I came across this beautiful, little, silk painting, a Chinese silk painting, with a plain, dark, wooden, beautifully molded frame. And I got it for seven dollars. [laughter] These are the little things that one remembers at the side. I brought that back and gave it to my mother, I guess. And now we have it—one of our possessions.





## AFTER THE CADET CORPS

WHEN THE *BRET HARTE* got to New York, I went ashore. By that time I had made very close friends among the members of the crew, and I made up mind what I was going to do. I went ashore, and I went up to the merchant marine training office and told them I was resigning and handed in all my papers. They took it very casually, this wasn't unusual at all. They had me give back certain documents I had. And they handed me a document saying, "Report immediately to your draft board," which I was ready to expect. [laughter] Now, what did I do? I think I didn't have much money. I had just enough to take a bus back. That was the first time I came across country alone by bus.

*And this is your first time in New York, too, right?*

Probably. You know, I don't think I'd ever been to New York. And I didn't have much time there. I don't remember that I did much there. I was really overwhelmed by the fact that I was now out of this service, and I

thought I could be picked up and either put in the army or fined or jailed or whatever.

*Well, what was the plan?*

My plan was to go to sea—the right way.

*The right way.*

So I went across country on the bus, and I really don't recall this very clearly; I just went. It took three, four days in those days to . . .

*Sort of just sleeping and eating day and night?*

Yes, sitting all the time. It's funny I don't have a very clear memory of that; I don't remember doing anything in New York. I think I just got out of there. And went back. First thing I did when I got back after seeing my family briefly, because I don't know if I saw them first, and did I see you? [to Kathleen d'Azevedo] This is 1942. Although I knew you, I don't think we . . .

Kd: Well, we knew each other, but I don't remember . . . .

I was in a frenzy of getting placed again. And I went to the SUP Hall and went back to that little school and got my union ticket in the Sailors Union of the Pacific and got ready to ship out. Within a week or two I was shipping out. I don't think that I gave the dates of that first trip that I went as a cadet on the *Bret Harte*. See, we left San Francisco, on June 12, 1942, and I didn't get back to New York until November tenth. So about a week later I was back in Berkeley, having gone across country and resigned from the Cadet Corps. But, there are a couple of things that I didn't mention that were significant to me.

When I got to Sydney in Australia on the first part of that trip, I had very little mail. I got some mail from my mother, I think, and my brother and one or two of my friends. But there was a tube, a long tube, and it was from Berkeley. And I opened it up, and *there* was my B.A. degree! [laughter] My diploma! A very ornate one that I unraveled, and much to the glee of my shipmates, showed it around. And they thought it was extremely funny. But then the funniest part of it, the most amusing part to me was I had only gone two or three weeks of that semester at Cal. I had *not* completed my final semester for graduation. And I had pretty well given up the idea that I had a B.A. from the University of California. And so here it was—B.A. in English and Anthropology from University of California. Totally unexpected and a gift from the gods on high. And I gathered from later conversations, when I talked to people at Cal, that they had done this for a number of people. This was doing something for the boys during the war, who had either enlisted or been recruited right after Pearl Harbor.

And there was such an uproar, and everything was so awry, not only on campus, but, of course, everywhere on the West Coast, that I suppose the decision of the deans and the president of the university was “to give them their degree.” So I got my degree by default, and I've always been very proud of that and happy of the fact that I got it under those conditions.

OK, so I got back to Berkeley. And it was a very excruciating kind of experience to get *back* to my digs in the Bay Area, with all the people that were still there that I knew. In fact, most of my closer friends were either in the army, the navy, or the air force. And there were piles of letters waiting for me from them, telling what they were doing. And I learned that Kyoshi, my Japanese acquaintance from Fresno, was now in the army. He had finally been inducted after being through these holding camps for COs [conscientious objectors]. But he managed to get into some sort of non-combatant work.

My friend, Pershing Olsen, who was probably one of the skinniest and most unlikely looking privates in the army one could ever imagine had been inducted; though he *did* have reasons for being given a 4-F status, health reasons, but they inducted him anyway, and took him somewhere to Texas in some camp, I learned. And I have a letter from him, which I still have, which is absolutely marvelous; he was a very witty guy, talking about the fact, “If they want me, they can have me, but what are they getting?” [laughter] He was terribly witty! Yes, he was about five-foot-seven or eight, and he weighed about 110 pounds. And he had a head like the bust of Cicero, you know. A strange, marvelously intellectual skull and face; really a very unlikely looking private. And he said that they put him through a number of tests, and they put him in the tank

destroyer corps. [laughter] He said after three hours in it, he was told to step aside and was sent to a psychiatrist! [laughter] He said, "I don't know what my physical prowess has to do with my mind, but they think so." And I heard over time they finally decided that he probably was not good material for the army. And later—this is after I got to Berkeley—I think he went back to Fresno State. At least he got his 4-F standing. And he was willing to do it, but he said, "If they can use me, they can have me, but they don't want me, so . . ." [laughter] And my friend, Pierce, was in the air force. My brother, Donald, became a navigator, a bombardier navigator in the air force.

All this had happened within a year. You just had the feeling that the world was turning upside down, the world you knew. The group from Lyon's class, most of them that I knew, had either volunteered or been inducted. And we were all writing letters to each other. So all these letters were there from them with all this "new world," the new military world. There were still these terrible stories of ships being sunk right outside of Golden Gate and all along the coast, and particularly up in the Aleutians. The Japanese had finally gotten that far after taking the Philippines, and they were moving up. I think they controlled most of the Aleutians until later in the war. When I went to the Aleutians, we had most of it, except the farthest Aleutian island which they were still on. The name escapes me, but it was the last of the Aleutian chain. And I think they had been driven back to that. It was a very lively area along the Pacific coast.

All that was going on—the worries about the war, and the fact that I was back now, having resigned from the Merchant Marine Cadets, and was now moving into another venue and a different domain. And I had this

feeling of being lost, not knowing what I was doing, really, whether I was doing the right thing. And some people telling me, particularly my family, I should have stayed in because I was safer there, that lord knows where they will put you now. And I was 1-A, a draft classification that meant I *had* to get back to sea pretty quick, establish myself as a merchant seaman, but I wasn't sure if that really would prevent me from being inducted.

*Oh, I see. So you didn't know.*

No, you don't know for sure, because they could always say that having left this one thing to another . . . I was getting encouraging things from the union, and when I was back east, the cadet corps officer had said, you know, "Get a ship as soon as you can. Everything will be all right as long as you're sailing, as you're at sea, and you are helping the war effort; nobody's going to bother you at all." But, nevertheless, I was in that limbo. Not only pressures, but the seductive pull of what I had been doing before, and the students that I knew at Cal, like the Phillipsborns. They were still there, Ellen and Renata, whom I had known very well, also Kathy was there now.

Before I had gone into the cadet corps, Kathy and I had known each other, and I think we had dated a few times. But then this time I saw more of her, and we began to be fairly thick. I remember thinking of her as probably one of the more intelligent and bearable women that I knew. [laughter] And she was extremely beautiful. I was impressed by the fact that she was a professional dancer and that she had been in two or three different ballet troupes. And I saw pictures of her in which I remember the image came to my mind—Dorothy Lamour in a sarong. [laughter] She was much lovelier than that. She

was terrific and a terribly sharp woman—still is, I think. And she and I had a lot in common because her family lived in Alameda; born in Oakland, I had grown up part-time in Alameda. And also we had a similar sort of feeling, I imagine that's very typical of late adolescence, of having to separate ourselves from our families. Not that we disliked or hated them, but we just had to get out, get away. And she had this feeling of wanting to get away.

By the way, when I got back from this trip and I was in Berkeley, she was working in a shipyard. This is the Rosie the Riveter period. So she had a job in shipyards, and sometimes she was doing something with social security benefits or something like that. And then also she wanted to go to school, and so at one period she was staying with Ellen Phillipsborn and Doris Woodhouse and starting Cal, taking some courses. That didn't last long because it was a terribly disruptive period.

So many things were happening, and so much was going on, and she needed the money, and the shipyard offered that. I just thought she was one of the most beautiful women working in a shipyard; highly glamorous. And there were a lot glamorous things like that because they were new and wonderful. Later on, I learned an old girlfriend of mine, Esther Dinkin, had been the first woman to apply to go to sea as a merchant seaman. And it created an *enormous* stir. That was later; that was in 1945, 1946. But, anyway, I had great admiration for women who did things like this. Kathy was a great dancer and did all sorts of things.

We saw a lot of each other, and I saw a lot of my friends that were still around or on leave. My friend, George Leite, had taken some merchant ships before the war, making me very jealous. Then he had gone up and

down the coast in a fishing boat and done some fishing in Boston, and I had a tremendous sense of the wonderful luck he had in doing these things, and the feeling of envy, deep envy, because he and I were very competitive—very close, but very competitive. Somehow or other he had not been inducted. I think he had some kind of disability. I don't remember what it was. He had some problem. And he had started the bookstore in Berkeley on Telegraph Avenue; it was called Daliel's. Earlier he had worked for Creed's—that was a famous, old bookstore there, now gone. And George had worked there, while he and I were going to school together. Then later he got to know a lot of the poets and writers and artists in the area; he started the Daliel bookstore, which became well known as the avant-garde bookstore on Telegraph Avenue. He was very good at that and did a fabulous job of bringing in new materials of very special kind.

And so when I saw him, he was thinking of starting a magazine himself, in competition with this little thing that we had done—Doris Woodhouse and I—and he had helped with on campus, *New Rejections*. And so George was talking about this new venture. He even had a name for it already; I think he called it *Circle*. Later on it became a major small mag in the country for a period of years.

Anyway, that was sort of gestating. And Doris, who had been working on the next issue of *New Rejections* which was to come out in 1942 (1941 had been number one, while I had been away) had written me, telling me, you know, "Get your tail out here and help me get this thing going. I can't get in enough contributions." And so when I got back, I ran around seeing various people that I knew and writers that I knew. One of them was James Yamada. I don't know what hap-

pened to him. But he wrote a wonderful story for that particular issue we were working on.

*I notice the covers are all the same.*

That was our emblem. A young guy named Alec Hugh Thornton volunteered this. He just turned that out as a woodcut, so we used it throughout. You know, pearls before swine kind of thing. [laughter] We thought we were extremely clever. And so there was James Yamada, a young Japanese guy who wrote two or three excellent stories; we had people like Evy Blum, an old girlfriend, who was connected with the Blum candy people in San Francisco—a very sharp young writer; Frances Slater, the poetess, she became fairly well known for a while; George Eliot, who also wrote quite a bit of poetry at the time, and was sort of thought of as the young and up-and-coming poet; then Dean Jeffers . . . Oh, who were some of the others? Jordan Brotman—I don't think he ever went on to do much, but he was very able. Claude Capel; Lloyd Saxton; George Leite wrote some poetry and pieces for the thing. I wrote some stories; oh, and Robert Barlow.

Robert Barlow, was an *amazing* poet; in fact, he was something of a force in the art world in the Bay Area. Not terribly well known outside, but he was a glorious kind of a poet. Strange guy. We knew him very well. In fact, he knew Paul Radin very well. And when Radin would hold his soirees, for a group of people, Barlow was usually there. But Barlow killed himself, oh, I don't know, three or four years later. Very unhappy guy. He had done a lot of work in Mexico; he even had done work on transcribing Aztec and things of that kind, and his poetry reflected this Mexican and South American experience. I have noticed recently some of the small magazines in the Bay Area, and poetry groups,

mention him. He's something of a heroic figure of the past, pre-Beat. This was during the days of the Bohemian movement.

*Do you think the war added any energy to that creative scene there in Berkeley, that literary scene?*

I'm not sure it added energy, so much as created a whole *new* kind of energy. There was a lot of, oh, what would it be, confusion, about what was important. You know, "What are we doing? Is this worthwhile? What kind of crap is this we're messing around with?" Art and poetry, literature, you know, right in the middle of the war. And there was a lot of that kind of feeling going on.

*Was it explicit in some of the stories and literature?*

Yes, I think one of my stories in one of these issues deals with the kind of defeatist position of the intellectual and the artist. Who in the hell do they think they are? And yet I couldn't help myself—I was doing it.

And there are people like Robert Duncan, who became a very well-known poet, a western poet. Kenneth Rexroth in San Francisco, whom I didn't know myself personally, but saw him, and we knew his work. He was pre-Beat, very, very hard-hitting, crusty kind of poet.

*Do you define the Beat generation as after World War II?*

The 1950s. Yes, I would say when the group that came from the East . . . it was the easterners taking over the West: Ginsburg and Keasey, and a whole slough of people, and City Lights bookstore, and all that—the

Broadway/San Francisco phenomena. That was in the 1950s. This is before, pre-Beat.

Like Josephine Miles, whom I knew fairly well at the time, would have groups of us over, and we would talk poetry and writing; and Benjamin Lehman, who was chairman, I guess, of the English Department. He in some way was spurring people on, he had been a professor of Earl Lyon's.

And, then Paul Radin—I'd almost forgotten him. That's where I first got to know him. Coming back, I had taken courses and sat in on lectures of his as an outside extension student most of the time. [laughter] And Radin was something of a character. I could see why Kroeber and Lowie were askance at him a good part of the time, because he was a real Bohemian, and yet a very simple, straightforward, little guy—kind of rotund and very witty. And his wife, who was this very large, impassive woman—we never really knew her, we used to call her the "Magic Mountain." [laughter] And he would meet groups of young people, artists. He knew people like Varga, and, oh, I forget some of the others, and even Miles and Barlow. He'd have a lot of us over, and some anthropology students, as I remember.

Later on, when I saw Radin after the war, after I'd left going to sea, I saw him a couple of times doing the same sort of thing. He used to have these parties where he was one of the first people to use finger painting—others had been doing it, but it was not well known. Most people didn't know about finger painting. He'd have these parties where he'd have finger paints and big sheets of newspaper. And everybody would have to do finger painting. Drink and finger paint. And then everybody would have to pin theirs up on the wall and talk about it. [laughter] And he thought it was wonderful. He said it was kind of a Rorschach test [or ink blot test—the best

known projective test in psychology] where everybody had to see the work. Well, all that was kind of new at the time.

Of course, I took some of Radin's writing to sea with me, and Kroeber's wonderfully strange rambling introductory text on anthropology, and even Lowie's, *Primitive Society*. God, nobody reads that anymore. It was wonderful. But three or four things of Radin's, the work he'd done with the Winnebago, *Crashing Thunder*. I also had some of his field-work notes somehow or other.

*Oh, really?*

He was very free with these things. He would give these things out, you know. And so all that was going on in the few weeks that I came back to Berkeley. It was just a pot-pourri, a great stew, a lot of my own making. I had created the conditions by which I came back and found myself. So I was torn in many different directions about what I was going to do. I think I thought again about declaring CO and refusing to do anything, go back to sea or anything, but staying and doing this, you know; that I was going to stay home and hide out and go to the mountains and write and all that sort of thing. That was just fantasy, though, because I still *wanted* to go back to sea. I wanted to become a regular seaman.

*Did you find that this group you were reintegrating with in Berkeley was a . . . I mean could you tell them your sea stories? Could you relate your experiences to them in any kind of way meaningful to yourself, or was it an alternate reality?*

Well, yes, we were all a very loquacious bunch of people. And, of course, I had a lot to say. I was *loaded* with stories! I was *loaded* with impressions. And certain of them

became key mantras for me, I would tell them over and over and over again.

*Kind of defining moments and . . . ?*

Yes. Yes, self-defining kind of stories, things that I had seen. Oh, yes, and everybody had some stories, except those who hadn't gone anywhere, they just hung on our words and slathered and all that. [laughter] Or looked askance and critical about what we were doing. Some, you know, anti-war people, "What are you people doing? Just don't go." And on the other hand, most people, though, found what you were doing very exciting; and you knew others doing exciting things, so it was a highly effervescent kind of time. And yet at that particular time I was very lost. I wasn't sure what I really wanted to do, and I was getting a little scared about my future. When the war was over, what was I going to do? And some of this came from my parents and my brother, you know, who's a very fine guy. He wrote me some of the most wonderful letters during the war—very funny letters—that he would not now admit that he had written. I mean the wild times that he had or bragged about or invented or whatever . . . ! [laughter] But also he kept prodding me that I should do something that would get me somewhere when the war was over. What was I going to do? And that worried me, and I think it worries everybody at that age, you know. Somebody looking you in the eye and saying, "What are you going to do with your life?" [laughter] And you haven't the slightest idea what you really can do with your life. You don't know what you want. And so all that yeasting was going on. But we, Doris and I, managed to put the second edition of *New Rejections* together, and there were a lot of people around who were sort of part of this

operation. And we got it out, but I guess Doris had to distribute it later after I left.

It was in many ways overwhelming. Everything was happening at once, it seemed to us, to me. It was a terribly stimulating, and terribly distracting kind of environment, coming back to where we'd been. And the whole world was distracting and excited at the time.

My friend, Pershing, as I had forgotten, actually had come back from his experience trying to be in the tank destroyer corps or whatever and was working for the *Sonora Daily*. So he got some newspaper work before he went back to Fresno State. And a number of old girlfriends . . . I had letters from Virginia Hess and other wonderfully intelligent women at the time. I always wondered what happened to some of them. One of them married me. [laughter]

That was the beginning actually, not of the women's movement, but of a very sharp, aggressive, intellectualization among certain young women, as a new breed. They had been there at the turn of the century, in the 1920s and 1930s, but the war brought this out—a great deal of independence.

Doris Woodhouse was one. She was a marvelous woman, *terribly* able and bright, and she was determined to do everything that was not the right thing to do for young women: she swore, and she sometimes smoked a cigar, and she did this, and she did that. But she was also a very wonderful, rich kind of a person, who did a wonderful job, in fact, of putting our magazine together.

And Frances Clark, whom I had known when I was in junior college in Modesto and kept in touch with later; and Pershing kept in touch with her. Another very bright, marvelously sarcastic and ironic woman. I always wondered if she lived past thirty; she must have been a magnificent older woman, if she

ever managed to get past thirty. She was pretty wild and wooly.

And Ruthie Haugen whom I'd known when I was in Camp Tallawanda. She and I kept a correspondence, and her parents had a place up at Lake Tahoe. And Bobbie Jean Miller, whom Kathy knew very well and stayed with in Modesto. And the Phillipsborns, whom I continued to see. They were very important to me in many ways.

*Where were you living? Where did you stay?*

I lived around with different people, and I think I stayed in my old digs up on Ridge Road where I had stayed as a student.

*OK. So you still had that?*

Well, different people that I had known—Pershing at one point, Phil Hoffman, and a couple other people had lived there. So the old landlady, when I came up, you know, always found me a way to have a bed or something. And that was one place I stayed. Different people; I stayed with friends.

Later that year when I came back, I stayed with the Millers where Kathy was staying, and then she and I got to know each other very, very well at that point. And that was really the beginning of a relationship, really. Before that we just knew each other and dated occasionally. But that was pretty heavy. That was a little later.

Then, of course, now I had to do something about going to sea. At the same time, while *all* of this was going on, I was living for a while being the Bohemian. I say Bohemian now, not in the antique sense, but in the sense of the avant-garde Bohemian set. I don't know if we had any other name for what was going on in the writing and art world of the Bay Area at that time. It was very lively. But

they weren't Beats—you know, the Beat generation was later. But I use Bohemian in that sense; I mean something of an avant-garde group.

*Well, analogous to the West Bank in Paris and . . . ?*

Well, in a way, but not that grand. But, yes, I guess they considered themselves like, you know, Greenwich Village.

*Taos?*

Taos? Oh, yes, excepting those places had a rather grander image. I mean the Berkeley and San Francisco scene was not quite as fully developed as all that. But these people there were very talented, doing a lot of work.

*Well, it was more youthful and untested or whatever, but . . . .*

Yes, well, not any more youthful; there just wasn't that much going on. It was the West Coast, and there were some very good people there and good work coming out of it, but it hadn't really . . . it wasn't really a "scene," in that sense, yet.

*Did you have a feeling, when you were there, that you were part of something new that was developing, or had Berkeley already acquired an aura of being conducive to the new and avant-garde?*

Well, Berkeley had always been that, on the West Coast and particularly for a lot of the rural characters like me, coming because it was twelve dollars a semester at the time if you were from California. [laughter] I mean you were coming to the metropolis and to the center of learning and of knowledge and



of excitement. And everything was happening. And to have that as a university, it was . . . Berkeley, as a wonderful university town in those days, had that image. But it was also connected with San Francisco and the work that was going on there. So the Bay Area had a certain panache in that sense. But I don't have enough objectivity at this point, looking back, to know to what degree that was a special phenomenon.

*Well, were there other people who had started literary magazines like you did or . . . ?*

I don't recall whether early Ferlinghetti and others were putting out magazines. Certainly things were being published and distributed in presses. But, you know, I don't know if there had been previous Bay Area magazines. There must have been, but I don't know.

And people like Josephine Miles, and, well, Duncan was too young then, but she was a noted West Coast poetess, poet—used to say “poetess.” Isn't that interesting? There are no “poetesses” and “actresses” anymore! [laughter] They're poets and actors, and that's good. But, no, I don't recall.

So when George had this idea of starting a magazine with a number of others, it was really one of the first magazines that I know of out of central California or northern California, anyway, that began to have a national, international standing as a small magazine. Do you know of any other literary magazines in the Bay Area then?

Kd: No, that was one of the earlier . . .

Well, I really don't know. I don't know whether the Bay Area was considered to have a degree of standing as an “art scene” at that time, like you know, Taos, sort of like Green-

wich Village, or the West Bank. The people who were there felt that way, but that doesn't mean that they . . .

*Well, it'd be interesting to know if it was considered a mecca for young, aspiring, creative people that wanted to go someplace where there was this sort of ferment. You make it sound very exciting.*

It was. It was full by people who had aspirations.

Kd: Well, quite well-known people came out of it, like Phillip Rexroth and Everson and . . .

Oh, Everson! Right. I knew him very well. He later became Father Antonias.

Kd: Yes, but I mean he was quite a well-known poet.

In fact, I think we have some of his poems in the early magazines.

Kd: We did. I remember that.

Yes. There were a lot of people there. We were talking about whether or not it was considered to be a special scene that . . .

Kd: Well, obviously it was, because it did produce a number of people.

But like the Beat generation period in the 1950s.

Kd: Yes, it was before that.

Yes. It didn't have that kind of . . .

Kd: Didn't have the national focus and publicity.

That focus, the focus of being a center, with all of the publicity and excitement of the Beat generation. It was pre-that. There was a lot of stuff going on, but it hadn't congealed, I don't think. A lot of things developed later. I think with *Circle*, George Leite brought some kind of early pre-Beat focus to the Bay Area—that's true for writing, anyway. But in 1942, this was not even a glimmer yet in our eyes.

There were artists like Giacomo Patri, whose work we got in *New Rejections*—a very well-known artist around there at that time. Varga on the coast . . . . Oh, and Henry

Miller had now begun to make his mark. I read everything that he had written. I was very impressed by Miller's work and, of course Joyce's work. I have mentioned Robinson Jeffers and Aldous Huxley. Those are the sort of works that I was all involved with at the time, plus many others.

Now, anthropology—you asked what I took to sea: Kroeber's textbook, some works of Lowie, Radin, and Herskovits. Herskovits's *Myth of the Negro Past* had just come out, and I was very taken by that, and it had a great effect on me later on.

WHILE ALL THIS mishmash was going on in 1941 and 1942 I had had these three or four or five thickly larded weeks of confusion, and I was torn in different directions. I *had* to get back to sea or do something else. So I began spending time at the SUP hall, the Sailors Union of the Pacific, in San Francisco. I've asked myself since why I didn't check in at the National Maritime Union at the time, which I *later*, for reasons we'll talk about, became a member of. But I think it's because the Sailors Union was the best known at the time. It's the one that, when I was seventeen or eighteen, I had gone to, to try to ship out.

The National Maritime Union really was a very young union. It started in the East in 1937 or 1938. And I'm not even sure what kind of a hall they had in the early 1940s. They were there, but I just don't remember being aware of them. All I know is that the Sailors Union had been the one that people that I knew sailed, had gone out from.

*Including George Leite, right?*

Well, I don't know if he went through the SUP. He may have gone non-union; I have no idea. He was shipping out on some god-awful old freighters. He may have just shipped on anything available, through any crimp on the water front. I don't know.

But the SUP would have been the one that everybody knew about. The crew on the ship I was on [*Bret Harte*] was Sailors Union of the Pacific. And I had heard a lot from the old-timers about the early struggles not only of their union, but of Andrew Furuseth, the old leader of the SIU, and then later of the Sailors Union; he became really the founder of the Sailors Union of the Pacific. I heard about his struggles with the ship owners and his impact upon Congress and legislation. He was a very old Norwegian guy—came over as a kid, as an immigrant, and became a major American labor leader—quite a remarkable figure. Later on, I became aware of his conservative right-wing views, not only about politics but his anti-communist position. He was not very strong on integration. Nevertheless, he was a great

labor leader. And unfortunately the mantle of Furuseth was passed on to Harry Lundeberg, who was probably, in my view, one of the more corrupt influences on the labor movement on the West Coast. But he was proclaimed as the heir to Andy Furuseth, which is a lie. But I have my own beef with Harry Lundeberg on a different matter. [laughter]

So, anyway, I got my union card and my number. It was a very early number because there weren't many members.

*So it wasn't hard to do, I mean, once you went in the hall?*

No, it wasn't hard to get into the union because they wanted to grow. Well, it wasn't that easy. I had already been to sea; that helped. I mean you had to go to sea as an ordinary seaman or something to get a card or be tried out or whatever. I forget . . . you had to go to the "school" for a length of time—wasn't a school—it was kind of a get-together with old-timers showing you how to splice a line and telling you what to do on deck, which was very useful. But I'd already done that, so I just went perfunctorily. But I got my card, and I knew I had to go. Around the turn of the year, the period that I began to know Kathy very well, I began to go to a hall. You have to go and wait for your number to be called. You are in a line. That's the union hall dispatcher's job really to line up people in terms of when they applied to come to take a ship. And you have to *be* there when the ship is called and your number is called, or you miss out.

*And go to the bottom of the line again?*

You go to the bottom of the list, unless you have some very good excuse, or you left

a note in advance that you can't be there. So I began to go to the hall, and my number got closer and closer and closer. And finally, I guess it was early January . . .

*What were you classified as, or would you have been classified at this point?*

Well, at this point I was an ordinary seaman. In fact, I didn't know much more than that, but knew a lot more than before I took that cadet trip. Two trips later I was an able seaman, so I moved up rather quickly, which I was happy about. But I started as an ordinary seaman.

So I began to hang around the hall. I got a lot of the feeling of what shipping out was like from the hall, met a lot of people that I later would ship with. I think I met Bob Nelson on the ship that I took, the *Mahi Mahi*, or maybe the *John B. Floyd* later. But, anyway, the ship that came up was the *Mahi Mahi*. It was an *old, dirty, long scow*, with three or four hatches. And it was docked out at the Crockett Sugar Refinery—or was that Spreckels?

*So this is not a liberty ship.*

No. It was a big old tub, a rust bucket. It was a true, for sure rust bucket.

*An old freighter?*

An old freighter, and it really was a sugar boat. It made the run back and forth to Honolulu from the Spreckels refinery in Crockett, in the bay, and sugar would be brought back. It looked to me like a thousand booms when I got out there. It had four hatches. It was a big ship, and it had booms that looked like a cockroach on its back. An

enormous ship. And you had to go through this big Spreckels sugar warehouse.

Kd: It wasn't called Spreckels. It was C & H or something like that.

C & H . . . well, now it is, but I don't know what it was then. I'm not sure what company owned it.

Kd: I think it was Crocker.

Well, yes, I can't find that I have the name of the company and whether it was even the sugar company that owned the ship. But, anyway, it was really a rust bucket. There was so much rust on it, it looked like it'd been painted in red lead. And you went through this *great big* warehouse—and most of it is still there—the sugar warehouse and the offices along the docks there at Crockett. A cavernous place. And I went through there and thought, “Oh, my god! Where am I going? What is happening?” Had my seabag, and I got aboard the ship. And it was like being thrown back fifty years and going to sea.

There were two or three ships that I was on that were of this ilk. Another one, which I will mention later, was the SS *Alvarado*, the ship that went faster backwards than forwards whenever there was a current. [laughter] But the *Mahi Mahi*, this great, sluggish, rusty scow—the quarters were in keeping. They were the grungiest, dankest, darkest. It looked like a ship that should have been part of the mothball fleet—the ones that they took up and left for years at anchor, you know, at Suisun Bay or something, and ships that had never gone anyplace. I see now that it was a Matson ship, one of the Matson discards. A lot of ships that would have been torn apart for scrap or taken to the graveyards, as we

call them, were running at that time because there was a shortage of ships. So this was one of those.

And I remember it with a kind of affection now, but I was horrified when I went aboard. “Is this where I'm going to live? Is this what I'm going to do?” And we didn't know really where we were going, but everybody thought it would be Honolulu. And, since it had been a sugar tramp, taking sugar from Hawaii, it was infested with billions of cockroaches of various kinds. There were *tribes* of cockroaches of various sizes and varieties. And the little ones were the most offensive; the big ones would just scurry around like mice, and they'd stay out of your way. But these little ones seemed almost fearless, except that they had a way with them. [laughter] You'd come into the mess room, particularly at night, and turn on the light in the mess room, and the whole room seemed to be alive. The whole room would move—the walls, the floor, everything. You had vertigo! You felt that the world was moving around you. It was these millions of little, half-inch to inch-long kind of an orange-gray, orangy-looking cockroach, with very long feelers. And they could scamper; they would tumble over each other. And there were *waves* of them; they'd go in waves.

They'd got into the corners, and you'd see them pushing through little holes and cracks and pockets, and a lot of them going into the galley and into the food, and you couldn't control them. I don't recall whether any of the measures that were usually taken on ships worked on that ship at all. They were so deeply entrenched . . . this was their turf. That ship had become their turf. And, of course, there was enough sugar around in the cracks and everywhere, so that they were quite healthy.

*Did they get into your clothes and your sleeping quarters?*

Oh, oh! That was another tribe that was in the fo'c's'le. They were the larger ones, the black ones. And I remember waking up sometime in my bunk and looking to my side and seeing one of these *large* cockroaches with feelers pointed at me, feeling in my direction. There was one that I got to know. It would come every time I was in my bunk. It would come and look at me, and his feelers would point. It obviously had some kind of nest nearby. And I couldn't bring myself to kill that one, though we killed thousands. But that one somehow or other, I had a feeling it was a mascot of some sort, because it never bothered me. It never came onto my bunk or touched me, but it went along the ledge along the bunk. And it would stop and then face me. I knew it was aware of me. Of course, we had all kinds of stories of cockroaches sucking at the corners of your lips and your eyes when you're asleep. You know, we'd tell these horror stories, and we'd be told these horror stories. But this one never seemed to bother me. It was just going about its business, but it was aware of my existence.

So it was that kind of a ship. And very quickly, as I got aboard, I realized that it was going to be a very special trip—my first trip as a legitimate seaman, ordinary seaman. And it was also an interesting crew. They were mostly old-timers. For some reason or other, a lot of them had made that run—they called it the sugar run or the Hawaiian run—and they had worked on the ships with that company. And they were mostly Norwegians and Swedes, and that's where I learned about the *great* historical lore about Norwegian and Swedish seamen, and their reaction to each other, and I heard that wonderful song that

the Norwegian seamen used to sing, [with accent] "Twenty thousand Swedes run through the weeds, chased by one lone Norwegian!" [laughter] And the Swedes aboard had other things, but they were quieter. The Swedes were more morose and sullen and quiet, and the Norwegians were loud and aggressive. And they would speak of that as showing the difference between Sweden and Norway. You know, Norway was being overrun by the Germans, so the Swedes would make comments about the Norwegians, who gave up their land to the Germans, and never fought back, and all that sort of thing; the Swedes had something to answer for, too, and certainly the Danes and the Finns. I got into that.

*Well, were there American seamen who were signed on?*

Oh, yes, most of them were, but some of them were naturalized, they were immigrants or from recently immigrated families, living in pockets of America where they could pretty well maintain their identities, you know, and their accents.

*Did you hearken back to your own Swedish roots?*

Oh, yes. Oh, I was very much involved thinking of my Swedish grandpa, who would have understood these guys very well. They talked a lot together in either Norwegian or Swedish to one another. So there was a sector of the crew like that, and then a lot of motley seamen from various backgrounds—a Filipino or two, which surprised me, because the SUP was very racist.

*But everybody on that ship was a member of this union?*

On deck. But the Marine Cooks and Stewards was another union on the waterfront. And they were still pretty much white or Filipino. I think that the steward's gang was mostly Filipino. And then there were the firemen, the marine firemen, and the black gang, and that was another union. And all these gangs were mostly white at that time. But the Marine Cooks and Stewards and the Marine Firemen were *beginning* to become very closely aligned with the National Maritime Union, becoming more left in their orientation. And so when you found blacks—not Filipinos, they had been around for some time in those unions—or Indians or any other ethnic group, you'd usually find them in those other unions, not in the SUP.

I don't remember ever sailing with a minority on the deck gang when I was in SUP. That began to bother me a great deal, particularly because the National Maritime Union was beginning to get literature aboard the ships, and there was a lot of propaganda.

*So it's the way the unions worked, though, they would monopolize one particular ship, or the ship would have a contract with a particular union?*

Oh, yes, yes. Matson certainly had to be SUP, but certain companies were SUP; certain companies were NMU. And certain of the jobs were one union or the other. The electricians, the radio operators, the Masters, Mates and Pilots, and all that were different unions. But, yes, the union had contracts with the company. The SUP had the deck gangs; Ordinary seamen through A.B.'s and bosuns.

*What's a bosun?*

A boatswain, the sort of leader of the deck gang, yes, the work leader of the gang. Like a mate on the bridge—just below the third

mate was the bosun. And they were union guys, too. They were men who had gone to sea for some time and could handle deck gangs. So on that trip I got a real taste of being a member of a crew, and this was an extremely varied, interesting crew.

I don't think there was a gun crew on that ship. It was scheduled for Hawaii, and on your discharge paper they called it "coast-wise" in those days; Hawaii was considered part of a coast-wise run, for whatever nefarious purposes the war shipping administration had.

So the ship took off, and as I remember, when we left bay, we were plugging along at, I think, probably six or seven knots, you know, just barely moving. And I remember the pilot joking about it. I was at the wheel, I remember, and I was very concerned because I wasn't that knowledgeable, and I was getting my first taste of being at the wheel with a pilot, you know, going out. You really had to be quick, because you got all these orders, you know, "Two degrees starboard and four degrees . . ." (I'm trying to think, sometimes the pilots would just say "left and right." Some of these things I'm forgetting. I think sometimes it'd be "left wheel," "right wheel.") Then you had to answer. But going out the Golden Gate, I had this *wonderful* feeling of, "My, gosh, here I am at the *wheel* of a great ship . . . this rust bucket!" [laughter]

*[laughter] Full of cockroaches!*

Full of cockroaches and a very mixed crew. And I don't even remember what cargo or if we had cargo going over. We were going to bring sugar back. We must have had cargo, because it was right after Pearl Harbor. I vaguely recall trucks and jeeps and things of that kind, some of them on deck, but it's too long ago for me to remember. We had some sort of cargo, I'm sure.

I had this *marvelous* feeling, “*At last*, here I am, an ordinary seaman, member of a crew, and I’m going through the Golden Gate, you know, out under the new bridge.” And the pilot gave me orders, and I was *very*, very alert and worried that I was going to make a mistake. I didn’t, though. Because if you make a mistake, they just call somebody out and, “Get your ass off this bridge,” you know. Particularly a pilot, because they are very concerned about rocks and reefs and things of that kind.

So off we went. And it took a long time. I forget how long, but it was an ungodly time to get to Hawaii, because like the *Alvarado* later, but not quite as bad, we were lucky to make ten knots. And that is very slow even for a freighter. And most of the time we were doing six and seven, and that, you know, is just . . .

*Well, what’s an average speed for . . . ?*

Well, it depends on the type of vessel, and in those days if you could do twelve knots, that was pretty good. Some could go more; some could do fourteen knots or something—new ships. A good new liberty might do that in good seas. But, you know, ten to twelve knots was cruising speed in good weather.

*So you were lucky to do ten.*

Oh, I think we were doing six or seven. I mean that *Alvarado* would do two and three, and then sometimes it was a minus two and three if there was a current. [laughter] You’d move out with the coastline, and you’d see . . .

*Going backwards! Things moving this way instead of this way! [laughter]*

So those are the slow scows. And yet it was an interesting trip because it took a long time, and, oh, the food was terrible. I don’t know what was wrong, it must have been the company. Everything was bad on that ship, but it was a good, interesting crew, so we got to know each other.

Particularly the Norwegians and the Swedes were always at each other, joking and/or getting angry, and arguing politics. And then, of course, there was an awful lot of union talk, a lot of union history. One of the guys had known Andrew Furuseth very well. (I think Furuseth died in the 1930s.)

And, oh, there was a lot of talk about the labor struggles on the front, all the way to the early 1920s and the turn of the century, and the role of the SIU [Seafarers International Union], and of the dirty commies—a lot of anti-communist talk because the SUP was a very conservative union. However, there were a lot of Wobblies and radicals. One thing, when you talk about the left wing, you have to include the radical left or the Wobbly left, the anarchist left. A lot of that. And people, you know . . . there was one of those guys again who was throwing things over side. I mean it was the thing to do if you were mad; and particularly if you were on a rust bucket, an old scow.

*Did you have to guard your books?*

No. They wouldn’t mess around with shipmates. [laughter] Just anything to do with the company, the damn company.

And blacks were referred to as “shines,” I remember. And I used to get very, very thoughtful and upset about the fact that if you said anything against that, you were considered a nigger-lover right away.

*Is that a slur on shiny skin or shoe shining or . . . ?*



“Shines” . . . your guess is as good as mine. Yes, yes, shoe shine boys shined . . . and ‘nigs,’ you know, and ‘Japs.’ Well, I had had so many Japanese friends, I *never* during the war was at ease with the colloquialism of “Jap” for Japanese. And I would try to avoid the term, but to say “Japanese” among people who were using the word “Jap,” immediately puts you . . . . So I would use all kinds of circumlocutions, so as not to have to name the people from Japan. [laughter] Just, you know, “Those people are over there,” or something. And I found I was very uneasy about this.

In fact, my growing unease about that eventually led me to the NMU. And I remember reading a lot of the NMU literature on discrimination. It was in 1943, 1944 when it began coming aboard our ships. A lot of it was Communist Party literature.

*Was it aboard that ship? The literature?*

There were always some pamphlets. And sometimes they were just left in the mess room, and . . . the “sneaky commies,” you know! “Oh, look what somebody left here.” [laughter] And if somebody really felt strongly about it, they would take them and throw them over side. But every now and then somebody would hoard a few just for reading, out of curiosity, and I had a few.

And there were a number of excellent pamphlets—in fact, I own some of them; I saved some of them—which were war propaganda and union propaganda. Some of it was just straightforward trade union policy and positions. And the ones on discrimination were to me very interesting, the movement to integrate ships that gained momentum all during the 1940s, and came to a head really in 1945, 1946, and during the CMU [Committee for Maritime Unity] strike, the big maritime strike. And I would

think about our own crew: why was there not even one black on board or even one dark-skinned Hispanic, you know, a Filipino or anybody? We used to be referred to as the “lily white” union. We were the “lily whites.” And so that all was coming together in my mind on that trip, and I did a hell of a lot of reading. I wasn’t reading any Marxist literature except these pamphlets, which, by the way, gave me the name of being a hard-hat Marxist later on. I find I didn’t have much theory, but I had read a lot of propaganda—picked up my left-wing views the hardhat way. [laughter] Which was nice. It was never meant to be an insult. But I was thinking like a Marxist, I suppose, long before I ever became one or read seriously. Even though at school just before the war, I had begun to explore this literature, it wasn’t really the classical Marxist literature. It was a little bit more of the periphery of the literature.

*Also, it must not have had any relevance to what you were doing until you had this experience at sea.*

Yes, well, lots of relevance then, because I was anti-war and anti-fascist and knew people who were, and probably some people who *were* Marxist and communist. And I was pro-labor and all that, so I had been familiar with those ideas and movements, but they had not really registered in me. Actually, it’s very hard for me to reassemble in detail that period, excepting I think my political views, if they could be called that, were more sort of a general socialist orientation to events. I had an anti-capitalist as well as anti-fascist view. It was in my mind at the time, along with many people that I knew, that fascism or national socialism, was an extreme version of capitalism, so we were sympathetic, at least, to not only the Soviet Union, but to

left movements throughout the world. In China—to the growing mood of the communists in China—not just because they were communists at that time but because the kind of things they were struggling for seemed to be meaningful and reasonable to me. And certainly the Spanish Civil War had awakened that in me and in many, many others. And by the way, many seamen, particularly in the National Maritime Union, which I didn't know at the time, had gone to fight with the Lincoln Brigade, made up mainly of Americans; and many of them were American seamen.

This was not necessarily something that the members of the SUP that I knew felt very friendly about. That was, to them, a communist thing. However, that's unfair, because a lot of the sort of Wobblyesque, anarchistic, and old trade-union men with that orientation were rebellious characters. They were, I would say, radical. They didn't have a particular political philosophy, but they were radicals, and they had usually supported anything that seemed to be radical. But somehow or other communism had been already made into a very special kind of threat in American life, so that they always put that aside: *That* is a special kind of enemy and problem. But then they would praise a lot of people who did things like that, and certainly destroying company property was one of the great, heroic things that one could do. That, of course, caricatures them. That's not fair, because some of them were very thoughtful, thinking union men—thinking more in terms of labor struggles than in terms of broader political struggles.

Now, as I remember, when I took this trip, that probably was one of the worst periods in the Pacific and of the war not only in the Pacific, but generally. This was when Rommel pretty well overran North Africa

and was going into Egypt. And the Germans had attacked Stalingrad, which, of course, was an important thing among the far Left in the country, and to me, being a kind of, I suppose, inadvertent fellow traveler at the time, along with others: those Russians had suffered so, and were putting up a great fight at Leningrad, and then at Stalingrad . . . . And there was a kind of admiration for how plucky they were against enormous odds.

The siege of Stalingrad was a very important event at that time. It was a kind of emblematic moment in the war, so that a lot of people who were anti-Soviet and anti-communist felt very positive about the Russians at the time.

Also, there were a lot of ships sinking all through the Atlantic, particularly in the Gulf of Mexico and in the Northwest Coast area in Alaska. Then there was that period of the lend-lease. Of course, seamen looked upon that in the seamen's unions very favorably, because this meant more ships had to be manned to take the lend-lease materials to Europe, excepting for the fact that Roosevelt had made the agreement mainly with Churchill, and that there was a lot of anti-British feeling, as I remember at that time, among seamen and probably elsewhere, too. [laughter] "Those dirty limeys. Oh, those lime suckers, for god sakes, what right do they got? There they sit over there with their kings, you know, and millions of dollars, and they haven't done a goddamn thing. Germany ought to bomb the hell out of them." It was not pro-German feeling, but, you know, it was such anti-British feeling, a "nuke 'em" kind of view. [laughter]

Not everybody. There was an element that felt this way, because there had been this long period of the 1930s during the Depression, when England was considered to be not necessarily our friend, you know. And dur-

ing the period of American withdrawal from conflict, isolationism, and all that, in which the early British requests for aid prior to the war were looked upon as handouts: the British were demanding something, and, “To hell with them,” kind of thing. There was a lot of that sort of feeling. But all sorts of things were going on.

I guess the attack on Pearl Harbor shifted everything, so that, at least on the West Coast and among West Coast seamen and those in the Pacific, where I spent most of my time, the major concern was what was going on with Japan. And Japan, by that time had not only taken on the Philippines but a good part of sections of southeast Asia and were moving in on all the islands of the Pacific. They were not only pushing us back, but making it difficult for us to even move in those areas, all the way up to the Aleutians and China. There was an enormous range of Japanese control. So that was our concern. I mean, “What in the hell are the Japs doing?” And that word again, the “Japs,” you know. But that’s what it was—the Japs, the squint eyes. Squint eyes. “Hey, those squints.” The colloquialisms were rampant about the enemy. We didn’t have as many about Europe and the Germans . . . except for the limeys, the goddamn limeys. [laughter]

*Who were allies?*

[laughter] Who were our allies? The “Huns,” that was like the First World War—the Huns and the Nazis and the wops. But those were distant.

People on the West Coast were following all this, but the real concern was what was going on to the west, in the Pacific. Japan had been extremely successful that first year or so. It wasn’t until the end of 1943 and 1944 that the United States began to move them

back—Guadalcanal. In fact, in late 1943 there was a great flap and headlines about “Merchant Marine Refuses to Unload Ships at Guadalcanal.” I mean terrible stories, that there had been some incident where the merchant marine seamen taking cargo down to Guadalcanal during an encounter had refused to remove the cargo, and that the marines had had to do it. It was in *all* the papers. It turned out to be a complete fiction.

Oh, by the way, I think merchant marine trade unionists were very aware that every effort was being made in the American press to diminish . . . demean the role of merchant seamen. Now and then you’d get a praising editorial somewhere about the heroic merchant marines losing two thousand men out of six thousand and all that. But for the most part, it was this business, “Here’s our glorious navy, the men in uniform, fighting the war, and the merchant marine making all the money.”

But of course, we weren’t. I mean there have been studies made. We were making much less than any navy person of equal rank. And I mean the most I ever took home was two hundred dollars a month, and that was because we had risk pay for being in the war zones. For those brief periods we were in the war zone, your pay was double. Well, I never made more than nineteen hundred, two thousand a year—that’s sailing all year round. Our hourly rate has been calculated at thirty-four cents. [laughter] And on and on. We didn’t get any death benefits like the navy did. We didn’t get allotments sent home to our families, and certainly didn’t—though we were supposed to—get the GI bill when the war was over. Every attempt was being made by the right wing and Congress to discredit the merchant marine. I was aware of this at the time—this was before any kind of special political orientation, ideologic orientation.

I was aware, along with everybody else, that the merchant marine—because we were union men—every attempt at the beginning of the war had been made to make us part of the armed services.

*Completely militarize it, right?*

Yes, so that there would be control. And the unions fought that and said, “You’ll have to take the union along with the men who are skilled to work on these ships, or you won’t have them.” But the efforts to undermine the merchant marine were well orchestrated, and this newspaper story was an example. This was a completely fictional, false thing. Within three or four months marines down in Guadalcanal, marine generals, came back and reported the story about refusing to unload ships was false; it hadn’t happened; that actually the reverse had happened. The merchant mariners had unloaded ships under fire, they were on shore when they didn’t have to be, and that was the reverse that had been reported. So that scandal, the great Guadalcanal scandal, was something all of us talked about there in late 1943. I mean, this is the way it is, and this is going to happen to us. They’re going to ignore . . . if we get hit or something we’re, all going to be called cowards and shirkers, anyway.

*Well, now, I know you didn’t have a gun crew on the Mahi Mahi, but when you were on ships that had gun crews, including the Bret Harte, were the relations between the navy gun crews and the deck hands . . . ?*

Usually very good. I mean, actually, they were just considered to be a special complement on the ship, and they usually had their own mess and their own quarters. Usually . . . I guess it was aft; the gun crew quarters were

aft on liberty ships in a special part way back in the stern. They had nice quarters, sometimes better than ours. And although they kept together a lot, there was a lot of interaction.

They would come in our mess rooms, and we’d play cards and talk and listen to the reports from Sparks, and all that sort of thing. And usually they were young kids, very young kids. This is wartime; these are kids, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years old, you know! We never had any trouble with them that I can remember. But there was a whole lot of joking about navy, and navy versus merchant marine. There was that kind of bantering that went on *all* the time: That it took ten navy men to do what one merchant marine sailor did. And alongside a navy ship, these great big ships next to us, with a hundred men on deck, and we’d have three, you know, taking in the line. And then we’d call back and forth, you know, “Do you need any help?” [laughter] There was a lot of that. But I don’t remember any nasty feelings; they were there, I’m sure, at times, but I don’t recall.

*So this sort of campaign, you see, being placed at a higher level?*

But at home in the media and in Congress we were . . . . Later on, with Senator Case the Case bill prevented us from getting the GI bill on the basis that we were not trustworthy; we might turn the guns of the United States upon the United States. I mean absolutely ridiculous and horrible kinds of things: “They’re all communists, all scruffy characters, the lost of the world,” and, “We don’t need them in the armed forces.” But all during the war we *were* in the armed forces. We were part of it. But the tension was because we also had a separate, independent union organization. That was the tension; that we

could demand things. We couldn't get them, but we could demand them independently, and we had a more relaxed kind of discipline, and all that sort of thing. And then the myth of our high wages, because now and then in the Murmansk Run, for example, somebody would make very high wages for being under fire for weeks at a time; and their wages would double. Nevertheless, the same person on a navy ship was sending home extra allotments, and if he got killed, his family got eleven thousand dollars, and the merchant marine was . . . .

*Got nothing, right?*

There was, I think, a five-thousand-dollar behest of some kind. But I mean *none* of these extra things applied to us, you see. But then, of course, the idea was, we were making a great deal of money; we were a bunch of shirkers; and draft dodgers . . . .

*Almost like pirates taking advantage of the . . . .*

Exactly. Yes. And, also, that we were stealing from the ships. A lot of that happened, but I saw much more organized stealing going on on the part of the army and navy in ports that we went to. I mean *big-time*, big-time racketeer kind of stealing. And no merchant marine could actually have swung the kind of deal as someone with a uniform on, being able to re-direct trucks, whole truckloads of cigarettes, as I saw later. And so that was going on. There was a hell of a lot of graft going on. There were fortunes made abroad during the war; I don't think anybody has talked about that very much.

I saw it with my own eyes, and everybody knew that certain people in the army were making fortunes ashore and stowing it away. So, sure, there was pilfering going on. [laugh-

ter] I mean pilfering is in the nature of the American way.

*It's just capitalism, right?*

As a matter of fact, I got a letter from my mother that she had read about some seaman who had been put in jail in, I don't know, Portland or somewhere like that for stealing blankets off of ships. He got three or four years, and my mother wrote and said, "Do be careful. Don't take *anything*! Look what they do!"

Well, I *had* done it! And others that I was with, we never left a ship without something like a good, heavy wool blanket to put in our seabag, or those table cloths—on that Dutch ship I was on—those wonderful, white, damask table cloths that had come from the days of the passenger ships. And they were all beautifully brand-new, folded, never used, but they were in the ship stores. All of us took two or three of those; I took more than that. Well, that was enough to put me in jail for ten years, if anybody wanted to make something out of it.

Pilfering, petty pilfering, was the nature of the game. You never even thought about it. In fact, toward the end of the war, when the Seabees and the soldiers were coming back, and we were bringing them back from all kinds of god-forsaken holes in the Pacific, when they got near shore, they started to take off all of their clothes—the most wonderful Seabee jackets and heavy, woolen pants and socks and shoes. Some were throwing them over the side; others were just throwing them in the hold or leaving them in the various quarters that they had. And when they all left, here was the crew looking at *mountains of wonderful* clothing that was going to go probably to what became part of all those surplus stores, years after the war. Of course,

we took those. I mean I took all I could handle, all I could carry or wear on me. [laughter] I wore them for years at sea. Wonderful clothes. So, sure, that was going on.

But what did the press say? "The merchant seamen are a bunch of thieves, commies, anti-American, this and that . . ." It was a real concerted effort to undermine the seamen as union people before the end of the war. This came out of certain conservative groups in Washington that wanted to make sure that we didn't get in the pie at the end of the war.

*And it worked?*

Oh, it worked. This was talked about a lot. These kinds of political views were very much a part of seagoing conversation. Not so much "commies against our great democracy" because, by the way, nobody thought the United States was the great democracy. I never met anybody at sea, except certain company men and mates, who ever took that patriotic line. Oh, and the conversation was always about the corruption, the evil, the anti-union acts and views of capitalism, and

all that. Not Marxist—these were just trade-union, class attitudes. And there was a lot of that: "The United States was in the war for its *own* good. That's all." And when lend-lease started, "Oh, those damn limeys, what are we feeding them for?" And, "Oh, we know why we're feeding them. We're feeding them because they're going to have to buy from us after the war!" And later, the same kind of criticism of the Marshall Plan, "We're sending stuff over there; we're giving them money so they can buy our goods."

A lot of cynicism of that kind, a trade union cynicism about capitalism that was deeply ingrained. I don't ever recall anybody who was really romantically patriotic about the great democracy of the United States—they would have been laughed out of the mess room. If they were, they kept quiet! [laughter]

Now and then, somebody might say, "You're a bunch of commies!" you know, but he would never elaborate because if he started in, there would be not only an argument, he would be lectured to for the rest of the trip about, "Oh, you company stiff. You poor fink."

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## TO HAWAII ON THE MAHI MAHI

WHAT NOW occurs to me is that I was very aware of the great difference between my previous trip on the *Bret Harte* and the *Mahi Mahi*—kind of an ideal introductory trip in a way, even though I was very irritated about being a junior officer type and feeling estranged from the crew; and then working hard all trip to establish relationships with members of the crew, and finally being accepted by them. But during that trip, as I think I've already talked about, I determined to leave the cadet corps and go to sea as a regular seaman. And so that trip had this kind of mythological and marvelous sense of having gone to sea for the first time, having seen a good part of the southern Pacific, Australia, and the southern ocean and all that, and having this somewhat idealized connection with the crew. The people that I knew were sort of typical seamen, and I remember them as being particular types of individuals.

However, here I was on the *Mahi Mahi* after coming from New York, spending a few weeks on the West Coast, and then realizing that I had to get out to sea, because I had

been classified 1-A. If I didn't make that transition soon, my draft board would be after me. And so I had hung around the union hall and gone to the little union fitness school that the SUP had on the front.

And I'm thinking of this comparison because while I was out at sea on the *Mahi Mahi*, I became aware that I was among a group of individuals, members of a crew who were quite different from those I had been with on the *Bret Harte*. The *Mahi Mahi* crew was a depressed group of men, except for these old seamen whom I had a great deal of admiration for—the old Swedes and Norwegians who argued all the time, but who knew their jobs very well—the old able seamen. Some of them looked to be sixty, sixty-five years old, and still working harder and better than any of the younger men. But the rest of the crew was a motley bunch, and there was a deep kind of cynicism and anger that they had of even being at sea, some for the first time. Others were sort of roustabout types who had been to sea off and on for years.

When we got out to sea I was beginning to feel a strong sense of disappointment and

depression about seamen, because there was really an unpleasant bunch of characters. There was a lot of fighting and there was a lot of liquor aboard and drunkenness. But also this deep cynicism was expressed through things like, "Why in the hell were we giving aid to England? All those lime juicers, all they will do is to take it and use it to support their damn monarchy [laughter] And that's all we are doing. The American taxpayers are supporting a lousy monarchy," which is all right; I mean I might have partly agreed with it.

But that was the general tenor—the attitude about the war, which of course, touched on my own feelings to some degree. But to them the war was merely a dirty plot on the part of a bunch of corrupt corporations and international conspirators to make a lot of money when the war was over. All these things rang bells for me, but for the kind of guys that were on this ship, it seemed like this was the kind of world they wallowed in. And this was a little unique for me. There was always something like this on every ship, but this one had a deep sense of the meaninglessness of the world and the difficulty of it, but also a depression, a deep depression. And all I could figure is that there happened to get together on that crew a lot of the lost souls on the West Coast.

But the old seamen, I felt very positive about these three or four old guys, who were very judicious, very quiet, kept to themselves. They kept their fo'c's'les neat; they did their work excellently. They never ever argued with you; they just looked at you and went about their business. They were great at making seabags, sewing seabags and stitching canvas. They made all kinds of things. One old guy had been on the ship for a year or two, and felt that it was his home. And he said, "Crews come and go. This one is a bunch of assholes, but they . . . [laughter] they come

and go." His fo'c's'le and his partner's fo'c's'le had this beautiful macrame kind of stuff they made out of canvas. They would tear out strands of canvas and leave a kind of lacy effect; they had curtains in their rooms, on their bunks. [laughter] And everything was neat and clean. They were two old Scandinavians, and they had made it a home.

The ship was their home. And they said, "It used to be in the old days, on ships like this, there were good crews that all minded their own business and did their work, and left everybody alone. But as now you got all these gazonies coming aboard, you don't know what you're going to get," on and on. Well, I didn't want to be one of those gazonies. [laughter] I was an ordinary seaman, so I hung out with these guys, and I learned a lot from them about seamanship—just that short trip. I'm awfully glad that I was in a situation where I could know three or four old guys like this, because when they saw I was interested, they showed me things.

There is a kind of an unspoken pattern among older seamen, at least, where you don't show anybody that you really give a damn about them. And you certainly don't make friends easily. But the way you show interest is to watch them do things. And they were very glad to let me watch them do splicing in their fo'c's'les while they were sewing canvas. They had their gear out—these wonderful sail needles and the beeswax that was used not only on your fid, so it went easily through the eyelet but also on the needles, on the sail needles, so they'd go easily through the canvas. And all these little tricks and the wonderful business of making this macrame-like thing out of canvas. They made them and gave them as gifts to their old girlfriends ashore—all sorts of things—bags made out of macrame and all that. And out on deck these guys were wonderful. They knew where



*everything* was; they knew *exactly* what to do. And you'd never ask them to show you anything. You just followed them and watched what they did. If you asked them, you would probably either be ignored, or some insulting remark would be made, you know, like, "Use your eyes, you son of a bitch," or something like that. But they didn't mind if you watched them, and, in fact, were quietly very pleased that you showed an interest in what they were doing.

So I learned to do that. And at the end of that trip I really knew a lot about things aboard ship that I would never have learned otherwise. I knew the names of all the rigging and the lines; I knew how to secure a hatch properly, even how to use a winch. I had some practice when we got to Honolulu using the winch for cargo. I wasn't good at it, but I had a chance to try that. And, anyway, that was the positive side. The negative side I've already mentioned—this rather unpleasant bunch of characters, a deeply angry and cynical group of men. There were variations among them, but there was that quality.

So on that trip, on the way over, the one bright spot in my mind was I was probably going to see my friend, Francis Motofuji, who had been a pen pal way back in 1937, 1938. He and I had been corresponding up till 1940, and then I hadn't heard from him. And we had a very, very full correspondence. I still have a couple of them. He wrote poetry, Japanese poetry. He was a young guy, young kid, very concerned, very ambitious; wanted to become something important in the world, and he wasn't sure what that was. He was reflective about the war in Japan and China, the Japanese incursions in China. I'd asked about that.

He was very, very careful and cautious about talking about it, but as he had said in a letter in 1940, a lot of his friends and rela-

tives were thinking of returning to Japan, because there was a lot of anti-Japanese feeling in Hawaii and the mainland. He said people didn't seem to be able to accept even the third-generation Japanese as Americans. Although he felt American—he *was* an American—he said he wondered whether or not, like some of his relatives thought, he would have a better chance in Japan. And yet at the same time he felt very uneasy about Japanese expansion and the Japanese social system. He said, "I am part Japanese, and maybe I'm not fully accepted here; maybe, I wouldn't be accepted there, but maybe it's worth trying. At least I *look* Japanese." These wonderful, reflective letters of his and the poetry he wrote—you know, young adolescent poetry, and some of it was haiku-like, which intrigued me.

*Were you the same age?*

Yes, the same age. This correspondence started way back when I was in high school, I think. I saw an advertisement for a pen pal in Hawaii—*Hawaii!*—you know. You can't beat that. And although the name Motofuji kind of stopped me, because I wished it had been a Polynesian name, I thought, "Here is a way for me to find out a little bit about that place." And I did. He wrote quite beautiful, very intelligent letters. But then around 1940, 1941, our correspondence fell off. And I suspected it was because of this growing sense that he had of the displacement of the Japanese. Certainly, after Pearl Harbor, I understood that. Although there were a lot of Japanese in Hawaii, and though most of them stayed during the war, there was this intense negative feeling generated about the Japanese, although not as bad as was expressed on the West Coast of the United States.

*Yes, because they weren't actually incarcerated, were they?*

No, no, they were not. I think there was a lot of surveillance and there may very well have been certain Japanese or groups that were tagged as difficult or dissident. But apparently a lot of Japanese were returning back to Japan. Even though they were American citizens, they decided that the time was coming when they were going to have to make a decision. This was before Pearl Harbor, which interests me, and I didn't realize of course, though it had already begun on the West Coast. But the large Japanese population and other ethnic populations on the islands probably protected them to some degree, apparently throughout the war. So, anyway, that is one of things I was thinking, "When I get to Honolulu, I will be able to see Francis Motofuji."

*Were you still keeping the kinds of journals and notes that you did on the Bret Harte on the language—you know, your excitement about the language, the vernacular?*

Yes, I had lots of notes on what people said and what they were doing. All through my shipping period I did that. My notebooks are extremely messy. Sometimes they don't even say where I am and what ship I'm on. But at least they're in sequence. And, yes, a lot of the notations are about the way people talk and stories they told and descriptions; what they made of their lives ashore and what it meant to them.

*I'm interested in you being the observer and quickly learning how to adapt in the social setting of that ship. I mean the unspoken rules of finding someone that can teach you things, but not asking.*

Oh, you had to. If you didn't, you were very quickly not only isolated, but ostracized. There was another ordinary seaman who was a lanky, arrogant young kid, who kept talking about what a good job he could have had ashore if there hadn't been a war. And, you know, about his family being a family that was shocked to think he was going to sea as an ordinary seaman. And that he didn't go into the army because he had some kind of trouble with his lungs, and he didn't think that it would be good . . . his family didn't think it would be good for him, and all that. He was a totally spoiled brat. Everybody very quickly hated him. And, of course, when somebody gets in that position, they become a scapegoat for the whole crew. Nobody harms them or mistreats them, but there is the constant use of this person as an example of the dregs of humanity.

*Did he ever change or adapt?*

Not really. He got so he had to work, because you have to. [laughter] If you're on watch, you have to do your job. He was also lazy. He would be in his bunk, and nobody could wake him up, and his watch would have to pull him out of his bunk and shake him up and get him out on deck. And this was almost an enjoyment; it was a kind of a drama. I mean he was part of the theater of the ship. Nevertheless, he wasn't very likable. [laughter] He was kind of disgusting. He ate not only sloppily, like a kid who had never been trained, a spoiled kid, but he always ate the most of everything—especially something in short supply. He would be in there gobbling everything up. And the crew got to the point of just keeping stuff away from him. Grabbing as he put something on his plate, then putting his hand back in the food and all. [laughter]

He was that kind of a kid. He was kind of pathetic when I look back—a very pathetic kid. And he was probably very anxious and upset during the whole trip. I guess he was around eighteen, nineteen years old, but he acted like ten. And so, yes, when somebody gets into that kind of a position, or if somebody is tagged as being a little fey, a little queer, as the word used to be, they were treated a little differently. A lot of asides and jokes—seldom directly to them.

This is one of the things in small groups, particularly shipboard—and I'm sure in many other work situations—there's a lot of tolerance about letting people be what they are. Yet that doesn't mean that you're not going to talk about it or you're not going to make something out of it—but usually not directly to them. You don't want trouble.

Anybody who makes trouble is, of course, also pegged as a little outside the group. Anybody who continually creates an argument or gets boisterous or aggressive, everybody deals with them with kid gloves. You leave them alone; *don't get the guy going*.

*It sounds like what your approach was, was to really observe what the dynamic was and then to fit in.*

Maybe. I don't know if I was that clever. I just wanted to get along. I was also just enjoying the idea of going to sea. But this trip was not pleasant. This was the darker side. There were one or two younger guys—one of the black gang, one of the steward's gang—you know, that were intelligent, articulate, people you could sort of rap with, and, there were a few others. But this particular deck gang, except for these three or four older guys, were unpleasant characters.

So here I was; we were approaching Honolulu, and I had this considerable excite-

ment that I was finally getting to the heartland. I'd missed it on the *Bret Harte*; we'd just gone *around* Polynesia, from Australia to South America. And I wanted to see if I could find Peter Buck, Te Rangi Hiroa, at the Bishop Museum, because I had read his early work on Samoan material culture in Lowie's class. One of the assignments Lowie had given us, I believe, on Polynesian religion, was one of Buck's very early works written in the 1930s or so. By the way, the Bishop Museum has his work as a tourist attraction—a big pile of his books, that he wrote later on various aspects of Hawaiian material culture. He also wrote the history or the role of the Maori in populating Polynesia. He was quite a scholar, and I liked his simple, direct way of writing and the fact that he was, I think, a Maori himself or part Maori.

Lowie was interesting that way. We would get some rather obscure works. One was the man that worked in the Amazon or in Brazil, Curt Nimuendaju. Nimuendaju had worked with the Mundurucú, a small group in South America. And Lowie had a tremendous admiration for Curt Nimuendaju, who he apparently knew, because he was such an adventurous and courageous type of anthropologist. He'd worked with this very remote, hidden tribe in South America. Lowie praised him to the skies. And, also, Peter Buck, was hardly known. I remember trying to find his name in the bibliographies. He's seldom mentioned because I guess he was a minor anthropologist—and, of course, he was a Polynesian. This kind of thing was very rare in those days—a member of a non-western group being recognized as a legitimate scholar. But Peter Buck was. And Lowie recognized that. His name was Te Rangi Hiroa. (Peter Buck) he'd always put in parentheses, meaning, "This is my name for the rest of you." [laughter] And so I had an admiration for

him, and I was hoping I could see him or see where he worked.

So we come at last into Honolulu. I remember the *tremendous* excitement I had as I was on the bow as a lookout when we were coming into the bay. I don't know if I'd ever want to go back . . . well, I went once again just a year or so later, but I don't know if I'd ever want to go today, you know, to an enormous, sprawling city. The whole of southern Oahu is practically a city. But in those days you came, and it had the look of being a fairly pristine island, from a distance. It had greenery along the shore; Waikiki . . . I think there was one hotel. Later I learned that the house out on the point under the *pali*, under the mountain, was Doris Duke Cromwell's mansion. And that was about all there was. I went to Waikiki, this one long sweep of sand, and beautiful background of palms. And from the sea, except for a few little buildings, that was it. When I see pictures today, I mean my stomach turns over at what it's become.

So we came into this beautiful harbor, and I remember having people point out, saying, "Over there, to the west, is Pearl Harbor." And I must say—I'm very curious about my own reaction to this—I did not want to see Pearl Harbor.

The ships were laying on their sides. You couldn't see much of it, but you knew the area of the docks and some ships at anchor was Pearl Harbor. This was only, gosh, a year and a half from the attack on Pearl Harbor. But I just had this feeling I didn't want to know about it. I mean I knew about it, but I didn't want to *see* it. And it wasn't because I had any queasiness about it. It just to me . . . you know, I guess, it was irrelevant to my interests. I'm a little ashamed of this, but it's the way I felt. I was very ambivalent. I'm not very clear on what my feelings were about that, excepting I did want to sort of ignore

Pearl Harbor. Though I was quite aware that I had very strong feelings about the attack on Pearl Harbor.

But here I was in Hawaii! [laughter] I was twenty-two years old; I guess I can be forgiven some strange reactions. And then the members of the crew—there were certain of these roustabout members of the crew—making all kinds of comments about, "Yes, there goes all the taxpayers' money. That's what we're paying for." There was very little sympathy among this particular level of guy; little sympathy for the war, the war effort, or the American response to it. And I was ambivalent. Not that I didn't feel that my own country had every right to be reacting against this and defending itself against it. At the same time I had very strong doubts, which I don't think I have now, because I have more historical background, but I had serious doubts about how we'd gotten into the war, and *very* strong feelings about what we had done to the Japanese on the West Coast, and certain of my friends—I was wondering about Francis Motofuji and all that. So I had these mixed, rather, what you call plural, early views, without much knowledge. I didn't have much knowledge about the politics of the situation. But I still had questions. I was still ambivalent about wars and how they start and what they really mean. But my feelings weren't the same about this war as some of these very cynical, mean-minded characters that I was sailing with, who really didn't have any interest in anything except the denunciation of the universe.

However, I do understand them. [laughter] I understand the kind of men they were and why they were that way. They were from the dregs of the slums of western cities. And some of them had been at sea; some of them came to sea because they had to do something, and that's what they did. They weren't

acceptable in the army; they had drug problems and all that. The *Mahi Mahi* was a unique ship. I had sailed with wonderful crews, but *not* that one, except for my old Swedish-Norwegian friends.

Anyway, here we were in Honolulu, and we finally docked, and there was a navy ship that had just docked ahead us, and all the navy men were getting off and had been given leis. They were being decked with flowers. It was a small destroyer. We hadn't an escort or anything; we just come slopping in on our old rust bucket. And here we were docked near these guys, and we were watching, you know, "Where is our greeting?" "Where are the hula girls?" [laughter] Here was the navy all decked out in their white uniforms and all that, coming off the ship, and a lei being placed on each one of them, and some kind of music—some kind of awful, popular music. Maybe some horrible crooner like Tony Martin, whom I had hated at Treasure Island, because he was an officer at Treasure Island and would give concerts [laughter] and croon. His voice would be on the intercom, and I just hated crooners. So, anyway, that was one introduction.

Nevertheless, here we were, docked in Honolulu, and we had a lot of work to do. We were taking off a cargo, which escapes me—I don't recall what it was—but we were going to be taking on pineapple and sugar. And, of course, hearing the comments like, "Well, we're sure aiding the war effort. We're taking sugar and pineapple back to the States. We're taking gin and rum to the world and taking back sugar and pineapple." And I thought that was a very justifiable bit of cynicism. [laughter]

I did have a little shore leave. I'm not too clear on time. I figure we were only there a few days. But first thing I did was try to look up Francis Motofuji at his old address

that I had from one the last letters he'd written. I didn't see him, but I saw members of his family. They were very suspicious of why I wanted to see him. Everybody was suspicious in those days, and they had reason. Here was this white young guy, this kid, comes up, dressed pretty frowzily, I guess—I probably was clean—and looking for a relative. It turned out this was his aunt or somebody and cousin living there. Finally word got to him, and he got in touch with my ship. He sent word, "Yes, I'm indeed here." So I spent one *very* interesting day or two with Francis. He had changed a great deal. He was now a rather dignified, careful young guy, and probably for good reasons. But, you know, I felt that he had decided he was grown up. He kept telling me, "I hope you burned all my letters that I wrote you. I was such a child; I was such an adolescent."

I said, "I thought they were wonderful. I liked your poetry, and you were doing a lot of thinking."

"Well, a lot of that," he says, "is just what adolescents do, and *I'm not adolescent anymore!* I've got serious things to do in this world."

He was *very* careful, as were the members of his family I had just briefly met. We never mentioned Pearl Harbor. It was *never* mentioned. There was a lot of difficulty on the island; the people were confused about what was going on, and he was, too. I said something about, "Well, you never went back to Japan."

He said, "No, I'm an American. That's all there's to it." And yet I felt there was kind of a tension, that he didn't know how much he could talk to me, and I didn't know how really to talk to him. But he was extremely hospitable. He took me *all* over Honolulu, a small town in those days.

It looked like a village, as I remember it. There was a long main street and I think a streetcar or a bus that went all the way out to Waikiki and along Waikiki. And there was a lot of vegetation. I remember very few things like hotels or houses. There was a lot of low-income housing and neighborhoods. There was a Portuguese section, a Japanese section, and a Chinese. I was fascinated by this multi-ethnic quality of Honolulu. And then there was downtown and then places where there were wealthy people and mansions, but I'm not sure just where these places were. Some of them were up in the hills along the *pali*. But you had the feeling of being in a fairly rural town. He took me out—I'll never forget it—out toward the *pali*, inland, through a large, what I guess would be called a slum or a ghetto, but a nice one—a clean, tropical ghetto. A tropical ghetto, with unpaved streets mostly, but something very beautiful about it, because there was so much greenery. We were in the Hawaiian section. These were mostly laboring people of the lower-income section of town well out on the edge of what was then Honolulu. We went to a large park; it was all lagoons, with Japanese gateways, and beautiful Japanese gardens. It must have been *acres* of this. And you got into a little boat, a little skiff, and you poled yourself out to little houses—stilt houses—on this large lagoon. You tied your boat up, and you went up and sat on the mats. You sat for a few minutes. And then another skiff would come with a beautiful Japanese woman in a kimono, you know, with a little brazier and tea to serve you tea and dinner. I remember that because it was such a far cry from anything I'd had for weeks! [laughter] And here I was, sitting in Honolulu in a Japanese garden, with all these little houses on stilts, where mostly Japanese people were eating. In fact, I don't remember any other

Caucasians around. I always have wondered if it's still there. I doubt it. It was a series of little lagoons. And these big goldfish, koi fish. You dropped rice, they would come in droves.

He and I talked for two or three hours about things. The war came up, and he told me at one point, "I'm too upset about it; I can't really talk about it. I'm torn in many ways." He said, "I am not sympathetic to what Japan has done; at the same time, I don't feel completely accepted here." And he said, "I'm torn, Warren. I don't know quite what . . . I don't like to talk about it, because I might say something I would regret," and on and on.

We talked about literature and the things we'd read, and films we'd both been very impressed by—*All Quiet on the Western Front* and *Idiot's Delight* and a number of other films that . . . Oh, and *Algiers* with Hedy Lamar. We both agreed that she was a fabulous beauty. He had seen *Algiers* three or four times, and I told him I'd seen it five because I was an usher in a theater and saw it every time I could.

So, you know, all this went on, and he did show me Honolulu. Then that was the end of that, because he had things to do, and I was going to be leaving.

*Do you remember what he was doing for a living?*

I'm not sure. He was going to school, University of Hawaii. But he also had a job, and I don't remember what it was. He was talking about getting into some alternative military group, either ROTC or something, but he was *very* reticent about this. It was obviously something that bothered him, and he didn't really want to discuss it. But it was a wonderful thing to have been able to see him. He was a very fine guy and then to see him actually after having him as a so-called

pen pal. And yet we never kept contact with each other after that. I never wrote him, and he never wrote. So that was sort of the end of an era.

I had to go back to the ship a couple times to be on watch and would help with cargo loading, although the longshoremen were there—the ILU [International Longshoremen’s Union]. By the way, that was the period in which Harry Bridges was being attacked as a communist and slated for deportation, a case which, years later, he won. And the ILU was very active on the islands.

But we were on watch not only to watch the ship, but we had lots of rust to chip on that ship. [laughter] And also, occasionally, to take turns at the winches where cargo was loading, which I enjoyed learning.

*That’s actually operating the winches?*

Operating the winches. At that point I was ordinary seaman, so I couldn’t do it alone, but I would work *with* somebody, and they would let me do it. And I found that intriguing. It felt wonderful to be able to move those booms and bring on the cargo of pineapple and sugar . . . . [laughter]

*For the war! [laughter]*

Sugar for the war. For the war effort! [laughter] With the attending cockroaches, a new sort—a new genetic input going into the ship! That’s why they were so healthy—they were constantly being infused with new genes. [laughter]

Well, anyway, one day I just took off to go to the Bishop Museum. And I remember walking into this place. I vaguely recall it was very beautiful—small at that time, but a beautiful building. And I walked into it, and there was a long corridor. All this is from a distant

memory. We’re talking about 1943. Almost fifty years. Well, so give me a break here! [laughter] Anyway, I do remember this long corridor, polished floors, out to a kind of a garden area, surrounded by the building, a cloistered garden. With all kinds of plants—banana, hibiscus, and orchids—everything growing in it. And there was a desk and over on one side in a little room on the side, and I went and I said, “Is Dr. Peter Buck here?”

“Well, who are you?” said this woman.

I said, “Well, I’m from the States, and I’m on a ship, and I’ve always admired him, and I wanted to meet him.” And I said, “I want to meet Te Rangi Hiroa.”

She immediately brightened up. I think she was either Hawaiian, or she may have been Portuguese. And she said, “Oh! So you know his name! Wait; I will see.” So she went, and this little guy came out—at that point he was probably in his forties. And he was *extremely* cordial and polite.

He sat me down and said, “Well, I’m going to have to do the hospitable thing. If somebody comes *all* the way here to see me, I’ve got to do something.” So he called for two fresh coconuts, and with his little machete, cut the tops off and poured the milk out into glasses. He and I had coconut milk together. [laughter] I’ll never forget—I was moved and pleased about this. And we talked briefly about his work and about the museum. He showed me through the museum and the collection.

*Now, was he the director of the museum or . . . ?*

I think he was the curator at that time. He later was director for a period of time. But at that point I’m not sure. He showed me the collection that he had of Hawaiian and other Polynesian material culture—all this magnificent weaving, the feather work, the

headresses, the incised calabashes, *all* sorts of things that were to me magnificent, wonderful. The weapons, photographs of very sacred sites. He was doing some archeological work—he did quite a bit. He was working on the book that later came out on the dispersion of the Polynesians and on the Maori. I don't remember much about it, except I was so deeply impressed and pleased.

*Do you think he was surprised that someone, you know, a seaman from Berkeley . . . ? I mean did you talk about Lowie at all or . . . ?*

Yes. Oh, he was very pleased. When he heard that I was a seaman, he was even more pleased. "Oh!" he says, "I come from a culture of seamen." And I told him that I had read of him in a class of Lowie's . . . "Oh, yes! Old man Lowie! Yes. Oh, fine!" And he wanted to know about the department, of course. By that time I was a little separated from it, but he asked was I going to be an anthropologist? And I said, well, I wasn't sure. At that time I didn't know what I was going to do.

But I was very disappointed in Honolulu and Hawaii. I mean these few high moments were great, but here was this gorgeous tropical island, the world of Polynesia that I had been reading about and yearning to see. And here it was: a rather tawdry, sad, little town, full of American sailors and soldiers, all of whom were very bored, depressed; drunken groups of men going down the streets from bar to bar, and I was among them.

There's something called Primo gin, Primo beer and five-island gin. There was very little available. And five-island gin was a terrible, horrible fire water. It was the worst! [laughter] I remember drinking with a group of guys from the ship and going around from bar to bar getting very, very drunk. And then

sake—always there was sake available. I remember one night just before shipping out, getting so drunk that I couldn't get back to the ship. We were on—I think it was this little streetcar—going out to Waikiki, and hanging onto it like a cable car. I was with somebody else, some other member of the crew, both of us sloppy. We were just kids, sloppy drunk, and in Honolulu.

And at one stop, where there was a big stretch of sand, we got off, and I went down and fell onto the sand, and didn't wake until morning, with the water lapping at my feet. This sudden tide had come in. And the water was washing over my legs, and I woke up feeling just horrible, but being aware of the most marvelous air, the sound of the sea, you know. I was still young and healthy enough to have a hangover, but still be able to enjoy life, looking around—"Here I am on Waikiki." [laughter]

"Here it is! This is it!" And I guess I had to wake this shipmate of mine up, and he was in awful shape. But I was feeling pretty good, except for a mild headache and feeling silly. And we went stumbling back and got this little tram, and got aboard ship, and took off.

*So did you go swimming while you were in Hawaii? [laughter]*

That's a good question. Yes, I did. That day when I woke up on the sands of Waikiki in early morning with a hangover, I remember there was nobody on the beach; there was nobody around in those days. And I remember just taking my clothes off and in my shorts going in and taking a swim just to . . . [laughter] just to relieve the pain of a hangover, which it did. It was wonderful, beautiful water: Just absolutely magnificent clear, sparkling water and surf. But the guy that I was



with, my shipmate, he was just too soggy still to . . . [laughter] to go in. Anyway, I came back, dried off in the sun, and put on my clothes, and we went back. A little footnote is that seamen really don't swim. Any seaman who likes to go swimming, who's always talking about swimming, is immediately pegged as a land lubber. He's just come from shore. He's new. Most old seamen, the older seamen . . . some don't even know how to swim.

They have very little interest in going in the water. I remember later, in the South Seas, they didn't want to swim. They always wore heavy shoes, heavy dungarees—they wore their work clothes. Even in the hottest weather, they would have these heavy shoes on. Going around in sandals was considered really freaky. And they also wore their winter underwear. [laughter] The older guys.

The younger guys, if they'd been at sea any length of time, just had lost interest in those things. They might swim when they're ashore at pools and things like that, but there's not this great interest you see getting into the ocean and all that sort of thing. But I did go in there, not because I was that kind of a seaman; just that I found it very helpful to get in the water that morning and to wake up.

So, anyway, we got back, though I don't recall the trip back. I think we came back to San Francisco in middle March. We had been gone about two months.

*Now, were there any incidents at all related to the war, or did you just take this in your stride by this time, of alerts if someone had seen a submarine or . . . ?*

Yes, it's interesting that I left that out. Of course, there were. That Hawaiian trip, we were constantly on the alert. And I remem-

ber the first mate saying, "With the crew we got here, we could be blown out of the sea, and nobody would know the difference!" [laughter] He said, "I wouldn't trust one of the goddamn guys (except the old seamen) to spot a sub or anything out there. They wouldn't even see a destroyer or a sub if it was within two feet and out of the water. They wouldn't see anything." And that's true. There was a great deal of disinterest in that crew. But I remember that some of us who were on lookout, were constantly on the alert, because we got these reports of subs all around us, and we were alone with ships being sunk just to the north and to the south of us. And these reports would come in on the ship's radio. So, yes, there was that going on all the time, but somehow or other, during this whole period, you begin to take that for granted.

*Yes, just take it in stride.*

Yes. And I would only remember the few instances later on when we were actually attacked and when we saw ships sunk and things of that kind.

At night, we had the blue lights in the passageways. We had these pale, blue lights. These were blackout lights. And I remember that first night out from Honolulu, all these guys who had been drunk ashore wandering around in a kind of a blurry daze through the blue lights, looking out of passageways, pallid and ghostly, looking like a bunch of Draculas, and groaning and belching and vomiting.

That was quite a trip; when I think of it on the least likable ship. And it was my first one as a regular seaman. I realized that this was no picnic. And Honolulu wasn't all that I had expected to be, and yet I had some valuable moments there. And then I'm still

curious about the fact that I never went out to look at Pearl Harbor. I don't remember any member of the crew going out to look at it. It wasn't the thing to do. Now it's a tourist attraction.

But I think there must have been a great deal of denial and reticence about the place, *even there* in Honolulu. Nobody really wanted to think about it, look at it. It was a graveyard and a recent graveyard. I don't think that's all that I was responding to. I just didn't want to be distracted from what to me was more important, these other things. But, yes, there was that. I don't remember people talking about it *there*. There was no discussion about it.

*Well, I can certainly see why you wouldn't discuss it with your Japanese pen pal. I mean that seems almost like a matter of courtesy, but . . .*

He didn't bring it up. Well, now it comes back to me, too, that there was a lot of talk about the dirty, rotten Japs, "the squint eyes," at the bars, by the soldiers and sailors and even our guys—you know, "The dirty, rotten Japs doing this and that. 'Squint eyes.' We

should bomb them out of existence," which didn't take long for us to do. Yes, there was *very* strong anti-Japanese feeling. And that's, of course, what somebody like Francis would be reacting to. And I reacted to it, too.

I felt *very* uncomfortable with this kind of thing. Not that I was pro-Japanese, but I wasn't ready to characterize, to stereotype them at this point. And, oh, yes, the charades that would go on—people imitating Hirohito and the Japanese dialect and, oh, it was even worse at that time than the anti-black feeling: You know, the "shines" and "jigaboos."

Among this SUP crew there was a lot of that. When we'd see a black on a new ship, they would say, "This is a jigaboo ship," you know. And by the way, that got me thinking a lot very early. All through that next two or three years when I was on SUP ships, more and more I became aware of the fact that the crews that I was with were—not every member of the crew—were generally anti-black, anti-minority, deeply ethnocentric in their views. And that was probably common throughout the American life at the time.

## ON SHORE AGAIN

THAT TRIP on the *Mahi Mahi* was, I suppose, where I got my feet wet, literally, and realized that the romance of the sea wasn't all it was cut out to be. Though I continued to have this great sense of excitement about going to sea, I realized that there were going to be some real unpleasant times, rough times. At the same time, I was feeling very good about being an ordinary seaman and doing it well, with a possibility that I might now be able to go back—because during the war they were pushing people through faster—I might be able to get my green ticket as an able seaman. Actually I did when I got back. So I made this quick jump from ordinary seaman, which usually takes two or three years. But my cadet experience helped, and then this trip as ordinary seaman.

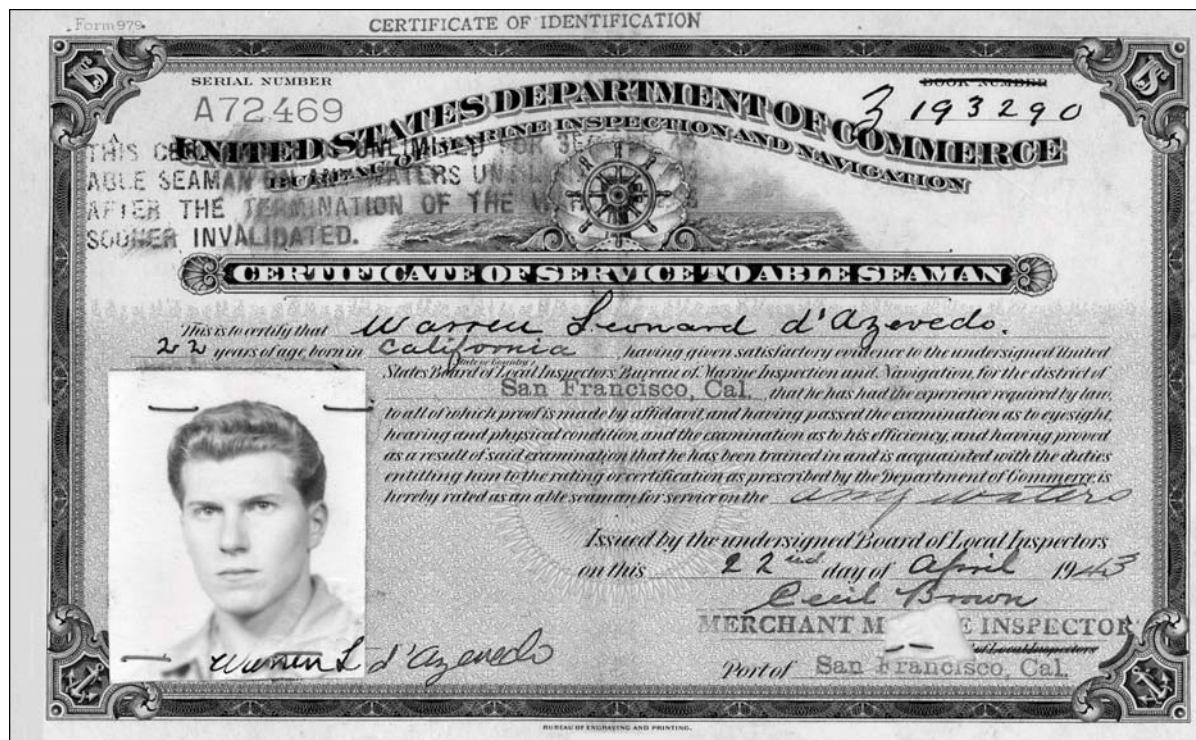
*Was there a test you had to pass?*

Yes, you had to pass a very simple test, but it also had to do with time and the ships you'd been on, what you knew about this or that or the other thing. There'd be kind of a

verbal interrogation, and it was wartime, so they weren't too particular.

*Did you have to be recommended by somebody for that?*

Well, the union had to send you to do this. So, anyway, on that trip also, I really saw—and I've already touched on this—I really saw the differences of orientation among various seagoing people at that time, during wartime. And saw, also, this very strong anti-owner point of view. The ship owners were really the enemies. Everybody took that on—even new people were soon talking about the goddamn company stiffs and the phonies. Anybody who said anything nice about a company was a phony or a company stiff, a company man. And that would be true of all the mates and the skipper. Even if you had a good mate or a good skipper, they had to be company men. They were working for the company; they had to do what they did. Oh, I remember one old guy saying, "You know, aren't the companies great? Aren't they wonderful—for being there to make jobs for



Warren's Able Seaman Certificate.

us? Their whole concern is to make jobs for us and good conditions for us.”

That kind of deep, dark humor went on all the time. “You know, the government exists to make it possible for us to have jobs and to live. And the companies—they’re really working so hard to give us these jobs.”

So that was one thing, and anybody who was pro-company was a phony or a company stiff, as against the real radical element. And that included the old Wobbly types. There were no reds in the sense of politically left people, or if there were, they kept their mouth shut, because these were highly conservative, *anti-communist* crews.

*But was there leftist literature still available on the ship?*

Yes, well, later. Yes, I had seen it. But later on there was a lot more of this literature on the ships. In fact, later one problem I had

when I got dumped out of the SUP, was that I had supposedly passed out NMU literature on discrimination. I think I did. But that was much later.

But, at this time, the radical element were the Wobbly types, the anarchists, the old characters who had been hobos during the Depression. The hobo world was talked about a lot. Oh, and some of the older guys would say things like, “When the war is over and I can get off this goddamn ship, I’m going to put an oar on my shoulder, and I’m going to walk inland. I’m just going to walk inland from whatever port I’m in. And when somebody says to me, ‘What’s that?’ I’m going to stop there, and I’m going to make my home there. That’s my home. I am through with the sea.”

But then somebody else would say, “Yes, but you’ve been saying that for the last forty years, so, you know, don’t give us all that bull.”

However, there was another element mostly among those in other unions: They were extremely *proud* of being seamen, where they were putting up a real fight about these attitudes about seamen; they were demanding respect; they were asking for a seaman's bill of rights, which came up as a political issue towards the end of the war. I was just getting little indications of this through the scuttlebutt, through the grapevine.

And here I was on one of the worst kinds of ships at that time. All the SUP ships weren't that way, but this one just turned out to be a real slum bucket.

So, anyway, we got back to San Francisco. And I was ashore about a month and a half, in which time I *buried* myself in the problems of getting out another issue of *New Rejections*, our magazine with Doris Woodhouse, and seeing Ellen Phillipsborn—both dear friends of mine and former girlfriends—and then Kathy. Kathy also knew them, and they were friends.

Kathy was working in the shipyards. And I remember seeing a lot of her, and talking about the fact that she wasn't dancing anymore, and I hadn't really been doing much writing, and that, you know, we were really caught up in this vortex of the war, and, what was happening to our lives. And Kathy and I had a lot in common. I had a tremendous respect for her. She was and is an extremely bright and insightful kind of a person. I just felt she was one of the few women I'd ever met that I could have a connection with and feel positive about. And she was so *terribly* intelligent and so beautiful—an absolutely ravishingly beautiful woman. I remember telling Francis Motofuji, you know, when we were talking about Hedy Lamar. I said, "Well, I know somebody who looks just like Hedy Lamar and Dorothy Lamour put together, you know, if not better." And I was thinking of

Kathy. I didn't really know her well, but we were seeing each other.

So I saw quite a bit of Kathy that time ashore. We went around a lot, saw some shows, and all that, and knocked around with friends.

Among my main tasks with Doris Woodhouse was to try to pull *New Rejections* together, which we did, and it was quite different than the previous ones. This one in 1943 was a labor issue. It wasn't a great magazine, by the way, but there wasn't much going on at the time, so for people at Cal and apparently for others who picked up and traded copies of this thing, it filled a niche of sorts. James Yamada [a student at Berkeley] wrote an article on the samurai, and I did sort of an anti-war free association piece called the "Inner Dialogue." And there were a number of pieces that were aimed either to labor or to work, because some of these people had now gone to work either in the shipyards or elsewhere, so they were writing about this experience. And then the work of Giacomo Patri, who was a well-known artist in the area, who did woodcuts of laboring situations, primarily of the waterfront.

*Is that the issue that has the one of the merchant ships on the cover?*

Yes, yes.

*That's quite something to have an article about the samurai in a wartime literary . . . [laughter]*

Well, it was a metaphor for fighters.

*But weren't the samurai elitists?*

Oh, yes. But this was really at the beginning of an anti-war critique of the war and in praise of labor. Patri's art was all about the

waterfront and also about concentration camps and Jews and Nazis. So we were beginning to get politicalized in a way and critical.

Doris Woodhouse and Ellen Phillipsborn, of course, were very, very, very far left from me at the time. In fact, I think Ellen was working for the California Labor School in San Francisco. It was a marvelous organization. I got involved in it very much later. But it was supported by donations and by various unions throughout the area.

*Was it to educate children of laborers or to . . . ?*

Oh, no. No, the Labor School was a kind of open college, where all kinds of courses were given by various fairly well-known figures in the area—scholars who had a labor or a leftist interest. Courses on the history of the Negro in the United States; history of the labor movement; series of lectures on English as a foreign language, I was going to say! [laughter]

*That's wonderful! [laughter] I think we should start one at UNR.*

But in fact, I did a course in that. That is teaching English as a second language. [laughter] I love that: "English as a foreign language!"

I mean one might well have called some of these courses just that. But, anyway, it was a *lively* place, full of events. A lot of artwork came out of it; crafts work; the posters that were later done for the strikes and things like that, most of them were done by California Labor School artists who were also working in the various unions. And it was very left. I mean it was a hangout, I suppose, for members of the party at that time, as well as others.

So it was a *very important* center for trade union interests and left thought at the time.

So Ellen (Phillipsborn) was working there. And I remember getting clippings from the *People's World* from her in the mail when I was at sea—articles on what was going on in Europe, articles on race relations in the United States, articles on various events in the *People's World*, a lot of them having to do with California Labor School activities. So I was beginning to churn around more in that world and in a much more serious way, because these people were very serious young people. Ellen and Doris (Woodhouse) were marvelously intelligent young women, and Kathy also knew them and was hanging out with them. She knew them through me, but then she had formed a connection, a relationship with them independently, and she and Ellen Phillipsborn got along very well.

*Do you remember if there was an overt feminism at that time?*

Oh, yes, but I don't know what to call it. Women's rights kind of thing. I told you about that very good friend of ours, Esther Dinkin, who had applied to go to sea as a seaman a little later in the war. And she made it, she made a trip or two. It got a great deal of media attention.

And Kathy in a way was among these women that we knew. Kathy was much more reticent on this; it was fairly new to her. But she was very forthright particularly about the war. Women were doing work in shipyards. They were riveting; they were working as alternate longshoremen. I don't know if they were in the longshore union, whether women were working on the docks . . . I think so. I think that was the period in which some women were working on the docks. You

know, there was a great deal of this kind of talk, that women were wanted; they were needed. But, "As soon as the war is over, they're going to try to get rid of us, but we're not going to do this." It was that kind of an attitude, where, "We are going to continue to demand to have this kind of work."

*Well, the gate's been opened to the . . . .*

The gate had been opened. And, of course, the young women that I knew were left wing. It was more than just the role of women and feminism or . . . I don't think they used that word then. It was women's rights, women's rights.

*But I just wondered if there was something overt in the left-wing movement that was liberating to women.*

Oh, yes. I guess I knew then, but knew certainly better later, that a very strong part of the Communist Party's platform was on women's rights and women's equality, and using the Soviet Union as an example of women working, doing all kinds of jobs that men had done.

*Well, you just don't want to waste that human resource. [laughter]*

Yes, of course. But, no, it was also a strong philosophy.

*My comment was a little cynical. [laughter]*

No. That's exactly what one could say. It's true. I mean, who can argue that?

*Women on a pedestal is a great waste! [laughter]*

Of course. Well, I don't think the Right would agree with you today. Their idea of women as human resource is for women to be at home with their children and taking care of their husbands. But, no, there was this strong feeling—women's emancipation—and women's rights. And the Communist Party was very, very up-front on this, as well as on racial discrimination. They took the lead; I mean they were the vanguard. And that was very attractive to me.

It was certainly attractive to a lot of people that I knew. You know, if you wanted to find straightforward, open statements about the role of women in society and the evil of discrimination and what to do about it, the Communist Party had it, as well as those unions that were left-wing unions.

*Was the California Labor School overtly associated with the Communist Party or just had the same ideas?*

Not overtly, but it was assumed by everybody, particularly the press, particularly the media, particularly from the Right that it was a "red school," it was a communist school. However, it was much more ecumenical than that. I mean there were all kinds of people—you know, from sympathetic, to fellow travelers, all the way to very active communists, who worked pretty much in those days in the open. I mean they admitted what they were. So the California Labor School was a center for the Left.

*Are you doing anything at this point about your interest in religion other than as an ideology?*

No, at this point I had become pretty secularized. I mean, *always* there was this element of interest in religion as a phenomena;

also it had attraction poetically. It was in a sense a glorious kind of spiritual phenomenon. But organized religion was an anathema to me. I mean, I felt any organized religion, was in itself *bad*, you know, and corrupt. Particularly Catholicism, which linked me back to my father, and then the charismatic churches of my mother's parents. Although they were the most interesting, and they were the most lovable—examples of simple, primitive religion—they were still religions. And the Protestant churches were to me a pallid version and far cry from the inquisition and the death and transfiguration in the development of the Catholic church and all other religions of the world. At this same time I was affected by the existence of large religious groups, as a wonderful ceremonial phenomena. I was interested in it aesthetically. That's it—I had more of an aesthetic interest in it. But, I was by that time an avowed atheist.

*And you're seeing your parents at this point?*

Oh, yes. Yes.

*I mean did you go home and are they getting interested in what you're doing, or . . . ?*

Oh, they were. My mother wrote voluminously to me, which I'd forgotten. I have since found some of her letters. I think she wrote weekly and very dutifully, and tried very hard to be understanding, tolerant, and in wartime, you know, as one of the boys off to war, not to say things that would make me feel bad. But always underneath was, "Are you praying?" and, "Are you doing this?"

And I never wanted to say to her, "No, I don't pray. I don't care about those things." But they knew it and there was some tension there. But I must say my folks were remark-

ably tolerant. Now that I have also had children and seeing what happens and going through their adolescence, I thought, you know, what pain I had given them.

However, I had to give them the pain, because I was going through this learning experience. I was assuming my own identity. But at the same time, I'm more and more aware of what problems and what pain it gave them, because the word got around in my hometown that I was a communist seaman—well, that came a little later—but that I was a seaman, and that I might always go to sea.

*Now, were they still in Modesto?*

Oh, yes, yes. That was their home. But, anyway, later I became notorious in a sense, because there were times I got in the newspapers and things like that, but, no, at this time they just knew that I was drifting away into a very bad life; I was moving in very, very bad circles. And hopefully I could be rehabilitated when the war was over, and all that.

*When you saw them, would you go home to Modesto, or would they come to the Bay Area and visit you there because you had relatives there, too?*

Yes, they would visit my Aunt Edith, the one in Oakland. I'd see her whenever I could. I could always get a good meal out of her! And also I'd see my grandmother, Amalia, my Portuguese grandmother. I'd see her whenever I could—not often, because she had moved to Alameda, to a little apartment because she didn't have any money. She had lost everything, and her husband had died—my grandfather had died. Oh, yes, she would write me these flowing, highly charged and eloquent Latin letters. And I began to see



what the problem was for my father because she could create guilt so beautifully about not having seen you, and wondering and dreaming about you, but she can't see "my own grandchild." [laughter] And, "Today is my birthday, my *dear* Warren. And *nobody* has sent any . . . . But I will sit here and have my little birthday cake all by myself. Ha, ha, ha." [laughter] Grandma's birthday. And then she'd go on, chit-chat about all kinds of wonderful things. Oh, she was a magnificent preacher, Amalia.

But I didn't see a lot of these people. I made a trip, I think, to Modesto between trips, but they knew that I was going far afield, and my world was shifting greatly, and I think my mother worried a lot. But she was amazingly restrained.

*Were they interested in your writing and things like that?*

To a degree, but they looked upon that as so much fluff, you know, not about the real things of life. They were partly right; [laughter] nothing was getting solved through that.

So, anyway, all that was going on, while Doris (Woodhouse) and I got this issue of *New Rejections* all ready to go. But it came out after I left on my next ship, so Doris Woodhouse really did the main editorial job there. And that was the last issue of *New Rejections*, and it was a wartime issue. George Leite wasn't in this last issue or around for this last issue, I don't think.

It is very interesting how the magazine shifted ground, with this element of labor awareness of the fascist and Nazi threat and the Jewish problem with Giacomo Patri's woodcuts of the waterfront and ships and merchant seamen. And we were beginning to get into that swing of things. Come to

think of it, it was a very long time, three or four years, until I was to be, in a sense, aware of the importance of unions and of a political ideology that had begun to attract me. And I was more and more attracted to, I suppose, not just the left literature, but communist literature. I didn't have a lot of the major works but was very interested in the propaganda, and read the leaflets and things of that kind.

It all made sense to me. Oh, I had read the *Communist Manifesto*. Somebody had given me a copy, and I remember taking that to sea with me, I think, on one of my next trips, and reading it with an *enormous* sense of discovery. Of course, I was working on ships and with people who felt in an anarchistic way but radical way many of the things that Marx had brought out in the *Manifesto*.

*Well, it seems like a ship by definition is just this very discreet world that you can . . . .*

A microcosm.

*Yes, that you can just see an idea you have. You can say, "Well, there it is or isn't."*

We didn't talk too much about the *Manifesto* on SUP ships. [laughter] But the ideas in it were terribly meaningful to me, and they related to the kinds of feelings and thoughts that came erupting then at sea in this little microcosm of a ship. But, no, I don't think I've ever said, "I'm reading Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, and here is what it says."

*[laughter] It would have gone overboard.*

It would have gone overboard along with some of the tools. [laughter] Indeed!

*Well, that's such a wonderful image, because I think a lot of other people who live in other kinds of societies besides ships wish they could get rid of things that easily, you know.*

Just “give them the deep six.” [laughter] So, anyway, all that went on—this very yeasty, busy period between ships. As I remember, a period of great ambivalence, pulls in different directions.

On the one hand, seeing people that I had known who were writing fiction or poetry and seeing them publishing in not only this magazine, but others. I was writing stories, and in fact, that year a story of mine was accepted in a small mag, *Interim*, up north. It didn't come out until a few months later. But many of us were writing, thinking, involved in various kinds of activities, a feeling of being avant-garde—part of that early Bohemian world. (And “Bohemian” is a hell of a word, because that's really not what it is.) We were part of a world of artists and thinkers in the Bay Area.

And so there was that, and on the other hand, there was the ship, the union, and all this, which I felt were two worlds, and yet I didn't disparage one as against the other. I

just felt I had to find a way to knit them together. Although I *did* disparage what I call the *effete* world of the intellectuals in Berkeley and who were disassociated from the realities of the world. I thought I was really getting close to reality. Among the set that I knew, there was this kind of snobbishness developing about anybody who had not worked and had not been out in the world doing things at the same time—a feeling of inferiority, a little bit shamefacedness, like you hadn't really got out there and sweated and worked with your hands and taken part.

*Well, was there an expectation that your professors should be like that too, or just among your peers?*

Yes, in fact, when we heard that Earl Lyon (a professor) from Fresno had become a lieutenant in the air force, we were overjoyed, that he would be the kind of person who would do that, an *involved* intellectual. Yes, I remember I saw a lot of the young guys, and a couple of the women, who had been around Earl Lyon, and they were coming in and out of the Bay Area. But most of them were, you know, either in the army or the air force.

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## THE SEAMAN'S MINDSET

**I**N ALL THIS GROWING political awareness and interest in political things, was there any discussion or acknowledgment of government, covert government?

Oh, yes. You know, it's hard for me to put together now, but just in my guts I know and remember that a lot of our feeling and conversation would be not only that the war was necessary, but that we were anti-fascists. We were all anti-fascist, and the war was in a sense an absolute necessity. But at the same time, there was a *tremendous* amount of critique and cynicism about the forces that were organizing the war effort; the fact that so much of it was corrupt, and about the secret role, the covert role of governments in the war, the kinds of plans that were being fostered to meet elitist agendas.

This underlying roiling of dissidence was always there on every ship that I was on, and I'm sure it was not just on ships. I think it was among any group of men of disparate origins throughout the country from relatively low income and sometimes really deprived backgrounds, who had lived very

hard and roustabout lives. There would be, when they get together, this kind of grouching about government, about companies, about the conditions that exist on the ships, and the war itself then became somehow a target for blame. "Who caused this? What is the cause?"

Now, when I said that everybody was anti-fascist, I have to modify that a bit. You ran across people who were saying, "Maybe the Germans had the right idea. Maybe Hitler wasn't such a bad guy." And particularly people who were anti-Semitic would sometimes say this. And there'd be arguments sometimes about it. On the other hand, sometimes the guys would just listen, because it was always one of those possibilities that we were caught up in a conflict that wasn't of our making, that others had engineered.

People—and I'm not excluding myself—feel since they're isolated together in a small space for long periods of time, a freedom to express opinions that they wouldn't ordinarily express. They find themselves really addressing one another rather than addressing the world, addressing a larger, more

complex social life around them. They find themselves opening up in ways that they wouldn't elsewhere. So you really got to know the real opinions of the people that you were sailing with.

And there were a great many different kinds of views that seldom erupted into a violent argument, because there was always a kind of a boundary at which people realized you can't go any further without having a fight or breaking down whatever kinds of order there were among the crew on the ship. Now and then it would happen, but usually not about politics or social points of view. It would usually be something very personal, an argument over a poker game, or somebody feeling that somebody else was stealing their stuff out of their fo'c's'le—something of this kind, or sometimes just sheer blowing off of energy, or sometimes in drunkenness. These arguments would erupt into fights now and then, but not very often.

As far as attitudes are concerned, there was a wide range, and even this view that maybe the war . . . maybe all the information we were getting about the enemy was false, and that maybe it was all propaganda to keep us going, to keep us, as one old seaman I remember saying, "To keep us enslaved. We're nothing but slaves here. We have no rights; we've got no voice. We're just doing what we're told. We're just *pawns* of this system!" A lot of that kind of feeling.

However, I wouldn't say that was general, because I think there *was* a kind of—even though it wasn't considered cool to express it—a kind of patriotism. I mean you were out there protecting your country, and a way of life, even though some cynical seaman might say, "What way of life? Whose way of life are we protecting?" A lot of this kind of grousing. But it really wasn't taken seriously.

*You said something very interesting last time about a number of the seamen had been hobos and disenfranchised during the Depression?*

Yes. There was a large number of middle-aged, older seamen, who had been through the Depression and through periods when there weren't enough jobs, in the pre-union period—a period when you had to wait for days and days and sometimes weeks to get the crimps to accept you on a job. And during that period of uncertainty, particularly during the Depression, a lot of those men had traveled around the country on freight trains looking for jobs, or were sometimes just getting used to that kind of roving life, and "being on the bum," looking for handouts: And not always looking upon that as bad. I mean, looking at it in a kind of romantic way—that they had gone through very tough times.

*Well, you were interested in that.*

Oh, yes. I mean I identified with this. [laughter] They survived; they moved around freely. The idea of the freedom of the hobo—there was a lot of allusions to the freedom of the freight train and the hobo camps and all that. And, of course, there was a spark in my head about that; it had always interested me when I was a kid.

*Did you think they were sort of perpetuating a myth about their own experience, or do you think that there really was an honest affection for that?*

Well, both. I think both. There were people who looked upon that as a terrible time in their life. Sometimes men were wrenched from their families, looking for jobs. Way back in the turn of the century my grandfather was going from lumber camp to

lumber camp looking for a job, while my grandmother was taking care of the farm and bringing up five, six kids. There was that kind of feeling, too. But, also, one has to remember that over a period of ten or more years during the economic slump of the late 1920s and all through the 1930s and up to the 1940s, there were *thousands* of men in that kind of situation. You know, we have pictures of soup kitchen lines and hobo camps on the edges of towns. These were not all people who had lived as hobos all their lives. These were people who had been thrust into those conditions, particularly a lot of Midwestern people coming out west to get away from the drought and to have a new life. And these people sometimes couldn't find anything, and the men usually would have to go out looking for jobs. And sometimes they'd end up just roving from town to town, looking for *anything*, and sometimes sending money home.

Others, of course, found it a way of life. It became a way of life that became romanticized. It was also connected with the Wobbly movement earlier—the idea of avoiding, being free of all entanglements, of all government, and all legal entanglements; being somehow a free agent, moving from here to there. Oh, there was a whole mystique of hobo life that has even been written about—songs and poetry and a feeling of a kind of community, of the mobile community.

Well, there were some of the seamen out of that period. Some old seamen could remember when they were younger actually hoboining, being roustabouts for periods of time during the Depression when they couldn't get jobs. So they would either create a myth of its glamour, which a lot of us are prone to, because they were identified with a certain orientation to life that became almost an ideology among groups like that.

Or they looked upon it as a terrible point in their life, when they were estranged from family and friends, and there was no order in their lives, and there was nothing to return to. A lot of mixed feelings. Nothing is ever one way. So, yes, there was quite a bit of that as an undercurrent. The older seamen who had managed to sail continuously, had, I suppose, what might be considered now a conservative view of themselves and labor. I mean they held the old concept of trade union loyalties and solidarity as a kind of ideal, that hadn't actually been implemented anywhere; nevertheless, it was an ideal—like socialism. Trade union solidarity, trade union organization—intensely loyal to the *idea* of unionization, the idea of working class solidarity, but very cynical about it ever being expressed in social life, and certainly not by governments. These guys often had an old IWW—Industrial Workers of the World—orientation, but got it from early union struggles and strikes. There was this *élan*, this view, of the noble working class.

At the same time, a realization that they hadn't gotten much of anything from anybody. Therefore, doing your job well, being a good seaman, sticking to your ship, hating the company, as you should, and everything that stood for authority; at the same time, doing your job. And so the job became your identity. Your identity was your job.

And I remember often talking to the older men on a ship, I always found them very attractive among the people I could talk to. They liked to talk. They wouldn't volunteer, but if you showed an interest, you couldn't stop them talking. Their view of the world oriented around work, their job task, the evils of capitalism, the evils of class, the fact that class warfare was the only way to break out of the bind that we were in: But no clear idea about how you did it, except

through unionization and strikes, or throwing equipment overboard!

I mean, if you were mad at something that went on you had no way of fighting the company directly. You know, how is one ship and two or three people on a ship going to change anything? But you could get back! You could show your contempt and your anger. You could piss in the mate's coffee when you took it to the bridge. There were ways you could express this anger. It was kind of sad, pathetic, in a way, but nevertheless, also very attractive, this view among certain members of the crew—this feeling of a solidarity, that they understood each other on this level. And yet, also, it was a kind of dead end.

It was the *end* of an era, really, rather than the beginning. They were expressing views that had been extremely prevalent and hopeful—when there had been great possibilities about change in their minds—in the past, during the great union struggles, strikes and the anti-company riots; and the great leaders that they had had in the past. Not only the ILU, but during early union development, like Andy Furuseth, the heroic figure to members of the Sailor's Union of the Pacific, the older members.

So there was this set of myths and ideals that these old men had. But mainly, their identity was their job—they dressed like a sailor, they worked like a sailor, they *lived* like a sailor. They went ashore and got drunk and whored and did all the right things that a sailor did.

A few of them even had wives at home and had children, but they had a sailor's orientation to that. You couldn't be tied to it. A sailor's life in society was when he was ashore. But then he was off on a ship, for months and months he was separated from all that. You couldn't worry about it. But I do remember at least some of the older seamen—

and when I say older, not necessarily *very* old people, but men who had been to sea for a long time and rather steadily—writing long letters home. Very long letters. Sometimes they would tear them up before they got home and got to port, and throw them into the drink. [laughter] But there was this nostalgia about something that exists at home.

At the same time, you might discover, when they talked about it, their home life was absolutely horrible. Their lives were disrupted; their relations with their wives and family were atrocious. They were always wondering whether their wives were living with somebody else while they were gone, and whether their children were growing up like street kids, and all that sort thing. There was a *lot* of feeling of sadness and helplessness about this. At the same time, a glorification of freedom—the glorification of being able to go and come, and get away and go back—an eternal adolescence in a way, an eternal . . . what would it be? The eternal adventure. And ship after ship after ship after ship.

*It's almost like a perpetual limbo, though, too.*

Well, in a way it is. In a way it is. And . . . nothing really changed.

*You weren't "home," whatever that means, long enough to be part of making a change or . . .*

No, you didn't *grow* with the situation; you escaped from it. And yet it would be unfair to characterize the lives of a lot of these long-term seamen as one of continual escape. In a lot of cases, that's all they knew how to do. It's where they felt most productive as individuals; they *knew* that job. They understood it, and they had a feel for the ships and the sea. So it wasn't just a matter of escape;

it was a matter of maintaining an identity as persons. Yet there was a strain—a constant strain between shore time and sea time.

*It's kind of like a cause and effect. Sometimes you don't know which is which. I wasn't thinking so much that they would be escaping something by going to sea, but, in fact, you couldn't . . . the sea life also has been sort of a refuge from the frustration of not being able to fulfill a role. I mean there was no continuity.*

Sure. You felt useful and capable if you were a good seaman, at sea, and you might feel absolutely incompetent and the lowest of the low at home.

I think some of them had houses. Particularly when I went on the Alaska run, later, I knew men who went off for a number of weeks and returned. A lot of those men who had been working for years at sea had homes, little places, particularly places outside of town, or in the mountains, where they had a wife who was more or less loyal to them and kids who were growing up not knowing their father very well, and all that. And there was always this kind of mystique about that family at home, that woman and those kids and that way of life. But then I remember time and time again, getting on a ship and the first night out the guys saying things like, "Oh, my god, that's over. *Wow!* Off we go!" Or, "We're heading out to sea, out to the *great, wide* ocean. And we don't know where we're going, but we're going to go there," and songs. But a sad . . . a deep sadness was often connected with this elation of "getting away."

Look, that affected me, too. I can remember getting into that frame of mind, where being ashore was exciting, and I knew a lot of people, and a lot of things going on, and I had ties, and all that. And yet it was during wartime, and things were *not* very good.

Things were disruptive; people you knew had gone away, and nothing was the same. And you had to face people like your family who were saying, "What are you doing with your life?" And, "Isn't there a better way to get through the war, to get something out of it, than going to sea?" That came sometimes from my family, my mother. And there was also the glamour of being a seaman and coming back, and all that, but it didn't *last*. This is very short-lived, and then the realities came upon you: first, that you had to get another ship, because you were compelled to; and the other was, "What would you do if you *didn't* have a ship? How would you support yourself? How would you get along?" And that became more and more a serious problem for me as the war went on, and, as I'll talk about later. I stayed at sea for a few years after the war because I didn't know what else to do. I guess that *whole* problem had taken root in me. You know, what was I going to *do*?

At that point I had a wife and children, and it became a very serious conflict in me. I knew I couldn't go on doing it, but how to get out of it, see. And so I have a lot of sympathy with that view that develops in people who have gone to sea a lot, for a long time. It's a deeply ingrained sense of two worlds—of shore time, of sea time. And sea time was sometimes a great relief, a great, boring, endless, routine, disciplined relief from the requirements of ordinary society. [laughter]

*Well at sea, you can't face all the choices that the society and your family are imposing on you to do something.*

Yes, that the *world* imposes on you and society imposes on you. And a ship is a small society in which you can control to some degree your own role in it. Your role is even

ascribed to you. And then you can play with it, and you can dissent against it. You can be somehow a freer person—like the mess room conversations that I was just discussing. People could express their views and not necessarily be afraid that they were going to be ostracized for them, or that it was going to have repercussions or implications in a wider world around you. *Oh*, the things that would go on in terms of interpersonal relationships and talk and conversations that would go on

for weeks and weeks on a certain subject. None of those guys I don't think would have occasion ashore to talk like that. That was not the arena nor the setting for them to do so. But somehow this kind of enclosed environment allowed a tremendous amount of inner turmoil and concern to be expressed openly, sometimes in the most *marvelous*, eloquent, colloquial ways. My notebooks are loaded with this.



## A PERIOD OF YEASTING

**M**Y NOTEBOOKS are *not* travelogs. I mean I have a hard time finding where I was or where something was written, you know. I sometimes don't even note what part of the world I'm in. I'm talking about what people on the ship are doing and saying—not even much about what's happening practically in terms of the ship and its cargoes and its direction or anything of that kind, but what individual human beings were talking about. I was being a writer, listening to people, getting the cadences of their expression, and the *way* they expressed themselves about things was a most fascinating thing to me.

*So it wasn't just understanding what was going on around you, but it was learning how to communicate or what was going on with other people.*

Learning how to read and understand what was happening. Being absolutely amazed. I was very young then, I think twenty-two, twenty-three. It was for me, a new world, and a world that I had never experienced or even had any inkling of—the

reality of these other lives. So I guess I became an enormous voyeur. I mean I was just *listening* to everything—*fascinated, amazed* by the way people talked and what they had to say, the various points of view, the stories of their lives, which were unbelievably distant from my own. Things that had happened to them, which I felt were marvelously arcane—the mysterious things that happened to them. Their relationships with women, their relationships with family, and the relationships with other people in the worlds that they lived—were all new to me, and I absorbed it; and my notebooks are full of *that*. Hardly anything about where we were going or why or what we did. [laughter]

*Were you conscious of trying to learn how to capture the essence and everything that was going on around you, so that you could communicate it later as a writer?*

Oh, yes. All through that period, I was a writer in my mind. That was what I was, what I wanted to do, the arts and literary criticism.

And I did a hell of a lot of reading. Oh, gosh, I read more in the few years of my life there from 1938 through the 1940s, than I probably have ever read since, including my professional work, you know. [laughter] I mean, just a great absorber of everything—also, all kinds of odd stuff. I'd read pamphlets and leaflets and the writings of other members of the crew.

There was always somebody who was not only a great raconteur, but a great creator of verse, of rhymed verse, usually so goddamn dirty and scatological I couldn't even mention it here, but marvelous. I mean just beautiful stuff. I would take that down. There was one or two guys I remember used to keep very elaborate diaries, and they would let me read them to comment on them. Well, now, I couldn't help but putting some of that in my journal because it was so beautiful. I mean, the language that was used, the way people expressed themselves. Yes, I was absorbed by that.

*And you said that sometimes people would ask what you were writing.*

Yes. Right. On my next trip with the *John B. Floyd* is when I started taking a typewriter aboard, a little, portable typewriter. I think it was on that trip, too, that I may have taken a little Victrola, a little wind-up Victrola, and I'd play *La Mer* out on the deck at night. That was after I got . . . you didn't do that right away; you waited until people knew you, and they knew you were a little nuts and screwy. You had your own kinds of screwiness, and they had theirs, and, you know, it was all right.

But my typewriter later gave me a lot of trouble because I always was elected as ship's delegate because I had a typewriter! [laugh-

ter] So I was ship's delegate on most of the ships that I took later—not these early ships.

*I'm not sure I know what a ship's delegate is.*

A union delegate. The union guys would have a meeting. Sometimes there'd be a ship's meeting, but usually the union meeting was of the deck gang of the Sailor's Union of the Pacific members. And they'd elect a delegate to be their spokesman, to go to the bridge and complain about something or go to either the galley or to the bilge rats of the black gang, and keep a little record of the beefs so that you could present them to the union when you got back. You had to make a report to the dispatcher when you got back, or the patrolman who came aboard the ship. He'd ask, "How's the ship been, boys?"

And the delegate would have to come and say, "Well, here's our record of beefs and our comments," if it was a good ship or not. So the delegate had that kind of a role. But I wasn't the delegate on this trip. I was just a new able seaman, so I was rather careful not to extend myself or allow myself to get into that kind of position.

But, yes, I was writing all the time. And when I had the typewriter, I couldn't type in my fo'c's'le unless the others were gone, because there'd be two other guys in the fo'c's'le—three to four men per fo'c's'le. Pretty cramped quarters. And you learn very quickly to know your space and not to interfere with others sleeping or even just their privacy and their being alone.

So how to be alone with three other guys in a small, six-by-eight fo'c's'le, or six-by-ten, was not easy, but you learned. You learned just to leave people alone. And sometimes you wouldn't talk to your bunk mates for days. If somebody didn't want to talk, you just left

them alone: Didn't even show that you were aware of it. So there was a lot of that. When I needed to, I would either go into the mess room at night, if it was empty, nobody was using it, or I'd go out on deck if the weather was good. I'd type up letters.

I have to mention again that I was very seriously interested in Kathy, Kathleen Addison. We had seen a lot of each other earlier, before I got on the *Mahi Mahi*, but I saw a lot of Kathleen in this interim period, after the *Mahi Mahi*, when I was trying to get out the *New Rejections*, along with Doris Woodhouse, and seeing a lot of my friends. And I began to think, you know, maybe this was serious and I should give it some very serious thought, so I wrote *long* letters to her, typed. We still have those. They were glorious. [laughter] They were glorious letters! There was more in my letters than there was in my journal.

My journal was the soil from which I would put some of these letters together. And they were so full of myself that it makes me cringe now, when I look at them. I mean I was entirely involved, absorbed in myself and who I was and what I wanted to do and what I wanted to be. At the same time there was a glimmer of the growing interest in Kathleen! [laughter] And so I wrote a number of letters on that trip on the *John B. Floyd* that I took right after.

*Circle* became, in the next year or so, the beginning of a very influential small magazine in the country, along with *New Directions* that was the older, more established, avant-garde magazine. And there were a number of other small magazines—*Interim* up north, edited by Will Stevens.

There were a dozen or so small magazines in the country. It was a period of a great deal of yeasting—writing and new work in the arts. And George tapped into that very well,

and his magazine was really quite impressive. It went through twelve to fourteen or fifteen issues, and I think now would give a *very* insightful picture of what was going on in the Bay Area, although it became more national and international. There are a lot of people from other areas represented.

*Was it based in Berkeley?*

Yes. And Big Sur later. Henry Miller was living at Big Sur, and he really stimulated a lot of this. His writing was something like James Joyce, who was on a much larger scale, and Kenneth Patchen, a number of others. Oh, and Anaïs Nin—a number of avant-garde writers and thinkers were emerging at that time. And Miller, because he had been in France and then got a lot of notoriety because his work was banned in the United States, was something of a guru for a number of people. And George was one of them. That relationship, I suppose, really had a lot to do with George starting *Circle* and getting it going. It reflected this very sophisticated, avant-garde world that was active, at the time.

*Were Kenneth Patchen and Anaïs Nin contributors to Circle?*

Yes, I think Patchen a few things; Anaïs Nin, a number of articles; Henry Miller, of course; and Paul Radin, some of his little pieces were in there. Radin was a wonderful character, when I come to think of it: [laughter] He was part of all this in a way. Then people like Robert Barlow, who later committed suicide and was an extremely impressive young poet at the time. Robert Duncan even had some things in there. Oh, a lot of people: musicians, composers, mostly avant-gardes of the new wave of modernism.

*Was there art?*

Varga was one; Dalí. I think they got something from him; right now I can't remember all of them, but it was part of an extremely exciting, experimental and adventuresome literary scene of the time. And it was pre-Beat. This was in the 1940s. George, unfortunately, has passed away. But he's to be specially commended, I think, for getting that little magazine going—with a lot of help from others.

I had a story in it that I had written in 1943 or 1944—"Deep Six for Danny," I think. But it didn't get published in *Circle* until a year or so later. It got *Circle* banned in Australia—I was very proud of that! [laughter] And a story "Blue Peter" got accepted by Will Stevens for *Interim* up in Seattle. I was writing other things and later published some other stories. But these were yeasting at the time.

Also, I have to say that not only was I reading Joyce, who had a great impact on my style—not that I think that my style was Joycean—but it opened up all sorts of possibilities in the way of expressing oneself, the ways of talking, ways of writing, ways of handling sentence structure and handling language. Joyce was a great eye-opener to me in that; *Finnegan's Wake*, I remember I didn't fully follow it, but even though I couldn't grasp the whole thing—I couldn't do a critique of the thing—the language and the tremendous openness and freedom of moving with words into situations, into character, and into environment, was to me very impressive. And I think I absorbed some of that. Also by Henry Miller. Henry Miller, I found exciting, freeing, argumentative, revolutionary in a way, because he was absolutely unrestricted in what he could talk about or write about or say—and did it. There was

something to me courageous and marvelous about that. It affected me and a lot of other people I knew. So I think that time has to give some credit to Miller for impact.

*That's a really nice distinction between something having a tremendous influence on you and actually being a model for something that you emulate.*

Yes. Well, in a way they *were* models, because they were successful and had done it. So they were a kind of model, but only in the sense of a kind of person who had done a kind of thing, not necessarily a guide to every aspect of style or every aspect of thinking, you know. Though there were people who did take them that way. I didn't. I guess I wasn't that intense of a literary thinker in the sense of taking *on* someone else's style. I had my own.

*But you were very geared at this point toward writing fiction, right?*

Mainly, mainly fiction. Except when you say fiction, it stops me. I didn't think my writing was fiction.

*Well, it stops me, too.*

Well, I mean it's a good question, because yes, I suppose it would be called fiction in the sense I was writing stories. At the same time, I never thought of it that way. I thought of it as *my* observations of the world around me and how I saw it. And if I wrote about *somebody*, it was through my eyes; it was the reality that I saw in the world around me. So, yes, fiction, stories, and I was also writing poetry. It wasn't very good, but, you know, I think some of it would stand. In fact, I did publish some much later, and I resurrected it

along with other stuff, and used it on a few occasions.

Yes, I would say my whole orientation and goal at that time was to write. Now, I can't say "be a writer," because I didn't think of it as a profession. I didn't think of it as anything but something you did as a way of life, along with what you were doing—that I saw the world in terms of interpreting it and writing about it. And so phrases like "being a writer" or "writing fiction" had no place in my thinking at the time. I was just *being*. I was just being a kind of person. So that was the frame of mind I was in.

Meeting Kathy began to make me think of what I really wanted to be later and what kind of life I wanted to live: And was it a time for me to have a relationship? It was a bit more constant than the ones that I'd had, and I'd had a number which were casual and frivolous and all that. This was something serious. And she was the kind of person that I felt I could be with that way. She was the most communicative, communicable woman that I had met. I mean we understood a lot together, and I could talk very freely with her and have a lot of fun with her. And I understood her life to some degree. I *think* she understood mine, but I don't think well enough to realize she should have stayed ten feet away from me! [laughter] But I was a pretty loquacious and an elegant contriver at that time about myself, so I may have fooled her a bit. Nevertheless, I was very seriously interested in her during that interim period in the early 1940s.

I was also seeing a lot of my old friends then, and hearing about them. Leonard Ralston, for instance was a young composer—I think a *brilliant* young guy with tremendous

possibilities. He had gotten a scholarship at the beginning of the war with Roy Harris, a well-known American composer in Colorado at Boulder. So he'd gone to Boulder with his new wife. But that didn't work out because he got his 1-A draft notices and had to do something.

And for the next two or three years I was helping him go to sea, and he finally went out as an electrician on some other ships. He hated it. He *despised* going to sea, because I think Len was really a city guy, and he wanted to be back doing music and living in the world that he knew. But he *did* it.

He was also a very good electrician. He left music some years later and had a business with electronic materials and sound equipment. He constructed and sold great speakers and hi-fi equipment and installed them in various buildings and homes. But I've always felt, "Here is a guy who was on his way to becoming a major American composer." And that disruptive period during the war affected him as well, you see.

It was happening to a lot of my friends. I had the fear at the time it was happening to me—you know, "Where is this going, and what am I going to do with my life?"

It was like that horrible thing that young people hate when some older person sits them down and looks them in the eye and says, "What are you going to do with your life?"

You want to kill. I mean, you don't know! You want to run and hide. And I was doing that to myself. "Where is this going?" That went on for a long time. But I knew one thing—that I really felt very close to Kathy, and that I wanted to maintain that connection. So that was going on.



THE *JOHN B. FLOYD*

NEXT I GOT ON the *John B. Floyd*. It was another liberty ship that had gone through a great deal, and it was pretty well beat up by the time we were on it. It was a troop ship. This was the first one I was on; I went on others later. They had turned it into a troop ship by gutting out all the holds in between decks. They set up *hundreds* of cubicles with bunks piled on each other, five, six high, in all the holds, line after line of them.

*Six bunks high?*

Yes, but all over. I mean you went through little corridors, through rows of these stacked bunks. And I remember when I got on the ship, the troops had not yet come aboard. When we went down there, I didn't ever want to go down again. It was nightmarish. In the first place, they're right near the engine room, and we're going into the tropics, and at times they had to close the hatches; and they had their own mess room between decks someplace. And you could just see that if anything

happened to that ship, nobody would be able to get out in time. It was a *death trap*.

*Oh. It sounds horrible.*

And we knew it; the seamen . . . we'd go down there and take a look at where these guys were going to go.

And then just before sailing, I forget how many hundreds, but hundreds came aboard; some Seabees, some army, a mixed military group of these *young* kids! I mean I was twenty-two, twenty-three, but they looked to me like twelve and thirteen. I mean they were *just little, pale, skinny* kids. Oh, not all of them, but I mean you had the feeling you were dealing with pubescent kids. They were actually eighteen, nineteen, and some older. But when you looked at the group, you saw a mass of kids—trying to look like they were savvy but scared to death—looking at this [laughter] horrible old ship, coming aboard up the gangway, some of them for the first time away from home. They'd just come out of boot camps from all over the country and were on

their way to lord knows where. They had some idea it was to the tropics because of the kind of things that they were given.

*Did you know where they were going at this point?*

No. Those are the days when you weren't told. You heard rumors—usually the rumors were right—that we were going to the South Seas. But nobody was sure. Some of the rumors where we were going to Midway; we're going to Honolulu; we're going to Okinawa. Okinawa wouldn't have been possible for us, but Christmas Island and places like that were stopping-off places for routing people from one place to the other. Or Australia, you know. But all this was speculation. In fact, I can even remember somebody saying, "Ah, well, they're probably going to ship us to Alaska. This is all just to keep us off the track, you know."

So, anyway, here are these kids getting on the ship. It took them *hours* to get on. And here they were, climbing down into these holes, these deep, dank, empty holes full of bunks! And the bunks are numbered, and they all had their numbers, and there was a lot of shouting and argument about whose bunk was whose.

And that was a full cargo, the weight of that number of men. I'm trying to think how many hundreds. It had to be over three or four hundred, but I can't remember. It may have been seven hundred. But I can remember people saying, "Oh, a thousand souls on this ship," or something, but I doubt that there were that many.

But I'll never forget that feeling of, "This is the war that we are really facing now. These kids are going *somewhere*, where most of them might get killed. Or we all might get killed on the way by subs." And the fact was a troop

ship meant that we would be tagged by submarines, since, you know, "Loose lips sink ships." Somebody would say, "It's a troop ship," and then, of course, it would be trailed.

*Were you going to be in a convoy?*

We weren't. I was on a number of trips where you'd get convoyed sometimes near your destination. But, no, I don't think the *John B. Floyd* was. Oh, we were convoyed for about a day outside of San Francisco, because that was a dangerous area. There were sub patrols all along the coast. At least that was thought. But, no, when we got well out, we were on our own.

*They just didn't want you to sink in sight of land and depress everybody! [laughter]*

Yes, well if somebody had thought of that, it would have been said, because that was just the kind of thing people said, you know: They don't want all this blood on the ocean near the beaches. "They don't want us stinking up the coast." [laughter] But, no. No, there was a shortage of convoy ships.

*And did you have gunners on?*

Yes, there was a gun crew. But they were kind of lost among the rest of the military troops.

When we got out to sea, three-quarters of them were sick. And I can remember being out well beyond the Farallons—we were going south of the Farallons—but heading out, the first two or three days, where the stench of vomit was so great on that ship, I will never forget it! And I felt so sorry for these poor kids. We were at least up in the air, you know. We felt privileged. At least we were up there in our fo'c's'les that had port-



holes and ventilators. *They* had ventilators—great *big* ventilators, actually cargo ventilators, all over the decks. You'd turn them around so you'd catch the breeze, and direct the wind down there. Well, then, of course, it had to come out. And so the ventilator would spew forth this *stinking*, horrible odor of decaying human beings down there. And they couldn't come up because it was too rough the first day or two. So they were down there sick.

And, you know, moaning and crying, and *yelling*, screaming at . . . . It was like a slave ship. A lot of them were very brave and taking it well. But there were a lot of kids there for whom this was the end of the world. They didn't know where they were, sick, . . . . I remember kids calling for their mother, you know: "Hey Ma! Ma, where are you, Ma?" You know, that kind of thing. And so then two or three days later, we got fairly calm weather. I can remember, we opened the hatches, and these *sick* and *horrible*-looking kids were climbing out on the ladders, out on the deck and breathing air.

Well, then from there on things got kind of warm after two or three days. We were getting in the latitudes where it was somewhat temperate. But there were certain times they couldn't be out because of sub alerts and things of that kind.

*Because they'd be seen, and they'd know it was a crew ship or . . . ?*

Well, not that. No, the fear that they'd throw things overboard, make noise, or I don't know, there were rules about the time they could be out and I can't remember what they were. Well, whenever there was an alert, they had to be down. But, nevertheless, when they were on deck they had to take turns. There were so many that they couldn't all be

on deck at one time. I can just remember them *pouring* out, taking deep breaths of air, and, you know, some of them running to the rail and puking again. And so many, sometimes, on deck, that they were like sardines. They couldn't find a place to sit, and they were shoving each other. And actually many were fairly good humored, making a joke out of it. Well, many did. But some couldn't make a joke out of it; they were too miserable. And there was a lot of kindness, too, some of them helping the others. Oh, I can remember guys holding onto some of the younger kids and hugging them to keep them from crying.

We had to work among these guys! And we got to know some of them, but there was a distance between us and them and some resentment on their part, because we were living in, to them, elite quarters. I mean our lousy fo'c's'les were to them, you know, "Geez, you guys got bunks, only three or four guys. You're eating the best chow on the ship." And our food probably was better than theirs—but not much better. They were eating army rations and, you know, how can you feed that many guys? So we would take food to them. I can remember some of us stealing food from our galley and taking it out to guys we knew on deck. That, of course, created some resentment; we had to be careful.

And then we had to cut down on the use of fresh water. We might be gone for a month or more going down, and with that many people, you couldn't have fresh water showers. So everybody—including us—had to have seawater showers. Well, that then creates secondary problems, like rashes and boils and itching and all that, because you can't rinse yourself off. [laughter] Seawater will eventually—particularly in the crotch and under the arms—cause havoc. You start to sweat, and you have seawater salts.

So I can remember a hundred guys or two hundred on deck tearing their clothes off, and buckets over the side, and throwing water on one another. That was their showers. And that is a scene to see that many men running around naked, throwing water on themselves, and cleaning themselves. And then doing laundry.

*Oh, in saltwater, also?*

In saltwater. I have done that many times. It is *not* pleasant. I like the smell of it, but it's stiff, and if you tend to rashes and irritation, I mean it'll really do it.

One of the ways—we taught many of them how to do this—you just put a line over the side with your clothes on, and leave it there for an hour, and if it's not torn to shreds, you would have relatively clean clothes! Well, that was brought to a close because it was thought that if any of those clothes got loose, that would be a sign. You couldn't throw garbage over the side; you couldn't throw anything over the side.

We were very concerned about subs on that trip, because there was every reason for us to be a target, and particularly when we got down close to the equator. There were supposed to be some buoys that had been set up by the navy—buoys for marking distances, well out at sea. I don't know quite how they did that, but they were gone. And word got to the radio operator that the subs, Japanese subs, had shot out a number of these. So we couldn't use those for navigation or direction.

But those days of watching these exhausted, frantic, desperate guys climbing out of the hatches in groups to get air and to clean themselves and to wash their clothes was something that I will *not* forget. And, you know, there were times, particularly in the

tropics, when guys were out on the deck and sunning themselves. Well, then, of course, a hundred of them would have such severe sunburn that they were practically *dead*. I mean we didn't have enough ointments on the ship. The purser didn't have enough ointments to even give them relief, and some of them were seriously burned—second-, third-degree burns. So the warnings went out—I even have the directions that were put out by Sparks, by the orders of the captain about sunburn. “If you stay out fifteen minutes, you can expect to have three days of misery,” and all that sort of thing. So then they had to be very careful, and they'd stretch tarpaulins to be under and all that.

But just to be out there, just breathing air, you know, sleeping in the air as long as they could—a couple hours, three hours—and then they would change a group. And all night long, there would be these changing of the groups. And as soon as there was an alert of any kind on—frequently somebody might have seen something or heard something—everybody had to get below.

*When you say “frequently,” just to get a sense of it, do you mean maybe once a day or . . . ?*

Two or three times a day, maybe. Sometimes not for a whole day, but then some days there might be two or three alerts. The crow's nest may report they had seen something.

Oh, we saw planes, and assumed that they were ours because of where we were in the eastern Pacific, going down. On the other hand, they didn't need to be ours, because the Japanese could have made it that far. So whenever we saw planes on the horizon—and at one time a whole squadron came over us, and, *oh*, there was tremendous elation, you know, with our planes—but whenever you'd

see planes and you didn't know who they were . . . down below decks for these guys.

And everything's on close alert. Garbage piled up for days, because only now and then could garbage be thrown over at night—if you felt that you were going to make enough time between the garbage and the morning, so that any sub finding it would not know quite where you were. Or if the currents were right, so that it would not tell where you were in relation to the garbage. Otherwise, the garbage stank for days—just piling up, full of maggots. I can remember seeing barrels of nothing but maggots from top to bottom! [laughter]

*Well, I suppose they were taking care of garbage in one way. [laughter]*

Oh, yes. Well, we had jokes about the fact if we ran out of food, there's always the maggots! [laughter] And guys telling how they were stuck on a lifeboat for days and there were some maggots in a tin can, and, "Oh, they're pretty good; they taste pretty good!" [laughter] So there was a lot of that.

But it was on that trip, as well as the previous one, that I felt I was a member of this kind of gang and mixed crew; this was a cosmos. This ship had everything. Kids from *all* over the country, of all kinds, all ethnic groups, except blacks! There were a few Hawaiians.

*Are you talking about the crew or troops?*

We called the troops the passengers. That was a euphemism. They were mostly white. Except you'd see a darker skin now and then—Hispanic or . . . I don't think I saw any Filipinos, certainly no Japanese.

*Any Indians?*

Not that I knew, but there were a few that could have been. And two or three Portuguese kids that I got to know. They were from Hawaii; they were Hawaiian Portuguese, and *very* nice kids. We sort of struck up an acquaintance because, you know, I had this identity. We were "Portugees." And they didn't really speak much Portuguese; neither did I, but there was this shared ethnic identity, and they were really great guys. I really liked them. We talked about the islands, and they sang some songs. They knew some Hawaiian songs, and I would steal food for them. They had a good reason to be pals with me. [laughter] I would bring bread down and sandwiches, you know, of horse cock—these long baloneys. [laughter]. And I'd bring *slices*, great big hunks of that with what bread we had. This was against the rules, but everybody did it.

And so there were those kinds of relationships. And then the equator. *That* was the most elaborate and the most fantastic crossing ceremony I ever experienced. I went across the equator many times with those ceremonies, but *this* one was *unbelievably* wild. It was a Romanesque orgy. Well, more than that—it was from outer space.

When these guys got wind of the fact that you were supposed to do certain things when you go across the equator, it was taken out of our hands, really. I mean the crew had very little to do with it, except to say what was supposed to happen. Here were *hundreds* of men dreaming of things to do against these others and to work off steam. A young navy junior officer of some kind was made the king, King Neptune. And they found some kind of stuff to put on him to make him look like a king. And then there was a young kid. It was really in a way kind of pathetic, because he was obviously very effeminate and very, very fay, as they used to say. "Gay" wasn't even

a word you used about this sort of thing in those days.

Queer was more like it, or “homo.” And whether he was or not isn’t the point. He behaved in a way that gave credence to others that this was the case. So they chose him for the queen. And he was queen. They decked him out with red paint on his lips, and a garish . . . it was a marvelous sight to see—the king and the queen sitting up on coils of rope that were their thrones, holding forth.

And then the polliwogs and shellbacks—the polliwogs were people who hadn’t been across the equator, and shellbacks are the ones who had been initiated. And, of course, I and the crew, most of the crew, were shellbacks—just a few were polliwogs. I invented on that trip the name “throw-back.” That was for all of us who weren’t really part of all this, but were watching. We were the throw-backs; we’d been around too long.

And it was orgiastic. In the first place, King Neptune gave orders that everybody had to strip. So there was . . . [laughter] there was hundreds of naked guys running around, looking very sheepish: And they had to tie their clothes up into knots and throw them in the hold. So the idea was, you’re going to stay like this until arrival. And then there were paddles. I don’t remember doing this with the regular crews. [laughter] They had heavy paddles that they had put together, like oars, and everybody had to run through a gauntlet and be paddled. And there were some guys with welts, deep welts, on their butt. I mean everybody had red butts, and this was crazy. If you didn’t have a red butt, you weren’t initiated, you know. I mean *hundreds* of guys getting . . . you could hear this slapping and whacking, and screaming and yelling and laughter and sounds of pain, and all that.

And it got very serious. In fact, a couple of the officers had to come in and stop it at times. With these guys it just out of hand. A lot of loose energy that no one knew what to do with, and a lot of cruelty, you know. So this went on all afternoon. Actually, it was orgiastic. It was an orgy of pent-up feeling and anger and cruelty and fun—all mixed up together.

They had to do all kinds of strange things; I forget what they were. Then eventually, when they were declared to be shellbacks, the clothes were brought up from the hold, thrown out on the deck; they all had to find their own clothes out of this morass, and arguments taking place—“Whose roll is whose?”

All that, and finally they were able to put their clothes back on. Some couldn’t get their pants on because their butts were so swollen. I mean it was something.

So that was getting over the equator on that trip. And I’ve taken a long time talking about it, because it was to me a very impressive affair! [laughter] And frightening. I was so glad I wasn’t part of it. Some of the crew had to be in it because they hadn’t gone across. But, then, everybody now is a shellback, so that creates a sense of unity, you know. Everybody now has done it. Most of those guys had to be initiated because only maybe about a dozen out of the hundreds had ever been across the equator. They were the meanest, and they were the ones who did the worst things. And so we got across the equator—*hot* and *steaming*.

*And you still don’t know exactly where you’re going.*

Well, by that time we knew we were probably going to Samoa. I *think* we knew by then we were heading for Pago [Pago Pago, main port of American Samoa].

But I just remember that trip through the tropics. I'd been in the tropics before, but you have an open ship and ways to get around, and you would have ways to escape heat and all that, *but* these guys didn't. The ship gets deadly hot. All the steel of the bulkhead and everything just gets sometimes too hot to touch, and all that metal was heating up the holds, and there wasn't enough breeze sometimes for the ventilators to work. And these guys were suffering. I mean they were sick and suffering, and coming up gasping on deck to get some air. They had to be herded, because everybody couldn't come up. And I remember a number of days like that.

They had to stay out of the sun, so we had to set up tarpaulins for them. Then there'd be a storm, and we had to take all the tarpaulins down. [laughter] We had to do a lot of the work, but they did a lot of it by themselves.

I remember guys going nuts. Young kids just starting to scream and yell and get hysterical, and running up on deck, and throwing things overboard, throwing whatever few things they had or anything they saw—just, you know, wild, and having to be controlled and sedated. A lot of that.

So my feeling was I was seeing the war at last. This is no fun. This isn't just a ship. Then, at the same time, I was having a lot of misgivings about my own role and what I was in the world, of course. And I had this feeling of being a dilettantish, middle-class character, like some of the others on the ship, coming aboard and just observing and watching, and feeling aloof; and that I really wasn't, that I was just a slob like everybody else, [laughter] and; you know, a feeling of having been something of an elitist and looking upon myself as special and; "What is this god-damned business of being a writer and an intellectual and all that?" A real sense of self-

criticism and . . . and sometimes shame about being on a different level than some of these others—a real sense of class differentiation, too, that I had come from a middle-class background, lower middle class, but middle class and professional.

My identity had been with my grandparents, and my great-grandparents, and then I realized that that wasn't the way I was living. I grew up in that early kind of impoverished environment, semi-impoverished, but always with the idea it was going to get better, and then it was, and that essentially I had been rebelling against a middle-class life.

And then the word *bourgeois* began to have relevance to me. Oh, there was a lot of writing at that time—James Farrell and a number of others were using the term *bourgeois* about the middle class. And I was thinking, "Here I am, a bourgeois ass, going to sea, thinking that I'm . . . oh, I'm special because I've had some schooling, and I have lofty aspirations. And, really, these guys, most of these guys, are better than I am in every way." And, you know, a lot of self-defacement going on, and beginning to really understand and feel this kind of dissent that occurred among most of these people who come from different levels of life, about the hypocrisy of propaganda and the role of the bourgeois, the middle class, as against the working class.

And I remember a man, a guy called Carlson, whom I got to know and liked very much—an old seaman. He said, "You know, not only are we just slaves," he says, "we are pawns, we are tools in the hands of the bourgeois and of the owners. We're nothing but pawns. We're just pushed here and there, and we *never rebel*. We never say anything. We just do it and complain. But we don't *do* anything about it." He was the same guy who later on in the trip gave a great oration down in the mess room—one of those nights when

everybody was feeling lousy, and there were guys sitting around playing cards and all that. And somebody had mentioned something about God, you know—well, sort of a religious guy who said, “All we can do is rely on God now.”

And Carlson stood up and says, “What do you mean God? What does God got to do with it? And if God has anything to do with it, why should he be praised?” And he said, “I don’t think that there is a God. I am a goddamned atheist. And I’ll tell you why.” And he gave this long oration that was better than anything that I’d ever read in atheist literature.

I mean it was very scatological, and a lot had to do with sexual behavior and how the world . . . . “Is this the world that your God put together? And did your God create this game we’re playing now out here in the middle of the Pacific Ocean? And those poor, poor bastards down there in the holds, God has created *them* to do this, too? While somebody else makes all the money and gets all the loot, we’re doing all the work.”

And he said, “*Now*, anybody who thinks that I’m wrong or is shocked at what I said, come with me. Come out here to the bow.” A group of us went, about eight, ten of us, followed him out to the bow and there were all these soldiers down below sleeping—this was at night. We went out to the bow, and the ship was rolling, and it was sort of a clear night with the moon over on one side—a very tropical kind of night. And he said, “Now I’m going to show you.” And he reached up, and he says, “If you’re a . . . if there’s a God here, if you’re a God, *strike me down!* Strike me down *now!* I beg you, Sir, strike me down.” And he stood with his hands raised like that, and then nothing happened. And he says, “I beg you. If you’re there, these poor assholes over here, they believe

you exist. *Do something!* Here is your chance! You can have conversions!”

I remember feeling shocked. I mean in a way I thought, you know, this is kind of great, kind of wonderful, but it was shocking, because the other guys with me were sort of scared and deeply troubled. And they were watching him and looking at the sky. [laughter] And I had the feeling, *even* kind of a superstitious feeling, “Maybe something will happen. This guy is making a *big* case out of this.” [laughter] And then I remember him finally saying, “Well, you sure are a failure. You poor son of a bitch up there. You can’t do . . . .” *Oh*, he was just carrying on much more eloquently than I can reproduce. It was an eloquent speech. I wish that I could have had a tape of this guy’s eloquent atheism, and *anger*, and yet wit and humor.

And then he turned around; he says, “I’m sorry, boys. The guy just didn’t come through.” [laughter] And for days afterwards, some of those guys would wonder and say, “Is something going to happen to the ship?” [laughter] “Has he cursed this ship? Has he made this ship . . . ? The hell with the Japanese. [laughter] And the heck with the submarines. We’re worrying about what he did up *there*.”

*Yes. It’s one thing to be an atheist and to say you are but . . .*

Then to have the theater, the local theater, to do it on this scale, in this way. But, you know, things like that you never forget. I’ll never forget Carlson.

*Was he an able seaman?*

Oh, yes, he was an old able seaman and a *good* seaman. But he was foul-mouthed, and he was bitter. He was witty, and he was, I

think he was against just about anything. And he was against anything that was pretentious. Oh, he took me on a number of times, and I . . . .

*Oh, did he?*

Oh, yes. Well, in a good way. I mean he would put me down and make me feel like a total heel. You know, things like, "Well, that was pretty fancy and eloquent of you, Daz. You must have some education!" Things like that. And I'd get a lot of this ribbing from somebody like him. I mean he was a sharp character. He said, "Well, I guess I just better shut up, because guys like you *know*, and I don't know nothing. I'm just a poor, simple fucking sailor, you know. I don't know nothing."

*Were there other people on the crew that had college educations, though?*

Occasionally, yes. In fact, I would say a number on different ships I was on, yes. They were called college boys. "You college boys." Yes, and I was able often to avoid that because I was very careful. If I'd get in an argument or discussion with somebody, I learned very quickly not to talk in my usual language, but to talk rather straightforwardly. Not to talk down, because it was so out of place, I mean, so incongruous to use certain language, though it happened.

I even have things in my notes where sometimes two or three guys would get together, and there would be some of the most *beautiful*, eloquent conversations in a highly literary form. I mean a lot of guys had done a lot of reading; some read Chaucer; I mean there were some seamen that read Chaucer, had read English literature here and there, read the Bible. And so sometimes the lan-

guage of these things would come cropping through their colloquialisms. And *that* was to me fascinating—this wonderful mixture of levels of language.

So, no, it wasn't all just the dregs of humanity on the ships. Although there were those, too, who didn't give a goddamn about anything, and who didn't even want to work, who, you know, were people who were totally disenchanted with the world and themselves, and drank a lot, and even on drugs.

*What kind of drugs?*

In those days, you could get opium. And I think marijuana was available, but what was it called then? There was a name for it, but not "weed."

*Oh, yes. It starts with a "g"? [ganja]*

I don't remember. It wasn't common. I mean if they did it, you didn't know about it very much. But there were guys that you knew were on something. Drinking, mainly. But we didn't talk much about drugs because nobody knew much about it, except we knew that certain guys did it and were *high* on something. I forget what some of the things were. But they had things you could get. The waterfront was easy to pick up all kinds of things. As you'd been abroad, you could get even more, you know.

So, aside from *that* level, which later in my ideological life would be referred to as the "lumpen,"—the lumpen proletariat, those who had nothing.

*The lumpen?*

They were the "lump" part of the world, the dregs at the bottom. Aside from that—

and they really weren't—there were very intelligent, able, clear guys. There were those with lots of problems, a lot of neurotic problems—difficult, mixed-up, lost souls. And some others who had aspirations—when the war was over, they were going to do all kinds of things, and probably *did* become lawyers, and some had been teachers and were going to go back and teach in schools. So there was a tremendous variety of people. And on different ships you had a different mix.

*And for each ship that you went on, were you always with a completely different crew?*

No and yes. For the most part, but sometimes like later on the *Henry Failing*, there would be pretty much the same crews. So if they liked the ship, they liked the run, they'd stay, and then you come on as a new person among a crew that had been there. You'd fill in for somebody who had left. That was quite common. You know, you can make a ship a home.

That was said ironically. Some of these old characters made ships their home. They stuck in there; nobody else could get on because they liked the ship, and the grub was good, and they had good relations with the captain. [laughter] Oh, yes. The guy who would say, "I polished your brass and kissed your ass. Can I have another run on your ship, sir?" [laughter] That was the joke about the guys that stayed on one ship all the time, that they must have had some kind of special relationship with the captain or the mates. "Can I have another trip, sir?" But, yes.

And then I was on ships where I would go on with partners—two or three guys—with Bob Nelson for example, who was on one later on the Alaska run, and Trot Ikenson and others, where we'd try to get on the ship together, so that we'd know two or three

other guys. I learned that system later, but these were my first trips, and I just took what I could get.

So, it's on this trip, I believe, that I met Bob Nelson, yes, for the first time, a young Swedish guy. He became one of my closest friends. Kathy knew him and liked him. What a wonderful, morose Scandinavian kid. Not a kid; he was probably in his late twenties. A *very* intelligent, wonderful guy. I think he was in the same watch with me, same fo'c's'le, on this trip, and I got little by little to know him. We would *talk* a great deal. He was an extremely morose character in what I would call the Icelandic madness way. *Peer Gynt* was his favorite—Ibsen, and he could almost recite it. He felt that sort of northern, mystical sadness. And Grieg, you know, the *Peer Gynt* suite. He brought the records aboard later, because I had this little Victrola, and we'd play the *Peer Gynt* suite. And he'd get very, very morose over it, deeply morose. When he'd get drunk, he would just turn into a melancholy, angry man, you know. But he was a great person and a *good* seaman.

And he was *big*. So later on when I became a ship's delegate, and often got into trouble aboard ships or ashore, he was almost a bodyguard. [laughter] Boy, I was glad to have him. Nobody wanted to take him on.

I have in my notes early discussions with him on the ship about race relations. And he was *very* . . . what we'd call today, racist. He thought Jews were parasites, and the only thing that Hitler had done right was to hold the Jews down. In those days it wasn't really admitted that the Jews were being slaughtered—you know, but that he had put them in their place or something like that. And we argued. Oh, and Trot was on that ship. Trot was the red. His name was Ikenson, but we called him Trot, Trotsky—not that he was a Trotskyite. I didn't know enough to know



the difference between Trotsky and Stalin in those days. But, anyway, Trot was a Jewish kid who was very red. I remember him just blowing up at Bob one day in the fo'c's'le and saying everything that I had wanted to say: "Who in the hell do you think you are? I'm a Jew, and I ain't rich, and I don't know many rich people, and I've worked all my life, and what in the hell are you talking about?" Those kind of conversations were terribly revealing to me.

Bob, also, was very anti-black—the "jigaboos." And he was glad he was in the SUP, because they didn't have checkerboard crews. Checkerboard crew is where you had all kinds of people, and all that. He argued a lot, but somehow he learned from argument. And later on, when I knew him, he had changed; he was very careful, and I think actually his views changed. But despite that, we liked him very much, because he was a deep thinker. He would think a lot. And he would think over and reflect on what had been said. And he'd argue with you reflectively and try to find arguments, and then sometimes would agree that you had made a

point. You know, when you're sitting around for weeks and weeks on a ship, it was wonderful to have people like that you can talk to, so he was one of those.

So I got to know him, and Trot. These two guys I knew for the next few years. Kathy got to know them, too. In fact, Trot was our best man when we got married the following year.<sup>1</sup> Bob wasn't ashore, but Trot was there. And he brought us a gift. It was a deer-handled wine bottle opener. [laughter] One that he got at a junk shop in Seattle on the waterfront. And I still have it; it's just marvelous. And some red literature—I forget what it was. I mean like the *Manifesto*.

But, anyway, Trot was aboard that ship. So the three of us determined we were going to ship out together later, and we did for a number of trips. Partners, they called it, ship partners.

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Note

1. Kathleen d'Azevedo insists that Bob Nelson and not Trot Ikenson was the best man.



## POLYNESIA AT LAST

**B**Y THE TIME the *John B. Floyd* got within sight of Samoa, there was an escort. We had a destroyer escort for a day, I think, coming in. And by the time we got there, I'd say that ship was in pretty sad shape internally. I mean there were some pretty upset, lonely, sick guys among these hundreds. They had a lot of spirit, too, you know—ready to go to war, ready to do their part, whatever that may be.

*Ready to get off the ship!*

Get off this ship and . . . yes, well, getting off the ship was terribly important to them.

And we came into Samoa, and here I was finally in Polynesia, you know, as opposed to Honolulu. And here was Pago Bay—Pago the bay and Pago the Rainmaker, that beautiful mountain overlooking it. This little, oval bay at Pago. *Absolutely* beautiful. I mean I had this feeling I was entering paradise.

*Now, had you read about Samoa?*

Oh, yes. I knew quite a bit; I mean, not only Peter Buck's work, I'd read a lot of South Sea literature and adventure tales and things of that kind. And Pago Pago was like going to Tahiti. Papeete and Pago—these are the places to go.

It was absolutely glorious in those days. The only thing that indicated change was the army post that was there—a naval post, army post—and a lot of buildings on one side of the bay where we had a base. The rest of the bay was just as pristine . . . I understand that today it is just one mass of housing. It's a city there. I don't know if that's true, but I've heard so. And there were all these Samoan villages, along with their *fa'alee* [a Samoan house]. These *beautifully* woven huts, woven palm-thatched roofs and poles, open veranda type of housing. And the people were still going around in *lappa*; the women wore sarong-type garments. That's not the word they used. But anyway, still wearing these early clothes, and some even wearing woven fiber clothing, and others dressed in western stuff that they got from the army and navy. So it was still pretty pristine.

And I think Mead had written some things by that time on Samoa. Yes, I'm sure I had read her. But that wasn't my real reading about Samoa; it was the adventure literature of James Norman Hall and people like that, and Robert Louis Stevenson, that sort of earlier literature. But I was familiar a little bit with the ethnology of it.

And the first day that we were there we had to do a lot of the unloading, with the army, too—we all longshored. And I got the first taste of what happens to American cargo and produce, all through the war and certainly I'm sure even today and elsewhere—I'll never complain about the old Wobblies throwing stuff overboard. Anyway, we were bringing beer ashore. First, the troops left. I think a few stayed on because we were taking them somewhere else. But most of them left, shouting with joy as they got off the ship. But when we were unloading these great big sling loads of beer, cases of beer, *every* load that went over the side, the winch driver would sort of slow down, and somebody would throw a case over off into the sea alongside the ship. So when you looked down to this clear, beautiful water, there must have been hundreds of cases of beer down there, and some of these Samoan kids would be paid to run down and bring up bottles of nice, cold beer! [laughter] There would have been enough there for, I would say, a multitude, from all the different ships that had come and loaded beer over the side. And a lot of other pilfering went on, too.

*Was it mostly beer, or were there other things like that?*

Oh, there were other things. Tools, items of clothing, toiletries; for girlfriends, anything you could pick up. *Cigarettes* . . . oh, ciga-

rettes were the main thing. Cigarettes were the most highly pilfered items, I think.

*But they weren't dropped into the sea?*

Oh, no. Just cases of beer . . . easy to put it down there refrigerated until you were ready to use them. So, you know, at night there'd be a line of people going and diving down or sending somebody to dive down to bring up beer.

*But then the other stuff was just pilfered just to . . . ?*

Just picked up and taken, yes, or diverted. A case of something or other that was wanted—a case of cigarettes might just disappear.

*Did you get a sense that it was some highly organized sort of black market scheme or just . . . ?*

Not there, but in Japan I saw the army, in a highly organized system, diverting *large* amounts, where a truckload would go this way and another truckload would go that way for somebody else, yes. And this happened all over. It's bound to happen. But, no, this here was a wonderful kind of pilfering.

*Ad hoc. [laughter]*

Well, it was also kind of beautiful. I mean right there in Pago harbor, beer being refrigerated! And I would say it was a pretty orderly place. It was quiet; there were, I don't know how many hundreds of thousands there, but it seemed a well-organized place, and I was very happy about that.

And while we were working one day, getting cargo off . . . I don't think we took

anything on that I remember. Oh, yes, we took on some jeeps and trucks later. Anyway, there were some young Samoans helping unload. And they were in breechclouts and very strong, young guys. Samoans are very well built and very energetic. And there was one young kid that got his hand caught in a chain and practically lost a finger. I remember that he didn't say anything. It must have been *extremely* painful, and he stopped work and came over with his dripping hand, and sort of holding it up. There it is, you know.

Well, I grabbed him and took him down to our fo'c's'le, and we got some bandages and cleaned up the hand and wrapped it up. And he was sweating and in great pain. We gave him some aspirin or whatever it was we had—painkiller and all that. And he went back to work on deck! [laughter]

This kid, Samuelo, came back aboard the ship with his hand all bandaged. He'd gotten it bandaged at one of the dispensaries, I suppose, the army dispensaries ashore, and he had a nice bandage on it. And although he really wasn't working too much, he wanted to be there, because I guess he got paid. He had come from Apia, the other island, the New Zealand-British-mandated island. It's called Western Samoa. And he'd come over to stay with relatives so he could work at this longshoring. When he came aboard, he brought me two coconuts, and some beautiful fruit—what were they? Like mangos or something and a ring made out of tortoise shell that he tried on me. He wanted to see if it would fit, and it did fit, and then he said, "Wait," and then a couple of days later he brought it back, and he had inlaid it with silver, with "Sam" on it. [laughter]

Yes, Samuelo. And, you know, it was very touching. Obviously I was his friend. And one day, about three days later, he asked me haltingly—he couldn't speak English very

well—did I want to go ashore? He would show me part of the island.

So I remember this wonderful day when we wandered along the beaches and these coconut groves—what Samoa must have looked like in the old days. It was quite beautiful. And he was very friendly, but we couldn't really communicate much, but it was a very wonderful feeling. He was obviously very thankful and grateful to me.

I remember we were sitting on a rock there—this was on the *sea* side, not on the Pago port side. It was overlooking the sea to the south and the southern part of the island. And I was just barely able to talk about the war, and he was saying *millions* of people, millions of people die, "Huh? Huh?" he said, "Huh?"

And I said, "Well, a lot, a lot."

And, "Oh," he said, "it's terrible. Millions dying?" And the word "millions" obviously meant that he didn't know any other large number. But, you know, he meant to ask if *a lot* were dying. I said, "Yes." And he says their people are sad, very sad, and he was crying, you know, how terrible this was.

I know I had this feeling I was talking to a really sweet, simple person. He was a very nice, young guy. And so I said, "Yes. Well," I said, "that's just the way it is."

He said, "Well, their . . ." "he was trying to find the word.

I said, "Their souls?"

He says, "Their souls must be very unhappy, you know. They're away; they're alone . . . *alone*." And then he says, "Well, that's the way it is." And there was a little crab on the sand, and he picked up this little hermit crab. He reached in, and pulled it out very carefully. He took out the little crab from the shell. It was wiggling around in his hand, and he says, "My soul is like that." Then he put it back in, and he let the little crab go.

You know, things like that I found very moving, very touching. And then he asked me if I wanted to meet his family. And so a day or two later, I went with him to this little *fa'alee* they had, very nice little house on one side of the . . . .

*"Folly" is what?*

*Fa'alee* is a house—an open, sort of shelter-house; Samoan, woven, thatched houses, with sometimes plank floors. The fancy ones are polished, where the chief lived with his beautiful daughter—the princess, the princess of Pago. [laughter]

*For real?*

Myself and another guy from the ship, we followed her one day home. She was carrying something on her head—a basket or something. Her walk was so beautiful. She just *swayed*, and she was a beautiful, young woman. And she was walking way out to the other end, under the Rainmaker, where the *fa'alee* of her father, the chief, had a number of large palisade houses. We tried to get to know her, but she was very uppity; she wouldn't have anything to do with us. [laughter]

But, anyway, Samuelo . . . I met his family with his mother and two old guys—one of them may have been his father—and a couple of brothers and other people, and then two *very* beautiful sisters, just lovely Polynesian girls. And we went in some sort of cart—we went over to the other side of the island on the beach. And all afternoon they played music, they danced, they sang; they made a kind of a luau—you know, they had a roasted pig. I had a real wonderful Polynesian day. I danced with these girls; it was just wonderful—or you danced by your-

self. Everybody was sort of dancing. Somebody had a ukulele and was singing Samoan songs. And I was in heaven. [laughter] I'd reached the epitome. Nothing could be better than this. And if I'd've stayed longer . . . Samuelo told me that one of his sisters liked me, and we should see each other. And there was no time for this, but I was very intrigued by the whole situation. [laughter]

*Oh, yes. And what did you say the Samoan word was again for the sarong?*

*Pareu, pareu.* I'm not sure that's the right word, but I believe so. It's for *lappa*, for what was called sarong and all that. It was a wrap-around of beautiful cloth.

*So this was all brought to you by a mangled finger.*

Just for helping to wrap up a finger. He was *terribly* grateful. And he kept showing his hand to his relatives. "This is what he [d'Azevedo] has done for me," you know, "Everything is going to be fine" and all. Later I wrote to him, or he wrote to me—he had a friend who could write English, and he was not bad when he could write, but he had an awful time talking. And he wrote these letters from Apia, said that his finger was not any good, but that it had healed.

*Did they have letter writers?*

He had a relative, I think, in Apia, who wrote for him. But he could write a little, and he sometimes did write, and it was kind of halting writing. He was going to school, learning English. And so we exchanged two or three letters. He wanted to go to New Zealand or something, I forget now. But that was a wonderful time. And I remember his sisters. They were everything I thought

Polynesian women should be. [laughter] They were beautiful. And one of them liked me.

Oh, when I left the ship, I went down to the beach, and I got a little hermit crab. That was my souvenir, aside from the ring that I had gotten from Samuelo. I got a little hermit crab and put it in a dish, in a bowl, and had it in my fo'c's'le. And when I'd get up in the morning, when we had left, I discovered the little crab had crawled out of the bowl and was somewhere around in the fo'c's'le, and I had to take it and put it back in its seawater bowl. It obviously didn't like that; wanted to be away. I had that hermit crab for at least two weeks after that, after a number of escapes. But when we got up into the temperate zone, it got cold, and I'd find that he would leave his shell and climb around looking for a way out. And I'd find him all full of lint; it had wandered around in the fo'c's'le. And if I saw a little ball of lint, I knew it was my crab. I'd take him, and, like Samuelo, clean him up and put him back in his shell! [laughter] And he'd stay there for a while, but he'd soon be out. The little guy finally died.

So after we loaded at Samoa, we left and we had a few troops still on the ship. We made another stop two days out at the Ellice Islands. We had on board a fat, little man, from the Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands. He couldn't speak English, and he was very reticent. He had no clothes, as far as I remember; if he did, he didn't wear them. He just wore some shorts, and he had a little, fat belly. He looked like a little gnome, a little Buddha. He was a man about fifty or so.

The story about him was that he had left Bikini, because he had heard that things were not going to be good there. And this was well before they were removed from Bikini in 1945 or so, to other islands nearby. But there

was something going on there already, so he was going to see relatives in the Ellice Islands.

I remember him sitting out on deck all day long and sometimes half the night, sitting on the hatch all by himself, looking up at the sky. This poor, old guy. I tried to talk to him, and I knew his name at one point. I was saying, "Your name, your name." And it was something like Papadagu or something like that, and we used to call him "Papa." And he was something of a mystical character—just sat there with his legs crossed, not saying anything to anybody for two days, near the garbage buckets. Right near the garbage can, and he didn't mind. He sat there, and he would eat his meal by himself. He'd come in and get a big, tin plate—it was really a kind of a wash basin. And the galley man would put his food in all together—he wanted it all together—potatoes, meat, vegetables, everything, salad and everything in the plate. [laughter] And he'd go out with a big spoon, sit all by himself and eat. He got off at the Ellice Islands.

Funafuti has become a kind of emblem for me of one of the most beautiful, classical atolls in the world. There were others, I'm sure, but I saw Funafuti, this small, little atoll, about a mile long and, oh, five hundred yards or more wide, with a magnificent lagoon. You come into this wide, open lagoon, with white, sandy edges and a coral reef all around it. You come through a little opening into this quiet lagoon bay, with a small, flat island laying out, covered with palm and white sand, glistening white sand. And I was in the crow's nest coming in, rolling back and forth, and looking down, I could imagine the water was a hundred feet deep where we were. I could see, like old Lake Tahoe, *all* the way to the bottom, with these *beautiful* fish swimming by. These schools of brilliantly colored fish

and a sparkling, effervescent water—absolutely beautiful scene. We just came in and we dropped our lousy anchor there in the middle of this paradise. [laughter]

The rest of the troops, I guess about a hundred and fifty or so, got off there. And then we had to unload on the barges oh, gosh, all kinds of equipment that we had on deck—jeeps, and I think there were a couple of cars and things of that kind. And the whole question was, “What are they doing here?” The atoll was so small that I could walk around it in one afternoon, all the way around, in an hour—just walked around the whole atoll. [laughter] And there were *hundreds* of soldiers there, camped, and jeeps and tanks lined up all the way across the island! And we were bringing them more! I remember one of these guys, the pursers or something, from the army group that came aboard, said, “Oh, for Christ’s sake! What? What more are these . . . ? [laughter] We don’t need them! Take them *back!*” They had to take them ashore.

These things are probably still there rotting, and this happened . . . you know, war does this. Waste—enormous waste. Nobody had told them that they were supposed to pick up stuff and take it somewhere else, not leave it there. They had no use for it. There was one sandy road across the center of the island, and there were guys just going back and forth with jeeps just for the fun of it. I mean, they were just zipping back and forth. [laughter] And that was very sad to see.

And then there was a little glade on one corner of the island where some Ellice Islanders were living. I’d say . . . oh, it was a little camp of about two dozen people—families. And I was fascinated by them. You know, they were just over there in the corner of the island. Now and then they were called upon to help with certain tasks and

jobs. But they were just surrounded by aliens, and the plans were for them to ship out. Oh, this old guy that was on the ship, he joined them because he had a relative among them, and the story is that they were going to be eventually taken to some other island because Funafuti was going to be abandoned. It was just a little atoll, and there were bigger atolls nearby.

But I remember one night I stayed there late—a beautiful night. And they were having a little party. They were playing drums, and they had a uke, and they were singing *beautiful* songs. I guess they were Fijian. These Ellice Islanders would be Melanesian; they were probably connected more to Fiji than to Samoa—I’m not sure. They were about five, eight hundred miles north-northeast of Samoa. And so they were connected with either Fiji or Samoa.

But they were going to be moved, anyway. And they were having a little dance, and I danced. They forced me to go up, and they put a grass skirt on me, along with the others. Anybody who was taking a lead dance had this skirt wrapped around them. And so, you know, I tried to dance, and I danced. *Everybody* was very happy, and they were singing and drinking. What were they drinking? I think it was gin. It was very hard to get, but they may have had beer from the army. And so I was there until midnight or something like that, then back aboard my ship. And the next morning, before we left, one of the guys that had been there—one of the older men—came with this grass skirt and gave it to me! [laughter] And I still have it. It is probably a rather good museum piece—an Ellice Island grass skirt—very stiff kind of skirt. And each of the palm leaves is backed with paper. And the paper is from a handwritten, Samoan Bible. You know, they had stripped it down and used it as a backing. It’s just marvelous—



some poor, old missionary had painfully written this thing out; [laughter] somebody had finally clipped all the pages off and used it to back a grass skirt! So that was another one of those touching moments—you know, getting a gift like that.

So that was the end of that trip—the Ellice Islands. And somehow or other we got back; I forget whether we made . . . . Oh, we *did* make another stop. We had this terribly heart-rending stop by Tahiti. [laughter] We had to go there for some reason. I think we

were taking a route to get away from reports of submarines, and we were taking a southern route around to come back. And we anchored in the bay of Papeete, but we couldn't go ashore. [laughter] I could see this *marvelous* place that I had wanted to go to, with little Papeete over here and a few buildings, and we passed Muroroa and all that. But we only spent one day there *at anchor*. And that was enough to make me want to slit my throat. And then I think we came back to San Francisco.



## SHIPBOARD HIERARCHY

SO WE LEFT that remembered paradise and headed for home still with reports of sighted submarines all along just north of our route. That's why we had spent the day in Papeete, was to wait for reports that things were fairly clear on the route that we'd be taking—a sort of an easterly route and up, oh, some distance from South America and Mexico, north to San Francisco.

But I think I should say something about the structure of shipboard hierarchy and attitudes about that, because I was becoming more and more aware of these kinds of divisions among groups on ships and what that meant in terms of the social situation at home in the United States. A ship is a little microcosm; and certainly this ship had been a very large microcosm with hundreds of troops aboard when we went down, and with a gun crew and with the regular crew. But I think I was doing a lot of thinking; at least the few jotted notes, the garbled notes, that I have for this trip indicate that I was thinking about what it meant to become aware of the way work situation and position affected people's

attitudes about themselves and about the world.

Briefly, I suppose I should sort of enumerate what the divisions were on the ship. There was first the bridge, which included the captain and three mates and often a purser, whom we saw as representing the company; and Sparks, the radio operator, would be somewhere in between. The Sparks' quarters on any ship were usually on the bridge, along with the officers. But Sparks was a kind of a free-roving character and could move throughout the ship and be sort of accepted, particularly if his personality was the kind where he wanted to identify with the crew. But on the other hand, I can remember there were radio operators who spent all their time with officers and didn't really come down among the crew. However, most of them did.

The crew was intrigued by them, because they were technicians. Also, they had their ear to the news, and they'd had sometimes a kind of a vocational education, which gave them a certain prestige, an intellectual prestige, I suppose. And they were often a little funny and screwy in their behavior. They

were either reclusives or philosophers or ranters and ravers or sea lawyers, as we all called them—people who always were correcting our irrational view of things with a rational picture of things; correcting us with regard to astronomy, geography, navigation, how ignorant we were.

And we didn't even know half the time where we were, what latitude or longitude, and Sparks always had a pretty good idea. We didn't know what was going on in the outside world most of the time, and Sparks had the news. He knew in this particular period on this ship, for example, on the *Floyd*, that the Japanese were being slowly driven northward. The battle of Midway and the Coral Sea had gone on with some successes on our part, on the Allies' part. And although Japan had New Guinea and a good part of the Aleutians, they were being driven back slowly, and that MacArthur and Ridgway were pressing northward. [General Matthew Ridgway commanded the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division and the XVIII Airborne Corps during WWII.] And all these things most of us were not really aware of: We didn't have newspapers, of course—and I suppose our interests weren't there. Our interests were on our own reminiscences and our own interrelations on the ship.

So here was the bridge, on the one hand, with the officers, and then somehow this anomalous position of the Sparks, and then the working crew, which was made up of sort of three major divisions. The black gang, or the engine room crew, who, of course, kept the ship going and were essential to our whole operation, and whose work was always for us on deck, sort of mystifying because they spent so much of their time down there in that dark, hot, noisy, almost frightening kind of environment of the propeller shaft with the sound of the screw and the boilers and all those dials,

the mysterious dials, and iron ladders going all the way down to the bilge, the bowels of the ship. And the few times that some of us had to go down to get the deck engineer or the chief engineer or tell him something, I always found it was like going into Hades. I mean this was the depths. So it was really a separate world. However, the engine gang ate with the deck gang.

The deck gang were the men who were on watch and were responsible for work on the surface of the ship—the decks and the rigging and, oh, anywhere on the ship that we might be asked to work. We also took our turn in watches at the wheel and on the bridge, where we came in closest relationship to the officers, because there was always an officer, a mate, on duty. And the captain would come up periodically to check things out—the skipper. But at the wheel with just a mate was sometimes a chance to converse and to communicate with the bridge—I mean after a long trip we were curious what they were thinking, what they were doing, and they were very curious about us.

There wasn't much direct social interreaction between the bridge and the crew—except individually, you might get to know somebody. And, you know, one time when my friend Bob Nelson was a third mate, and I was the delegate on the ship, which I'll talk about a little later. We would share all kinds of information about what was going on and created a lot of havoc because of that. But, nevertheless, there was this division of not only one's work, but orientation due to one's place on the ship.

*Now, you said that the engine room gang had a different union. Is that right?*

Yes. The MFOW—Marine Firemen Oilers, et cetera. I don't remember the full

name. They had a separate union, and I think at that time they had become CIO—I'm not sure. A little later they were all in the CIO, along with the National Maritime Union, which was another seamen's union.

And also the steward's department had its own union, the Marine Cooks and Stewards. And they had not only different work and the galley as their main place of work, they had their own section of the crew's quarters. And the number of them varied. There was always a chief cook. There was the steward, who was really something of an officer and lived in the officer's quarters. There were the cooks and the scullion helpers and the mess men. And they were usually mixed—Filipinos, sometimes blacks, sometimes Caucasians, Hispanics. This was a union that very early had diversified its membership and was in those days considered a progressive, red union, like the National Maritime Union.

And then the deck gang, which the ships that I was on at this point, was Sailor's Union of the Pacific. So they not only had different unions, different sets of regulations and rules about their work, but they had a different orientation about the ship—but not completely.

There was a sense of being a member of *a crew*, the working crew, that included the three departments: engine, steward, and deck departments. And we felt in a sense like a nation. I mean we were the crew of a particular ship. Nevertheless, within that, there were these differences and tensions, having to do with the requirements of our jobs.

And *always* the steward's department got hell from everybody. And it was built in; it was a kind of a way of life to see the steward's department as the "belly robbers," as they were considered as never turning out adequate food. They seldom did, and when they

did, they were never praised. Just that nobody would say anything! [laughter] Most of the time it was the place to raise your beefs. And I would say most of the beefs on the ships that I was on had to do . . . not most of them . . . a lot of them had to do with food, the quality. Well, like on the *John B. Floyd*, when we were going down with the troops in that terribly tight, sardine-like morass of flesh that was on that ship, there were two or three weeks when *everybody* on the ship was sick with the runs.

But this isn't really fair. There were so many possible things to which the sicknesses could be attributed; it is mind-boggling—from the way people had to live and the sharing of very tight air space, the fumes coming from the engine room, the sewage was onboard, and all those things. But the steward's department was singled out. It was the food, of course. And there was some reason to think so, because not only with the deck gang crew, whose galley was different, it was not the same as the galley in the mess for the troops. Nevertheless, there was a sort of sharing of food to some degree, of passing materials back and forth. But for the troops, in particular, I have one of the dispatches which the Sparks on that ship put out to everybody on the ship, saying that, "It is the food, and it is the unsanitary conditions created not only by the cooks on board this ship, but by the food served us and the way it sits out for two or three days, festering in the heat," on and on, but probably the main thing is that the troops have to wash their own dishes. And they go through the galley, dipping their plates and cups and things, all in the same water, and rinsing them off and wiping them off. And undoubtedly this is one of the things that has spread whatever this bacteria is that is affecting the crew." And, of course, then the deck gang on the ship and

the engine gang began to say that that's what was happening to us, because people were getting ill. And so the poor, darn cook and the steward were constantly berated with accusations that they were poisoning the ship, and they were belly-robbers, and that when we got back on port, *all* of our unions were going to get them. [laughter]

And, as I remember, it took a great deal of either strength or an ability to distance oneself from what was going on to be a steward and a cook, or even a mess man, because the mess man got it first. I mean, everybody would yell at the mess man about what was going on in the galley and what was coming out of the galley. And particularly, when one of the cooks served—this was one of two or three times that it has happened on ships—what was called “mountain oysters,” which are sheep testicles. [laughter] And it always seemed to be the last resort, when food got short, out would come the mountain oysters, as they were called. And, of course, a few of the crew thought they were great, because they had been used to them by living in Colorado or Wyoming or where it is that sheep testicles are removed by the ton. But this was, of course, cheap food, and the war shipping administration was obviously allowing this kind of thing to come aboard ships.

So, we had that and sometimes the worst, most horrible liver that one could ever imagine. I mean it was old tough liver. And that, along with the mountain oysters, was sometimes too much. That happened once on this ship, and people threw it over side, and there were big arguments and screaming matches between and the galley gang.

Things like that would erupt all the time because of the differences. You know, each group had its own needs. And sometimes the black gang would bring up their soiled, oily, greasy clothing, and their footprints would

be all over the passageways, and the deck gang would have to swab that and clean it up, and we would be angry at them for this. They would say they couldn't help it. Sometimes they'd leave the ventilators open so that we would get the smells from the engine room. If the wind was blowing the wrong way, we blamed it on them, because the oilers should be up adjusting those ventilators. So there were these little tensions that would go on all the time.

And, oh, the deck gang was considered by the two other departments to be uppity and to believe that they were superior because they were up there in the air, “being sailors,” you know. I can remember one deck engineer or an oiler (I forget which), who had tasks on the upper deck, oiling the winches to keep them from rusting and taking care of the machinery on deck. And hearing our complaints, I remember him saying something like, “You guys are living in a dream world. You're up here; you're not doing a goddamn thing, except chipping paint and thinking you're steering the ship, and all you're doing is handling the wheel and taking orders. And you guys are just automatons up here, believing that somehow or other you're real seamen. *The real* seamanship is going on down below, where those engines are that keeps you going, that keeps this goddamn ship moving! And all you can do is complain about what goes on down there. All you do is sit up there and do your watch, go back and bunk, read the dirty stories, and all that sort of thing.”

“And as for the steward's department, well, yeah, we need the food, but we don't need what *they* put out.” [laughter] And, you know, “Next time I come on board any ship, I'm going to bring a bunch of sandwiches and bread and bologna of my own, and I'm not going to eat that goddamn crap,” and on and

on. These kinds of minor things were built into the situation.

But there was a real hierarchy. There was the bridge and the rest of the crew, essentially. And always there was the grumbling about the bridge. Either the captain was competent, or he wasn't competent, or he was a bastard and hard to get along with and had it in for the crew and seamen and was only thinking of the company. And that was true of most of the mates, except now and then there would be a mate who had just come up from being an able seaman or from the engine room and had just gotten his papers and was now a new mate, like a third mate or a second mate. And now and then there would be one who had a strong feeling of identity with the crew and would come and visit us and talk and all that. But that was rare, because once up there, they were linked in to the operation of the ship, the responsibility for really keeping it going where it was going and seeing to it that things were orderly. [laughter]

Nevertheless, there would be a reaction to authority. "Those guys up there, they're making their big pay; they've got their connections, all of them have got homes ashore with wives, and they get regular pay", and all that sort thing. And, "They'll get pensioned off when they get older, whereas the guys below, they won't get anything—not even like the army or the navy. We'll get nothing." And that was one of the beefs, of course, of the CIO unions, was to get some kind of recognition for merchant seamen at the end of the war, which didn't happen.

But, anyway, there were these beefs about not only different status, but different emoluments that came with it, and who got more pay and who didn't, and who was doing how much work? And "what was that goddamn third mate doing? He didn't have anything

to do except stand his watch." Except a lot of time the third mate was also the doctor aboard ship or the first-aid man, who may know absolutely nothing. [laughter] And I think I mentioned earlier something about the lancing of a swelling on the groin of one of the members of the ship, carried out by a third mate who *acted* as though he was a very proficient surgeon and was *absolutely* ignorant, didn't know anything about anything. And it was a wonder that the man lived, but . . .

*Not only lived, but he was grateful.*

He was grateful, happy about it, yes. [laughter] Well, there was nobody else who would dare to mess around. And then there was also among certain members of the crew a strong feeling about class divisions and caste divisions elsewhere. For example, old-timers against newcomers aboard ship. That was always there. It was the essential difference. Those who had been on the ship, on *a* ship or *that* ship in previous trips, and were the older members of the crew who were competent, efficient, the old-timers. They'd been around a long time, or they were old union men that I've talked about earlier. So there were the old-timers, who sometimes included men who had sailed for a few trips and knew their way around a ship and all that—they might be included as old-timers.

But the newcomers were people still learning how to get along on a ship, often called "stump jumpers" or "lubbers:" Stump jumpers because they'd come from the Midwest or the South or somewhere in California or Oregon, where they had been on farms, and so they were stump jumpers. [laughter] They clambered around on farms and over stumps, and they didn't know anything about ships. They were the "gazonies," the "land

lubbers,” or the “lubbers,” and the lowest of the low.

Nevertheless, they had to be trained; they had to be brought in, not by any great effort on your part, but by allowing them to learn. [laughter] Allowing them to live. [laughter] And this was where, of course the distinction on deck was made between able seamen, ordinary seamen, and bosuns. A bosun was a member of the deck gang, but he was sort of a foreman. Not always with the crew, sometimes his orientation was to the bridge.

A good bosun, we thought, was one who really had the crew's interests in mind and who would take on the crew's side in a major beef or something of that kind or would act as a kind of a go-between between the crew and the bridge. But good bosuns were few and far between, because a lot of them were really authoritarian and somewhat vindictive characters, who hated themselves and hated crews! [laughter] There were some good bosuns, and a good bosun was a good thing to have. But there were the bosun, the able seamen, and then the ordinary seamen.

An ordinary seaman has not yet gotten his green ticket or papers. I don't know, three, four, five trips at least were necessary, and taking an exam to become an able seaman. So able seamen had a sense of being superior, on deck, I mean. They had the *credentials*.

And here come these gazoonies. On board every trip would be a new ordinary seaman or more. And the ordinary seamen were separated in terms of watches. I mean, the three watches—four to eight and eight to twelve, twelve to four. Three four-hour watches *around the clock*. So you each had two watches in a twenty-four-hour period.

So you had an eight-hour period, where you could always be called outside of watch; you could be called on deck for emergencies and all that, for which you're supposed to get

overtime. But it was hard to get, and you had to argue with bosuns and argue with mates. And that's where the ship's delegates came in to argue whether or not overtime should or should not be paid.

And so the ordinary seamen were split up. There were three ordinary seamen aboard, one on each watch. So you'd generally, have two able seamen in a fo'c's'le and one ordinary seaman—three men to a fo'c's'le on a watch. And when you came aboard, you tried to get the watch you *wanted*. And you didn't always get what you wanted; it was whatever was open.

Later on, I always liked the one that nobody else wanted, you know, the four to eight, because you had a lot of time to yourself and things were quiet on deck. The four to eight during the day, in the afternoon, was after the work day was really over, and so you had some mop-up work to do, all that. And I found that desirable, but I didn't always get it. Not everybody wanted that. Some wanted the twelve to four; some wanted the four to eight, and that sort of thing. But, anyway, you often had to take what you could get with an opening in the watch.

And so the ordinary seamen would come aboard, and they would be assigned to one or another fo'c's'le. And they, of course, were the butt of a tremendous amount of ribbing and tricks. [laughter] One of the *classic* tricks was to send an ordinary seaman for a sky hook: “Hey! Hey! Go get that sky hook! Go tell the bosun we need a sky hook.”

And the poor guy would run to the bosun, and the bosun would say, “Oh, well, now, where did we put those sky hooks? Check up at the rope locker. No, look in that hatch locker. No, you better run after and check with the gun crew,” and on and on and on. They'd keep the kid running until he was exhausted and till everybody got tired of the



joke. And then he would be told, “There ain’t no such thing as a sky hook. What is a sky anyway?” And usually they didn’t know; they just took it for granted that sky hook meant something, you know, and that’s a legitimate misconception. And so that was a classic one, where you would haze somebody and, oh, a dozen other kinds of things of this sort—sometimes sending a very inexperienced kid aloft, which was against regulations and rules, but it was done, you know.

*Because it was dangerous?*

Oh, very dangerous, particularly in a heavy sea. But the idea of seeing how scared they got and all that; you’re not supposed to do that. But it was done all the time. Or taking their clothes and hiding them so that they’d have to run out on deck in emergency half naked.

You know, on and on and on. There was that kind of thing. At the same time, they were the “kids” in the watches, and so you did try to help them, if you could get along with them. But there was sometimes just some impossible character like Cowboy. I’ll never forget Cowboy, who was a kid from Texas who came on board with his cowboy boots on. And he *loved* those boots, those cowboy boots. He was a skinny, ratchety-looking kid, a little . . . well, I can’t say he was dumb. He just acted very wild and distracted and was sort of a crazy kid. And he seemed to have no idea at all where he was—that he was on a ship, and that there were certain things required of him, and that there was a certain kind of behavior that he had to learn. And, oh, he would complain.

The ordinary seaman should not complain about things, like the food. That’s left to those who know what food ought to be. And he would send stuff back to the galley!

“Take this crap!” or, “I want something or other!” And pretty soon people would just not serve him. The mess man would just ignore him or throw something entirely different than he had asked for, or the thing that he didn’t want would come back piled high, or something of that sort. And he would tell tall tales about how important he was and all the great things he’d done, all the women that he had slept with, and he couldn’t have been more than eighteen, you know! [laughter] And all these women who loved him, and he just thought that he was out of this world with the boots.

Then that got to be a thing on the ship—this guy’s boots. “We got to get those boots off that crazy kid.”

And we went to the slop chest. It was open, I don’t know, once or twice a week, something like that, and you could buy things, the steward’s slop chest. And there were some shoes there; they weren’t quite the right size, but there were some work shoes. [laughter] And we all chipped in and bought a pair of work shoes, and while he was sleeping, we threw his cowboy boots over side. I even took part in this. There was this strong feeling that something had to be done. Because his boots really caused him a lot of trouble. He’d slip all over the deck.

*Well, a hazard, yes.*

Well, he had the high heels on them and all that, and he would slip and slide, and if the sea would come over, they’d get full of water, and yet he loved those damn boots. Well, we threw the boots over side and left these new shoes—those shoes that were at least a size or two larger than he would wear—left them by his bunk.

There was a day or two of *absolute mayhem*. *He went wild*. “Where are my boots?”

What did you guys do, you dirty, rotten bastards? I'm going to sue you when I get back," on and on. And we loved it. I mean, the more he ranted and raved, the more we enjoyed it. And we didn't tell him that we'd thrown them over side. We just said we didn't know what happened to them. He knew. He knew that something terrible had happened, that we'd stolen them or something! So then he went to the captain; then he went to the mates. And they just said, "Well, we can't do anything about that. I mean, you know, maybe you misplaced them," that sort of thing. [laughter]

It was terrible! But here was this ordinary seaman. The idea is, anything goes, and he wasn't the careful, intent, questioning kind of guy that a good ordinary seaman is, who wants to *learn*, who wants to become a seaman. He seemed to be totally disinterested in becoming *anything* except what he was. I mean, he claimed that he was a great poker player, and turned out he'd never held a pack of cards in his hand. You know, that kind of a kid.

Well, being on a small ship, a small world, that becomes a *cause célèbre*. I mean, you would talk about him all the time. He was great entertainment. And it took days for him to get over it. And finally he had to wear shoes to go to work, and he put on these great clodhoppers, the kind that you tie up and had cleats on them, and they were above his ankle.

*Oh, the poor guy!*

[laughter] And this scrawny kid would be in these great big, oversized shoes running around deck, tripping over himself. He finally got pretty good at wearing them. [laughter] But he had his first lesson about becoming a member of the crew. OK, I just tell that little

anecdote, because it's one of the types of things that helps you to see how that world was organized.

And most ordinary seamen were young. Every now and then someone would come aboard—a middle-aged man or something—who hadn't been to sea before, was trying to get to sea. They were treated with great respect, but, also, a degree of contempt—quiet contempt. You know, who do they think they were? How are they going to become a seaman without having started earlier? And yet, some of those guys would go on and become able seaman. So there were these divisions.

And then there were the attitudes about race. The Sailor's Union of the Pacific, as I have said before, was a *very* reactionary union from this point of view. The idea was, you have to fight against having checkerboard crews. I mean, "It's always been a white union; it's going to stay a white union," that kind of a view. And a lot of the old-timers agreed with that. They may not even be anti-minority or anti-black or anything else, but they didn't want to live with them. "It just ain't right. It'd spoil the ship. This wasn't the right way. It's never been that way, and it shouldn't be that way." And I remember *very* well, more and more it firmed up my view that I was in a very, very strange and reactionary kind of environment.

Oh, and attitudes toward Jews, a great deal of anti-Semitism—even though there were Jews on board. But nobody paid any attention to the fact they were on board, because they were quiet, but *all* sorts of anti-Semitic statements—even to the point of saying that there's one good thing that Hitler had done, you know, that sort of thing. And, "You know Hitler was a bastard, and look what he has done generally. I mean, we're going to have to beat him and see to it that

he gets his dues, but, nevertheless, he did a couple of good things, and one of them was put the Jews in their place”—that was expressed by a lot people.

*But you said before, too, that at that time, and correct me if I'm wrong, there wasn't much comprehension as to what Hitler really was doing about "the Jewish question."*

Not really. The enormity of the genocide, if it leaked through with the controlled press we had and all that, it wasn't enough to stop people in their tracks, as it was later, after the war. There was always the idea that things weren't as serious as anybody implied, that, "It was just a war, and he was a dirty, bastard dictator, and he and Mussolini . . . get rid of them as soon as possible, because they're making war against us." People were not so much aware of the implications of fascism—and people even said they were anti-fascist when they were saying these things—what fascism was and what it did and what kind of social system it created in Europe and a similar kind of development of militarism in Japan. Oh, they were clearer about Japan or more definite about Japan than about Europe

and Hitler. I mean, Japan, the "damn squint-eyes," you know. "They had this emperor." The emperor, of course, was the flag—I mean, the flag of how terrible it was to be ruled by an emperor who claimed he was God.

*Did you know about the kamikaze pilots at that time?*

Oh, yes, because all through the war we were hearing about kamikaze raids. However, that increased toward the end of the war, the sort of desperate last stands of the Japanese. But, we knew the word *kamikaze*. "Kami-crazy," the people would say. "The kami-crazies." But, yes, we heard about that. And we heard about the atrocities in China. We didn't call them "war crimes" in those days, but we heard about the handling of prisoners, the atrocities against prisoners. And *hara-kiri* [ritualized suicide to save face], you know, the Japanese propensity to kill themselves for honor, and the kamikazes were part of that. Yes, we heard all that. But on a ship rolling around the Pacific or the Atlantic, people didn't pay too much attention to those things. They just came up now and then.



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## BOB, TROT, AND CARLSON

**B**OB NELSON and I began to have a real friendship on that ship. Nevertheless, when I look back, he was an incipient racist and fascist. But he was such a nice guy. [laughter] This is where you learn these kind of things, that I disagreed with a friend about everything that he stood for on that level—his social view. He was an innate social Darwinist and a Malthusian; [laughter] I mean, “We got too many people in the world anyway.” I remember a big argument that took place, on the bridge a month later, on the bridge of the *Alvarado*. Bob was third mate, and the captain was on the bridge, and I was at the wheel. And Bob and the captain got in this long discussion about eugenics. The captain was saying how terrible it was that the Germans were out there sterilizing people, because they either were mentally retarded or they had some kind of infirmity that was considered to be heritable but that poor people generally, the dregs of society, and in general incompetent should be sterilized and removed from society; and the Jews, and all that.

And Bob, more as a devil’s advocate than anything, but, nevertheless, it was part of his way of thinking at that time—he was a cynic and a pessimist, a true Nordic cynic and pessimist from Minnesota, Lake Minnetonka, which we used to joke about. And he was telling the captain, “Well, after all, are the rest of us going to support *these* people and their descendants for time immemorial? Each one of them will have descendants, will spread these characteristics through society. Do you want that? Is that what you want? And should we support those who don’t want to help themselves, who are just the dregs of society, like some of the people on this ship? Are we hard-working people going to support them?”

And the captain, being something of a humanist, and very shocked, I remember, saying, “Well, after all, not *all* people who are declared to be idiots have idiot children. And not all people inherit the characteristics of their parents. That may be acquired by their experiences and the way they had to live.”

And Bob would say, “Well, you’re just an idealist, because it ain’t that way.”

And I remember talking to Bob about this later and arguing with him at length. Bob helped me sharpen my viewpoints. I mean, I liked him, and I trusted him, and he and I were very friendly, and he was very smart. He was able to converse and argue in his pessimistic, mournful, Ibsenesque way.

*Well, you said he listened, too.*

Yes, he would listen. And later on, he changed remarkably. Not just because of me but of experiences we had *and* because of Trotsky. [laughter] Trot. Trot Ikenson—this young kid on board who was some kind of Marxist. As I say, we called him “Trot,” for Trotsky, just as a joke, having no idea whether or not he was a Trotskyite or member of the Communist Party or whatever. But he was very far left, very red. And Trot was a great influence on Bob. He would argue with him and call him all kinds of names. “You’re a damned reactionary.” And he’d call me names. “You’re just a goddamned liberal. You’re just a damned liberal.” And I had to look into this, what a liberal was, from that perspective. In a sense I was, you know, standing apart from all this and being a humanist and all that kind of stuff. And he just called me a “wishy-washy liberal,” you know. [laughter] And it didn’t hurt me.

*He was Jewish, wasn’t he?*

Yes, a Jewish kid. And he’d say, “I’m a Jew, and look what you’re saying, Bob. What kind of ass are you, anyway? Look at you. You’re just a big, dumb Swede! And you think you know everything. You think because you got a white skin, you come from Minnesota, your ancestors come from Sweden,” he said,

“you’re just like Hitler! You’re just like the damn Nazis,” and on and on.

These arguments would take place, which were when I look back, kind of marvelous. I learned a lot. I was being honed in a way. And my sloppy kind of quasi-political views began to take shape with those kinds of conversations mainly because these were two people I liked and got along with; we could talk. And there was no way for anybody to do anybody else harm. I mean, we couldn’t harm each other! [laughter] We could just disagree. And Bob could at least argue. And then sometimes he’d just get mad and go into a funk for a day or two, where he wouldn’t talk to you; wouldn’t talk to anybody. He would withdraw. And then he’d slowly come out and *raise* the question again after he’d thought it over.

*So you were on the John B. Floyd together.*

Yes. Trot and Bob were both on that ship. And then later, we sailed together a number of times on ships out of Seattle up to Alaska. Yes. And, you know, I didn’t know them too well, but then later we determined that we should ship together again. I know how that happened. Bob would tell these long, long stories. He had shipped the Alaska run a lot, and he had done fishing; he was a fisherman. So we’d get these *wonderful* stories from him about the Alaska run, shipping Alaska Steam, and of the Inside Passage, up into Alaska and the Aleutians and all that. And what a wonderful country it was, and how he was saving up his money and he was going to get a little cabin up in the woods in Washington, way back in the wilds of Washington or British Columbia, and he was going to settle down with about three or four hundred acres, where *nobody* could get to him. [laughter] And he was going make his living on the land, and

all that sort of thing. All these *wonderful* things to us out there at sea, lonely, wishing we had someplace.

And then he might get married; there might be a woman who'd be willing to do this, but not many women are willing to live like that—he's got to find one. All the ones he's known, they *all* want to live in some kind of middle-class way. They don't really have any adventuresome spirit, and he's looking for a woman who had . . . . Eventually he found a woman who put up with him for a couple years. [laughter]

Anyway, that's what he was going to do. And then the other thing was fishing—getting a fishing boat and fish for salmon in the Sound, and living a free life, continuing going to sea, but doing it in your own way, and *you're* in charge. Or a cabin in the woods and living off the land, and all those wonderful dreams, you see.

Well, of course, the guys would listen to this; we loved it. That was what we wanted to do. And that's really what turned me on to going north out of Seattle and shipping out of Seattle, which I did for a good part of the remainder of my shipping life. But particularly after I got married, had kids, it was being closer to the shore, shorter trips instead of these very long ocean voyages, though I did take a couple of those.

But, anyway, these two guys . . . . I think it was Carlson that I mentioned before, who had gotten out on deck and brought the crew out and challenged God to strike him down. "Strike me down now, so to prove to these guys that you exist. Otherwise, shut up and get out of our lives and leave us alone," you know. [laughter]

And I think of that, because along *with* this business of a growing class consciousness, I guess it would be called, on my part—I mean I had a social consciousness, a kind of secu-

lar, humanistic view of things, up until that time . . . . I think what was beginning to happen was that the kinds of partners like this that I had on ships—some of them *extremely* bright, intelligent guys—were beginning to shape in my mind a concept of class division, class struggle; differences based upon authority and access to the goods of society as against those who have no access, and workers, the people who drudge and work for very little in order to supply a great deal of wealth to others. Those kinds of ideas were taking shape.

And some of my reading . . . . I remember Trot had a pamphlet of Lenin's *On Dialectic*, I believe it was, at sea. And he told me to read it, and we argued this whole business of dialectical materialism and the negation of negation and the struggle of opposites, and all that sort of thing. And all those sort of germinal, early things were taking place at that time. And Bob, of course, being extremely cynical and calling us "just a bunch of phony reds, just phony reds. I mean, you guys, you all go for any big idea, any big talk. And the facts are before you. *Look* at the world as it really is, and you'll see some are always going to get everything. And the struggle in this world ain't the struggle of the working class and the capitalist class. The struggle is to find some little niche inside where you can stay alive." [laughter] "And I'm going to go in a cabin in the woods. I'm going to have a boat of my own and fish for salmon."

So he was something of a nihilist, something of, I felt, an anarchist, in a way, though he was a young guy and, I suppose, fit into the late Wobblyesque orientation to the world. And yet he was terribly curious and did a lot of reading. As I said, he read *Peer Gynt* and Ibsen plays, and all that meant a lot to him. Grieg's music would throw him

into a deep, marvelous, melancholy funk for days, particularly *Peer Gynt*. He saw himself, I think, as the reincarnation of a picaresque character like *Peer Gynt*. And anything mournful, anything pessimistic and mournful was pure poetry to him. [laughter]

So, anyway, these two guys, and I . . . . Though there were others, as I said, they sort of shaped the beginning of a kind of a more focused social consciousness and what later would be my interest in a Marxist orientation.

Oh, also, there was the *constant* input of trade union values and concerns and working class struggles, *on that level*—the trade unionist, the syndicalist kind of values that existed among the older unionists on those ships. And I say syndicalist and trade unionist *as against* an ideology, a philosophical or social ideology like Marxism or anything else that was to them, “red” and “commie.” And you know, their idea was, “Trade unions, if anything, were good, and you fought for your rights; but as to where trade unions are going to go and what kind of society you’re going to build unless you have one great big world union, well, that’s too big for us to think about. [laughter] We just want our union to see to it that we get some rights and we get something to eat.”

And, of course, Trot then would rant and rave in the mess room about, “You guys are just a bunch of slaves. Your *whole* world is this little ship or ships like it. You got *nothing* else. You haven’t got wives; you haven’t got children—if you do, you pay nothing; you’re away from them all the time. You’re making nothing. Is that all your labor is worth?” I mean, these wonderful speeches. And “Is that what you’re worth? Are you worth what you get every month? Thirty-four and a half cents an hour, basically? Is that your life? Is that a life? Aren’t you as a human being worth more

than this? Isn’t your labor of value? Doesn’t it stand for something? Haven’t you any kind of respect for yourself as a human being?”

And everybody would laugh: “Trot’s at it again. Oh, the little commie’s at it again.” And then sometimes later in private they called him a “little commie Jew,” you see, so all that was there, yeasting.

But after Carlson had made this great speech on that ship going down, when he took the four or five members of the crew out on deck and said, “Look,” arguing religion, “We’re going to settle this here and now, about this God business.” And, you know, that thing about the speech, throwing up his arms and calling upon God to strike him down now. “Now, strike me now.”

Well, that’s the other thing, religion. Religion wasn’t talked about very much on ships. But at the same time, that had an impact on me, that event, because I remember telling Carlson later, talking about what he had done, you know, “A lot of these guys are kind of shocked, because you don’t do that, you know. I mean, some of these guys are probably religious. They probably go to church when they’re back, or they might even pray. You don’t know if they do that. They believe that there’s a God—some of them. Some of them don’t; some of them are atheists or claim to be atheist. Like my friend Bob said, you know, ‘If there’s a God, he sure did a lousy job of it.’” [laughter] And, you know, there was all this range. But I was just telling Carlson! “What did you do that for?”

He said, “Look, the world is made up of shock, you know. Everybody is shocked. You’re shocked when you come out of your mother’s (I won’t use the word) . . . come out of your mother’s vagina. The world is already hurting you, always giving you hell, and it gives you hell all along. What kind of hell can I give to those guys? I mean, if they can’t



take that, they ain't heard anything. I can tell them more, too." [laughter]

And I wrote in my journal, I remember, and I don't know if I told Carlson, just that it bothered me a great deal. Because what it made me think about was my grandparents. I was thinking of my old grandfather and grandmother, who believed in God and were saved in the blood of Jesus Christ and who wrote tracts, and my grandfather gave them out and stood on top of a mountain in California, waiting for the end of the world. And their kind of faith, which made it possible for them to come over here as immigrants and bring up a family of seven or eight kids, and help out a lot of other driftwood in the world around them; always gave food and whatever they had to people. You know to me, what Carlson had done was too much.

But I was also intrigued by it. I mean, I also sympathized with that view. And it was like reading Ingersoll when I was a kid, you know. [Robert G. Ingersoll was a philosopher of positive atheism.] Here was a dead to rights atheist, you know, letting you have it between the eyes.

Oh, and then I think Trot also told me about Ludwig Feuerbach writing on religion. But, anyway, all those things are in my mind. I wasn't religious in any kind of regular sense. I had, I suppose, a propensity to a spiritual orientation, to a mystical orientation, in one way. However, I was becoming more and more a materialist, and essentially, if anything maybe a secular humanist might be the word now, but I think essentially an atheist. Though I always felt, not even as an agnostic, that there were things so great and wonderful in the universe beyond our comprehension, that I wanted to leave open with a kind of respect, the possibility that all sorts of things are happening in the universe that we can't even conceive of, and if that's God,

that's God. But, you know, an old man with a white beard kind of thing, I don't think there was anybody even on the ship who saw God that way.

But, nevertheless, a concept of God, being saved in Christ, and all these things threw me back metaphorically and emotionally to my grandparents. Those poor damn people—that was important to them. It kept them *alive*. And, oh, yes, I did mention this to Carlson, yes, "You know, what about people like that, for whom it acts as a tremendous power for them in the little, constricted worlds they have, that helps them live, to get along?"

He says, "The sad thing my good friend, Whitey," (I think I was called "Whitey" by then), "is that they have to have it." He said, "The sad thing is that they are encouraged to have that." Of course, this is what I began thinking later. This was Feuerbach and others, Marx Engels and all sorts of . . .

*Yes, the opiate of the masses.*

Yes, the opiate of masses kind of thing. And Carlson . . . I don't think he was a Marxist, he was just a philosophical dissenter. He said, "Look, you know, your poor grandparents, I respect them, what you tell me about them; that's great. But isn't it awful that their lives have to be put into the mold of that when they had so many other potentials. Look at the minds they had that were cramped, pressed into the skulls, and they were given the sop of these attitudes and these beliefs." He said, "If that's all they had, thank Christ they had it, you know, but isn't that a sad goddamn thing, d'Azevedo? You know, face it, face it, you know." [laughter] Those were wonderful conversations. So even on that trip, this was beginning to happen.

And I was having this philosophical struggle in my head, not about belief in gods or anything of that kind, but trying to understand the powerful drive of religion.

*Where did you think your urge to be good came from? I mean to be good and to do right? I mean, a moral sense to be fair and to be good.*

Oh you mean a humanistic, orientation. It came from my family. I think I grew up in an environment that was diverse, in both families. And that diversity and the need to accommodate to it on the part of my parents, who had to accommodate to an extremely complex stew of ideas and feelings and thoughts and traditions. And then my mother, though she was extremely religious, wasn't really an active churchgoer or anything. But she had a very strong humanistic orientation. And I think my dad did, too, to the degree that he expressed anything—fairness. They believed that people should be treated with a degree of equality, and although they had racist views in a way, they didn't defend them; they didn't press them, and they were critical of them to some degree.

For example, both my mother and father didn't particularly like the Chinese. They didn't particularly like Germans. But this was not in terms of direct, face-to-face relations. They *had* friends of this kind. It was just that the idea of Germans, particularly, since the First World War, which they had been involved in . . . Germans had become a kind of anathema. You know, they were the people who had very, very authoritarian ideas, who believed they were superior. At the same time, they always criticized anybody who denounced people based on their race or their color.

And yet they didn't have many friends, close friends, of these groups, and certainly didn't have any Chinese friends. Well, my brother later on married a Chinese woman—my dear, accommodating, conservative brother. I think they had trouble with that, and certainly my Aunt Edith did.

But they surmounted it. You see, I think that's the humanism. They did struggle with it and managed to at least deal with it as though it wasn't there, you know. [laughter] And though you were aware that they had difficulty, you knew they had struggled with it.

*Do you think there's something—and I'm jumping around a little bit, but I had a couple of things that just surfaced—inherent in fascism that leads to racism, or was that just the form that it took?*

Oh, no, I think fascism is a symptom, you know. I don't think fascism is a cause. Fascism was a symptom of a social disease in Europe and still is throughout the world.

*And so is racism.*

And so is racism, anti-Semitism, and all those "-isms," I don't see as causes . . .

*I don't think I meant it as a cause. I think what I'm really asking is, is that the two somehow are intertwined inevitably.*

Yes, I think fascism was sort of the epitome of racist ideology and also of reactionary political ideology. National socialism, I think, was one of the blind alleys of development of capitalism. And the Soviet Union represents a whole other current, which, as a nation, failed. I think the failure of the Soviet

Union was a failure of the people who ran it, not necessarily of the ideologies or the ideas.

*Did you say that fascism was a blind alley of capitalism?*

Oh, I think so. Yes. The whole idea was one of the cul-de-sacs. Those cul-de-sacs are all over. But, yes, national socialism I see as one kind of capitalism that is highly authoritarian, centralized, directed. I think this capitalism is quite different from socialism when it goes on to manipulate and control: And where everything is directed to large corporations, which are linked to government directly; and the government and large capital are hand in hand. Socialism took another track.

You know the old saw about socialism and fascism—the Soviet Union’s form of socialism and fascism—being the same, essentially. That’s a lot of bull because it isn’t. Different values motivated each entirely. If the Soviet Union went wrong, it wasn’t because the ideas wrong; [laughter] it’s because the people *running* things were wrong, and that they came from a tradition that in a sense, as Marx would say, had within it the contradictions that brought about its own destruction, the seeds of its own destruction. And that doesn’t mean that other systems could not succeed. I still believe that sort of thing.

And China? Is China a so-called *communist* country? Is it communist? Is it Socialist? Where is it going? What form will the system take, as it struggles to maintain itself in the world and to develop and produce? It may also be a great failure. And that would mean that what they tried to do was wrong, or what the originators tried to do was wrong, as in the Soviet Union.

*Well, also, does it mean that it wasn’t the only thing that could be done at the time?*

No. There may have been other roads that could have been taken, but that was the one that was taken.

So, I don’t know if I was thinking like this at the time we’re discussing here, but, you know, I came slowly to that kind of view. In the first place, I defended the Soviet Union. Most people were, since they were our allies. And there was something wonderful about taking Stalingrad back—the defense of Stalingrad. And then finally, about this time—in fact, just a few months later—the Germans being driven not only out of Stalingrad but driven south into Germany, and the Russians coming down through Poland and being the first into Berlin.

I mean this was a *great, romantic* episode! “Uncle Joe” and all that sort of thing. Well, it had within it the seeds of its own destruction and England and the United States were a little bit uncomfortable with this. [laughter] And yet, as I was becoming more and more identified with left thought, that was a great heroic moment.

*I know this is a digression from what we were talking about, but I just wanted to ask you, too, about where you put the Swedish social system in this spectrum?*

Oh, I see the Swedish as probably one of the most benign forms of capitalism and socialism that has been developed so far. [laughter]

*But it is a hybrid of the . . . ?*

Oh, I think Swedish socialism, democratic socialism, democratic capitalism—

whatever one wants to call it—is very good for a relatively small and a relatively homogeneous population. I mean, it's a great model.

*That's probably a key, though—the relative homogeneity of the culture.*

Maybe. It could be. That's one of the things that sociologists would say, is that if you have a homogeneous constituency and population . . . as Germany tried to make itself. The Swedes had homogeneity already. They were already “clean.” [laughter] They were squeaky clean to begin with, so they just adopted that sort of a system, which works very well. However, they're having all kinds of strains in it; things are changing now. But, no, I always looked upon the Swedes and, oh, even the Danes and the Norwegians as being rather enlightened socially. So, you know, it's a very complex thing to think about—*why* is it there and not somewhere else?

*And now to take us back to where we were. [laughter] I wanted to ask you, when you started talking about religion, if there were any other beliefs—if you wanted to call them superstitions, if you just wanted to call them customs or whatever—that were sort of held by the deck crew as a whole, that were maybe unspoken, but they were certain beliefs about doing things certain ways, that if you messed up, you would be . . .*

Oh, yes. Oh, gosh, of course. And that would probably be true in any intensive work situation. But, yes, I'd say especially at sea there's a long tradition of ideas that might be laughed at, and yet nobody wants to break them—like spitting into the wind or whistling. On board they were always first-trip gazoonies.

*Oh, you weren't supposed to whistle?*

Oh, no. It whistled up a wind. I can remember ordinary seamen, or even accidentally somebody on ship would start whistling sometimes, just spontaneously, and everybody yelling, “Hey, quit that. You're going to whistle up a farter!” you know. [laughter] And they might even be joking, and it's something that is not necessarily a belief, just that you don't do it. It's not sea worthy. You don't do that.

There were lots of others, as you're in a crew and certain traditions mean something as part of your identity as a worker in that situation. And if old-timers say these things, you might laugh and take it as not serious. But you take it as part of your work ethic. It's part of the way you behave—to *be* the kind of person you are on a ship.

It's part of the culture of the sea. And, you know, somebody might say, “Oh, it's a lot of shit,” or something of that kind, but at the same time they'll stop whistling, or they won't spit into the wind. Oh, there're so many other things; right now they escape me, but I mean, your whole world is full of this lore. Oh, yes, being out on deck at night on the bow as lookout, you'd watch the hawseholes, where the anchor chains go through, because sometimes there are creatures that crawl up that thing (in fact that was in my story, “Deep Six for Danny”). Creatures that crawl up—probably dead sailors or, you know, all kinds of things down there. And that's where you might see them, the mysterious things of the sea. It's just lore, you don't *believe* it, but it's part of the culture of a ship. And if some ordinary seaman goes out and starts whistling a tune, *everybody's* screaming at him, because he *most* of all, has no right whistle! [laughter]

He'd bring flotsam from shore—the flotsam from shore life. He's bringing that

corruption aboard ship; he doesn't know *nothing*, you know! [laughter] So, yes, there's a *lot* of lore and superstition. But I hesitate to call it "superstition," because it's more like cultural tradition.

*Well, in one of the books that I was just glancing at, the author was discussing the idea that certain captains were identified with certain kinds of luck, and there was this whole idea that somebody's luck had run out, or there was an uneasiness, because maybe this person . . .*

Oh, it could be. But, see, that's very general throughout the society, the degree of luck. You know, you want a skipper to be somebody who is not only lucky but knows his business. And sometimes they figure they get by just by luck, not by what they know,

you know? But I'm not aware of any special orientation to the idea of luck that's not just in the general population. But, oh, well, there are things like . . . oh, yes, the full bottle thing. You got just so many beans in that bottle, and when you spill them out, you got to keep aware of how many are left, because that's going to last you all your life. If you spill it all, too bad for you, bud, you know. [laughter] But I've heard that elsewhere, not just at sea. There is some specific sea lore, and right now I can't remember much of it, but, yes, it was there. And you just take that on, you move with it. You accept it as part of your life and part of the romance. It's part of the poetry of life at sea. Oh, yes, oh, yes. The idea of luck goes into things like some storms and where that wave is that may hit you. It's like the bullet that's got your name.



## THE ALASKA RUN

WELL, WE GOT back from that trip docking at San Francisco, where, of course, I saw Kathy and saw a number of my friends. I guess I was feeling more and more separated from people that I'd known, my friends. I was writing, and at that time I had written a story—I think I've mentioned it—"Blue Peter," that in the next few months, I think in 1945, got into *Interim*, that magazine. It was a good story; in fact, I got a seamen's story contest prize for that, and it got some attention. In fact, it was mentioned here and there by newspaper columnists and critics. I forget the one in San Francisco who had mentioned that.

And "Deep Six for Danny"?

That was later, in *Circle* magazine. That's the story that was banned in Australia, because I had used what was considered to be a pornographic word, a scatological term, though I spelled "fucking" with an "f-o" in order to slightly cover it, because that is the way it's often pronounced. And the theme, I suppose, was a little heavy, and Australia at

that time had a very strict set of laws about incoming literature. *Circle* was banned for that issue in Australia.

There was a beginning of an opening in the United States in literature for the use of language that had been considered to be immoral and distasteful before. So I don't think there was any trouble in the States with that. And little by little people were beginning to use a wider range of vernacular. I would say Henry Miller had some impact on this, but it also was true of other young poets and writers who pressed the limits of language in this way.

But I didn't feel the need to use too much of it. There were so many alternative terms, so many colloquialisms that were just as useful. But now and then you felt you had to, because that's what people *did*, and that's what they said. And I was writing, I suppose, "Deep Six for Danny" at that time. I have my notes in my journal on it, and it finally came out. In fact, my notes are better than the story. But that got some attention—was thought to be a good story.

I was also painting or drawing, and I won a seamen's art exhibit contest and sold a few drawings and a painting or two. These were really wash drawings and paintings. I didn't use oils; I was using color wash in water, and brush line. And some of the work, I guess, was kind of good.

But at the same time, the war had really dispersed so many of the people that I knew. George Leite had started *Circle*, and it was quite a success for a small mag, for a small, avant-garde mag. So I was seeing him and a few others around. But Kathy and I spent a lot of time together, and she had met Bob Nelson and Trot.

After that particular trip, I had decided I was going to go Seattle and ship out in this glorious Alaska run. I don't think . . . no we weren't talking about marriage at that time; I was thinking about it. But I was a little bit scared to bring it up. I wasn't sure of myself. At the same time, I thought if there was anybody, it was going to be Kathy. And I guess that was the preparatory getting together with her, after that trip to the South Seas on the *John B. Floyd*.

So, anyway, I went north. I think it was that time that I went north right away. Yes. I went north to Seattle alone; I don't believe Kathy went up with me. She did later.

*Did you go north with Bob Nelson and Trot?*

I don't know if I went with them, but I met them up there. And I stayed at that marvelous Pembroke Hotel, which was a seamen's service hotel. I forget the street that it was on. But all the seamen stayed at the Pembroke, and so you'd always meet somebody that you'd shipped with or were going to ship with. I don't know if it's still there. It may be there, but changed to some other kind of building altogether. It was cheap. I don't

know, seventy-five cents a day, a dollar a week, or . . . I forget what it was, but it was ridiculously low. And there was a wonderful hofbrau right next to it, underneath it, a German place where we could get sandwiches for fifty cents, and beer and all that. And it was near the SUP hall, which was down on the waterfront on old skid row.

So I went and signed up. And I think Bob and Trot were also on that trip—I'm not sure about both of them, but I went with Bob, partners on the *Joseph Henry*. And we sailed out of Seattle in July of 1943, and it was a remarkable trip.

We went up the Inside Passage on that trip—absolutely beautiful country—past British Columbia and Vancouver Island, Queen Charlotte Islands, Prince of Wales Island, all the way up as far as Skagway, past Juneau and Ketchikan and all those marvelous places. And we stopped at so *many* little ports with lumber, oil drums, and all sorts of commodities for those little frontier towns of the time. Just mixed cargo of all sorts. For each of these little towns, there would be some cargo taken off.

*Were you aware of the high proportion of native population there?*

No, not so much in the towns, except I was very interested in seeing Eskimos, you know, so-called Eskimos. And sometimes they would be the longshoremen at the little ports. And later on I saw the Aleut longshoremen, which was a thing in itself.

Oh, coal was usually the main thing—sacks of coal. I'd forgotten the main one. [laughter] And that was my breaking-in to *really hard* work. I mean, work beyond which I don't think I could ever do and that I have never had to do again in my life. But we put in weeks and weeks of stopping and unload-



ing coal, mainly, along with these other sort of general commodity parts of the cargo. Those were fifty- to a hundred-pound sacks of coal. We would be in the holds loading them on pallets, because we would do the longshoring on the shipside. And there'd be another bunch who were sometimes Eskimos and other roustabout types of characters who were the portside longshoremen. We would load the pallets with these sacks, and that would go on for four hours straight, sometimes longer. In fact, because we had to get in and out of port fast, we'd sometimes work for sixteen hours, with a break of a half hour or so for chop or to rest. We couldn't all rest at one time; we had to take turns, go off on deck, have a smoke, and we'd be black with coal dust.

When I think about the concern today about the effects of the work environment, I wonder how we survived. Like on the tankers, how we survived working down in the tanks to clean them after oil was unloaded—I don't know. We'd breathe this stuff, faint from it; would just put some wet cloth over our noses. I just wonder how many guys I worked with died from that. Fortunately, I don't think I have any effects.

But we were covered with coal dust; our noses were stopped up with coal dust. Our throats were full of coal dust. And we'd do that for sometimes twenty-four, thirty hours, with sometimes a two-hour break for a nap and go on. And lifting these sacks of coal! You just do in the most *mechanical* way.

I got a great respect for groups in a gang working together. You could tell somebody you wanted to work with; you just knew who you wanted to be with in terms of the sense they had of the rhythm and awareness of their partner. Where, if they were helping you, and you were passing sacks or working on the same pile of sacks, this sort of intuitive under-

standing of movement developed, because you had to after hours of working, even when you were *absolutely* exhausted. And *anybody* getting in your way or interfering, it would be like you're climbing another mountain. I mean, that created problems that you'd get furious with, particularly an inexperienced ordinary seaman or somebody stumbling and getting in your way when you're lifting up a load.

But there's something about an experienced person you're working with—like people drowning who are helping each other get to the surface. I mean, you just understand, you feel the movement in a kind of a *dull, exhausted* way. You're feeling good about this other person, and you want to work with that person again.

That went on for weeks at a time, and then we'd go out to sea to the next port. We might have twenty-four hours between where everybody would just fall asleep. Sometimes not even clean up—you'd be filthy black, you know. [laughter]

But somehow or other I remember the trips up there with a very positive feeling. There was something wonderful about the scenery. You'd go up on deck, and no matter what else was going on, you'd look out at the Inside Passage with all those islands and the beautiful coastline and the sea itself loaded with fish and dolphins, and at night sparkling things in the water. And the cold, the sense of really being north and away.

Usually the food was good. That was Alaska Steam, and their food was pretty good. They better *feed* their people, because they worked the tails off of us.

And yes, I remember the Eskimos. They were hard workers and little guys. Usually they had very heavy coats on, some of that seal skin stuff, and mukluks and things of that kind. But we didn't have much to do with

them, except one port (I forget where it was), where the longshoremen wanted to eat on the ship. They had no food so wanted to eat on the ship. And this happened once again way up at Point Barrow, when I was delegate, on another ship.

Anyway, there was this *very* strong feeling among the crew, that they didn't want these Eskimos eating with us. And they didn't want them eating off of the same plates. And they brought out some kind of War Shipping Administration directive about cleanliness on ships and the fact that disease could be carried and contaminated, and people had to watch that. They brought that out to say, "We are following the rules. We are *not* going to have them eat off of the same dishes we do and the same plates." And I remember being *very* upset about this and arguing against it. At the *same time*, I saw their rationale, because there was diphtheria and tuberculosis ashore, and it was a relatively serious thing.

So here is where a kind of ethnocentrism and racism, I suppose, was expressed that bothered me and maybe two or three others very much. But on the other hand, what was the alternative? So I remember we set up a separate mess for them, eventually, because there was very good reason to feed them. They were working as much as we were, and they had no way to get food, and nothing had been arranged for them. It was one of those ports where we had to move fast.

And then I remember that two or three of us brought our food over to them. They weren't getting as good stuff as us. They were getting, I don't know, maybe something they had chosen. It looked awful, as I remember, to us—whatever they were eating. And I don't know if it came out of our galley or not, or a separate place. Nevertheless, I remember we brought a lot of stuff on our

plates—filled our plates after we ate and brought it over to them, and sat around sort of looking and trying to talk to them. But they weren't interested in talking to us, and they were eating their food with great gusto and slurping up coffee and I remember they stank of seal. [laughter] This fetid, rotten seal odor that comes with the not fully cured mukluks and seal skin.

But I happened to like it; I thought it was kind of like later on in my life, in Africa, the so-called smell of other people, of Africans. I always thought it was kind of pleasant; it was a good smell—except for people who were just dirty. But anybody who just had a natural odor . . . Well, these guys, seal was part of their natural odor. And there was something very fresh and open and arctic about that smell that I still remember.

I brought Kathy home some mukluks that were made from hide softened by being chewed by women. They were *beautiful*—fur on the edge and white seal skin—beautifully made. And they had a slight odor to them, [laughter] but when they got down here in this climate they actually *rotted*, and they stank up our house, and we had to get rid of them. I just felt awful because they were so beautiful. She wore them for a while, but after a while we couldn't stand the smell!

But I remember clearly that there was this feeling among some of us, of being very upset by this but not knowing what else to do except dealing with it by bringing some food to these guys. And, oh, I remember their women and kids sometimes would come to the dock on that particular trip and bring little things for them to eat. But they hadn't brought much; they were far from any place where they could get a lot of food. So they would be given snacks—probably dried fish or dried seal or whatever. And in that port there had been no provisions made for them.

I remember that. Anyway, that trip up there, up the Sound, on the *Joseph Henry* was a marvelous thing.

*Now, were you more protected on that run from fear of Japanese submarines?*

Oh, yes. There was still a threat but the Inside Passage was fairly safe. However, *getting* up there, going up to British Columbia, subs had been sighted there. And this was, yes, 1942, and the Japanese were still in action in the Aleutians. So up north was really a problem, and out to sea. There had been ships sunk outside the Sound . . . I don't know if there had been any ships sunk inside the Sound . . . I mean, the Inside Passage. Maybe so, but I don't recall that. We felt fairly safe there and were kind of easygoing about lookout and all that.

*Was that a particularly sought-after run?*

It was for northern seamen, northwestern seamen. Oh, this Alaska Steam was considered a prize.

*Well, you said the food was good, and . . .*

Well, yes, it was better. [laughter] Yes. But it was sought after because they were getting back and forth a lot—there along the coast, and come back often to Seattle and to British Columbia, so they weren't long trips. It *had* to be better. If it hadn't, we'd have raised hell. But, no, these were desirable trips, because you weren't going for a long stretch. I think this trip lasted two months or something—July to October—yes, two, two and half, three months. So we were just going from little port to port.

And so I came back and almost immediately got on the *Henry Failing* for another trip

up the Inside Passage. That was different. That was a . . .

*So when you sailed off immediately, you didn't go back to the Bay Area. You just stayed in Seattle?*

No. I made another trip immediately because it was good pay, and I didn't want to lose my place in line. I got the *Henry Failing*, because it was a higher pay because it was going to go way up north, past the Aleutians. And there was going to be some danger-zone pay. I was thinking of sort of putting away money at that time. Also, because I'd gone up the Inside Passage, I was in a higher place in line to get on another northern trip.

But I got on the *Henry Failing* in October of 1943 and that was the beginning of two trips that I took up there to the Aleutians. We went up to Dutch Harbor and Unalaska Island and Attu in the Aleutians. Not Kiska, because the Japanese had that. The Japanese had the two furthest islands, and they once had had all those islands, but we had driven them back, and they were on the two western-most islands. Kiska was one of them. But we just went up to Dutch Harbor, Unalaska, and I think we hit Attu. And those were miserable places, as I remember.

Oh, yes, we hit two or three of the Aleutians—Unalaska, that's Dutch Harbor, and Attu and Adak, where the Americans had a big base. That was an experience, because there were thousands of men up there on those little islands—Adak, for one, that had been Japanese controlled and was still being occasionally attacked by planes from Japanese-held Kiska and the far islands. And subs were everywhere. But the Japanese were being driven back elsewhere in the Pacific, so they weren't as active as they had been. Nevertheless, we really were on the alert the

whole time, and ships were being sunk up there.

But Adak, I think it was, was where thousands of men were quartered in Quonset huts, and it was very cold; they'd gone through a winter. They were a miserable bunch of guys. I mean, it was terribly isolated. They were *alone* and drudging around in the mud and the rain. There was ice slush. And I remember, on the crew, we felt very sorry for them. There was a *real* feeling of camaraderie about them and what they were putting up with. And here is the war, as seamen, we were *right in* middle of the situation, bringing stuff up there.

And then one thing that I do recall very vividly is a USO show; these USO groups were going around to various fronts. And it was supposed to be a lot of fun. You know, they had a crooner and two or three starlets and chorus girl dancers and a little band and things of that kind. And they had a Quonset hut they used as a theater or a meeting hall. And god, there were hundreds of guys packed into this one night. They had nothing else to do. And here they were.

And one of the young women was a contortionist, and she was a very skinny, thin young lady, who could move her arms and legs in the most outlandish pretzel positions. I would say it was not only bizarre; there was something wrong with it in that group. By that, I mean they were looking for ordinary women . . . [laughter] of which there were a couple who sang and all that, and they would whistle and yell and scream. And, you know, god, these poor guys, I mean, you just felt that you wanted to cry, watching them react to this. They hated the crooner; they booed and hissed this guy who sang. They would yell, "Get out of the way. Bring out the women." Then they brought out this young contortionist! I remember there was stunned silence

in the room, in this great room. They really didn't know how to react, you know. It was wrong, and she went through her act, and everybody was terribly uncomfortable.

In the first place, it was sexy, but in a weird sort of way, and not what anybody wanted, you know. [laughter] And I'm sure that later on there were all kinds of jokes and horrible stories about it among them. But at that moment, it was a stunner.

And then, of course, a couple of the girls came out—good-looking, young women who sang. And they would clap, and everybody screamed and yelled and asked for more, "Take it off, take it off," you know. [laughter] These guys, that's all they had. And that would have to be enough, because they wouldn't see anybody for months. *Then* the stories I heard. One young soldier that I was talking with said, "They really shouldn't have these shows, because it just gets the guys all upset. They're lonely enough, but then they see this. It's OK when its happening, but when the people go away, it's worse. You just feel like hell," he said, "They shouldn't *allow* it. It's terrible." I don't know if they all felt that way. And he said, "Did you ever hear about this guy who a few weeks ago fell for this girl when a troupe went through? She was a singer or a dancer. And he went out of his mind. He just went crazy. He followed her everywhere, and they had to take him back to his own Quonset hut, because he was hanging around so much." And he says, "One night they found him dead in the snow. He had been trying to chew his way through her Quonset hut." He said, "Yes, his mouth was all chewed up, and his teeth were broken, and his fingernails were all gone. And the guy was dead in the snow there trying to get inside."

Whether this is true or not or just part of the lore of that place, I don't know. All I

know is listening to this guy, I just had chills. "You poor son-of-a-bitch. *Oh*, you poor guys, what you're putting up with here." It was awful. The surroundings were barren, the barren Adak, and there had been bombing and all that. Everything was *desolate* looking. We hit a couple of the other islands that weren't as bad. But you know, those guys really had it tough, really rough.

I've always wondered what some of them must have been like afterwards, what they would say about it, as against being, you know, at Guadalcanal or at Okinawa or at any of the battles of New Guinea or anything. I just wonder if this was any better, because there must have been psychiatric problems beyond belief over a period of a couple years or more out there. They had no place to go, nothing to do.

*They couldn't get away from each other, it doesn't sound like, either.*

No, they couldn't get away from each other—nowhere to go. And then these shows would come, with sometimes inappropriate crap. And they would partly enjoy it, and yet they knew these people were going away, and that was that, and they'd be back to . . .

*I've always felt the same way about entertaining people in prisons.*

Maybe, but that's more frequent, and at least it's close to home, and it's near their society. But these guys didn't know when they'd ever get out of there, you know. They were not just prison; it's an isolation on another planet.

*No, it sounds grim.*

Terrible. Anyway, Attu and Kiska had been taken while we were on that trip, just before we came down. That's right. There were real battles just a few hundred miles to the west on Japanese-held islands. It was a dangerous period. Yes, there were kamikazes up there. Not while we were there at Adak, but there had been kamikaze attacks at the other islands.

So, anyway, I had two trips on the *Henry Failing* up to the Aleutians. And I got letters from Kathy at Dutch Harbor or wherever it was, and she and I were beginning really to correspond a lot. And things were shaping up in some sort of a way. She saved some of my letters. I have a hard time reading them. I was such an egoistical son of a gun, so full of myself, so full of the romance of my adventurous life and of what I was going to do in the world, but also there were rather good descriptions of what was going on. I had a good sense of place and environment and people and all that. And then there would be a little place reserved at the end about how much I thought of her and what we're going to do, because I had devoted a lot of time to myself, what I thought of myself. [laughter] And she wrote me wonderful letters, telling me all the news and what was going on. And we were able to communicate quite a bit. When I read them now, I just think, "Why would she be interested in this preening little bastard who was out there at sea doing his thing?"

On that trip is where some of us on the crew talked about work a lot, because it was *hard* work. And it would be whenever we weren't too exhausted to talk. I remember Bob and I and some of the crew, sitting around talking about, "What kind of life is this to work like this all the time? We're just doing it for a short time. But, you know, there

are people who work like this day and night all their lives.”

I just knew I wouldn't have the stamina, the ability, the strength, to go on and was in a state of wonder about men who had done it for a long time. There were some old-timers—young old-timers, middle-aged guys—who had been on the Alaska run for most of their lives; their ability to work with seeming endless energy, to continue for four, five, six hours, humping coal, you know, when I'd be almost *dead*. And yet there was something about the way they worked that kept you going, so I was *able* to do it.

I remember feeling how grateful I was to work with one old guy that I liked very much. I forget his name—Larken, I believe. There was something about the way he worked, that I felt he had turned himself into a machine. He must have switched something in his head, which I think happens, and you don't think about anything except the next load, and you just do it, and you do it, and you do it, and you keep doing it. And I would be practically dead. And once or twice I think I did have to just sit down—I couldn't stand it anymore—get rest, which was allowed. And then somebody else would go in for you. But you know, you didn't want to do that. You wanted to keep up.

Well, I probably got in better shape at that point in my life than I have ever been since. I mean, I was just one tight wire from head to foot. [laughter] And by the second trip that I made up there, I was able to keep up, but I still had this admiration, amazement, wonder at the work ability of some of these old guys—some of them sixty years old—who could do this kind of work.

And then we'd talk about that—not necessarily with them, but some of the younger guys. And we'd talk about, “What kind of life is this, anyway?” And Trot was with us

on one of those conversations and, he said, “Well, what's life worth?”

“Life is worth what you pay for it. Life is worth what you give people for it. Labor is worth what the rewards are. These guys got none. They got *none*. And that's exactly where we all are right now. Our labor is not respected. They use us; they exploit us; they abuse us; and it all goes under the heading of ‘doing your job.’” And he said, “Look at some of those guys. They don't know anything else, and they believe this is *life*. They believe this is their life. They've got no other life.” He was a marvelous guy when I think of it!

He says, “You know, their blood is being sucked. They'll end up without a pension. They'll be on the dole. If they haven't saved up a little out of this lousy pay they get, they'll be flotsam on the beach. Some of them might be able to get a little rooming house and live and wander around, you know, punch drunk for the remainder of their lives, sewing their little canvas and making their little curtains for their windows.”

It was rather common for two or three old guys to live together. They would retire, when they couldn't work anymore and were just worn out. “Hey, look at that. Nobody's doing anything for them. They've been sucked dry and tossed out.” He said, “That's capitalism. *That's* what you guys think is so great. You're not getting any part of it, and yet you have this *weird* notion that it's good. Why? What's it done for you?” [laughter] On and on.

And then somebody would bring up trade unions. “Oh, fine! Trade unions are great! But you got to have a long-range view. What are the trade unions going to do with the whole system?” And these *wonderful* arguments would go on, and Trot, I remember, was wonderful on this. He talked about the value of labor, the value of work. I struggled with this

quite a bit and didn't know if I agreed; but, nevertheless, it sounded great to me.

Bob would bring up things like, "Trot, I want to ask you one thing. Would you do something for me, one thing for me? Would you just say once, 'Fuck the working class?'" [laughter] I remember he said, "I'm so tired of listening to you talk about the 'great working class.' What is the working class? You just said yourself, 'Look what they're doing, what we're doing. This is a way of life.' But they take it; they like it; it's their way. That's what they see as their value in the world—being just this kind of crap. This is what they are."

And Trot would say, "You, man, you are a real basic nihilist." (He'd use all these words.) "You're a nihilist," he said, "and you're pessimistic," he says. "*Your* reaction to what's been done to your system is to withdraw from the world and become a recluse and go up to a little piece of land up on the mountains where you can sit there and contemplate your navel. Well, go ahead! You're no use to us!" [laughter] Oh, they were wonderful. I wish I could really reconstruct some of those wonderful arguments.

And then somebody would yell, "Ah, shut up, you guys! You don't know what you're talking about. You're all full of shit. Shut up! Shut up! We're playing cards; be quiet! You're making too much noise." [laughter]

*So it sounds like you were probably too exhausted to write? I mean, your writing . . .*

Not much. But I do have some scrawls in one of my notebooks from those trips, about work. A lot of it was about work, about scenery, about things that people said. And things like what Trot just said, I would note down something to remind me about that, and

Bob's deep, melancholy pessimism and his view of women. [laughter]

He had a very dim view of women in general, though he had probably more sexual activity ashore than anybody else that I knew. I mean, women liked him very much so he *always* had some young woman with him—picked up at a bar or met somewhere. And yet none of them were worthy of him. [laughter] He didn't say it that way. He said that none of them were the woman he was really looking for. And they were all lost women looking for brief encounters to get themselves through a few days.

I met two of the young women at the Pembroke Hotel. We had adjoining rooms. And I had one room, and he had the other. And I had to listen to his relationships with at least two. They were very nice young girls—lost, sort of seaport girls—young, relatively inexperienced, very bright these two. Betty was one, and I forget the other's name. And I liked them both very much, and we'd go around together, all of us. And one at a time he would have them up to his room, and they were satisfied with that brief relationship. They were very loyal to him while it was going on, and then he'd move on. So he was that kind of guy. But when he was talking about women in general, he had again this deeply chauvinistic view that women were only looking out for the immediate goods of the world. They would take anybody who could supply them with what they needed now. They didn't have any long-range views; they didn't have, you know, *his* great view of the world. You know, on and on.

There was arguing about that. I, of course, being a great humanist, was always on the other side of the argument and raising hell with him about his deeply chauvinistic view of the world and his attitude toward women,

and that he'd never find the kind of woman he says he wants, because he wasn't worthy of it. I mean, he sounded just like a bastard. [laughter] What woman would want to hear that about women?

And I said, "They would know exactly what you think of them—you wouldn't tell them, but they'd learn it. They'd learn pretty quick." I said, "You can't really stick it out with a woman more than three or four days because she catches on to you. [laughter] You're afraid that they're going to learn what you're really like."

But on the other hand, he was very nice to women. He was very good to them directly. Kathy thought he was great. She was taken in by him. [laughter] But, no, he was not just kind; he was very understanding of women, when he was talking to them, when he was with them. But way down underneath he had this contempt for all womankind, as he did for the rest of humanity, you know. There was this deep pessimism about motives; you never know what people really think, and all that sort of thing.

Those were interesting days, because this is part of learning; this is part of growing up, you know. You're in your early twenties, it's the sort of thing that becomes a kind of food; you are nurtured by these things.

*And it sounds like somehow the lessons that you were learning, or the things you were observing in that setting, in the context of being a seaman and working, were somehow more real or more valid than the social lessons or the relationship lessons you were learning like in the Berkeley setting.*

Oh, yes, they're entirely different. You wouldn't learn these things in that setting. Oh, no! Oh, then and later I just knew working with people as a worker made a

tremendous difference in one's view of the world and one's understanding of it. I began to look upon what I had been and thought before, that I was a kind of a dilettantish, pipsqueak intellectual, you know. Middle-class, liberal ass. I began to really feel very *bitter* about that whole world and that everybody like I had been ought to get out and get to work, have a job, work with the other people.

And so it was a sort of class interest that was developing, and I was beginning to characterize my other acquaintances and old friends in terms of their work, their class or work identity.

*Well, did Kathy sympathize with those ideas or find them interesting?*

To a considerable degree. She was working in the shipyards. Her father had been a hard-working guy in foundries, and she had a certain sympathy for that world. Her family had been poor, honest, lower middle-class people, hard-working, and all that. At the same time, she went through this early wartime experience of working very hard and with work . . . . You should talk to her about it sometime.

She learned about things that she had never dreamed of—other women in other frames doing different things—that she never knew that such people existed. The same with me. I was finding out that there were people who existed that I never dreamed of, who I found extremely compelling, loaded with new wisdom about the world—things that I had never thought of, new angles, new ways of looking at things. Sure. That was part of what was happening, in 1943 and 1944, for me.

All right—Trot. One last harangue that he made: "Any of you guys who don't know what you're worth aren't worth living."



[laughter] And I thought that was a marvelous line. He was quite a guy—crazy, little guy, but a nice guy. And so I made two trips on the *Henry Failing*.



I HAD GONE DOWN to San Francisco between the two trips. I'd gone to San Francisco to see Kathy, and we spent a lot of time together. I only had, what—October, November—about a month and a half before I had to go back to sea. And I had talked her into going up to Seattle with me. Now, we hadn't told our folks really. I guess her mother and father knew that she was going with somebody, and they probably had seen me. I don't think they had much use for me. [laughter]

Kathy agreed to go up, and as I remember, typical of me, I was finishing writing a story on the way up on the train, and I was reading it to her. She had such enormous patience. That's one of the reasons, I suppose, I enjoyed being with her. She listened with always great attention and quite critically.

*Were you writing on your typewriter on the train?*

No, I was writing by hand and reading her selections from it. It was a very nice trip, and we stayed at the Pembroke Hotel, the seamen's hotel. Trot was in town, but Bob

was out to sea. And my own folks, by the way, I hadn't told them. They knew that I was going with Kathy, and we may have even visited them once, but we hadn't said anything. And Kathy's folks, all they could think was, "Here it's wartime, and our poor daughter is running around with this guy, who is not only going to sea but thinks that he's a writer and has no idea in the world what he's going to do with himself," and all that. But they were nice, but they didn't like it. Kathy's sister was the only one who was really nice to me. She still is. But that all changed later.

But, anyway, so we went up to Seattle, and I remember sitting one night; we were having a drink or something, and I said, "Why don't we get married?" And there was a long pause. And that was my proposal. She agreed. And within two or three days we . . . . [Kathy d'Azevedo joins session] For whatever reason, Kathy did agree, but it was very nice, and I felt very good about it but also very scared. I wasn't sure why I felt that I could handle being married and all that sort of thing, but I wanted to be, and it seemed to me that Kathy wanted to be. And she says

even today that she wanted to be. So we decided to do it right away.

Kathy was beginning to feel a little guilty about her mother and father not really knowing what we were doing. So we both agreed she should call home and tell them. And her mother, in characteristic fashion, said, "Don't you do it; I'm coming up. Wait till I *come*. I want to be there." *Very* forthright woman—very, wonderful woman. Actually, I liked her a great deal. And she said, "Please promise me you'll wait till I get there." And she and Kathy's sister, Shirley, arrived the next day.

We held off, and they came, and I remember it was a little strained with Kathy's mother, who was very nice, but I could tell she was thinking, "This is a terrible way to get married, and *even* in wartime one should not do this," and very worried about Kathy, as she should well have been. But I do recall Kathy's sister, Shirley, being *very* sweet and nice to me. She is to this day—even though she has gone through some terrible times, and she's not a very well put together lady at this point in her life—I have this very warm feeling about her, because she made me feel as though I at least had one friend in Kathy's family and was very up about everything. [laughter]

And so then I managed to line up an old judge who would come up to the room and get us married. We dressed up in what little we had, the best we could. Trot was in town, and he came as our best man, my best man. And he brought this wonderful, little gift—a reindeer-handled wine bottle opener, silver wine bottle opener, that he'd gotten at some flea market down on the waterfront—just the right thing. And there was a bottle of brandy that I had bought and put on the dresser for us to celebrate afterwards and have a drink. And I remember the judge, a poor, rather blowzy old guy with a big, red nose, couldn't

get his eyes off the bottle. I gave him a drink because it was obvious that's what he wanted. He would have gone on drinking the whole bottle, had I not said, "It's time for us to get married!" [laughter] And he went through the routine, and we said the vows. And Kathy's mother and sister were there as our witnesses. As I remember, I was feeling rather good about it. But Kathy, I'm sure, felt that it was a very poor answer for getting married, for a wedding. [laughter] But that's the way it was.

Kd: Right.

So I think Kathy's mother and sister made it very good. It was good that they came. It would never have occurred to me to ask anybody. I called my folks, who I'm sure were shocked down to their boots.

*You called them after you got married, or when you were going to?*

I think after, I believe . . . or just before. Anyway, it was not more than, you know, a few hours.

Kd: If even that.

You know, I felt I had to let them know and tell my brother and all that. And, again, you know, when I look back, how tolerant people can be and how controlled. I was talking, I guess, to my mother and then to my father. They both, I *know*, just thought, "Oh, he's done it. He and Kathy are just going to be miserable, it's going to be awful," and they were partly right, [laughter] "and this is just wrong." And they felt hurt, because they hadn't known, and they had no chance either to *be* there some way or to do something about it, which *to them*, in their world, was

very important. And I guess it was to your folks, too, something you . . .

Kd: Yes.

You know, you do something about marriage. You don't just, you know, do it this way. However, in my kind of crazy, dissident frame of mind, I thought it was just the right thing; it's wonderful. I felt it was just the *way* to do it. But there really *was* no other way. I mean, we weren't able to tell our families. In fact, we weren't clear enough on what . . . I wasn't clear enough on what I was doing. I knew I wanted to get married, and I knew I wanted to marry Kathy. But I wasn't sure that I had any idea what came after or how to handle it, or who I was or why I was. [laughter]

*Well, when we touched on this before, not on tape, one of the first things that came out of your mouth was that you didn't know what you were going to do to be a provider, and you felt constantly under scrutiny to answer that question to somebody.*

Right, sure.

*Primarily to yourself, I think more than to anybody else.*

All I knew was I was going to sea. Of course, at that point, I had to because the war was still on. But, you know, things were going to come to an *end* there, and I had no idea what I was going to do when the war was over, how I was going to get along. All I knew it was marvelous to be married; then a few weeks later learning that we might have a kid—Kathy was pregnant. I guess I learned that at sea. You wrote to me about it. But, you know, we expected it, and that's what we wanted. And I just felt everything was

just marvelous. But it *wasn't* marvelous, because the reality of the world was that things were very difficult. [laughter]

*Well, the reality of the world then was this expectation that you would be the primary provider and . . .*

Oh, I don't know, because Kathy had been pretty well a provider for herself, and she'd been working. However, from not only the point of view of that era, that period, but *now* I mean, if the wife gets pregnant and is going to have a child, it does change the whole chemistry of the situation. And I think we were much more aware of that kind of thing than people are today. I mean, having a kid and being married meant responsibilities of an enormous kind if you were doing it right. I wasn't really prepared to understand or accept those responsibilities. They scared the hell out of me. But I just decided, "We got to do it."

*Well, don't you think during the war that some of the bets are off on the way things had been done, because you honestly didn't know how the world was going to be later?*

Kd: Yes, I think so.

Oh, sure. Oh, yes. There was a great deal of uncertainty. But when you're that young you take on all *kinds* of things, and you make all kinds of leaps and risks, you see. But I wasn't completely oblivious of the fact that I was up against something that I might not be able to handle very well. And yet I was glad to have done it. Also, I had escapes. I could get away to sea, and Kathy could not. That's the other thing, Kathy couldn't get away.

*So you had about a week after you were married in Seattle?*

Kd: Couple of weeks I think, close to two weeks.

Yes, I would say about three weeks, almost a month. And we had I think, a very nice day or two with Kathy's mother and sister. And I got to know them a little better, and as I say, Shirley was just wonderful to me. I'll never forget it. She was sweet and encouraging, and she liked me, and I liked her. And they helped relax us to a degree.

And so I was there another couple of weeks and had to then ship out again. That was the second trip on the *Henry Failing* up to the Aleutians, until March. I got back on March twenty-fifth, and took the SS *Alvarado* immediately—three days later. And I now remember why, because Bob was a mate on the *Alvarado*. I got back, and I was able to get a placement on a ship immediately and decided to do it, because it was going out in the Pacific and probably would have a fairly good payoff.

Kathy and I were writing. We wrote a lot of letters during that period. My letters from the *Alvarado* were kind of great, and Kathy's letters to me were marvelous. We had a good letter-writing thing going. We were newly married and thought the world was going to be all right and didn't see all the breakers ahead, or the rocks. And I was beginning to feel really very good about it. Things were going all right; it was going to work out—I had no idea why and how, but I knew it was going to go well. [laughter] And then Kathy wrote in one of the letters that she was pregnant, and I remember feeling wonderful at sea learning about that. I got that letter in Honolulu, I guess. And we wrote back and forth, and the world seemed to be taking shape.

However, there was that great glowering black hole in the future of what I was going to do when the war came to an end. And for this period, at least, going to sea was an obvious escape from problems, which, of course, it is for everybody who does it. You can think about them, but you don't have to do too much about them.

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## BECOMING SHIP'S DELEGATE

**T**HE *ALVARADO* turned out to be going to Honolulu. That was the wonderful ship that would go sometimes just as fast backwards as it did forward, because if it hit a real current or a storm, it just didn't have the power to go. I think we made about four or five knots, which was very slow. And it was a *terrible* old rust bucket, the *Alvarado*. Though I remember it with a kind of an affection, it was terrible to work on.

My friend Bob Nelson was third mate, and I was, of course, immediately elected delegate because I had a typewriter and I knew quite a bit about ships by that time, and I knew the beefs on the Alaska run, and I had some idea what to do.

*And you're still with the Sailor's Union?*

I was still in the Sailor's Union. And I think it took us three weeks to get to Honolulu. We just did a snail's pace across the Pacific. There were stories about how we might split in two, because there had been some tales about the welding not being very

good on one side. And it wasn't a liberty ship; it was just an old scow.

We stopped, I guess to get cargo at Longview, Washington, on the Columbia River near Kelso, Washington, which is a famous old port on the old coastwise run. And when we were trying to turn around, the engines were so feeble that when we were trying . . . I was on the wheel, as I remember, and we were trying to get the ship to go astern so the tugs could pull us to the port so that we could turn around down the river. In the process we ran into this great sewer main and the very large culvert, split right down the middle. I mean, we just rammed right into it. And I recall that there were probably a hundred people up on the bridge nearby and along the waterfront looking down on us—local citizens—watching us destroy their culvert, and yelling at us and cheering, and telling us what great seamen we were and all that sort of thing. [laughter] And that's what the ship was like. We had a great start, and then we headed off and went to Honolulu.

And in Honolulu, that was a very sad trip there. First place, I couldn't find Francis Motofuji. He apparently was somewhere else. And Peter Buck, Te Rangi Hiroa, was away on some trip. And so, nobody that I really would liked to have seen was there. And Honolulu was a very depressing place.

*Was it markedly different from the first time you saw it?*

Well, it wasn't so long between trips, excepting it was toward the end of the war, and things had gotten very shabby. I don't know if there was much military there at that point; I think a lot of them had left. Again, I didn't go out to Pearl Harbor; I didn't want to see it. And we only were there just a day or two.

*This is in 1944 now?*

The *Alvarado*, yes, March to May, 1944. And it was quite different there. Yet it might have been me. I just didn't go ashore much; I didn't really want to go around. And we weren't there more than a day or two, and we headed back.

The *Mahi Mahi* on the Honolulu pineapple run was one of my first trips, and I was still full of gung-ho spirit and the romantic view of going to sea. But by the time the *Alvarado* came along, I just remember that all of us on that crew, including the officers, were irritable and out of sorts most of the time. And there was a feeling that we were on a ship that might not even make it. [laughter] And here we were out alone, and reports of subs and all that, and there was just a feeling of being sort of lost in the ocean, lost at sea. And the days would just go spinning by slowly, and we were rolling on the waves. Sometimes the waves would bowl the ship over at what seemed to be a forty-five-degree

angle. The screw would come out of water and the whole ship would shudder, and you wondered whether it would hold up, because the ship was really a rust bucket.

*And it was not a liberty ship?*

No, the *Alvarado* was . . . I guess they would call it a steam schooner. And it was very old. It had been around a long time. In fact, a couple of the old men on board said that they had shipped it back in the 1920s or . . . [laughter] or before, and that it had been running coastwise up and down. It was a shuttle-run ship that they were now sending on the Hawaii run during the war.

I was the union delegate on the ship, because the three gangs had finally agreed on me to represent the ship. I was beginning to get very conscious of trade union policy and being a union man. And I read the agreement—the union with the ship owners—carefully and tried to follow all the rules.

My friend Bob Nelson was third mate. He had passed his exams for becoming a merchant marine officer, and as far as I know, it was his first trip as mate. He was a third mate. And so, you see, that was rather interesting—the fact that I had a close friend who was now on the bridge. He and I would have *long* talks and arguments about conditions on the ship. There were others who took part in these bull sessions we would have in the mess room, but Bob had to keep a little distant from the crew, in the sense of hanging around. Nevertheless, he and I would talk a lot.

And the crew was getting more and more impatient and irritable. The ship was so slow, and everything was wrong. The captain was a heavy drinker, and there were days in which you had the feeling that you were being led by the blind. [laughter] The officers didn't really have enough to do sometimes on those



long days when we were plowing through the ocean at six or seven knots, or backwards, as we would sometimes say, depending upon the current.

And so a lot of beefs arose, having mainly to do with food—of course. The steward's department always gets this first thing. But the food was rotten. I mean, whatever they put on that ship, it was as though they had kept it around since the beginning of the war, and it was still in the half-frozen state in the ship's lockers. That was bad enough. But, also, the garbage stank; it was often left inside in the galleys.

I remember a big argument between one of the deck hands and a member of the steward's department who was chopping up some just-thawed chickens with their heads on, still had some feathers. And they smelled and looked rotten, and this scullion in the steward's department was chopping them up with a cleaver for dinner that night! [laughter] And I remember the deck hand asking, "You're going to serve us that slop? That rotten slop?"

In almost proverbial fashion, the guy picked up a cleaver and held it up and said, [laughter] "You're going to be part of the chop if you don't shut up! You're going to get what we serve you, and this is what we've got, and this is what it is." And I remember looking at that pile of chicken parts—they stank; they were real rotten. But they were made into a kind of a stew which we had to eat! [laughter] And I forget exactly what form it came out in, but we had it!

And, plus the fact that the eating utensils were often filthy—they'd come out of the wash basin in the galley full of grease, sometimes with bits of food on them. We would complain, and the steward would tell us, "Shut up. What do you think we are on? The Ritz? We're on the *Alvarado* out in the middle

of the ocean, about to be killed, and you guys are worried about a couple of little specks on your forks and knives!" [laughter] And there were cockroaches galore, as there always seemed to be on those older ships, particularly ones that went to the islands. This ship was just a fetid hole.

So here I was delegate. And there were arguments, also, about overtime, because the mates would sometimes turn watches out when it wasn't their watch, which is something they can do. Officers can turn you out if there's either an emergency or some extra work that has to be done. But then you're supposed to get overtime! Then there were always arguments about how much overtime. This went on every ship I was on—how much overtime should actually be paid? And the crew, of course, took this terribly seriously as did the officers. I mean, a few hours overtime, even though it might mean just a few bucks, went on their record as something they had approved of. So if you were on the bridge you want to turn in a low budget for crew time. And to the crew, *every hour* that you spent outside your scheduled work is by agreement something that overtime should be paid for. So one of the delegate's responsibility was almost *always* arguing with mates about the amount of overtime for each of the men.

I took this very seriously. I took all the beefs up to the bridge, and Bob and I would talk about it sometimes, off watch, when he was not on the bridge or he didn't have duties and when I was free. We'd go out on deck, and we *shared* this information between the bridge and the deck, which is unusual to have that kind of communication. [laughter]

And Bob, as I have already shown, was a very serious, somewhat conservative, morose kind of a guy, most of the time, but *very* pro-union. Yet at the same time, he was very cynical about the working class which I've

already talked about. And he and I would argue about this all the time, and with Trot Ikenson. I've mentioned those three-way discussions with a communist-Jewish guy aboard the ship [laughter]; and Bob Nelson, a morose Scandinavian from Minnesota and very bright, very able, very much a loner in his own way of behaving, and in life; and then myself, constantly curious and pushing into the lives of these people to understand what I was doing and who I was with.

Between Bob and I, we developed a kind of program. We were going to make this a true union ship, you know. He was in a new union now; he was Masters, Mates and Pilots. We would joke about that: that he was now a masturbating pilot. But he had also been a member of deck gangs for years on ships.

*Is that very usual for people to go through the ranks that way? To become officers by . . . ?*

Oh, yes. In fact, the older way was that if you were sailing for companies, you went through all the jobs. During the war that was broken. Lots of people got just a couple of weeks orientation, like I did as a cadet. And they would come aboard with very little experience, and, of course, they were looked upon as the lowest of the low. But they had to be treated as officers.

In fact, that was one of the things that caused me to feel so uncomfortable as a cadet. I didn't feel that I had come up through the ranks, I didn't know enough about ships, and here I was with a little wartime monkey suit, as a merchant marine cadet. And that bothered me a great deal. It was one of the reasons why I resigned when I got back to New York on that first trip.

But here was Bob, who did it in a legitimate way. He came up through the ranks, passed his exam, and got a raise in pay. Yet

he was very vulnerable to the joking that went on. He didn't like hearing, "Now you're a company man, Nelson. From now on we can't count on you for anything." So he was under that strain of showing that he was a good guy. But here he had a friend that he had sailed with, myself, who was deck delegate and ship's delegate, and so he and I would sort of confer. We dreamed up *ways*, strategies, for bringing up these beefs in ways that the officers and the captains would not really be able to contend with. And most of this was put upon me, because I was the delegate, and I was the one that had to go up and do it.

But Bob said, "You know, if you take this captain on, he's basically a real stupid ass; he doesn't know his ass from wild honey. If you're firm with him and hard, this guy is going to give way. And the chief mate is the same kind of guy. These two guys are drinking buddies; they're up there drinking their brandy and their loganberry wine and all that up there. And you get them when they've just had a few drinks, and these guys are vulnerable, you know. We'll take the position that they're breaking the union agreement."

So I would do that. I'd go up with these beefs, and I was fairly firm, and many of them they agreed to, and sometimes not. And then I'd say, "Well, we'll put this down for the patrolman to handle, the union to handle, when we get into port."

I had my typewriter, and, gee, I wish I had some of those records that I had. [laughter] I mean, I took *very* full records of *every* little picayune beef that there was on the ship. There were many safety violations. I mean, that ship, when I think of it . . . [laughter] I'm not sure what company it was, but it was obviously a ship ready for the graveyard, for the burying ground of all ships.

Everything was wrong. They didn't have the proper tools for work, so that it was very hard on the crew, particularly chipping. There was rust a half-inch deep on most of the ship. You were afraid when you went after the rust that you were going to go through the bulkheads. It was that rusty. It hadn't *really* been chipped or cleaned or painted for a long time. And a lot of the ropes from the rope locker had laid around so long that they were already frayed and beginning to rot in places, so that if you went aloft, you know, in the bosun's chair or something, you would see these places of wear and wonder whether or not it was safe.

And so all these things were beefs, and you'd go up and complain about them. You couldn't do much about equipment on-board that was no good, because that's the way it was. And that was a trip where one of the old-timers used to throw things regularly overboard! [laughter] Anything that didn't look right he'd throw, so pretty soon we didn't have much to work with at all—not even bad tools and bad stuff. The paint was lousy paint; if you had to paint, it didn't cover. *Everything* was wrong on that trip. So all these little beefs would add up—particularly beefs that had to do with overtime. That was always the main beef.

And then I became the “bad boy,” as far as the bridge was concerned. I was a trouble-maker; I was inciting the crew. This was always the old charge, *always* against ship delegates—if things didn't go right, they were *inciting* the crew. The crew here was just pushing, and they were using me, too, as a kind of patsy. [laughter] And then my friend, Nelson, who was giving me advice about how to approach the bridge, what to do . . . and it wasn't long before things were in really bad shape.

I remember one day, we'd had a ship's meeting that I had presided over about what we were going to do about this when we got to port: “Let's all stay here and be here when the patrolman comes on, and we'll lay out all these beefs, and we'll *nail* this damn skipper, this damn chief mate, the phony bosun, and all these company stiffes.”

Two of the guys, two of the, oh, not old seamen—two older men, but they hadn't been at sea very long—were real what we would call “phonies.” I mean, they were either pro-company, always cozying up to the mates and telling tales . . . which, by the way, is the worst thing you can do, be considered to be a snitch on a ship and take tales from what's said down below up to the bridge. And we thought they were giving information. Of course, I was doing it, too, to the third mate! But he was on our side! [laughter]

*Yes! [laughter] Now, the bosun wouldn't be at these meetings?*

The bosun could be but not always. The bosun was supposed to be a union man, and usually bosuns kept kind of quiet during these meetings. These were crew meetings, and in that bosuns had a certain kind of special position in the crew, usually they kept kind of quiet, but not always. And I don't remember what this bosun's position was. I don't think we liked him too well. But, nevertheless, at this meeting I was trying to get them to determine that they were going to stick together and *be* there when the patrolman came aboard.

*Now, would this happen in Hawaii?*

The meeting would be when we got back, and I think on that trip we got back to Port-

land, Oregon. And there was a patrolman who would come down from Seattle. So we weren't quite clear what kind of reception we were going to get, as far as the union was concerned.

My view, and that of others, was that we should not leave the ship until we had registered these complaints. I had them all written out and all that. And these two old guys started to say, "Hey, Whitey, you're starting trouble on this ship. We never had trouble before on this ship until you got here."

And I felt like saying, "How long have you been on this damn ship?" It was all new crew, as far as I could tell. And they're making little remarks of this kind. Then we heard that they were also talking to the officers and the skipper when they went up to the wheel—that's when you had a chance to talk to the officers and sometimes the skipper, that's where there was some communication between the bridge and the crew. So that was getting around.

So most of us—the majority, I think—backed this business of, "We've got follow the agreement. We've got to do something here. Even though it's wartime, goddamn it, we have to protect the union." I took this very seriously. To me that was important. And I was beginning to feel at that point, very much a part of the union. I had a very strong pro-union feeling, which was growing. I'd always been that way, but now I had an opportunity to exercise it, to implement . . .

*Had you thought that the delegates on the ships you were on before had done a good job? I mean, you'd seen other delegates do their thing on other ships.*

Yes. And some of them were considered totally useless, and were elected to be totally useless, you know, on some ships, and there

were times when a crew would just choose anybody who would take it, because it was considered a dirty job or one that could get you into trouble or one that you had to work beyond your hours and all that sort of thing. And other times they would be a very careful, depending on the crew, to elect somebody whom they thought would do something, as I think was the case of the *Alvarado*; it was such a lousy ship. Oh, about two or three days out when we had a ship's meeting, their idea was that I had a typewriter, and I talk like a sea lawyer, and . . . [laughter]

*A sea lawyer? That's great!*

Oh, a sea lawyer. Oh, yes. See, that could be an epithet, and it could be a compliment, depending. Or a motor mouth, you know! But the point is I showed an interest in the agreement and things of that kind.

*So normally, are these delegates elected after you've been at sea a couple of days?*

Well, I don't remember exactly when this happened. Not usually in port, because things are too disruptive in port—people coming and going, and cargo coming aboard—usually in the first day or two out. I forget just when, but early in the trip, this happened. So I was elected. I took this very seriously. I had been a delegate once before—forget on which ship—and things were fairly quiet and ordinary. But I'd learned something about the process, kept long records. When I was delegate, I'd have a sheaf of papers, you know, two inches thick of ship's meetings and beefs and things of that kind. I turned it in to the patrolman when I'd come in.

So, anyway, I was doing this, and at this meeting, I was taking notes, saying, "Well, so are we all agreed? Let's have a vote."

And these two guys voted against it, saying, "What do you mean keeping us? As soon as I hit the dock, I'm going! The heck with this," you know, and all that.

And so the majority, I think, began to feel, "These guys are real stool pigeons; they're disruptive assholes, and we got to watch *them*."

So the meeting was over, and everybody was leaving, and I was getting up and putting together my stuff, and one of these guys said, "Hey, Whitey, you're a commie. You're just a commie! What are you doing? Starting some kind of ruckus here." He says, "We're going to report you to the union."

And I said, "I hope you do, because I'm going to make a report to the union!" And they made a couple of other remarks.

I got very mad. I only had a few fights when I was aboard ship—I mean, serious ones. But these guys really made me mad, and, you know, I told them to shut up, and I was yelling as loudly as they were, you know. "Just shut up. You're a phony son of a bitch. Shut up."

And they stood up, and I stood up, and they started coming toward me. Oh, no. I started saying, "You guys sound like real phonies! What kind of union men are you? Will you just shut up!" And as I said that, first they looked as though I had quelled them, and they were going to be quiet and leave.

But I went too far, and I kept making these remarks and yelling at them, and finally one of them slowly stood up and said, "Well, that's enough. That's just too damn much!"

And he started moving toward me. And he was much bigger than I and I thought, "Uh-oh, I've really done it now."

And so I got myself ready, and I thought "I'm going to have to duke it out with this guy." And just as he was about six feet from me, moving toward me, I saw him suddenly

look up and slowly move backwards. And I was thinking, "Why? What have I got? What is this power I got over . . . ?" But I saw he's still looking up behind me, and I turned around, and coming down the little stairway, the gangway, into the mess room was Bob Nelson, who was a great big guy! [laughter] And he was coming down and looking at these guys, didn't say a word—just looked and stood there. And he says, "Whitey, you ought to go back to the fo'c's'le. Go back to the fo'c's'le. I'll take care of these guys." [laughter]

And he stood there, and I said, "Well, OK, but these guys are real phonies, real phonies."

He says, "That's all right. That's OK."

So I left. And he told them to go back to their fo'c's'le; and apparently he told them, "If there is any more trouble, we're going to put you in irons." [laughter] I never saw any. I was the only one I ever saw put in irons and that was on a later trip. But that was always the threat, you know. "We'll put you in irons!" [laughter] "Down in the bilge, where we can keep an eye on you!" And so these guys just turned into meek, little lambs and went back to their fo'c's'les. I didn't have any trouble with them the rest of the trip.

*You were actually put in irons?*

We're not there yet. Oh, god, yes. But, anyway, so I remember thinking about that a great deal. I was very vulnerable in those days, and I still am—everybody is vulnerable in some ways—but I was very vulnerable to the charge that I was pushing the crew, that I was causing them to do things. I wondered, you know, to what degree the fact that, as a delegate, I was forming policy and making suggestions, that in a way I was arousing feelings and dissent that would not have been activated. I was thinking about that. But, of

course, the charge of being a “commie” didn’t bother me. I mean, it’s just the way it was said—it was meant to be an insult. At the same time, the fact that someone was a commie didn’t bother me that much, just that it was part of this whole antagonistic way that they were talking.

And I thought about that, you know. “Gee, am I acting like a communist? [laughter] Am I being a communist?”

I had done a lot of reading by this point, and I was identifying to some degree with the left of the CIO, reading their literature on board ship. And the fact that the NMU had done away with discrimination and had mixed crews, and that they were very militant, those things attracted me, and I was very interested in it. But I was a member of the Sailor’s Union of the Pacific, and I had a certain feeling of loyalty to that organization, and I wanted to be a good ship’s delegate and follow the agreement. And I was thinking, “But maybe I’m going too far. Maybe I’m pushing too hard. Maybe my personality isn’t the right thing to be a delegate. Maybe I create the problems.” All these doubts.

And Bob didn’t help too much because he was telling me, “Hey, Whitey, what you did is fine. You got to do things like that, you know. And a lot of these guys wouldn’t do a goddamn thing if there’s somebody didn’t give them leadership,” all that kind of thing. And these two things created pulls in different directions. I remember that I went through a lot of soul searching on that trip about what . . . .

*There’s a really interesting parallel in that phenomena you’re describing with what I think anthropologists sometimes fear that they’re creating a cultural phenomenon by writing about it or . . . .*

Oh, god, yes. I mean, to what extent are you intruding or imposing something into a situation because of who you are?

*Yes, by trying to provide structure or even by just trying to . . . .*

By asking questions. By the kinds of questions you ask, you might be affecting the situation. Yes. But that kind of concern, when I had it later in life, came under different kinds of conditions, where one could contemplate it and think about it. Here it was where I could get into a fight in two seconds over it; either that or be accused by the officers when I got back to port of being a troublemaker and a commie.

*But you did feel—you must have felt, or maybe that’s what you’re going to talk about—that you were representing a common good or that you were representing union regulations of what should be done and protecting rights that . . . .*

Oh, yes. That’s why I felt so assured in doing it. I was very idealistic. I believed that there was such a thing as the proper way to do things, and an agreement is an agreement, and I did have the sort of characteristic attitude toward the bridge as company men, and “the company versus us,” and all those things were at work. And I had some political notions about the relationship of officers and men and companies and governments and class and caste and all those types of things. And so I was very idealistic about my role: that I had to go out and struggle to defend the rights of the union men. And to be a good union man, you did that. You fought; you struggled. And, you know, I felt very heroic at times about this, that this was an important job to be done and that I was one of the

cogs in the great wheel of trade unionism and the seamen's struggles for rights and all that, particularly even in the Sailor's Union of Pacific, which is a very reactionary union that I didn't really fully understand at that time. But even there, the history of unionization had been a very militant one in the past—Andrew Furuseth and his mixed role in development of labor unions after the turn of the century.

All those things I had begun to get aware of and felt part of that tradition, part of that trade union tradition, and idealized it to a considerable degree. So, you know, I would go up to the mates or the captain with the idea that this was my historic role and *right* to do this!

I was here representing a union, representing the crew of this ship. I must have been a little poppycock in many ways. I probably was an annoying bastard and probably was very full of myself and maybe a bit patronizing—lord knows. [laughter] I mean, I could have easily been. But all I know is that in this case, the chief mate and the skipper couldn't abide me. "Here he comes again! What's the beef now?"—you know, this kind of thing.

*Well, did they suspect the relationship between you and Bob Nelson? Did Bob Nelson have any trouble because of . . . ?*

Not that I'm aware of. But he was a pretty true guy and a *good* seaman. He knew his job. He did his job. And they would have had a hard time getting at him.

I don't think that we made so much of the fact that we were friends or knew each other, that that would become an issue, because often that's the case. Often you sailed with particular officers before on the ships and got to know them and be fairly friendly

with them. This wasn't unusual. It would have been had we made too much of it, and if it was obvious that we were conferring and conspiring. But it wasn't that way. It was much more informal than that.

*Was there a standard schedule? I mean, was it like every Tuesday and Saturday that you'd go up to the bridge to, you know, to present the beefs, or did you just continually . . . ?*

No, it would be by appointment and when I was off watch, and either the mate or the skipper had time, and I would just say, "How's getting together?" or something. Then we'd get together in one of their state-rooms or in the officers' mess or something of that kind. And they were pretty informal. These weren't like court proceedings or formal meetings. We'd just get together and talk. But sometimes we would get very argumentative when I'd present my view about overtime or a beef and they would take exception and accuse me of padding the records, and then we'd get a little hot and argue and all that. But I don't recall on that ship that things ever got into a shouting match, except with those two phonies on the crew, who shut up the rest of the trip, I'm glad to say.

But part of this business of ambivalence on my part had to do with this feeling of utilizing a position or a kind of minimal power to foment problems. I kept questioning myself about this: "To what degree am I working out my own problems about authority"? Because I *did* have problems about authority, having been a cadet, left the cadet service, developed a kind of a contempt about the officer class in general, and certainly about companies. I picked up very quickly from crews, even on that first trip as a cadet, this trade union orientation to relationships and all that. And I asked myself always whether I

was making more out of it than others, and if this wasn't part of *my* problem. I give myself some credit for being a reflective person even then.

*Oh, yes. Especially while you're in the midst . . .*

Well, this wasn't on my mind all the time, but I can remember lying in my bunk thinking, "Why is there so much dissension? Is it because I'm here? Did I *do* it?" A misplaced sense of power, by the way, because nobody does anything that they don't want to do. [laughter] But I guess I had some feeling that I was particularly potent or something, because I was a good delegate and I was liked by most of the crew.

*And disliked by the bridge?*

In this case, disliked about certain things, and particularly by the skipper, who just wanted to be left alone, you know. He just wanted to be up there drinking and steering this poor, damn rust bucket through the ocean. I remember him running down one time in a panic, because he heard a kind of a thump or a rasping noise, and we went down and searched through the ship. I had to go with him along with my watch. We had to go through what we could of the hulls, because he was wondering whether or not there is that crack in one of the seams. And there was. That could have been what he heard. But, oh, we'd hear a crack or something like that, and ships make a lot of noise, they wheeze, and they scrape, and they whine. Not only the engine room, but you can hear the bulkheads moving. You might hear a very strange, loud, crunching sound. He had heard something like that, and we searched the whole ship. And we found what had been

there before, a little crack in one of the seams in the bulkhead about midships. And he was terribly upset about this, and in fact, *he* was complaining that the company knew better than to do this. I remember saying to him something like, "Well, you know, the same with us. We got some beefs, and they shouldn't be that way."

And it was the only time we had had an agreement. [laughter] He said, "Well, that's right. That's right," he says. "You know, these ships, they shouldn't put them out like this. But it is wartime. You know, it is wartime; we got to do our part." And I couldn't argue that. [laughter] But, you know, here we were on this floating, rotten cork in the middle of the ocean, and bobbing around and making straight . . .

*Were you still sighting submarines, having alerts a couple of times a day on that run?*

Oh, yes. Yes. But I'll tell you, *the* lookout system and the security system were so ratchety! [laughter] These guys were yelling all the time they saw something, but it got so we didn't listen anymore because, you know, we had a strange crew. I mean, they would yell, "Hey, look! Three points to the starboard! Look at that! Look what's over there!" And it turned out just to be a wave or something. But we'd have alerts when we thought we saw something.

*This was still going on.*

But this was a dull trip. I mean, nothing very exciting happened. We just went wallowing through the ocean over to Honolulu and back.

Anyway, these concerns were growing in me—a kind of sense of uncertainty about leadership or power or patronization—feel-



ing that you knew more than other people, and trying to organize people to do a particular kind of thing that they wouldn't ordinarily do, like go as a group up to the mate and make a complaint. Things of that kind, which sometimes I would invent and say, "Look, if three or four of us go up, it's much more powerful rather than just this guy, this damn delegate, making things up." And sometimes two or three, four guys would go with me. But this isn't something they ordinarily did.

And the beefs weren't that terrible. I mean, if there were really serious beefs, sometimes the whole crew would confront an officer or the captain. And on one or two

trips I was on that would happen. But, you know, I thought at times, "My god, am I making more out of these minor beefs than I should? Maybe I should just list them and report when we get back."

And the attitude that had developed about me on the part of at least the two main officers, I always wondered to what degree that was my fault—my demeanor, the way I behaved, and all that sort of thing. So to me that was a learning experience, and I look back on that as a kind of an important step in my own understanding of myself at the time.



NOW, JUST A FEW weeks earlier, before this trip, well, when I was still on the *Henry Failing*, I had gotten the letter from Kathy that she was quite sure she was pregnant. And this was a very powerful experience for me. Not that I thought it was totally unexpected, but just that it was a very profound experience. I remember feeling very happy about it, at the same time very worried. It somehow made me aware that I was going to be a father and that I was a husband in a very real sense; that I had to face this very sharply, and it was very hard for me. You know, what was I going to do? Here the war was still on, and I was sailing. And I must say that getting away from shore, getting away from problems, *even* after Kathy and I got married, was like for other seamen, often a great relief, even if combined with a sense of separation and loneliness. You didn't have to face problems directly.

But here I had word now that we were going to have a child. And it was a very exciting thing. I remember writing letters to Kathleen in which I was ecstatic and also already making up names for the kid, you

know. If it's a boy, here it is. I remember calling it "Snapper." Or "Snapper" was the name for whatever the child was she was carrying. "Maybe Snapper's name should be this. Or if it's a girl, it should be this." And I would play with these names. I had all kinds of fantasies about how we were going to live that suited my romantic orientation at the time. Things that I'd picked up from men I'd sailed with, like Bob Nelson and others—"Let's just go get a stump farm way out in the woods or up in the mountains someplace, with a little cabin. I'll build it; we'll fix it up, and we'll take little Snapper. [laughter] Maybe up in the high mountains, Snapper will learn to play in the snow and swim in the cold water. And we'll have very few visitors, and we'll have a chance to be alone, in this wonderful setting." Or, since Kathy was looking for housing at the time, "You know, try Orinda." Now, Orinda if anybody knows the Bay Area, is outside of Oakland toward Walnut Creek, and in those days was still very undeveloped country. There were trees and farms and groves of eucalyptus and other things. It was a very beautiful stretch beyond Oakland,

going toward Walnut Creek. *Today* it's just one long housing project after another. But, you know, I said, "How about out in Orinda, where those old farmhouses are? We could get one of those cheap, and we'd fix it up." You know, we wanted, *I* wanted, to get away. I had stump farm fever, as they called it, when we were at sea. You want to get your own little . . .

*Now why did they call it the "stump farm"?*

Because that's also a comical name for farmers or guys that have cleared land or cleared forest for agriculture. A stump farmer is a guy who runs around, slogging in the mud, jumping over stumps. [laughter] But it also had this other nostalgic view of how nice it would be to have a little stump farm you could retreat to and all that sort of thing. A pioneering stump farmer. And Bob Nelson was always talking about it. He wanted this little cabin in the mountains. He wanted three hundred acres of ground where he'd shoot anybody that came in. [laughter] He and his dogs and maybe a woman, and they'd be out there all alone, living off the land. Well, that kind of thing was a rather common view at sea.

Seamen have this mixed orientation to going to sea. If they'd been long enough, going to sea fulfilled a tremendous need to get away and to have this period of lonely reflection and separation from everyday concerns: "They're back there somewhere. Lord knows what it'll be when I get back, but at least now I don't have to worry about it." And, "So maybe my girlfriend has turned into a seagull." "Seagulls" are girls who hang around the beach waiting for the men to return, and they get into all kinds of trouble; they sometimes become prostitutes or gas

hounds. And maybe, you know, "But what can you do"?

*What's a gas hound?*

A heavy drinker.

*These are great vernacular . . .*

Oh, gas hound—I thought that was still in use. A heavy drinker, drunk. So, you know, who knows, at least it's back there. And *then* coming back there's, of course, that kind of fever? Port fever or something. We had a word for the excitement of returning—being glad to return, at the same time, a deep anxiety, always a deep anxiety. What's there? What are you going to run into? Now all the problems start. And, "How long can I stand it ashore?" kind of thing.

You'd get that kind of thought. "How long can I stand it? How long can I stay this time? And what in the hell is my girlfriend doing now, or my wife or my family? What about my kids? Ah, well, haven't had to think about them for three or four months. And, well, there they are." Port fever, I guess it was called. It was something like that. And it really made a change. You could *feel* the change in the crew.

I think I should say something about shipboard sexuality. People ask about it all the time, and it's very interesting. It's sort of assumed that there are real problems aboard ships—sexual aggression and homosexuality, all this sort of thing. I mean, I've had people that I know say, "What do these guys do? What do they do, men without women?" and, "Oh, it's like prison," you know. And it's an interesting thing, because I may have a biased view, and maybe I just denied or put things out of my mind.

There was an awful lot of talk about sexuality. But very interesting was the privatization; always you're telling tales about someone else. Someone else did these *horrible* things. I mean, absolutely *unbelievable* sexual exploits and funny stories.

Sometimes terribly depressing stories, sometimes extremely hilarious stories loaded with the most extreme kinds of pornography and perversion. [laughter]

*It almost sounds like you're talking about coyote stories.*

[laughter] Yes, right. You know, perverse stories. But always told as stories. You know, "I had a friend who did this." And, "Did you ever hear about Red Murphy? Did you ever hear about this?"

That was part of our mess room conversations. Seldom did anybody use themselves as an example of behavior of this kind. It was always what somebody did when they got back, or on a ship. "There was a ship I was on when such and such happened, when this happened, or that." However, in my view, as I think back on it at the time, I saw very little overt sexuality aboard ship or any homosexual activity.

Though there were homosexuals often aboard, sometimes open one's. I remember a second mate. When we'd go on watch with him, he would tell long stories about himself, as though he had a need to talk. [laughter] A very nice guy, young guy. He was a navigator, and he would tell these elaborate stories about his friendships and relationships and sexual exploits with men. And I remember I'd hear them, and others would hear them, and nobody took it seriously. It was just as though, "That's an interesting story," and "So the guy's queer. He's not bothering me, and you leave him

alone." There was a lot of this "Leave people alone. That's their business." Unless they bother you.

And there was a lot of homoerotic humor. Why wouldn't there be, you know? Their images begin to turn to one another. I don't ever remember there being direct homosexual advances or any rumor, even. Oh, sometimes somebody joking would say, "Oh, you know, those guys are asshole buddies; they're in the sack together." This kind of joking was common. But nobody believed it or took it seriously. It was just a joke; nobody got mad if it was said about them.

*However*, if anybody said anything about their actual behavior and what they were doing that implied homosexuality, a person would get extremely angry, because this was a closed world. Not only one's identity but perceived identity, one's status, was extremely important. Anyone who allowed themselves to be pegged that way were considered to be then that way. And they might be the butt of all kinds of jokes. But seldom did you hear stories about something going on *on* the ship you were on. It was always somewhere else, where these weird and marvelous things would happen on board ship. Much too interesting to relate here. Much too interesting.

But I mean, my journals are loaded with these wonderful stories of what happened. "Did you ever hear what this old skipper did to his cabin boy?" and all that sort of thing. These were our tabloids. And a lot of chauvinistic talk about women. I would say that the attitude toward women, as *expressed*, was abysmal. And the few guys now and then who had wives at home and were young and in love and all that, and wartime guys, they were miserable with this, because they couldn't enter in. And they would be ribbed and pummeled with stories. [laughter] You know, "How do you know what's happening to your

wife? You know who's with her right now?" And all this kind of thing. And, "You don't know her that well." [laughter] "And you left her there. I mean, do you expect her to go on without a man for the next two or three months? What's wrong with you?" And on and on. One or two times, I remember guys just getting so mad they'd start a fight. They'd just get furious; they'd throw things and stomp off.

I remember one young kid, very nice, young kid, he had just gotten married—and me, too, so I really identified with him—he said, "You guys just shut up. I'm going to kill somebody on this ship." [laughter] "I'm going to *kill* somebody on this ship, I swear! I don't want to hear another word! I don't want to hear another word. I don't want any of you to talk to me. I don't want you to say one more word to me! I'm ready to *kill*!" And he stalked off and was quiet for days, and everybody knew they'd gone too far and tried to sort of make it up to him. But I felt a very strong identity with him, you know, thinking this was a very legitimate response and that there ought to be more of it. But that was part of the release of tensions on ship.

A *lot* of sexual talk, sexual innuendo, homoerotic innuendo, that you better not take seriously, because most of these guys were very, very heterosexual. But in these circumstances, it was just the natural thing to do, to single out somebody that they're going to now rib for the next few days about what a fine butt he had, or "Boy, he's a whore's wet dream walking" kind of thing, you know. [laughter] And, if you weren't aware of the dynamics, you'd think these guys were all homoerotic. It's the kind of joking that goes on. I'm sure it goes on in the army, the navy, and anyplace where men are somewhat isolated. And it doesn't mean that they're going to act it

out. It just means that this is the way to bring it to life in a group, you know. You choose your targets, and you play with things in this way. So I am glad to say a word about that because I think that that's not always understood. I don't think it has been written about much. In fact, I don't recall much discussion of this.

*Well, it seems to be avoided as a topic just in the few books that I've looked at. And perhaps people consider it an undignified thing to even discuss. But it is an interesting aspect, because one of the things when you were talking that I was thinking about was wondering if there was a degree of more tolerance in that culture for homosexuality than there was in the land culture.*

Well, that's a good question, but I don't think it's a matter of tolerance. I think it's a matter that under those conditions, one's boundaries of what's permissible to talk about expand. I don't think that it is a matter of any of the groups on a ship like that being tolerant, let's say, of either homosexuality or the very perverse kinds of activities that they describe in these wonderful stories—I mean, *really*, as foul as you could get, sometimes extremely funny, nevertheless. None of those guys . . . I don't know, some maybe, but none of those guys that I was aware of, would dream of even talking this way ashore—even thinking that way ashore. That stuff becomes denied; it's another world, that free and open, nutty world of going to sea, where the boundaries are somewhat let down, but *not* if the tone is such that somebody is suggesting it's real. If somebody suggests it's *real* in somebody else, it can erupt into a terrible . . .

*And it's so interesting, as that can be such a subtle, fine line, in terms of if you were trying to*

*describe to a Martian who had just landed on the ship, how to tell the difference or how to communicate the difference.*

Yes, you have to feel it.

*You probably couldn't do it, and yet probably everybody on that ship would know the difference.*

They could tell. You could just tell by the tone; you could tell by the circumstances. And if somebody goes beyond it . . . well, I can think of an example. There was an electrician—the same electrician who had his great boil in his groin lanced by the third mate, who was quite a guy. I liked him. A good guy. And he probably had an advanced stage of gonorrhea or whatever, which was not so uncommon in those days on ships and elsewhere. But I remember one time . . . everybody used to joke with him, because he was always telling stories about *his* exploits with women. What a lance man he was, you know.

*What was that word?*

Lance man. A lance man. [laughter] You know, he really was bragging about his parts, you see.

*OK, got it. [laughter]*

So, you know, he'd tell these wonderful stories about the things he had done, and his language was marvelously colorful, and, oh, I wish I could repeat some of it. I mean, they were just beautiful. Wonderfully colloquial, but also artful and poetic ways of describing things like experiences he had with prostitutes in Panama.

*Couldn't we do another series on coyote sea tales? [laughter]*

On another tape, another tape. Or somewhere else. I have them in my notes. [Laughter] But anyway, he would tell these stories about various kinds of experience that he had with prostitutes at various ports. And, you know, he obviously allowed himself to become the butt of jokes. I mean, people were going to try to cut him down. You know, a big shot and all that sort of thing.

So I remember one time a group of guys was sitting in my fo'c's'le, and I had this big pad of paper, and I was doing a sketch of one of the guys. I used to do that—make sketches. They were intrigued by them. I wasn't bad; I did some good sketching. They said, "Hey, let's give this guy . . ." What was his name? I forget now. But, "Let's give him something. You draw something."

So I drew a terribly pornographic woman. I mean, I'm ashamed of it now. But I mean, it was in every way a stupendous depiction of women's parts, and rather well done with charcoal. And it was shocking. Oh, they thought, "That's just the thing for this guy. We'll tell him when he is alone we're going to give him this, so he can have it in his fo'c's'le and put it up and look at it."

And so we went as group, and we went and said, "Hey, guy, this is for you. We want to present this to you." So we handed it to him.

And I remember him sitting there on his bunk looking at it for a long time. And he was thinking, and he was feeling. And he threw it down on the deck, and he looked at me; he says, "You guys are filthy." [laughter] And he was deeply hurt, offended, shocked. It was to me interesting. And I learned a lot from that. This guy was a talker, and he'd

tell all these stories, and it was all out there and put in a frame, you see. But somebody had come to him, part of the crew, with something direct.

*Yes. Well, you confronted him almost.*

Well, confronted him and showed him something that he thought was pornographic, was dirty. And it was, you know. It was. I was ashamed. I just felt awful. The other guys didn't. "Ah, well, you know that's what he deserves. That's what he wants; that's what he has got," you know.

But I thought about that. This guy told me something about the way certain people react. He had been blowing his top off, working off his energy, talking, telling marvelous stories. And then suddenly somebody gave him something that turned it into something else. Made it rotten and real in some way that he didn't want it to be. And I tried very hard the rest of the trip to sort of make it up to him, get to know him, and eventually became good friends. But he was very hurt by that, deeply hurt. So these are things one learns.

And, by the way, that says something about sexuality aboard ship and its expression. You can talk like hell, say all kinds of things, but be very careful about what you do. Because you're personhood and your status is involved. The kind of person you want to be seen as and thought about. So that's something important to learn about what people do. I saw *very* little activity aboard ship that I would say was acting out of sexual behavior. Everybody knew that everybody else masturbated. That was sort of taken for granted. In fact . . .

*Were there jokes about that, too?*

Oh, well, yes. In fact, the curtain that you have above your bunks is called the jack-off curtain. [laughter] And there were a lot of things of that kind. See, there was the curtain . . . oh, there were a number of terms like that.

These are things for privacy. And so of course it was given what was considered an appropriate, colorful name. And, oh, but there's another one for the physicality of bunks and sleeping, you know. Your bunk was your cunt sack. [laughter] And the curtain was your jack-off curtain. So, you know, all these kinds of things went on all the time. But I think anybody on a ship who had been caught, say, at watch when you're awakened, and somebody comes bursting in, and he turns on the light—"You guys, it's watch time," you know, something like that. If anybody would pull aside a curtain unexpectedly, even . . .

This *intense* sense of privacy, of space, is, of course, extremely important. And we know this throughout human societies. It varies from place to place and in different conditions, but on a ship, personal space becomes intensely important. But if anybody should see one in the midst of masturbation or something like that, and talk about it in that instance . . . You can talk about it in general, or about something that happened over there or on another ship or something, but mentioning a specific incident was considered extremely, oh, insulting and could produce deep anger. And the person who does it gets characterized as a peeper or has something wrong with him or something like that.

*It was not condoned at all?*

Not at all, no. It's the idea of your space. The whole ship becomes eroticized in terms of language, in terms of names. I mean,



the names for block and tackle, the names for portholes. [laughter] I mean all these things can be applied to in terms of physical parts or sexual activities. It just becomes part of the language and the culture of the ship. I mean, food, you know—bologna is horse cock. There's no other word for sausage, you know, particularly a big one. And, you know, one of the cooks would be slicing bologna; everybody would scream, you know, "Aahh!" [laughter] I mean, this goes on all the time. Taken for granted.

In fact, when you think about it, it's just part of the language on board ship. But *everybody* . . . there is an understanding. If anybody gets out of line, they are dealt with by just the way they're accepted or not accepted in the group. Nobody steps out of line in terms of activity. If somebody is accused of being overly fondling to somebody else, it'll be joked about sometimes.

That would happen sometimes. Somebody was always laying on hands or putting their hand on your butt or something like that or on your knees, and you suspected something was going on. And this would be noticed by others. And little by little, little jokes would be made that would warn that person. If it went on, that person then became the butt of a *lot* of jokes and sometimes violence. Not big violence, but, you know, kicked around.

And the whole thing was a defense of one's self, of one's masculinity on the one hand, and also one's right . . . the freedom to say anything you wanted, as long as you did your work and behaved properly directly with others. A very complex set of dynamics, and I think I understand it and feel it, but it's very hard to describe it. You just know it. It doesn't take you long. A few trips, you got the whole picture—what is allowable, was not allowable, how far you can go, how dra-

matic you could be about stories. You have to be very careful.

I can remember guys telling these magnificent, really powerfully funny or insightful stories about others, sometimes in a monotone. You know, you didn't make too much out of it. And the cooler a person presented such a story, the greater it became. [laughter] But anybody who just loved to rant and rave and get dramatic was somehow laughed about, you know. Anyway, that's enough of that.

So in the midst of all this, here I was becoming a parent, just married, identifying with a guy like that electrician and thinking how right he was, and also began to be more sensitive to and less tolerant of anti-woman talk, which was very common. I mean, this is the way it is. You get a group of men at a distance. What is their target, the thing that they care most about, that they're going to deride and denigrate? It's women. There's a little bit more to it, though, because these are often men who spend a lot of time away and have to rationalize the fact that they're alone and who have very poor relationships with women—many of them did; not all of them. Many of them had very poor relationships. Some didn't have any consistent relations at all. Just in port, out of port, new girlfriend or "seagull", you know, "any old port in the storm" kind of attitude about women. This could lead to some pretty ugly kinds of epithets and stories and things of that kind.

*Well, at a minimum, I think it provided sort of a truncated view of what the possibilities of a relationship are, what women are. I mean, it would permit you to maintain whatever . . .*

It allowed some men, I'm sure, to rationalize their long absences, their lack of connection with things ashore, their feeling

of being lost and out of place when they got into port, not having any place to go except a bar, a flophouse, to find a woman. Not everyone was that way, but that element had a lot of prominence on a ship, because they often were the ones who talked in this way and had a lot to say, sometimes most strongly about how women were no good and you couldn't trust them, and how they could ruin your life. And I remember a guy was talking about how, "Women just ruined your life and just wore you down. All they were looking for was for you to take care of them and buy them drinks or do this. But they got nothing to give you, except their . . . a night in the sack and all that. Women could ruin you."

I remember one guy saying to somebody like this one time, "How could they ruin you? How could anybody ruin you, man? You were ruined from the start." [laughter] There was a lot of this kind of wonderful give and take.

*Well, did you feel at the time any twinge at all that your status as a husband and father in any way kind of limited your ability to identify with some of your crew?*

No. At this point it was a very new thing for me. I mean, it was just this trip when I just learned of that, that Kathy was pregnant, and we'd just married. No, I think it was respected.

*Yes. So there were enough other people . . . .*

Oh, yes always. The idea was that you got a good woman; "Oh, wow, you lucky son of a bitch," you know. "Oh, how lucky you are."

Not always. Some guys were cynical about this, "Just wait and see. Give yourself a chance. I mean, don't get in too deep."

[laughter] All kinds of things would go on. But usually it was a kind of nostalgic, warm acceptance, because some at least believed they had such a relationship. And if somebody was going to have a kid—though many of them had—they would say, "Well, the real tough times are yet to come, man. You just wait till that little guy or that little gal gets older, well, *then* see what happens. You don't want your daughter to be a seagull." [laughter] And that was also, kind of, I would say, a defensive activity too—this being cynical and joking about somebody who seemed to have a good relationship, just like that young kid who just had been married.

And, you know, there was the view that people couldn't help but rib them. Part of that was because you didn't want to sound sentimental about such things. You wanted to express your cynicism about life and long-range doom, which was always in the picture. But more than that, rationalizing one's own awful problems in life. "Could it be that this poor son of a bitch is really getting something right in life?" So it's very mixed, and you feel it, and you know that.

That part of the interreactions on ships was very real. As I remember, what I have been saying would fit most ships that I was on, most crews—which were very diverse. I mean, not everybody felt one way, but all these ideas and feelings get expressed in one way or another by all sorts of people. And they're shared; they're shared.

*Is it overstating the case that maybe underlying part of this, too, was some idea among the seamen in general that they were more inherently at risk being at sea? I'm not talking about the war; I'm just talking about the life of going to sea. Was there an idea that you were more at risk at sea than if you had a job back home, or not?*

During the war, to some degree. However, everybody, also, was very aware that others were even worse off. And although it wasn't talked about much, we figured the army over there on those islands—in the Solomons and at Okinawa and all these places—were having a hell of a time. And our fears, though they were real . . . we were still alive, and these guys were getting killed. And if you were on a troop ship, you just . . . “Oh, we're taking these guys to slaughter.” I felt that; the others did, too. Every ship we saw these guys get off, like at Samoa, and later at Okinawa, we felt three-quarters were going to be dead in a few weeks. So there was that feeling of, “You know, we may not like what's happening here, but we got a job to do, and it's not as bad as some others.”

However, we also felt contempt for some—the navy [laughter]. It was not true . . . well, partly. But we just felt that the navy was contemptuous of *us*, you know: “The damn merchant marine and all these guys down there on those dirty, old rust buckets earning their big pay in big boats.”

And then we'd argue, “They go around in these neat, little sailor suits, afraid to get any dirt or grease on their pants, off-watch most of the time.” And except for a few cases of confronting the enemy and all that, that they were getting a pretty good deal, and that we weren't getting much better than they. So there was a lot of this kind of feeling and talk.

And the sense of danger—yes. I mean, it was more dangerous. Nevertheless, if people had gone to sea, and they were seamen in their own image of themselves—as against these newcomers, landlubbers and all that, who *did* feel this sense of loss, of being away from shore, and intense danger, the danger for somebody who kept going to sea was *built in*. It could happen during wartime or any other time. You could run into a storm where you capsize or run into a coral reef and on and on and on. It was just a little bit *more* dangerous during the war.

So you just took that for granted. No, the sense of danger was built in, certainly during the war. That's what you did.



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## READING, WRITING, AND THINKING

**I**N TERMS of the question of my own feelings about being a person who probably eventually would come ashore and be working ashore, what was I going to do? And I was *very* mixed on this. I had moments, later on even, where I thought, "I'll go to sea forever. I'm going to be a union person. I'm going to work for the union. I'm going to go to sea." And then, of course, immediately the idea would come, "Well, how can I do that, have a family, and Kathy wouldn't put up with this, and nor should she." And that was one sort of idealized, escapist kind of thing that occurred to me. [laughter]

You know, you have lots of fantasies when you're at sea, a lot of time spent lying there with nothing else to do but dream up . . . . And I was at my typewriter, writing in my notebook. I have the weirdest notebooks. They're almost as bad as some of my field notes. [laughter] They're just full of things that go through my mind or that I heard or that I saw, and very little about what was going on in the war. Mostly in terms of human beings and their interreactions and what they said and what they did. And very

difficult to read, because they're scrawled and all that. But I'm able to read some of them. Nevertheless, that was one side of my quandary.

The other side of it was to always be interesting and different; to get away from any kind of *normal* way of life. And my letters to Kathy are full of that. "We've got to build our own house. Our house has to be us. Please, let's never live in one of those rows and rows of stucco houses, those goddamn tract houses. That would be destructive and suffocating. We won't live that way; we've got to have someplace where we can express our own look at the world and what we believe in." And that was on my mind. If I came ashore and stayed, I'd have to live in some very special, significantly different kind of a place that meant something to me, that accommodated my way of looking at things in the world.

Then there was a sort of a third issue, of being more stable, of having a job ashore, a real job ashore, having a steady income, which was something Kathy felt. And she was very careful. She was wonderful in her letters. She never really laid it on me. She was

always very supportive. Even at my craziest, she was supportive, partly because it was war-time, and she really couldn't do anything else. [laughter]

She told me later at times some of my letters scared the hell out of her, because it sounded like I was just going up to Pluto, you know, on a space ship. I was not on this planet; which happened on my next trip, a return to a kind of a mystical orientation, deep interest in metaphysics and spiritual experience and all that. These kinds of things went back and forth with me, sometimes concurrently, but sometimes I'd move from one sort of sphere of feeling and thinking to another.

*Well, just off the top of my head, it sounds it would have been really hard even for you to maintain an identity, to be this active union delegate while you were pursuing mystical . . . .* [laughter] *Those two activities don't seem . . . .*

No. Oh, no, because if it's your job, you do it. But I'm talking about a more interior kind of experience, the things one feels and thinks about. I'll be talking about that on this next trip, because that's when it happened.

*But it sounds like this experience as a delegate was a very internal one, also, for you.*

Oh, sure. But it didn't mean that other kinds of thinking would be excluded. I mean, I still was—not struggling with—but still reflecting upon my earlier religious experience, which wasn't formally religious, but more in terms of a kind of a metaphysical, spiritual orientation, an interest in various kinds of mind-expanding experience and orientation. Concern about astronomy and the cosmos and the meaning of life.

*Well, is this the time period, also, that you were reading Aldous Huxley and . . . ?*

Yes, in there, all along in there. And a lot of other things, too. Oh, my god, I did so much reading, I would have to go back and reconstruct the various things that I was reading. But I was reading a lot of metaphysics and spiritualism—out of a curiosity, mainly.

*Where would you get these books?*

Oh, I'd get them at libraries, you know, or a bookstore. And sometimes little bookstores in ports that I was in would have all this literature I could hardly keep my hands off. I had to keep myself from buying books, because even though they were cheap in those days, I didn't have the money. But, yes, I always was picking up some oddball book in ports here and there.

*Well, in ports there must have been this real smorgasbord of weird stuff.*

Oh, yes, some of the bookstores along the Seattle waterfront were absolutely marvelous. [laughter] *Everything*. A lot of pornography, a lot of cultism . . . sometimes in second-hand books, serious books of all kinds. And, you know, I'd browse and pick up two or three. And I have lists of the things that I was reading. But all these things . . . you know, this was a period of, "Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble." All kinds of things were going on! A lot of political stuff; what little information we got about the war was highly effective not only on me but others. What was going on in Europe, what was going on in the Pacific, questions in our minds about the meaning of the war. And the end of the war was beginning to loom now in 1944,

1945. And what did that mean? What did it mean for us? What did it mean when the Selective Service Act would come to an end, which we knew it would? And what would that mean to the merchant marine or mean to seamen? A lot of these things were parts of our discussions.

*Was it of significance, do you remember, beyond other political events, when Roosevelt had died and Truman was going to take over? Was there any discussion about what that was going to mean to how the war would be ended?*

Not on ships. I was ashore when that happened. Truman's vice presidency and presidency was in late 1945 and 1946. But, oh, yes, those things were talked about a lot—and later, certainly talked about in terms of trade union problems and a very, very reactionary set of movements on the part of the government to restrict . . . . In fact, the merchant seamen were not included in the GI Bill, as they'd been promised. And all those things became political issues later. But this was just on the edge of that.

So, anyway, all this was a deep concern to me. I would say that these issues—"What am I going to do?"—distracted me considerably. Just like a young kid being asked, "What are you going to make out of your life?" I mean, I didn't know. I didn't know what my options were and what I could do.

*When you would be thinking about being a writer, did you consider that that would be part of your interesting and different identity, or your job and income identity?*

Oh, yes. Yes. I'd go off and write. Write and sell my work, which I realized probably then and later was not very likely.

*Did you have an inkling of what you might do if you were going to take on the real job and steady income identity?*

Not clear. I thought maybe trade union activity. Maybe that would be one kind of job, which, by the way, I thought of seriously for the next year or two, particularly during and after the strike, the big maritime strike, in 1946. But that was one part. The other was—and I denied it, but I had still had this very strong feeling I needed and wanted to get back to school—that I felt that my education had been severely interrupted and constricted. And although I always felt that I knew everything in those years, I also knew that I did not. [laughter] And the more I thought about things, the more interested I got in various kinds of problems—politically, socially, metaphysically, in terms of literature, literarily. I felt that I needed more of that kind of experience. I needed more information. I needed more grasp. And even though I did a lot of reading, it was scattered. I didn't feel it was focused and hard-working, diligent reading in terms of a specific amassing of information. And so I felt that this was a problem, or something I yearned for. I yearned for more knowledge, basic knowledge.

*Was the other thing you wanted to be among other people who were seeking this kind of knowledge in the same way? Or was that not part of it? I mean, to be socially among people who were challenging themselves intellectually and questioning?*

All my friends were such people, had been such people. And Kathy, certainly. And all the friends that she had and that we had were, I suppose, post-academic, intellectual,

literati kind of people, which—that's very interesting—posed another kind of problem for me.

I had begun to get a kind of repugnance for dilettantism and “the literati” and people whose main lives and thoughts were lived in abstract study and concepts and theory. People who had lived a kind of sheltered intellectual life, which I thought was true of a lot of the writers of the time, a lot of the academics and things of that kind. A kind of feeling that this was also a limited world and one that I grew more and more uncomfortable about, even though I was writing.

Two of my stories were published during that period. One was in this little mag, *Interim* in the north, which I mentioned before, and then in *Circle*—two stories, which I think, by my own view, were very good stories. And so I was feeling, you know, that something was happening, as far as my writing was concerned. Also, I had written an article that expressed part of this inner struggle, this conflict—an article accepted by the *New Republic* in the spring of 1944, called, I think, “A Reply to Henry Miller.” It was after a trip that I made. It may have been just before this trip; I'm not sure, but while I was ashore, Kathy and I were living together, and I wrote this article in response to a letter I had read in *New Republic* that Henry Miller had written.

Now, I had a lot of respect for Henry Miller and admiration for him as an artist, as a writer, and as a ground breaker not only in contemporary American letters, but maybe in Europe, too. And although I had other people that I admired more as writers, as role models as writers, I felt that he was a kind of an inspirational and revolutionary figure in writing. Like Joyce, only of a different kind but with a similar sort of impact on literature. *Less* of an impact than Joyce, but, nevertheless, it was there. And he'd appeared,

in fact, in the same *Circle* magazine that a couple of my stories had appeared in, and I felt very glad about that, and had admiration for him at a distance; and also my friend George Leite had gotten interested in him and I think knew him. He was the “bad boy” of American literature at the time, you know. And that, of course, made him very congenial, as far as I was concerned. But then he wrote this letter to *New Republic*, which somehow or other got under my skin. It was after *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* had been written, I think, around that time, his famous underground book, denouncing American commodity culture, which I found very . . . I liked it. It resounded with me, and also was discourteous and unseemly and full of all kinds of scatology. And his language was very colloquial at times, and all those things which I thought were wonderful. I thought this was important; this was good, because I was working with things of that kind in my own life, and in a quite different way, because I never felt that I would write like him, but I got cues in Joyce, James Farrell . . .

*How about Sinclair Lewis?*

Lewis's work later when I became more politically oriented and focused. Oh, yes. Very much so. And Dreiser—people like that. But I was reading, I think, Tom Wolfe at this point. Much more romantic kinds of things, *and* experimental writing. I was very interested in new, experimental, and aggressively revolutionary types of writing—I mean, revolutionary in terms of form and style and content. So Henry Miller was to me a very special person.

And then he wrote this letter in which he, to me, seemed so puerile and adolescent and trivializing of himself, saying how disappointed he was in America. He'd come out



of France . . . driven out of France because of the war, and he came here as a kind of a refugee. I don't know exactly the conditions in which he came here, but in a sense he had run here and taken refuge, and apparently had some hard times and all that. And that was admirable, and I thought it was great he had done that. But he wrote this letter in a kind of a pleading, nagging kind of a way about how badly artists were being treated, and particularly himself, in the United States, and asking for help. This was, you know, a public statement by someone I considered to be sort of an exemplary, almost giant kind of writer. And it was so, to me, embarrassing to read it. I thought, "He can't mean this." And, also, it aroused some little glimmers of patriotism in me, because I felt he was ignoring the realities of the war, ignoring millions of people who were suffering, and in the United States millions of impoverished people, even during the best of times, who were having a hard time—racial problems, et cetera, et cetera. It awakened all these kind of antagonistic feelings in me: "What the hell is this guy doing?"

And then he ended it up with saying he was painting "my poor, lowly paintings," or something; "I keep painting away and selling them for ten dollars apiece. I'd be so happy if anybody wanted to buy them, my poor efforts."

And I thought, "This is ridiculous; it's demeaning." And I had an over-reaction. I just felt all of the sudden, "Why, this poor bastard," you know. "I have a new look at him, and I don't like it."

So I wrote this article, and it got accepted in *New Republic*, in which—in kind of a sarcastic way—I said, "You know, it's too bad this country hasn't matured enough to accept his language with open arms. That's been true all over the world in different societies, and

time will tell, and things will be better." Which is true. "I mean, people will read his work in the future and wonder why anybody complained. And that is unfortunate, but, Henry, that's the facts. That's the way it is. And I'd much rather see you writing, and I'd much rather see you painting and out in the street with your tin cup, even, than writing something like that for a public journal." You know, something like that. And ended up with one of his own phrases, using asterisks instead of the full thing, you know, and, "Indeed, Henry, you seemed like a dash-dash-dash duck at midnight, indeed." [laughter] So that got published, and it got some attention from people that I knew, a lot of them . . .

*Did it get attention from Henry Miller?*

Not directly, no. But I heard later. But to my friend, George Leite, who had gotten to know him and idolized him, I think Miller became something of a saint, a guru, behind *Circle* magazine and all that for George—which I understand.

*And Henry Miller was down at Big Sur at this point, right?*

Down at Big Sur. This was the Big Sur period. And George really felt so close to Miller, like he'd never toward anyone else, and saw himself as kind of a presenter of Miller in this country, which to an extent he was. *Circle* magazine was one of the early outlets for Miller, along with Anaïs Nin, and their kind of writing, and what a wonderful thing that was.

But George was deeply incensed with me about my article. I have a long letter he wrote, talking about, how could I have done this to such a great figure? To a man who had given

so much of himself, who had suffered so much, and who really *was* a giant in modern literature and all that—all those things that I agree with. Nevertheless, George was my friend, so I was *really* deeply troubled by this letter.

And then I wrote him after a while, a long answer, in which I just said, “I see what you’re saying, but I can’t agree with you. I mean, I still think that I have a point. I may have said it badly, but, nevertheless, I cannot react to something like that as though it is worthy of the person that it came from. The man is worth more than that. In fact, it doesn’t do him any good in the world that he’s interested in.” On and on. Rather a long letter. We used to write long letters in those days, all of us.

*Do you happen to remember if this was going on while you were at sea, your correspondence with George?*

Part of it. I think George sent me his letter at sea. And I wrote my answer at sea. And I’d have to check; I’m not sure . . . I wrote lots of letters at sea and got letters from different ports at sea.

And so, anyway, that bothered me for some time. It was going on about this same time I was wondering where I was going, what I was doing, and all I knew was that I still felt very strongly about this “posturing” of a man that I admired. I also felt badly that my friend George had reacted the way he had. It passed, you know. Nevertheless, that had happened.

I remember again, as part of my ambivalence about my motives and directions, that I questioned was I really being self-serving in writing that kind of thing about Miller? Did it need to be written? And why I had done it—was that done as a sort of a self-aggrandizing act on my part? On the other hand, I

knew that it was just something I felt and did, but I didn’t have to do it, and I did it. You know, all those things—pro and con.

And so that had a rather deep effect on me about what I was doing. I had just written these two stories, had three or four in the hopper, and was about to be published and things of that kind. I suppose I didn’t want to have any problem within that world of writing and art that I admired and was part of. At the same time, I had criticisms about an element of that, about a kind of effete distancing from social problems, and the arrogance of being really above the little people. In fact, I remember that Miller used to use the term “little people.”

*Oh, really?*

Sometimes, here and there. “The little people.” Not only Miller, others did. And I was beginning to do a lot of churning about this sort of thing, about the arrogance, and the sense of superiority and patronization on the part of a lot of the intellectual world, the literary world, about large sectors of their society that they didn’t seem to have any real interest and concern about except as grist for their mill, as material for their writing, rather than involvement and concern.

And so, you know, here I was, on one hand, thinking in terms of trade union activity and developing concepts of the working class and all that sort of thing. On the other hand, what is *my* writing doing about that? My writing was very much in the area of experimental, new writing and really concerned with tone and texture and special circumstances of characterization.

*Who did you picture as being the audience for your writing? Who were you writing for? Did you have a sense of that?*

I think that's always a great question, and I don't know if there's ever a really good answer for it, other than writing for the universe. [laughter] For myself as expression, for people I knew who were either writers or were intellectuals, who read. It was that. Remotely for the people that I was living among, working among, but I didn't think they would have really appreciated the way I was writing about the world that they were in. It was highly specialized, very romantic and poetic. I felt that I had an audience because I had won a prize in the merchant marine service seamen's short story contest. [laughter]

*And who judged that contest?*

People like Joseph Henry Jackson, who was a critic in the *Chronicle*, and about four or five others—various writers and critics who were involved. I felt kind of good about that.

And so I felt, you know, I was sort of in that world, entering into it, but I wasn't so sure I liked what I was writing, even though I admired the formal aspects of what I was doing. I thought I was onto an important style, that I was onto a way of expressing some very difficult things to express about people and relationships, that I was doing a kind of *personal* expression that was not necessarily at that point usual in literature, sort of first-person observation kind of thing. I liked my writing style, the grammar, the use of suggestions of colloquialism and the way I worked them in, how I handled dialog, and things of that kind. Part of it I got from Joyce. I kind of admired his way of using dashes before each person who talked, rather than announcing who it was. And you could have long conversations where, you know, this person speaks, then that one, then that one, then that one. And I liked the way it looked on

the page. And so there were a lot of things that I was learning at that time, that I liked.

At the same time I was feeling, here I am, a kind of a literary person with literary pretensions and feelings and background; an academic writing about this very real world in which I was doing very real things. And although I liked the emotional content of what I was writing at that time, I wasn't sure I liked it against the framework of the real world I was in, that I wasn't really getting at that, and I wasn't sure I really wanted to and knew how, you see. It's a very subtle thing. I have to think about it a lot. I'm talking very easily about something that I found very hard to figure out.

*Did you also feel like maybe you had a sense of responsibility for somehow getting it right? That you had access to an audience that the people you were writing about didn't have, and that you needed to be able to . . . . You had this opportunity to kind of communicate some . . . ?*

I felt that that's something one *should* do. I wasn't sure that I was doing it, that I wasn't really talking about *myself* in the situation. I was talking about my own, my own emotions, my *own* observations, the way I felt and thought about things around me, which I think I did well. And that the style I was developing was a bit romantic, was a bit abstract, a bit—oh, gosh, what is the word for it?—voyeuristic in a way, standing apart. And even though I was in it and expressing it from within the situation I was in, I felt I was a viewer who was not like the people that I was viewing at all.

*You were mining . . . .*

Mining it for experience. That wasn't quite true of what came out, but that's the

way I felt. I was heading in that direction. I was afraid of that; I didn't want that. I felt a little ashamed of that. At the same time I was very proud of myself for being able to do anything about it, and to be myself and to say things in my own way. But I was wondering where that was going and what I really wanted to do with it. So I was doubting at that point, questioning even whether I wanted to be a writer.

That was coming up in my mind. And was I to go on in this vein, writing about this sort of thing? And did I really have a lot of other things that I wanted to write about, or was this it? Had this been the experience of my life in a sense for that period, and would

I want to go on doing this in other venues or not? And was the literary world that I was surrounded by, that I happened to be in in that contemporary period, was it one that I felt was conducive to the kinds of aims that I had in writing? And did I know enough to do anything else? So there's where the idea of getting back into some kind of disciplined study then came.

*All* this was churning, at the same time, and here was Kathleen pregnant, and here we were married and, "What to do?" as they say. What to do, what to be, and happy as I was about it, I was also, I think, deeply disturbed and scared.

## BACK TO ALASKA

**A**FTER GETTING off of the *Alvarado*, Kathy and I had a few weeks together, which were very nice.

*Had she found the Federal Avenue place yet?*

In Seattle?

Yes.

I'm not sure she had that yet. I think I probably went down to the Bay Area. Let me see how much time there was between . . . May, June, July. Oh, I had two months. That's when I went down to the Bay Area, and the whole idea was to get to know parents. She and I spent some time with my parents up in Modesto, and then we spent some time with her parents.

I felt at that time that they were very leery of me for a very good reason. You know, what kind of husband was I going to make for their daughter? And yet they were very kind, even her father, who was a grumpy, dour Scotsman, whom I learned to love and admire. He was very suspicious and careful of me, but very

polite, and treated me all right. But I knew . . . [laughter] I had very good reason to know that this was not an easy thing for them to take.

And we spent some time at my home in Modesto, which was very pleasant in a way. My folks tried to be very kind and my mother in particular—because Kathy was carrying her grandchild—was very solicitous and all that, except very, very quietly concerned about the fact there was no religion in us, that we were not true believers. And she did a lot of praying, quiet praying, and would let on about that to me.

*Were your grandparents alive at this time?*

Yes. Yes. They weren't *there*. My grandmother, later after my grandfather died, she stayed up there regularly. My beautiful, wonderful, strange, old, Swedish grandmother, Hanna, Hanna Fogde. But, no, we just went up there and visited my parents. And we spent a lot of time—Kathy was very pregnant at this point; she was at least visibly pregnant—swimming nude out in the rivers, the

Stanislaus and Tuolumne. We found little beaches, and it was very rural at that time, and there was a lot of wild country still left. Now, god, there are little towns all over the place—places like Ceres and Knights Ferry and all that. But we went out there, and we spent days out on these little river beaches, rocky and sandy, very beautiful. We had a good time together and a chance for my parents to get to know Kathy.

And although that went pretty well, there was at the same time the feeling she was an outsider. She was still not family; she was an in-law, which is strange because my mother had gone through this same thing. And I think she was aware, and she didn't want to be that way. But how could she help it? Here her son had married a young woman, first without even telling them much ahead of time, had run off in a kind of elopement and not really given the family a chance to do anything—or to complain, or, you know, to divert their poor, wandering son. And on top of that he had married a woman who had no religion.

Kathy had very much a secular orientation and was from a family who was fairly secular. One side of it was Mormon, and the other side of it was Scotch, anti-papist kind of thing. [laughter] And so she never really grew up in a religious environment. Not necessarily an atheist or agnostic; it just had no place in her life.

This was very hard for my mother, who thought, "Here I have a daughter-in-law; I can now talk about these things and guide her and lead her." Well, of course, this was anathema to Kathy; that was the last thing in the world . . . . And it bothered her. It bothered my *mother*, who had to sort of be careful about that. So that was a problem. My father did his best to be somewhat jovial and helpful. [laughter]

*These* days I look back, when I reconstruct what was going on, I have a lot of admiration for my parents. They handled themselves—and so did Kathy's parents—very well with us. They tried; they did their best. I even got a few letters from my father—I totally denied and forgot about—in which he was trying to be kind and helpful, more so than he ever was in direct relation with me.

But in letters he was being very helpful and kind, and my mother wrote almost weekly while I was at sea. I didn't open half of her letters because I knew what was in them. [laughter] I would just pile them up, and sometimes open them up and read them all at once. And I was creating barriers between myself and them, at the same time, trying to maintain with them and *needing* a relationship with them. Every now and then, if I wanted help, I could get it from them. And I tried not to, but there were times later on, when Kathy and I were struggling to get started in a way, I called on them freely, as she did on her folks. When I was away for a long time, and the checks didn't come in regularly, she . . . we . . . she had to turn to her parents. I always felt very badly about this, but it was true. It had to be done.

So, anyway, that was a good summer, I think, before I got on this next ship, the YPO in July. I'd been ashore a couple of months where Kathy and I had been together, and I think at that point, she was going to come to Seattle after this . . . oh, no. No, she was going to have the *baby* after this. [laughter] I'm not sure that she came back to Seattle with me when I took off on the YPO, and whether we had the Federal Avenue place or not. But, nevertheless, she didn't stay there after I left. She went back to the Bay Area because she needed to have somebody with her.

So I, or we, went back to Seattle at that point, and I got on a boat called the YPO, Alaska Steam. Alaska Steam was one of the famous, old shipping lines between the Northwest Coast and Alaska. By this time, because of the *Henry Failing*, I had gotten to be known as an “Alaska stiff,” which is nice. The reason why I was doing this was that I wanted to have shorter trips. Even though the war was still on, it had simmered down some, and I didn’t feel so guilty about shorter trips.

*Was this July of 1944?*

Yes. And I didn’t feel so ill at ease about not taking ships out into the Pacific or around the Panama Canal and all that. You know, I wanted now to sort of get a run that’s closer to home on the Alaska run. So I’d taken enough trips up there before, where the patrolman and dispatcher at the hall began to see me as an “Alaska stiff,” and let me know, give me hints about a ship that was coming up, if it was any good and all that. And the YPO, he said, “Well, it’s not the greatest ship, but it’s going to take an interesting run now. It’s going up north, and we’re not sure how far, but you’ll be seeing a lot of the country up there.” So I shipped on the YPO.

It *was* a very interesting trip. We went north to places that I had seen before, but here we went up the Inside Passage, stopping at all kinds of small ports—the names escape me now—small towns and villages, really, leaving off small amounts of cargo. This is one of those runs that involved, you know, a sling load or two for this port, and a sling for that port, and a couple of boxes for another port. It was really a kind of a UPS of . . . [laughter] of the northern run.

*So you weren’t doing coal and . . .*

Oh, yes. And there was coal, and we did a lot of heavy work. But they were just short stays—sometimes only a few hours at each port—then we’d steam on. And at that point, the guys weren’t so worried about subs and all that. That problem had gotten less, since the Japanese had lost the Aleutians. But, nevertheless, they were still out there.

But we went up the passage, and then *out* along the Alaskan coast, up through the Bering Strait. And there we must have stopped at a dozen ports, little places—sometimes couldn’t even see what was there. Looked like some shacks, and sometimes it looked like little Eskimo tents or villages. And we’d drop off a few things, you know, like canned meats and sides of bacon, and oh, at that time Spam. Everybody got Spam in those days and various kinds of utilitarian things, tools and things of that sort. We’d go up, and Eskimos would come out in skin boats, walrus skin boats.

And sometimes we’d just drop the sling over the side, and they would unload the sling at sea in the water, which was quite a trick. And there’d be two or three skin boats and a lot of talk and waving and yelling and screaming. And the farther north we got, the more the Eskimos looked like Eskimos, [laughter] wearing their traditional clothing and their seal skin hides, and in the rain wearing these almost transparent *anoraks* made from . . . I forget what part of the animal it comes from, but they looked almost like plastic, you know. [Seal or walrus intestines] Wearing those, and stinking to high heaven when they came aboard, but as I said, I loved the smell.

And on this ship again, we had trouble about feeding these people. When we were offshore a ways, and three or four skin boats

would come out, and after they'd worked, or just before loading up, it was whether or not to feed them. I was the union delegate on the ship again. And I remember writing letters to Kathleen, and I have looked them over since—very interesting. I was in a *deep* quandary about this. The crew did not want to eat with the Eskimos, on the basis, said one very bright sea lawyer among the crew, that the War Shipping Administration said—and this had been used before—that men who contracted communicable diseases would not be able to go to sea until they were cured. And there were no cures for some of these diseases in those days. I guess penicillin had just barely come into use. And the Shipping Administration very forthrightly stated that communicable diseases were going to be a basis for lopping people off the rolls. And this gave certain members of the crew a real in. My view was “Why not?” you know. “Let’s have them aboard. Let’s feed them; they’re working like hell, and we’re *all* in the same boat together, literally speaking.”

And, “No, no, because if any of us get sick,” and, you know, this was unlikely, but diphtheria, tuberculosis, all kinds of other things, were rampant ashore in these areas.

Some of us were saying, “Well, can’t we work out where they eat at different times?”

“Oh, they’re using our plates or spitting at our tables or doing this or that.”

“Well, what about having them eat on deck?”

“No, it’s the same idea. We have to move among them,” on and on.

And there was real dissension in that crew twice on that trip. I was delegate and had to think through this. I remember writing to Kathy these agonizing letters, in which first, you know, I took the position of the other men of the crew, and then I took the other position, you know, and I was worried

that Kathy would think of me as a real chauvinistic bastard, because she was very socially conscious. I said very defensively in my letters to her, “Well, you’ll probably think I’m awful, but on the other hand, what can I do? Anyway, the problem is not ours; the problem is the inadequate education and their medical . . . what the state is doing for them ashore. Why don’t they strike, and then we all can strike together and do this and that?”

And I was just putting the problem off, you see. But I was very disturbed about that, because I had to sort of go along with the majority of the group, who didn’t want them aboard. I went up to the captain, and, you know, the captain was saying, “We’re going to have you guys fired when we get back, put in irons! You have disobeyed. We ordered those men to come aboard and eat, and you have taken the position they shouldn’t; you are disobeying a lawful order of the bridge, of your captain!”

And I said, “Well, Captain, why don’t you have them in the officers’ mess?” [laughter]

He got furious. Absolutely livid with rage. You know, he said something like it was too small. [laughter] And I said, “It’s no smaller than ours, and you got better food. Give them the best that the ship has.” But at the same time I was very disturbed by it.

But we didn’t do it. And the captain logged us. He put it in the log that the crew refused to obey a lawful order. Nothing ever came of it, but he took it seriously. And it was. I thought it was a serious matter.

We ended up by giving a lot of food to them to take ashore. They were just as happy with that. And they didn’t give a damn about eating with us, anyway. [laughter] They didn’t care about eating on the ship. They were curious about the ship. They wanted to walk around and look at everything.



They were *hard-working* little guys, and those wonderful boats would come skimming out and pick up . . . .

*And their boats looked like kayaks, or were they . . . ?*

Yes, they were whaling boats. Some of them were large, thirty feet long, and open, paddles, you know.

*And so those were the boats they were using sometimes to unload right onto the boat?*

Oh, yes. Yes. They'd come out there and wait and paddle, and waves moving these little boats up and down. Our ship was rocking sometimes if the weather was rough. But they could handle it. We'd lower the slings over the side and had to be very careful because it would bang against the ship. And then we'd throw them lines so that they could keep it away from the ship. They could handle it, and they were wonderful at this. Their little boats were jumping up and down. And they would just take things off the slings and give us the signal, and up the sling would come. Now and then they'd lose something, but not much. And so we had a *dozen* little ports like that we'd go into and saw these wonderful little Eskimo boats everywhere you went.

*Then, one place . . .* I think it was Little Diomedes below King Island in the Bering Strait. King Island is a little to the north. These are little rocky islands, ledges, in the middle of the straits. You know, you can see Siberia on one side and Alaska on the other kind of thing.

The ice floes were beginning to come down. I guess this was early October . . . no, late September, when the floes were begin-

ning to come down; we were beginning to see the ice floes coming in. We were getting warnings that we were supposed to go all the way up to Point Barrow, way to the Arctic Circle. And we were getting warnings that we'd better move fast because if we didn't, we might get stuck up there, or the ice floes would be very dangerous, et cetera. But we had to stop at Little Diomedes (I think it was Diomedes), and we had some cargo, a sling or two, for that island. The ship only came there once a year. There was a teacher on the island—a young guy, I think from Oregon or I don't know where—a young guy in his thirties, and he was something of a missionary type. I'm not sure whether he was a priest, but a teacher. He had a long beard, big, fuzzy beard, and a mop of hair, and he came on with a group of, Aleuts, I guess, the Little Diomedes people that were part of his school. [Diomedes residents are Inupiaq Eskimo.] They had villages on Little and Big Diomedes long before this, from way back.

But, anyway, here this guy comes in, in his little skin boat, and he's standing up and looking very heroic to me. I saw this guy coming in this rough sea and coming up the side of the ship first, you know, to check the cargo that was due him. We had it in a sling on deck. And it turns out that not only he had been there all that time, but he was *adored* by these people. I mean, they treated him as though he were not only a teacher, but a guide, an advisor. And they would look to him for everything about what to do and how . . . and treated him with more respect than any of the people we had seen down the line treating any whites. He was treated with this very special respect. There was a kind of a religious quality to it. And I was *very* impressed by this. I had a deep envy for him. [laughter] I thought, "What a life he's

living out there out there doing some kind of good work, feeling good about himself. He's chosen this kind of hermitage."

My friend Bob Nelson would have been very moved by it. He wasn't on this trip, but that's the kind of thing Bob always felt he wanted—not necessarily doing good for anybody—but having the isolation in living this kind of romantic, isolated life. [laughter] And this guy was doing it. He was a very ordinary, nice guy. And so he was checking the cargo. "Where are the mushrooms?" They were gone. Oh, the sacramental wine—that's right, there was a barrel of sacramental wine. "Where is it?"

We knew where it was. [laughter] All the way up we'd been sneaking into the cargo hold and taking out these wonderful canned mushrooms with butter—mushrooms and butter in cans. Well, you know, there was nothing like it in the ship's slops. And there wasn't much of it—two or three cases—but we went through it. And the wine—it got just *sloowly* drunk away! [laughter] And so he had a half empty or three-quarter empty barrel, you know. And, "Oh, the bottom must have leaked. My god."

The captain was very suspicious. The mates knew, but they had been in on it, so they shut up. And this poor guy. At that point I was *very* ashamed, but I wasn't going to say anything.

And he stood there, and he says, "Well, we've been waiting a year for that." And he says, "That's the only piece of home I got, were those mushrooms. I looked forward to that. You know, I've been eating seal meat, walrus, birds, canned beans, and all that." He says, "I was looking forward to that." And he says, "The wine is sacramental."

We thought, "Well, yeah, but . . ." [laughter] "A lonely priest is going to drink a lot of wine."

But, anyway, that gave me a very strong impression about this person, and I always remembered that *marvelous* scene: watching him going back with his little cargo and two or three skin boats, heading back to this *rocky* cliff. I mean, some of the houses, like King Island, were built on stilts against the cliff—right overlooking the sea. Any storm, they could just blow off. And the village was really on the cliffs, on the cliff-side. And I remember watching him going, thinking, "Oh, my god, how I envy the personal power this man has, a feeling of being together, being something." You know, he had dignity. That to me really was the epitome of a good life, you see, because I was at this time struggling with all those things.

As we went north, things got very heavy as far as weather's concerned. We had williwaws, strong storms, and then periods when the sea was like glass. And ice floes were moving by the ship and sometimes bumping into us, and we'd have to carefully go through them. And sometime you could just hear them scraping. We didn't know if the ship really had enough strength for the bulkheads to handle this. And it was getting to the point where we were going past King Island . . .

King Island had a priest that was a clearly defined priest, who came looking for *his* sacramental wine. His was gone, so we had gotten rid of the barrel. [laughter] I don't know what else he got. But I didn't have much use for him. He was a little parrot guy—a high voice, demanding, ordering his Eskimos around . . . the natives around, and wearing a collar and all that. My anti-papist feeling came to the fore, "The heck with him," you know. "Let him wait another year for his sacramental wine." But, nevertheless, there he was, living out there alone on King Island, which is another dramatic place with houses on stilts, plastered against the sea cliffs. I

really wish that I had been able to go ashore and walk through. The village was on ladders, all kinds of ladders and little staircases, and a very rickety, ramshackle kind of place—King Island.

And there is where we heard how there was such a problem with the Eskimos and Aleuts going over to Siberia in the winter-time and then coming back to Alaska. And they had relatives over there and relatives in Alaska, and they were going back and forth in their sleds and trenching into Russia, along with the commies, and sometimes they'd come back with hammer and sickle pins. [laughter] And, "What to do with them?" It was a real problem up there for the authorities, how to keep a boundary with these people who could zip along not only in their skin boats from one side to another, but across the ice.

And I was thinking, then, you know, "Well, it didn't take much for different people to get across the Bering Strait. And if *those* people can get across in the skin boats, why would people have had to wait for the glaciation or the Ice Age to get across the Bering Strait, you know? They were doing it in now in their skin boats. Hell, this is hardly anything." You could see both shores. It was some distance; I forget how far it is—forty miles, fifty miles.

At this point we were seeing polar bears on ice floes coming down. So . . . I don't know. It's kind of naive of me to suggest that people were able to get across in any large numbers without the glaciation or the bridge, but it's a surprisingly short distance.

*But at sea you could see both continents?*

Oh, yes, going up by King Island, you could look over and see in the distance the outline of Siberia. And you had the feeling—

everybody felt it in a way—of being at the top of the world. It was a marvelously mystical trip for me. You just knew you were going north; you felt the curvature of the earth. You just felt you were going into this great unknown expanse of the Arctic.

And then mirages. The most remarkable mirages. I don't think I ever saw anything like it anywhere else in the world, although I've seen mirages—small ones. These were spectacular! Mountains upside down, you know! [laughter] And very clear in the distance. Sometimes what looked like a city with things moving in it, you know, up in the air. It could have been a reflection all the way down to Skagway or something. I have no idea, or somewhere else in the world, reflecting there—moving things in the sky.

And, of course, at that time, I think it was semi-dark for twenty hours a day. I mean, the sun just barely showed itself and then would go down. But there was still plenty of light—a kind of a luminous quality to the whole area—eery and luminous.

And these ice floes coming down, and sometimes large icebergs, and the lookouts really had to watch for those, so we could avoid them. And some of them had polar bears on them, you know! [laughter] And it was very, very dramatic.

*Did you see any northern lights?*

Oh, yes, during these half days, during the twilights, flickerings in the sky.

So there was a sense, really, of living in an enchanted place. I mean it was unbelievable, and I had all sorts of spiritual and mystical feelings. I wrote letters that sounded almost as though I had reverted to my old involvement in cult metaphysics, you know. [laughter] Just remarkable feeling of unity, and the cosmos, how small we were, but how

wonderful it was to glide over the top of the earth.

You felt that you were going through a narrow aperture to the top of the earth to the North Pole kind of thing. And the sea was quite dangerous, and we had to have continual lookouts all the time, watching just for signs of submerged ice. And we'd hit them a couple of times, but nothing serious.

And finally we got to Point Barrow, a remarkable place. I have been to the top of world. It is the northern-most town, at least in the western hemisphere. It wasn't a town; it was a village. They say now it's a kind of a sprawling little suburb up there, to be reached only by plane. But then it was really sort of a pioneer broken-down village with a *lot* of Eskimos. As I remember, there were even some igloo-like structures. We didn't go ashore and see them.

We had quite a bit of cargo, because they only had a ship once or twice a year up there. And we were now right on the edge; they were not going to get anything for practically a year because of the ice. And we could see it forming. And we were supposed to have just enough time. In fact, the captain was hearing by wire from the company, was being told, "You know, you better just turn back if the ice gets bad. Don't jeopardize the ship. Don't risk the ship." And he was very concerned. And he was drunk half the time, but he was legitimately concerned. [laughter]

[laughter] *I thought you were going to say "legitimately drunk."* [laughter]

[laughter] Legitimately concerned, and had good reason to be.

But we finally got off of Point Barrow, a kind of a large, wide bay, as I remember. And there were some other Americans up there. There was a kind of a camp, a company . . .

I think there were some American soldiers—I'm not sure. I think there was a weather station up there, and there were some other things, and lots of Eskimos. And they came out in their . . . some of them had motor boats, but some still in skin boats. And we unloaded, oh, five or ten slings of cargo. And as we were there at anchor, the ice packs were moving in right around us, and there was really a question whether we're going to be able to get out. And the captain was yelling, "We got to get out of here! Get that stuff off the . . . Drop it in the drink if you can't get it." And if we had gotten stuck . . . I remember some of us were saying, "This would be a great place to be stuck." The only thing that stopped that thought going too far with me was I am supposed to get back because my daughter was going to be born. But on the other hand there was this inkling: "If I can't help it, I can't help it. [laughter] Wouldn't it be wonderful to be stuck at Point Barrow for the winter?" And it almost came to that. But finally we were ready to go. We battened down the hatches and got the ship squared away and had to go in reverse, pull up the anchor, and use the anchor a couple of times to break ice. And, in fact, I guess we left it out. We didn't take it all the way in. We left it up so we could drop it now and then if we needed to. We were able to sort of go astern and push some ice behind us and get out to little patches, and then make a turn. In fact, I was at the wheel for part of that. Fascinating, because it was really tough. The second mate had a real time moving the ship; he was afraid the screw would get damaged on some of these large ice floes. And we were able to turn around and had to push our way for, I would say, half a day—push our way through some very thick ice floes that were beginning to form into solid packs.

*That's incredible, just to even think about it.*

Yes. And it'd break; we could hear it crunching—you know *crunch, crunch, crunch!* And once or twice drop the anchors down. But it didn't do too much good because it was just laying on the ice. Then we knew it was fairly deep when we saw that. And now and then the screw would shudder, and we'd realize that some ice had gotten back there. But eventually we got into clear sea, but with plenty of ice all the way back down to Diomedede, and there were still some ice floes floating around off of the Aleutians and things of that kind.

So that to me was a beautiful trip, as I remember. Even though it was hard work, and there were a lot of squabbles in the crew. There was lots of overtime, because we were always doing longshore work—at least part of it. And then the question of, "What do we get paid for longshore work?" and, "What about overtime for this and for that?" So I was very busy with that kind of stuff. At the same time, there was something about that atmosphere of that part of the north, and one of these days I want to take a tramp steamer to Point Barrow. I'd like to be one of the ships that goes up there before they put the road in, which eventually they will do. They're going to try to get to Skagway and Juneau with roads, and then it'll be something else. But I sure would like to get up there—just to

see that ocean up there. It was marvelous. Oh, and lots of terns and gooney birds and those puffins, Auks. Just *thousands* of auks.

*Are they the ones with the big eyebrows?*

One species. I am not sure they had them, but they were short, little, squatty birds, making this: "Auk, auk, auk!" [laughter] Oh! We heard the auks all the time.

Well, of course, you know, there's the wonderful, traditional, little anecdote about auks: The "Marvelous Auk." "The Marvelous Auk that flies around and around in concentric circles, in ever-decreasing concentric circles till finally it flies up its own extremity, and it says, 'Auk!'" [laughter] And that's what you're hearing in the "Auk!"—the auk just as it flies up its own extremity. [laughter] There it goes again—"Auk, auk, auk!" They have a proclivity for flying around in circles until they fly up . . . [laughter]

Anyway, that trip was over; I get back, very anxious now coming down through the Inside Passage to the Sound. By the way, up there in the Diomedede Islands, they were very worried about subs going past the Aleutians but had no problem. There were subs reported through there. However, the Japanese had pretty well given up on the Aleutians. So if they had subs available, that was a good place to bring them to get ships.



COMING DOWN south, here I was within two or three days of when Anya was due, and we hadn't even gotten to Seattle yet. Well, we didn't know if it was a girl or boy. In those days you didn't have all the fancy technology. But the baby was due in mid October, and I was supposed to be in on the fourteenth. And all I can figure out is . . . because I *didn't* get down to Alameda, where Kathy was in the hospital. I didn't get down until the night of the eighteenth or on the nineteenth, *just* after Anya was born, I mean just, I don't know, within a few hours of that time. And all I can figure out is what happened was the ship was held up, and I might have taken the train down from Seattle to the Bay Area. Whatever it is, I got in *just* in the nick of time—a little bit late—with a great big, long, flowing red beard or reddish beard and all my Alaska junk on me and some mukluks for Kathy, and went into Alameda Hospital, right near where Kathy had gotten this place on Clinton Street. And I remember running into the hospital with my Seabee coat on and my Jeremiah beard, and rushing in, and went by

where the babies were, and looked in. And the nurse was holding up a baby, and I was saying, you know, [whispers] “d’Azevedo?” And she held up this little creature—little, smashed creature—a red, little . . . . You know, I’d been envisioning these marvelously three-months-old children . . . .

*Gerber babies.*

[laughter] Gerber babies. And I was deeply shocked . . . . I was also old enough to realize that things would change very quickly. Nevertheless, I thanked the nurse and smiled. And then I saw Kathy, who was very kind to me, very nice. She didn't like my beard because it was really quite large and made me look like Rip Van Winkle.

*And it was red?*

Yes, a reddish beard. But that was a wonderful homecoming. So you know, “What are we going to call her?” And I had made a lot of suggestions—everything from Christina to Geena to this, that. And we finally decided

on Anya, which was a name that had come from my grandparents' family way back, and it was a Russian name. There was a heroine of a novel that we liked very much named Anya. And there were two or three other Anyas in our experience, and so Anya became the name.

And that was a wonderful time, I remember, excepting I was at times miserable, because in that month or two before my next trip, *all* the problems that I had packed with me from the *Alvarado* and the YPO descended on me. Here I am; we're getting close to the time when the war is going to be over; I didn't know what I was going to do. And here we were in a small, little place on the beach in Alameda. It was very pleasant, wonderful. I was doing a little writing, and it was roman-



"What are we going to call her?' . . . And we finally decided on Anya." Kathy, Warren, and Anya in Alameda.

tic, and we had a little perambulator, and Kathy and I would take the baby for a walk. And I was painting, drawing pictures of them, and feeling very wonderful, excepting sometimes it would just descend on me—"My god. Where is this going, and what am I going to do?" And there were times when I was extremely miserable—even to the point of thinking I'd like to be on a place like King Island or Little Diomedé. You know, get back to sea or anything, which I eventually did anyway since the war was still on.

Yes, that brief period ashore, after Kathy had given birth to Anya in Alameda, was a very mixed period for me of conflict, I think. On the one hand, I was facing the fact that I had sort of merely dreamed about, thought about it, in a kind of romantic way at sea, that Kathy was pregnant and we were going to have a child. And it was all very wonderful and stimulating, and I felt great about it, despite what was going on on that particular trip. But on the other hand, there we were. We had a little child; we were living in a wonderful, little, shingled house on the shoreline of Alameda.

In those days there were no lagoons or tremendous buildup of housing. It was a kind of an old, broken-down Alameda neighborhood, and the backyard was on the shoreline of San Francisco Bay! [laughter] It was very nice, very beautiful. We had a little, tiny backyard out in the sand and a wooden fence. And we'd go out there and sit on the rocks and look out on the bay. And when it was stormy or the tide was in, it would come up high, almost next to the house. It was a wonderful feeling that we had.

And there we were with a child, and I had no idea in this world, other than what I was doing—going to sea with very small pay-offs—how we were going to continue. And while I had been away on this trip, I think





*"I was doing a little writing, and it was romantic."*

Kathy even had to borrow from her folks. And all those things somehow or other at that age—when one was that age—they don't seem insurmountable, but they are troubling. [laughter] What is one going to do? And this bothered me a great deal, particularly, because that trip on the YPO was a very troubled time in many ways.

On the one hand, I was deeply engrossed in a kind of recapitulation of the spiritual-metaphysical views that I had once held. I was not, I don't think ever in my life, *religious* in a conventional sense. Only when I was very young had I any connection with churches or formal religion under the pressure from the Swedish side of my family, my mother's people and my mother. My father, was very, very ambivalent himself about churches and religion because of his background. So I will say from the time that I was

fourteen or fifteen, I was an atheist, or at least a decided agnostic. But I still had very strong feelings about transcendence, about unity with the cosmos, about the importance of human relations with nature. In a way I was a . . . [laughter] secular humanist, but very metaphysical on the one hand. And the humanism was the aspect that kept shifting and changing and where the conflicts were.

On the other hand, there was this growing identification with work, with labor, with the unions or the union that I was in, which unfortunately was a very limited right-wing union. Nevertheless, the idea of trade unionism became a very important thing in my life. And so that was a real conflict between *that* and these strong, spiritual, metaphysical kinds of concepts that I had.

I remember writing long letters to Kathy on that trip on the YPO about this, about

this conflict. And some of them are very revealing, and I suppose I should resurrect a couple of them and read them, but I won't at this point. Nevertheless, they were really about this business of how was one to incorporate what was going on in the world, accommodate to what was going on in the world, all around the war, the horror of the war, and one's feeling of wanting to be of service and doing something positive in the world? On the other hand, there was this very strong pull in the other direction, which had to do with a highly subjective personal growth and orientation, having to do with a pull toward isolation, toward removal from the world, toward contemplation, meditation. On the other hand, this *very real*, hard-bitten feeling that one had to take part. It was a growing social consciousness I had.

I would have to attribute a great deal of whatever stability I maintained during this period to my relationship with Kathy, because she was very matter of fact, a straightforward, pragmatic person. She had been working during the war in the shipyards; she was a "Rosie-the-riveter" type during that period and was very much involved with everyday, average people working hard in the shipyards. And she had this feeling that there was something very important about that kind of involvement, not only for her, but the kind of attitude she felt, the sense of unity she felt among these people she worked with. Also, because of some other friends of mine, she had spent quite a bit of time, in fact, at the California Labor School, being of service there and I think taking some classes. And her friend, Mimi Kagen, the dancer, was giving dance performances in connection with the labor school. And so she was very much into this San Francisco, Bay Area labor orientation and progressive orientation—progressive orientation from a political

standpoint. And we had long, long discussions of this kind.

I think she was a little concerned that maybe this kind of romantic pull towards metaphysics that I had a real concern and interest about was moving in the direction of the occult—which it never was. I had a great contempt for most of the occult movements. I had already been there, done that, when I was a little kid. And I don't think that I was at all interested in occult movements, but I was terribly interested not in theological thinking—it's hard for me to find the words for it—but thinking that had to do with internal growth, consciousness, awareness. I was very interested in astronomy and in some aspects of physics, what I could understand of it, and the feeling of the largeness of the world, the importance of being fully aware and open to new directions and to change of ideas. And I had a respect for certain of the mystics of the past, who seemed to transcend their time and thought, who thought universally, I guess universalistic thinking.

It would be hard for me to put it into words, except, oh, the kind of reading that I was doing at the time when I come to think of it. There was a guy called D. R. M. Bucke, I believe—a book *Cosmic Consciousness* that I had at sea with me. [laughter] And G. K. Chesterson's *Saint Francis*, that I found very, very moving. I don't think I would now, but I did then. And the poems of William Blake—I remember being really taken with them. Oh, and William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* was another. And I think I had with me on that trip, or another, Radin's *Primitive Man as a Philosopher*. A whole range of things that sort of threw me into a framework of thinking about larger spiritual concepts and problems and the human accommodation to the world around

them, or recognition of what was real in the world around them. Long gone was my interest in Plato and that kind of idealism. [laughter] I wasn't that sort of idealist. I'd have to do a lot of thinking about it now to define what I really *was*. But I was struggling with all these things.

At the same time, I was reading things like Wendell Wilkie's *One World*, which had a great impact on me. I wrote a long letter to Kathy about that on this trip on the YPO, because I thought it was one of the greatest statements that I had ever seen on what was going on in the world at the time. I felt it was an honest, straightforward, simple statement of the realities of what human beings had to face in the world where was emerging during the war and after the war. I admired the fact that he'd made a long trip all through the world that he could during the war in order to see for himself what was taking place. And I don't know if I'd have the same view of Wilkie today that I had then. And Henry Wallace came into the picture a little later for me. These were the political figures that I felt congenial about. They were people who thought about the kind of problems that were of interest to me. And so that was some of the readings.

And I was reading, oh, Edward Carpenter's *Toward Democracy*. And, oh, Pablo Neruda's poetry—Neruda. He fired a real interest in sort of a revolutionary spirit, a feeling of change, of what was necessary to make change, the kind of consciousness that a human being had to have to absorb and to deal with change in the self as well as in the world around one. I was also occasionally reading tracts from the left-wing trade unions, excerpts from Marx and Lenin at the time. All these things were sort of going through my mind. It was when I think of it, a won-

derful hash. [laughter] And I was dealing with it with a tremendous sense of urgency, I think, a need to find a way through all this.

I had Herskovits's *The Myth of the Negro Past*, which I think I said somewhere else, that I wrote that it became a kind of scripture for me—not at this point; later on. But, nevertheless, I read it with great interest, and it awakened in me at the time a real concern about the fact that I was in a union that was a "lily-white" union, as we used to say in those days, and that the union actually had struggled against ending discrimination, like the CIO union had done, the National Maritime Union. Also, the longshoremen that we would deal with along the way in various ports, particularly in Seattle and San Francisco, but even up along the way through the Inside Passage, the ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] men would often raise these questions with us, you know, just in passing and talking while we were working, and the like. "What the hell you guys doing? What kind of union are you in, anyway? You don't even know what's going on in the world out there; you don't know all the struggles that are taking place right now all over the world. You don't know what the role of workers are." These were sort of left-wing guys in the ILWU, and I remember listening with *great* interest, these exchanges.

And the guys that were usually on the ships with me, bantering back, you know, like, "Oh, you bunch of commies or reds"—usually joking, but there was this difference, this tension. Oh, and among the longshoremen there also would be blacks, black longshoremen working together with the whites. This impressed me. I was very moved by this and thought, you know, "What's wrong with *us*, anyway?" So these things were

beginning to jell in me, I think. But at the same time, there was the great struggle going on.

And then, of course, that teacher up at King Island—he became a kind of an emblem for me, kind of an icon, which, by the way, I think in a way distills the conflict I had. Here was this guy, living out there, with a small village of isolated Eskimo people, and carrying on this little school, and all alone, and seemed to be so happy, seemed to be so satisfied with himself, and was so admired by these people. This threw me back to my old views about how I wanted to go to one of the Tuamotos in the South Seas and set up a new society when I was twelve, thirteen years old. [laughter] I was thinking, “Here is this guy who went off and found a little world of his own and developed a positive and productive kind of work in it.” And that appealed to me; at the same time it was very unrealistic, because I could *not* separate myself from the world I was creating with a child coming and Kathy at home waiting to give birth to a child and all that sort of thing.

Yet these are the escapist kinds of thinking, I suppose, that go on when one’s under a lot of pressure to make decisions about oneself. You’re torn in many directions, and all the things that you are and all the things that you come into contact with come together and have to be unraveled. You’ll have to find a solution through them. Well, I didn’t find it very soon.

But, also, that was a hell of a trip in some ways. It was a marvelous thing just from the point of view of moving into a strange, new world at the end of the year in northern climates, up through the Bering Strait, and up past Kotzebue to Point Barrow. And that whole atmosphere was one of . . . really, I would say, it *created* a sense of the unreal, a

sense of another world, a sense of mysticism, a sense of metaphysics. And I was in the mood to thoroughly respond to that. So that was going on.

At the same time, the work . . . There was *absolute incessant* work, *day and night*. I think we did six on, four off when cargo was being unloaded—coal, mainly, coal dust, et cetera. And we worked like hell. It was probably one of the hardest working periods of my life. I mean, *intensive*, hard work, where you did *nothing* but work, get into a kind of a half-dazed coma of work. You were so tired, you didn’t even think about it. You’d just go working. Then you were too tired to eat, to go to the mess hall; you’d go in and flop on your bunk, and you would have to be awakened—people would have to come in and practically club you to wake you up. And you were dirty, and you didn’t care. Then you’d go into the mess room and have a cup of coffee and gobble down whatever lunch meats were around, and then you’d be back in the hold. And that would go on for days and days and days.

*That* was conducive to a kind of mystical frame of mind, too, as I come to think of it. [laughter] I mean, in a way it was kind of drug . . . the “drug of work.” And I remember thinking about the “drug of work” and thinking about my shipmates and how some of these men did this all their lives. And what happened to their way of thinking and their lives when all they would have would be back to shore for a few weeks, doing things that other people did in the world, yet not exactly, but running around wild, trying to make up for lost time, drunk. Some drunk, some seeing wives or girlfriends and trying to maintain relationships, and others kind of lost and drifting around the streets of cities and then back to sea again to this endless repetition.

Some trips where the work isn't so hard, and others where it's deadly like it was on the YPO.

The crew was a mixed bunch. We had two Eskimo crew members, which is the only time I saw a mixed crew. And they were taken on because I think a couple of guys had jumped ship along the way in the Inside Passage. And they were very interesting guys. I remember these guys—young fellows—they could work and work and work. These young Aleuts were like some of the old seamen, sixty years old, who could just work as though they were fifteen. Moving without pause, and then go to sleep and go eat and come back to work. And that seemed to be their lives. I don't know what they were thinking about while they were working. Sometimes they would sing.

Oh, that's where I first heard "Joe Hill." [A song about labor organizer Joe Hill, executed by the state of Utah in 1915.] [sings] "I dreamed I saw Joe Hill . . ." One of these old guys would sing the "Joe Hill" song, which I learned to love and remember. "I said, 'Joe, you're a long time dead.' 'I never died,' says he." [laughter] I remember this old guy would be mumbling this song, keeping him going, and that was also very affecting to me.

And these Eskimo guys would work right alongside the old-timers, and although I could do it too, and others of the younger guys on the ship could do it, it was with great effort. These guys seemed to be effortless; they just moved with oiled joints. And one of them was in our fo'c's'le, with our watch, and he never said anything. He didn't have *anything* to say to us. He must have felt that we were unreachable anyway. But he worked; he'd do his work.

And the captain on that trip went a little wacky. He drank all the time. This was one of the ships where they had the problem

about whether they're going to feed the Eskimo longshoremen aboard, and where I was delegate and had to make the decision, finally, in great confusion. Maybe it was right *not* to have them there because of the health risk, and yet I knew that that was a dodge; I knew that the reason for that was not one that I had. And yet there I was, a delegate—I had to go with the majority of the crew, even though I spoke for doing it, and went to the captain and said, "Why don't you have them up in the officers' mess?" and got logged for it and things of that kind. But those were conflicts. They sound today, when I speak of them, really inconsequential and a little flip-pant, but they weren't—they were deep, powerful problems [laughter] that you faced in the middle of being under strain and tired and working. And these things all became important. And one had to make decisions under the worst possible conditions.

I remember one of the few things that happened on that trip that I think was a glorious bit of good fun. The captain got very drunk with the mayor of a little town that we passed. We had stopped and dropped some coal off at a little town with mostly Eskimos with an Eskimo mayor. And he came aboard, and he had some walrus spears with him. I don't remember why he had them; I think that he was going to sell them. And he and the captain went up to the captain's cabin, and they got drunk—terribly, terribly drunk. And I remember they came out on deck each with a walrus spear, running around, throwing this spear at sacks of coal! [laughter] And I remember myself and a couple other guys that stood and watched this said, "There's our captain." [laughter]

And finally the mayor of the town was so drunk, this Eskimo guy with his spear, that we put him in a cargo net sling, and put him over side into the whale boat, a skin boat!

[laughter] And he was screaming and yelling and saying, “Good-bye, Skipper. Eh, I had the most wonderful time I ever had in my life. Thank you, Skipper!”

And the skipper was stumbling drunk out on deck, saying, “Good-bye, old friend.” [laughter]

I remember that as one of the few really entertaining moments on that trip. [laughter] And, oh, that one of the deck hands and the steward got into a fight over the food. And the steward, as sometimes stewards did—they’d get so *mad* that they’d actually take a cleaver—not because they were going to kill anybody, but if a steward raised a cleaver, he was mad.

*The tools of the trade.* [laughter]

[laughter] Right. And he was threatening to take on after this guy; said, “You know, you’re going to eat what you get because that’s what you got, and that’s all there is on this goddamn belly-robbing ship, and you’re going to eat what you get.”

This guy was saying, “You’re not going to get me to eat that, and you’re hiding stuff; you’re feeding the good stuff to the officers, and we’re getting all this goddamn slumgum.”

So this guy, the deck hand, ran into his fo’c’s’le and came back with a dried walrus penis [an “oosik”] that he had bought someplace—quite long, very hard. It was like a billy club. And he came back, and the two of them stood opposite each other, one with a cleaver and one with the walrus penis. And as delegate, I finally was able to calm them down and tell them, you know, this was no time to have that kind of fight. “Please put your walrus penis back in your fo’c’s’le,” I told this guy. [laughter] “Steward, do not raise your cleaver at any member of the crew. Do it to

the captain, not to us.” And that was the end of that.

So I’m just telling these funny, little anecdotes, because they were the only breaks in this, aside from the environment, which was absolutely stunning.

*This time of year were you having long nights or long days?*

These were long . . . long, *dim* twilights. So aside from work, part of the craziness and the sense of miasma and detachment that you had, came from the fact that day and night seemed hardly defined. You’d get up, and it’d be a little bit lighter or a little bit darker. [laughter] The sun just came—well, even stopped doing that—came up just enough, you could see the rim of it, and then disappeared. And, of course, the ice floes were coming down. I’ve already talked about that.

So I’ve been back over this to say this was the quality of my life and thinking when I came back, saw my new child, Anya, this little baby, and saw Kathy, and we had our little, shingled place on the water, which was all very romantic and all very lovely. And I remember this *good* feeling, a sense of not only accomplishment and pride that Kathy and I had, but, you know, a real sense of unity about what we had done. It sort of made up for the fact that we had gotten married under such conditions, and we were still trying patch up our relationships with our parents, on both sides. [laughter] And, you know, I said, “Here, Kathy, you are a bride one day and a mother the next!” [laughter] “And our poor parents have not been informed about what we’re doing.” And so that was going on.

At the same time, I remember walking the streets in Alameda, sometimes at night, thinking, “What in the hell am I going to do? What is my life going to be? I can’t go on

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doing what I'm doing without any money, without any pay, ship after ship, and shore leave after shore leave." I even had the idea that the selective service was still on. I think it was just a little later in early 1945 that the selective service was ended, but then I think it was still on. So that I had to do this; I had to stay in, or I had to enlist in the army, or I

had to declare conscientious objectorship. And that came back to me again—this old problem that I had at the beginning of the war—was I going to just be a conscientious objector? So that sort of mystical, mixed-up kind of feeling was working in me, too. I was escapist; I was trying to find a way out of this cul-de-sac.





**Y**OU SAID you were writing. What kind of things were you writing?

Well, I had written some things that were now getting published. Oh. That's when the Henry Miller thing came out in *New Republic*. And I was having a real deep inner conflict about my own writing and about what I was saying and what I was doing. My writing had been pretty subjective and pretty avant-garde in its orientation. And although I liked what I was doing—I thought it was good, and some others apparently thought it was good—I had a feeling it wasn't what I really wanted to do; it wasn't the way I really wanted to write.

I had this growing contempt for what I considered the art world, the avant-art world. My friend, George, of *Circle* magazine . . . I had admiration for what he was doing and what it was doing (probably because he'd published a couple of my stories) and things of that kind. At the same time the whole world that it represented, the kind of detached, effete world of the agonized artist living in a separate strata from the rest of society . . . a

kind of anti-social view that was really based upon the elitism of art. And I was feeling very mixed about this.

I had written this critique of a letter that Henry Miller had written to *New Republic* and in which I took him to task. Even though I had admired him, admired his work, I took him to task for a kind of melodramatic, self-serving, pleading orientation to his role as an artist in the United States, having come from Europe and having fled France, fled poor dead France, as we used to say. And when Paris was liberated, some of my shipmates would say, "Oh, boy! All those slimy little artists over there must be dancing in the streets!" [laughter] They had absolutely no use for anything. I didn't feel that way.

And I was thinking, here during the war . . . not that patriotism was something that I held up as a great good, but I felt it was for him, unseemly; it was out of character. There was something wrong with him presenting himself in this way, as a supplicant, and denouncing the country not helping *him* personally. It was this personal kind of

thing—"You are doing this to me"—that annoyed me. So I wrote this short article, which was accepted and printed in *New Republic*, and immediately things fell apart among the people that I had known.

Certain people thought it was great that that had been said; somebody had to say it, and then others and my friend, George Leite, who was very close to Henry Miller, felt that I had made a tremendous mistake.

He wrote me a long letter at sea, I remember, that was probably the most feeling and profound thing he had ever written. [laughter] And it was very good, in fact. But saying to me, "How can you do this to this great man who has suffered so much?" I thought he was talking about Jesus Christ, you know.

I was reading it, and kind of feeling a little guilty about being a Philistine; I didn't want to be somebody fighting against the very things that I was for. But there was something about *his* attitude, too, that bugged me. I mean, you know, here is this great man, but untouchable, his pristine, marvelous greatness was such that anybody who would criticize him just missed the point and all that. And this bothered me; this bugged me.

This was a very profound problem I felt about literature and art. During the war I asked myself, "Am I just being affected by the facts of the war and a kind of indirect patriotism, or, you know, am I reacting on some more realistic personal basis?"

And so that gave me a long pause. I had to do a lot of thinking about that, but while I was doing that, I was becoming more and more critical of the kind of writing that was being done by a lot of people in the avant-garde world. I was reading a lot of other things—Steinbeck and Farrell and, of course, Joyce, a lot of poetry. T. S. Eliot, of course—I was very interested in his work. And some

of the local poets, Kenneth Rexroth and others, and Josephine Miles.

This problem was for me a kind of an Armageddon, I suppose. I was thinking, if I'm going to be a writer, what kind of writing do I want to do? Was it what I'd been doing and what I'd been praised for at the moment? And is that the kind of thing that I really *feel*? I did. I mean, those were important things to me that I wrote, but is that where I'm going? How much more of *that* can I write? I had farmed that particular genre.

*The kind of praise that you were getting, was it in response to what you'd wanted to communicate, or was it for things that surprised you?*

No, that was the interesting thing. The positive things had to do with style, had to do with the kind of content that I had, the things that I was writing about that were sort of unusual. For example, suicide at sea.

"Deep Six for Danny" was a highly subjective story about a suicide I'd heard about, about a young kid who jumped overboard. Not on my ship, but I had shipmates who told me all about it in great detail. And I was *very* impressed by the story, about their take on the kind of kid he was, and their analysis of him in terms of what kind of family he'd come from and what his problem was, sexually and otherwise. And it had a deep impact on me—that lore, that sea lore, about suicide at sea, and then all the tales that go along with it, the anecdotes that people have about other suicides they saw. And how, you know, when you're out at watch at night, and you're up there by the hawseholes where the anchor chains go out from the bow of the ship, when you're out there by these great big holes, in the dark night, and the ship is moving through the water and going up and down,

you can hear sounds, you know, coming from down below—gurgles and cries and calls. Quite possibly, you do—certainly up in the north seas, you know, with the auks and in the South Seas with the gooney birds or the terns. Sometimes these night terns make strange cries. And, also, maybe porpoises or something make strange sounds, so that you hear these funny sounds. And those are cries from the rotten bodies of dead sailors trying to get on the ship. And if you're not careful, they'll crawl up through the hawsehole with their fins on. [laughter] They've grown fins, and they're all rotten! Their hair is like seaweed, you know! And that impressed me so, those tales, that I sort of put that all together in a kind very poetic *mélange*, I guess.

Henry Jackson in the *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote a column about that story and saw me as a merchant seaman writer, as a sea-going writer, which I was, and how I had captured a very unusually sharp and moving view of sea life. And I don't remember all that he said, but it was very positive, and I think all true! [laughter] I know that that was a good story, as well as others that I had written at the time.

*And what was it published in?*

That was published in *Circle* magazine. And that's the *issue* that got banned in Australia. I think probably because I had mentioned Australia, [laughter] that he had gone with a whore in Sydney or Melbourne and how this had affected his life, coming from an extremely rigid and fundamentalist household. And I guess they didn't like that, but, also, instead of saying "fucked" in those days, I said "focked". I thought I would camouflage it a bit, but they weren't fooled at all. [laughter]

*What happens in a fo'c's'le.* [laughter]

In a fo'c's'le, yes, a fo'c's'le. [laughter] And so anyway, that had happened. And I was becoming, though, disillusioned with that particular world, I think, because I was doing a lot of reading in social themes. Oh, I had come across Gorky, and I had great admiration for the directness and simplicity of the stories, and the fact that he was dealing with real people and in a most, I would say, unelaborated way—direct writing—one of the things that I admired Steinbeck for. So there was that side of it. And at the same time I was personally, though, surrounded by pretty much the avant-garde group of poets and some writers—mostly poets then in that area, people whom I admired and all that. But at the same time I didn't want to write that way or about those things.

But my issue over Henry Miller bothered me a great deal, because in a sense I felt I had cut off a connection that I had, because I had gone down to Big Sur, and I'd seen where Henry Miller lived up on the hillsides up there—a very romantic setting, wild horses running around on the mesa above Big Sur—and where he had had a little shack. He wasn't there at the time that I was there, but his friend was; his woman friend was there. And later I saw her and her newborn baby, I think, whose name was Valentine. And so I had this feeling of intimacy, though it wasn't really deserved, about my connection with that world and him. But although I really didn't feel that, a couple of my friends made me feel that I'd made an irretrievable break—George Leite in particular. He got over it, though, because he himself had some troubles later on that caused him to rethink.

And then, oh, there were people like Anaïs Nin, whom I never met personally but

heard a lot of. I mean, her spirit was around that group a great deal. And Lawrence Durrell, who had written about North Africa. And it was a scene that I began to lose identity with because, I think, of work, the war, my connection with people at sea—that whole waterfront scene had given me another perspective on things. And I was beginning to feel that if I was going to write, it would have to be in a different genre. Though I *liked* what I had done, and I felt that I had expressed something that was important to me, I was changing—personally changing.

I found this old letter to Kathy, talking about something like this. I say, “You know, I believe that it is the key to the great dump heaps of impotent art piling up around us. It is a sort of by-product with spiritual dislocation. In the first place, there are too many people writing, painting, planning to write and paint, or do any number of other related things. Such activity, or intended activity, has become a haven for twentieth-century misfits and malcontents. It is a rationalization for the chronic psychological chaos of the times. A hundred years ago most of them would have had their energies molded and directed for them. [laughter] But today every college student who happens to get an overdose of college English, economics, or anthropology, along with his adolescent disillusionment, eventually finds his way to the sordid, little ghettos of dead souls. It is an unhealthy underworld and as dangerous as a quagmire. It is almost impossible to avoid the ghettos around universities and the Greenwich Villages of cities. But only those who have managed to get away in time ever succeed in directing their strength and ability. The magazine *View* strikes me as being to the upper-class ghetto people what the *New Yorker* is to the lower class—a sort of hand-

book for the smug, brittle, twittering, little hothouse world of intellectual canaries. One admits to being amused by the slant and lured by the intricate, facile jigsaws of their minds. But there is something fossil and unclean, too, as though seven clever twelve-year-olds from an English public school were to be sealed for fifty years in a cave and given only Thomas Aquinas and funny books to read. [laughter] Perhaps at the end of forty years someone might slip them the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. What sport for the gods. What weird refinements of flesh and spirit in that last golden decade. Seven old men, unutterably civilized and informed, sitting in a circle, diddling their undescended cerebral testicles. [laughter] One could be quite confident that upon their resurrection a presentation of a year’s subscription to *View* would be riotously welcome.” [laughter]

[laughter] *So that was written to Kathy while you were at sea?*

Yes! It was written on my typewriter intermittently in the few times that I could stay awake or wasn’t absolutely seeking escape, sleeping or . . . Well, there were certain days between ports—that’s right—where we had a little space, a little time, and I wrote these, say, probably between Skagway and Kotzebue or something, two or three days. Anyway, that’s one of the things that was going through my head at the time, among some of these other things.

*What did your shipmates think you were doing?*

I never had a problem of being looked upon as peculiar because I wrote. There were others who had kept diaries. There were guys who weren’t necessarily seamen, who had

come to sea during the war, who had interests. One or two were teachers, I remember, and one was a lawyer on a ship that I was on. And these guys, you know, talked a little different from the old-timers or the kids that came off the waterfront. And on the ship people begin to sort of homogenize. [laughter] There's a lot of sort of acceptance and tolerance.

Also, in this case—not always, but in this case—I was ship's delegate. And I could spend a lot of time at my typewriter, and was considered as doing ship's business. I was a "sea lawyer" under those conditions; ship's delegates were really called "sea lawyers." Sometimes that was an epithet—you know, "goddamned sea lawyer." But no, I had no problem with that. It was sort of accepted that I had gone to school and was interested in these things. And I didn't talk about it too much. I hardly ever talked about *these* interests. But it would creep out.

*Did any of those men who had originally related the story that inspired "Deep Six for Danny," do you think any of them ever read your story? Did you send it to any of them?*

One did. Trot Ikenson, whom Kathy and I kept up with for a few years after this point. He had read it, and he said, "Wow, Whitey! That's a hell of a story!" you know. [laughter] And I think a lot of it he might have missed, because it had a kind of a rhythmic, poetic style to it. And it was somewhat analytical and philosophical. But he wasn't dumb; he was a bright guy.

*But you were really writing, you think, that story for an audience that never would have personally experienced the world you were describing.*

No, my audience was this avant-garde world, I mean, the world of artists and writers of that kind that I knew and was reading. At the same time I thought it was bigger than that audience. You know, you always do. You think it's for the world, for the universe! [laughter]

*I just wanted to clarify for myself, that earlier you had mentioned this ambivalence and conflict about your leanings and interest in humanism versus metaphysics, having a social conscience.*

Secular humanism, yes.

*I just wanted to make sure that I understood that there's something potentially mutually exclusive about being a humanist and indulging in metaphysics, or . . . ?*

Well, usually. Usually, you think of humanists—secular humanists—because that implies they have separated from formal religion. Usually that is associated with a scientific, rationalistic approach to the world—usually. It doesn't have to be. There are a lot of humanists who are also very mystical. And that metaphysics in the ordinary sense of the word is placed in opposition to humanism, to secular humanism. Metaphysics can be thought of as humanistic, depending on its content, but it's usually thought of as detached from worldly concerns. Philosophically detached.

*Kind of self-involved. I mean, self and universe or . . . .*

Either self-involved, or involved in other planes of experience, idealism, et cetera. At least that was the way we thought of it.

*So sort of a disconnect from the everyday problems.*

However, my struggle at that time, was that they were linked in my mind. I was a humanist; I was a developing a social consciousness; I was beginning to be politically aware about forces, political forces in the world and the war; I was cynical about the causes of the war; I was cynical about the

orientation of many of the politicians in my own country. I had, you know, what at that time would be considered, a dissident approach to politics. [laughter] Ship's companies, officers, and the government were all the establishment, lumped together as the kind of authority that I was opposed to. And it wasn't very clear. I certainly didn't have it very clearly worked out, as I'm sure has come out, by what I've just said. [laughter]

## A FAMILY MAN

**D**URING THAT month or two ashore, Kathy and I were learning to be parents and feeling . . . “My gosh, here we are.”

*Did you see your parents during this time to show the baby off?*

Yes. Yes, we took a trip up to Modesto. And my mother was absolutely delighted, and my father was, I think, delighted. And they were getting over their peeves about us, about what we’d done. And I think Kathy had . . . well, not at that point—a little later—begun to make peace with my mother. Never fully, because in that family people were never fully accepted unless they were practically born again and crawling on their hands and knees, you know, to the nearest church. [laughter] And Kathy was not that, but that would not be a very good picture of her way of behaving. She just was non-religious and came from a non-religious family; highly moral, highly conscious of problems in the world and all that, but not religious. And my mother, who was not a fundamentalist—she was I’d say,

spiritually, a Christian—just felt that there was this great gap between them, which I guess there was. And what kind of environment was our little daughter going to grow up in? All that sort of thing. But my mother, I must say for her when I look back—not at the time, because I understood what she meant when she said things indirectly—she was *very*, very controlled about this, and she was being as nice as she could. But she was hurt, deeply hurt, and troubled, you know. But I knew that was going to happen, and Kathy and I made the best of it, and I think Kathy handled herself beautifully.

And with her folks . . . her old father, this poor, old working man, Jim Addison, whom I really liked, had worked hard all his life, you know—foundries and then at that point in his life, he was working as an engineer in a hospital. A no-nonsense, old Scot. He would look at me, you know, like, “Who is this gazoony coming in?” I felt I was being looked at by an old seaman, really. [laughter] And I respected him; I liked him. And eventually he got to like me.

Kathy's mother was *very*, very wary of what her daughter had gotten herself into. "This guy, you know, going to sea? What the hell is he going to do in life? And he's got all these dreams about all these impossible ends and goals." And they, of course, had the same worries I had about me! [laughter] Only I had a slightly different take on them.

Anyway, that was going on. And then my grandmother—my father's mother, Amalia d'Azevedo—she had had to give up her old house on Lake Merritt that she had lived in because she was impoverished. She had spent everything, sold everything, and it was not a good time. Her husband had died—my grandfather—and my father practically supported her at that point. He was just beginning to make enough in his practice where he could do this. He had had a very hard time during the Depression years, earlier. People just didn't make anything, and he was making mostly handouts in food from his patients. But, anyway, he began to have a practice, and he supported her to some degree.

Anyway, she had to move out of that great place, that grand house, as she saw it—and it was in its day—now torn down for an apartment house on Lake Merritt. But she had to move to a little apartment in Alameda of all places. So there she was in Alameda, and I would visit her. And there is where I did a lot of talking about the genealogy and the past of her family and her *very dramatic*, almost operatic view of her own life and the world she'd come from—the Azores and her great family and her relationship with close relatives like Cardinal Nunes of Macau in China. What was his position? Something or other of the Indies, a pontiff of some kind. And we would talk about that, and she'd have all the old pictures on the wall; she still had her old phonograph with all her operatic vinyl records.

And there she reminded me of a story that I had forgotten about. When I was a kid in high school, I had written a story for one of my classes about my great-grandfather being shipwrecked in the South Seas, on this *wild* story she had told me. I have no idea if it's true or not, but I remember it had a great impact on me: how he was shipwrecked, and the chief of the tribe on one of these little islands had taken a fancy to him and wanted him to be his son-in-law and marry his daughter. This is such a classic tale. I think she made it up, but who knows? She said, "It happened to Joaquim. This is the way he was. He was a pirate! He was no good. And this is what happened to him." And somehow he got out of this; he had to go with this woman, but he was rescued in some way.

It was a fantastic and wonderful tale! I wrote it all up, and I have up at the top of it: "This is a true story of Joaquim, my great-grandfather, told to me by my grandmother, Amalia d'Azevedo." And it's wild and woolly and I think mostly fiction. But she was great at that. She knew what I wanted to hear. So I remember her telling me about this again, about, oh, I was going the way of Joaquim. I was going the way of my grandfather.

*This must have pleased you a great deal!*  
[laughter]

Well, I was partly pleased, but also worried about what happened to that old guy, you know! [laughter] Well, he did all right. He came to California and had farms and opened a winery and all that sort of thing.

But, anyway, that was going on about the same time my aunt . . . I had two, young aunts who were only about a year or two older than my brother and myself. We used to play together. One aunt had been committed. She had become very strange, and she was in a



convent. She had been an extremely beautiful Portuguese girl, and very regal and dignified.

*Now was this your father's sister?*

His younger sister and my aunt. He had two brothers and two sisters.

And so she had been—I'm not quite clear on it—partly committed at some point, then had gone to a nunnery where she'd be taken care of. And she came to visit us. I mean, all this was going on in this interim period when I was trying to figure out my life. And she was dressed in a severe, black dress, almost as though she were going to a funeral—rather stylish, with a black veil on a funny, little, black hat. And she came to visit us, and she came in the house and sat. She didn't have much to say. And I tried to carry on a conversation with her, and she would say "yes" and "no" and all that, and then she went away. And then we learned that she was a real problem at the convent—I don't think she was a nun; she was being cared for by them. She would get into cars; when she'd see some man in a car, she'd open the door, and just sit there like she did at our house—just wait to be taken away someplace. So it was a real problem for the convent. [laughter]

But aside from that aspect of the story, I had this *tremendous* sense of the decline of the dynasty, of the world—the end of an era—through them. And seeing my aunt, who was practically a peer, and my grandmother in her decline but still being the grand lady, and kind of proud of her in a way for being able to put on the show that she did. She always dressed finely, sitting in this sort of drab apartment that she had. And she always treated you in a grand manner and always had a little glass of wine and things of

that kind or coffee, and would talk about the past.

So a sense of the end of an era was there, too—a feeling that things were declining. And my grandparents on my mother's side were getting old and ill. My admiration for them had been great, and here they were going, too. And my mother was becoming ill, but not at that point seriously; later on it was cancer, and she died I guess ten, fifteen years later. But all this was sort of portentous at that time.

And, also, things were happening on the waterfront. There was a lot of labor negotiation, particularly the longshoremen. Harry Bridges [a labor activist and president of the ILWU for forty years] was being attacked, and I was very positive about him as a great figure, and irate at what was happening to him. But I also admired the ILWU for what it had done as a trade union. And the California Labor School, which I'd visit occasionally and would take part in some of the things that were going on.

So *all* this was happening. I mean this was muddy water, a period of shining, muddy water. That's all I can say.

*Shining! [laughter]*

Well, it was shining in a way, because it was also extremely promising.

*Well, it really sounds like no matter where you turned, it was just shifting sand.*

Well, it's the time, you know. When was the war going to end? We were winning the war; I think, by that time, I guess we were getting into Europe. I think France had been liberated, and the Soviets had, I think, pretty well broken the Stalingrad barrier and were coming down. The Japanese area of control

had slowly diminished in the Pacific. And I think we had by that time gotten into the Philippines. Most of those battles had been successful. They were out of the Aleutians; I knew that because I had been there.

*And was the fearfulness of them actually being off the coast of California kind of diminished?*

Oh, well, yes, because by that time the Japanese were no longer a threat directly in the country. Though there was that strange period of the balloons. I recall that the Japanese were sending up balloons with little bombs on them.

I remember that being in the press, but I don't remember exactly when that happened. [From November 1944-April 1955, the Japanese launched some 9000 balloons armed with incendiary bombs taking advantage of the jet stream. Several made landfall and caused forest fires in the Pacific Northwest and Canada.] But that kind of fear and hysteria, was as I remember, no longer there. There was the feeling that the war was being won slowly and arduously.

*Did you know anything about the GI Bill at this time?*

No. And I don't know if it was being talked about. It might have been talked about in Washington, but I think it was 1945 and 1946 that that was happening. I don't know.

The merchant seamen thought they were going to be part of it at that point, because Roosevelt you know, had the idea that everybody was taking part in the war. And, my god, I even got a little certificate from Franklin Roosevelt, thanking me for my service to the country in the war effort and all that. That was the period when the merchant

marine—six thousand men—were considered part of the armed services. Otherwise, I would have been in the army, because going to sea was alternate service. But I don't remember us thinking too much about that until later. That became the *real* issue in 1945 and 1946 when the war was over, and we found that we were *not* going to be included. I remember *that* very clearly. Earlier I'm not sure that I or others followed the GI Bill or the merchant Seaman's Bill of Rights thing that was being pressed by some union, I think probably the ILWU . . . NMU, I think.

*Well, one of the interesting things about that political battle over the GI Bill was that it almost didn't pass because of strong opposition from the southern contingent, because they didn't want the blacks that were coming home to be educated.*

Oh, yes.

*And they could speak about it like that, that openly.*

But that issue entered my consciousness a little later. I mean, the whole issue of *why* the merchant seamen were not included had certainly to do with desegregation on NMU ships, and the fact that the merchant seamen were considered to be "reds," those in the National Maritime Union that I was part of. But that was later. Now, if this discussion was going on earlier in the press I wasn't aware of it.

*Well, apparently the president of Harvard and the president of the University of Chicago had tried to keep the college portion in the GI Bill out of the bill from the get go, because they said it was going to ruin education to have all this riff-raff coming to school.*

Oh, that's fascinating. You know, I may have been aware of it at the time, but I can't recollect now. I think you're aware that sitting here and putting together the past is an experience that I have not had before, and it's a very interesting one. There are all kinds of things that I'm sure I knew about, but I don't recall knowing about them, you know. There were other things that were foremost in my mind—like my Aunt Alice—I mean, what relevance does that have to anything? I don't know, except that it had a great impression on me, how people that you knew as children and . . . is this what they've come to? I don't know, I had a sense of a kind of doom, and in the war itself. I had two views of the war: one, the fight against fascism and the new world to come.

Some of the socialist reading that I was doing was about a new world and a new order of things and how all this was progress. Then there was another side of me and in the reading I was doing, the feeling that this was the decay, the degeneration of Western civilization, the Tolstoyesque kind of view of the world, [laughter] you know, that corruption was rampant, and people were being led by Judas goats—you know, like goats to slaughter—that human beings were going down the drain.

*Which was part of your objection to occultism, too, wasn't it?*

In what sense?

*Of people being led by . . .*

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I couldn't stand the idea of gurus, although I was interested in some special people, like earlier, Ashokananda had impressed me because he was a very smart man. And I don't know, there is something

about his kind of spiritual view that I found congenial and all that. But in general, the idea of gurus and swamis and great leaders of the masses was something I was very, very leery of. And later on, I had that problem about the development of charismatic political leaders in the so-called socialist world, in the Soviet Union and in eastern Europe, and later in China.

My attitude was the same toward charismatic figures in religion and fundamentalist sects, in occult sects. I was not only suspicious, but there was always an element of repugnance in my feelings about that kind of person, being adored and unquestionably followed. I always had that.

And I suppose, underneath all of this emotional and intellectual struggle, I was always a kind of positivist and rationalist. And that probably came from my early life with my family who were very, very straightforward, rationalist people—practical, pragmatic people in a way. Despite their religious orientation, they were basically practical, especially my grandparents on my mother's side—*thoroughly* pragmatic people; farmers and peasants, who worked hard all their lives. Yet, they saw the world, on the one hand, mystically. They believed in all sorts of strange supernatural events and things. At the same time, except for the time they knew how to get along in the world as it was, and they often were very, very shrewd and aware about what people really were. They saw through a lot of the tomfoolery and elaboration that people would present to them, except if it was in the words of God—if a person claimed that they were the voice of God, they were easily fall guys. But even after my grandfather went to the top of the hill, he went on; afterwards, he came back, and things went on.

And that was part of my reaction, repugnance—that they so willingly would go along with that. However, they were *terribly* alert and clear about everybody else. They could peg people very quickly as phonies and this and that, but not when it came to their religious experience. So those things were always affective to me.

And my father, who was a physician, one part of him was always very rationalistic, positivistic, based on all of his discourses, based on *reason*. And I disagreed with him frequently, and I thought he was a stuffed shirt often, the way he would talk and his assurances about rationalism and all that. Nevertheless, those things stuck with me, that kind of orientation to the world.

And then later on, the kinds of reading that I did, certainly the anti-religious work, the atheistic work, was to me highly rationalistic. And, you know, I think I would have been a great contributor to the *Skeptical Inquirer*, the magazine that exists now, when I was a kid, because I was always debunking things. I felt there was an awful lot of bullshit going on in the religious world, in the press, and in relations between people. I never had supernatural views—maybe a few times when I was very young, a belief of odd and strange and peculiar phenomena having meanings that were highly mystical, spiritual. But most of the time I wasn't. I think I would say now I'm proud to be a positivist, you know, even though that's a bad word these days. [laughter]

*A book title.* [laughter]

You know, that “Okie from Muskogee.” [laughter] But by positivist, I don't mean anything very elaborate or fancy—just that I do think that evidence is what is testable data. Testable data that can be shown by a great deal of arduous investigation was the way to

go, rather than simple belief. Though I had a lot of beliefs, and always have had, that could be considered spiritual and mystical, they in no way impinge upon my feeling that the basic course is a rational and positivist one.

The mystical, that's really sort of the decoration on the cake to me. I enjoy science fiction; I enjoy mystical fantasy. I think it's part of the theater of life. I enjoy when I'm dealing with this as part of fieldwork. I can empathize with the views of the people I'm talking to, even though I don't hold them. I can even feel emotionally about them, because I can see what it means to the other person.

Like with my grandparents. I sometimes felt they were absolutely stark-raving mad. At the same time, they were my grandparents, and I loved them. And I listened to them talk about things that were, you know, way out. I would feel about how wonderful it is for them, you know; [laughter] what joy it gives them. And to try to debunk them I felt would have been a terrible disservice. Their life depended upon these fantasies. And some of the fantasies were remarkably beautiful, I mean just tremendously moving. I remember even as a young kid, thinking, “I don't want to spoil that for them.” Like the time I told my grandmother, “Grandma, you weren't sitting on Jesus's lap. You were right there sleeping. You were dreaming.” And I remembered that mainly because I felt badly that she had reacted the way she had, and I thought that, you know, what I had said had hurt her, you know. And I thought, “What right did I have to do that?”

Later on in my life, I used that as a . . . in fact, I've used that in classes at times—about how you can have empathy without belief. You can have tremendous feeling of sympathy, of accommodation, empathy, understanding of somebody else's views with-

out believing at all. Just like, you know, my favorite phrase: I'm not a believer in gods, but I certainly am a great respecter of them.

So, anyway, all this was stewing between the YPO and the *Castle Pinkney*, which we haven't even reached yet.



## THE SS CASTLE PINKNEY

THE SS CASTLE PINKNEY was a tanker out of San Francisco. And I had to take her. It was December of 1944, after this relatively long shore leave in which all these wonderful things were happening to us, and at the same time, all this wild stuff was going on in my head.

My friend Bob Nelson and I had talked about having a fishing boat, and later on we tried to do this, but I was thinking, “Gee, if I could only get a fishing boat and go fishing *now*, but how could I do that and carry out my draft obligations?” And everything was mixed up. Marvelous potpourri: spending time in San Francisco Labor School, talking to people. I also had this whole other wave, a feeling of commitment to labor and to progressive movements and things of that kind.

So then I had to take another ship, and it turned out to be the SS *Castle Pinkney*, a relatively new tanker. And we headed off now across the Pacific again. And we didn’t know exactly where, but we figured, and we were right, that it was going to be Australia again. And that was quite a trip. It was Deacon Hill shipping company, as I remember now.

That was a trip we made to Darwin in northern Australia, and we took a load of gasoline. It was a terrible trip in that way, because that was real scary. Even a spark could have blown us up, but on top of that, a sub would have made a marvelous fireball out of us. We had no convoy or anything—just floating down there across the equator, zero longitude, and over the international date line again. It was one of those trips that was *déjà vu*. It was a *long* trip, because we went without stopping all the way to Australia. And that was a wild trip, because Darwin was a *terribly wild* port at that time. Very provincial, that was my impression of it as kind of like the “Wild West.” Everybody got drunk, and everybody ran around the streets.

It was a wild port to stop at. And again I picked up some parakeets, like the early trip I made. Well, I got two more. I had names for them from some eighteenth century literature. Anyway, I had these two parakeets, and most of the crew got pets. It was a wild trip. They had parrots; there were a couple of dogs—mangy curs from the streets of Darwin. Someone had some kind of a small

marmoset-like animal. I mean, strange little animals running around the ship. And then there was a kitten that somebody had picked in a whorehouse. [laughter] It was a sick, little, scrawny kitten that finally got some weight on and grew during the trip.

*Eating parakeets.* [laughter]

Yes. [laughter] As usual, one parakeet flew out the porthole. That was the male—flew out the porthole and was obviously consumed by the sea. I used to have them sitting on the ventilator lids—large, round, metal lids—and they would swing back and forth.

And I had the porthole open one day, and whatever his name was—Paolo, I think he was. [laughter] It comes back to me. Paolo and Francesca [laughter]—two tragic figures in literature. Paolo flew out and hit the waves, and Francesca lasted a few days longer and probably died because of sorrow over Paolo, but actually from the fumes. Because coming back, we had to ventilate the tanks. Tankers are awful in those conditions. I mean, if the wind is wrong, you're practically knocked out by the continual fumes. I don't know how any of us survived, because, you know, if "the canaries" died, well, I would expect the whole crew to have been sick and die. People did get sick. But certainly, Francesca got sick, and she just keeled over and died. So that was the end of that.

But that was a sort of uneventful trip. It was an interesting crew, I remember. There was two guys, college boys, very bright, young guys. One had been to UCLA, and the other was from some other university. And we used to have long conversations. It was a kind of pleasure to do that. But they were kind of lazy guys, and I had to stay away from them, because, as delegate, I had to keep clear of the guys who weren't doing their part.

Although I used to enjoy them. We'd sit around talking whenever we could. But they were just poor seamen and real lubbers and gazonies. But it was a thoroughly interesting crew and good trip.

We had, though, a crazy captain. I don't know why—maybe it's my bias—I keep talking about crazy captains. We had a couple of good ones. The first one I had, I told you about, was Roogenes [of the *Bret Harte*], a wonderful, old man. And there were a few others who were nice, old seamen who did their jobs well and who kept away from the crew and let their mates handle things and who were usually extremely good at final negotiations with the crew if it came to that. And there were some mates who also were good guys. But I also had a couple of real corkers, and Captain Stuart was one of them on this trip.

He was a wiry, little, neurotic guy. And he would bark orders, not only to his mates, but sometimes go over his mates heads, bark at the crew. And you just don't do that. Captains aren't supposed to do that. Skippers don't deal directly with the men. They do it through their mates or the bosuns. And he just ignored all these things—always running around giving orders and telling people to do this and that and the other thing. So we developed a kind of a deep sense of animosity towards Skipper Stuart. [laughter]

And the chief mate was a guy that I developed a strong feeling of animosity to, because he was two-faced. He would tell us one thing and then tell the captain another. And he was anti-union. I remember having long conversations. I'd go up with him to take the overtime records and the beefs to him, and we'd sit around for two or three hours. He was very congenial in a conversation, and we would sit and chat.



I would think Captain Stuart was one of the most peculiar and remarkably offbeat skippers that I can remember—aside from that wonderful guy on the YPO who got drunk with the mayor of a small village, the Eskimo mayor. And they were chasing each other around, as I told you, with walrus spears, very drunk. And the mayor had to be taken off in a cargo sling and put into his little skin boat and sent back to shore. That was a wonderful thing. I mean, that captain was a lot of fun. He was entertainment. And was drunk most of the time, so the mates had to take over. But, anyway, he was an enjoyable figure, and he was a great raconteur whenever we'd hear him, he was full of stories. And then when he was drunk, he was quiet in his bunk. [laughter]

But Captain Stuart was another kettle of fish. I don't know about his background, really, excepting there were rumors that he had been in the navy when he was younger, and he had had some kind of position in a business during the years ashore and had finally volunteered to go into the merchant marine during the war, in which they were taking almost anybody who could stand up and who had certificates. But, anyway, he was a real problem.

I remember coming back from Australia, through that long stretch across the Pacific, when the tanks that had carried gasoline on our outgoing voyage were now empty and had to be opened whenever the weather permitted to air them out. And the stench, the fumes from the tanks were sometimes overpowering. If there wasn't enough breeze for the ventilators to clear the tanks and carry the fumes away, they just accumulated on the ship and in our fo'c's'les and in the mess rooms and all through the passageways.

And this of course, is what had killed my little parakeets on two voyages, and I should

know better. After all, we do have the stories about the use of canaries in mines as a warning for fumes. But here we were on this ship, sometimes locked up in hot weather during the war, with portholes down sometimes, particularly during the night, breathing these heavy fumes.

I'm very lucky; I don't think that I had any effects from that. But I wonder how many of those crews, after a number of voyages of that kind, what kind of trouble they may have had later in their lives. No one seemed to be particularly concerned about it. We didn't like it; we complained about it. But obviously the companies and obviously the War Shipping Administration and obviously the officers didn't think it was anything more than a normal set of circumstances.

But the thing that really got to us, as I remember, was about halfway across, after we crossed the equator going north and were heading, we found out, toward Panama—the ship was going to go around Panama to New York, where we would be discharged—that the captain ordered the mates to send us into the tanks to clean them. He wanted clean tanks, he said, when he got back to home port. And those tanks were a mess. In the first place, the fumes were so strong that we would put wet rags around our faces so that we could breathe a little bit. And every time we went up on deck, we would dip them into buckets and wring them out and put them back on again. And those were our gas mask.

And we would go down with copper scuppers and hammers; all the tools we had, had to be copper . . .

*What are scuppers?*

They're like little shovels. I even have one to this day. I took as a souvenir off that ship. The hammers and chisels had to be

copper to diminish the possibility of sparks. One spark, of course, could blow the whole ship to bits.

And so, you know, a whole watch would go down there, sometimes extra men on watch on overtime. We'd go down to clean out the tanks. And we had to use the chisels and the hammers to break up the rust on the side of the tanks, and that rust would fall to the bottom in a kind of sludge that accumulated at the bottom with water and gasoline, and lord knows what else. And all this rust was sometimes, I think, six inches deep at the bottom of the tanks. And we'd be using these little shovels and filling copper buckets full of this debris. And we could only really work for fifteen, twenty minutes at a time. We had to go up and breathe, because you'd get dizzy. [laughter] We were all drunk! We just were all gassed up!

This went on for two or three days at a time, as I remember. And I'd be sent up by the crew, and sometimes go on my own, to the mate, first through the bosun, to negotiate. And the bosun would say, "I can't do anything about it. The skipper has ordered it." We didn't say we shouldn't clean out the tanks. I remember the beef that we had was . . . that it should be spaced more, we should be down there only fifteen minutes or twenty minutes, and then come up for another fifteen or twenty minutes to get back in shape, and also that we should wait for really good weather, so the tanks could be open before we went into them and be thoroughly ventilated if possible.

The skipper would have none of this. The tanks had to be cleaned, and he'd . . . "You guys get down there," and sent word to the mate that anybody who refused to go down or to do their duty would be logged.

Logging merely meant you were put down in the captain's log book and when you got

into port, this would be taken into court—a coastguard court in this case—and you might be charged and fined or have your papers taken away. You were logged for disobeying a lawful order. And that was wartime, and captains had almost total power.

*Was this a coastguard boat? Was that why you'd be before the coastguard . . . ?*

No, no. But the coastguard were the wartime regulators of the merchant marine. There was a merchant marine law that I think had been passed in 1940 or 1941 that had somewhat clarified the relationship of crews to officers and the ships' owners, the companies. Before that, the unions had done a great job during the 1930s in relaxing some of the very stringent kinds of laws that restricted seamen's rights aboard ships. Early in the twentieth century the conditions aboard ships were terrible. Seamen had no rights, and the possibility of suing companies for your disabilities or for disobeying orders because they were absolutely ridiculous in some cases, was impossible for a seaman to do. But during the war there was some relaxation of these reforms, and the captain at sea had total authority.

And I would say that the skipper, Stuart, took this to the extreme. He was a neurotic despot. And he would never go back on one of his orders, and this was . . . "That's the way it was, and don't you guys disobey. This is wartime, and I am the master of this ship." I remember hearing that time and time again from him. "I am the master of this ship. Get back and tell those guys to get to work!"

So this went on for a couple weeks or so, I think, all the way across the Pacific. And I would say most of the deck gang was really sick, and also the engine crew and the steward's department—all these guys were

affected by these fumes. Now, there wasn't anything to do about a lot of this. The ship had to be battened down at night and the portholes closed, and nobody had any control over the weather. If there was no breeze, the fumes would accumulate. Nevertheless, there was every reason why the schedule of work should have been changed or relaxed. And so that's the kind of beefs that I would take to the mate.

Oh, there were many others, too. The captain was one of these strange guys who would walk around on deck and into the crew's quarters and check things out, as though he was in the army or the navy. There's nothing that gets a merchant seaman's gall more than having somebody playing navy with them. [laughter] And that's why I think he had been early in his life in the navy, because his idea was his job was to keep order *everywhere*. And I had *never* seen a captain walk through crew's quarters. This was a new one on me. Opening fo'c's'le doors, making all kinds of remarks about the condition of the fo'c's'les and, "Why haven't you made up your bunk?" And we didn't have to make up our bunks. We were merchant seamen. We could do as we pleased with our fo'c's'les!

And this was a big joke. "The captain wants our bunks made up. And why don't we have maids aboard the ship?" and things of that kind. Nevertheless, most merchant seamen keep their fo'c's'les very clean and in very good shape. But if you're working hard and you're rushing from one job to another then go on a watch, you don't always have time to make up your bunk, for gosh sakes! But he would come in, anything laying on deck, he would demand it be picked up. And of course, we hated him. We got to the point where just the sight of him would make us livid. And this affected me, and I think I be-

came really compulsively antagonized by that little man. And here I was the delegate, and I was supposed to be very careful and judicious and then take complaints to the officers and negotiate. But it was impossible with this guy.

The chief mate I could talk to, but I didn't trust him. Nevertheless, we had long talks, as I've already said. And he'd always come back to how the unions had interfered with the development of the shipping industry, and that things would be much better if it had not been for the unions interfering. "Look at the kind of gazonies coming aboard ships now! You got everybody . . ."

And I would say, "Well, it's wartime. [laughter] Even the army and the navy take anybody they could get these days, you know. What's the complaint?"

"Oh," he says, "yes, but none of these guys are seamen; they don't know what they're doing; they got none of the tradition of the sea in their hearts."

And I would look at him and think, "Well, buddy, you certainly do have . . ." Also, he drank heavily, which was OK, he did his job.

Nevertheless, he would agree with me on many of the issues that I'd bring before him for the crew. He'd take them to the captain, and I learned that he'd take the exactly opposite position, you know. "These guys are just asking for too much. They're looking for trouble, and that delegate, he must be a damn commie. He's a college boy; he's done every . . .," you know, "he's got all kinds of big ideas about how things should be. And he's a troublemaker."

And so I became the troublemaker in the captain's mind; I was the guy causing the trouble, when, really, I was representing the crew. And I may not have done it well, because I tended to shoot my mouth off a lot.

When I thought I was right, I would put up a pretty good front.

*Did you ever win any concessions at all that would have encouraged you?*

Not on that ship. But, oh, many times on a good ship. My relations as delegate with the chief mate and the skipper on this particular ship was rather unusual. It was just as though you had, beyond the chief mate, a totally, immitigable situation.

I think that most of the mates—the chief, or first mate, and the second and third mates—really feared him. I don't think they respected him, but I think they feared his actions, what he might do at any given point. And he did have the power also to log them.

And so the first mate was really an expert two-faced guy. He would talk very reasonably with me and take a beef seriously that I would present to him—for example, this one about the deck gang being able to get some relief from the fumes when they were working below decks. And then he would come to me and say that the captain would say no. But actually then I would learn that he had told the captain that we were a dissident group led by a Portugee college boy, a loud-mouth guy named Daz, [laughter] and that I was a troublemaker. And yet to me, he was always very reasonable and even very friendly. And it took me quite a while on that trip to learn the dynamics of that situation on the bridge.

You asked about the tanks. There were five or six tanks on this vessel, in the place of holds. Rather than holds for cargo you had tanks for fuel. And they were fairly large. I vaguely remember they were maybe fifteen, twenty feet deep. You climbed down ladders to the bottom, and they were maybe fifteen or twenty feet across.

One of the procedures was that when they're empty, and that had happened early in the trip, they got "steamed." Steam was sent into the tanks to loosen some of the remaining gas and sludge on the sides of the tanks. And all this would go down to the bottom, mixed with gas and sea water and whatever, and so it was a *very* difficult situation to work in.

We were miserable! We'd come out of the tanks after three or four hours, only getting up for a breath of air every now and then. Not only feeling fatigue, but sick to our stomachs. Guys would vomit. Along with the sludge at the bottom would be vomit and the smell of vomit, steam, rust, and gas. And it was quite terrible. It was one of the worst situations I remember at sea, including, you know, the endless hours of humping coal on the Alaska run. In fact, I *yearned* for the Alaska run on this particular trip.

And, by the way, the temperatures were well above a hundred down near those tanks, because we were in hot tropical weather with very little breeze for long periods of time. And I remember, we would practically *yearn* for, call for a storm that would relieve us of the job for a while and might clear the air.

So, anyway, this was one of the major beefs. There were other things. The food was terrible. In fact, the food smelled of gas! [laughter] *Everything, everything* was permeated by this strong, nauseous blast of gas fumes that sometimes would be insufferable. I remember we'd open up our hatches at night sometimes when we weren't supposed to, because we couldn't bear it. We would open up our portholes in our fo'c's'les to let the breeze come in. And that was against the law, and we could have been logged for that. There were times when you could do it, but other times when you couldn't. And there we were out in the middle of the Pacific, in

wartime, alone, with this *mad* skipper and a very disgruntled crew.

Another thing that was beginning to affect my thinking a lot were the engine gang, who were members of the CIO union. They were organizing ashore, along with the National Maritime Union, which was the other seamen's union. They were very militant unions. And they had literature aboard the ships. And I remember I read a lot of the National Maritime Union and Marine Firemen, Boilers, and Water Tenders Union literature aboard ship, which was very militant, trade union literature.

Some of these guys—the delegates for each of these other gangs—would come to me and say, “What are you guys putting up with? You know, your damn union, you guys never fight for anything. You never join with us on anything. And there's going to be a big strike after the war, and you guys are going to be left out,” and all that sort of thing. There was a great deal of trade union talk in the mess rooms and in the fo'c's'les with these other guys.

*Now, why was there going to be a big strike after the war?*

Because everybody *knew*, already there were portents of this in Congress, as soon as the selective service was over, the ship owners were going to be free to negotiate the kind of wages and the kind of working conditions they wanted; and they were very upset with even the lousy conditions we had at sea during that time. I mean, my god, when you had to put a man ashore because he was sick and give him four dollars a day, this was just too much. And the wages were too high. We were getting something like thirty-five cents an hour average over time. And, also, the ship owners were not able at that time to press

the kind of interest *they* had freely, because during the war you had War Shipping Administration intermediaries. So everybody expected the ship owners to press for changes they wanted, and for the unions to respond. At the end of the war the trade unions, particularly CIO seagoing unions, were going to strike.

*CIO stands for what?*

Congress of Industrial Organization. Most of the other unions now belonged to the CIO, but the Seamen's Union of the Pacific we were AF of L. And we were considered a very conservative and reactionary union by some of the more militant members of the other unions. So we would hear a lot of this.

And, of course, there were three or four other members of the crew who were also very affected by this, and we felt that our union wasn't really defending us to the degree which they should have. So, I was ship's delegate—that is, delegate for the whole ship. I was being urged by these other delegates. You know, “For Christ's sake, are you going to let this captain do this to you guys? I mean, these fumes are making everybody sick. *Do something about it!*”

So I felt that I had an obligation to press these things very strongly with the chief mate: “Look, we're just not going to do it. We're going to make our own organization down there. We're going to send guys up.” On each watch, there would be usually one guy at the wheel and two guys in the tank, then guys on overtime—additional guys to get the thing done in a hurry from other watches.

We were always arguing about overtime—how much overtime they should get for what they were doing. When I said, “We're going to just organize this so that every

fifteen minutes one of the guys can go up and stay up and get some air, good air, for at least ten or fifteen minutes and then go back down, and somebody else come up.”

The mate would say, “Well, the captain’s going to say that you’re not going to get overtime when you’re up on deck. I mean, there’s no overtime for that.” You know, these little pip-squeak kinds of arguments that would go on.

And we’d say, “Look. The guy’s on watch. This relief time should be built in. These guys are going to get real sick, and some of them already *are*. Some of them are in their bunks.” In fact, two guys couldn’t turn out. They were coughing and spewing and vomiting, and so others had to be taken out on overtime, brought out on overtime.

This was considered *terrible* up on the bridge. I mean, “My god, look at the money we’re putting out to get this thing cleaned up.”

And the captain was in a state of frenzy, and he would shout from the bridge, you know. “Hey, you lazy bastards, you get off your asses and get those tanks clean, or you’re *all* going to get logged when we get into port!” [laughter] He was crazy! We got so we just expected total madness from him whenever he spoke. I mean, it was incomprehensible. He would sometimes rattle on and scream, yell, sometimes just to nobody, from one of the wings of the bridge.

So this went on for two or three weeks, and I was feeling I was getting into a real bind, because nothing could happen. I couldn’t *really* force anything to happen. And the crew, even though most of them were with me—I would say most of them, you know, were *urging* me to do this—there were always some guys you called phonies, who were always saying, “Aw, forget it, you know. What are you guys making such a fuss about?

Haven’t you ever been on a ship like this before? Just do your job and shut up! Just go up and get your air; don’t argue about it; just do it! Don’t tell anybody; just do it!” And of course, my view was that I’d follow the principled road, and if it wasn’t right, then you don’t do it. And most of the crew was with me on this at that time.

And so I was getting into a real bind. I could feel the tension was getting to the point where something was going to happen, and it wasn’t going to be good.

And we had no power. Legally, at sea, the captain, even if he’s a madman—you can *prove* later he’s a madman—you never get compensation for the trouble that’s happened. [laughter] You can have him removed, and there can be court cases, but in wartime that was very unlikely, very unlikely, as proved to be the case.

So we went on with this work, and we worked out a little system, and he would get furious and say, “What’s that man doing up on deck? Get that man down! He’s on *watch*!” you know. And so we would go back and do it; then sneak up again when . . . . We learned when he was in his bunk, when he was in his fo’c’s’le, and then we would resume our little schedule where guys would go up for air.

But, anyway, by the time we got to Panama, that ship was a powder keg. *Everybody* was irritable and angry, and there was very little communication. I remember in the mess halls, instead of a lot of talk at mess, everybody was sitting there eating, they’d gobble down their food and get out. Nobody was talking to anybody. And I began to feel the pressure in a different way, too, because the crew began to feel there was going to be trouble when we got to port, and who was going to take the brunt of it? I could feel the support beginning to erode.

Although a few guys stayed the course. I remember Kim, the Korean guy—he was an oiler, I believe, in the engine room—he was *very* militant, a big, lanky, tall Korean kid, young guy. And I think he was the delegate for the engine gang. He didn't speak very good English, but he spoke a *lot*. And he was saying, "Hey, this goddamn bunch of officers and this skipper and this damn company and the whole goddamn War Shipping Administration, they're just a bunch of . . ." He was *very* angry, and I think a little bit out of hand, as was the whole situation. And he would *yell* at the officers sometimes. He would say, "Get the hell out of the way! You're getting in my way! How can the crew work with you guys standing around?"

He even said it to the skipper once, and the skipper said, "I'm going to *log* you!"

And, "You can log me all you want! Get out of my way!" [laughter] So he was obviously a guy that was under scrutiny. And there was a guy named Clark, who was in the deck gang with me, and my strongest supporter. He stuck with me through all this, and two or three others. Two young college kids—Ingersol and Ironsides—I remember, you know, very smart, intelligent, young guys. I think this was their first or second trip to sea, and they were *appalled* at what was going on. And I felt rather funny having *them* on my side, because they weren't exactly the kind of seamen I admired. [laughter] Nevertheless, they with two or three other members of the crew formed a little enclave. We were very solid on this, that we would stick together. And the other members of the crew were beginning to sort of fade away as we came closer to the port. This is an interesting phenomenon, and I can remember it on other trips as well.

But on most ships, when I was delegate and as I remember, other delegates, had much

more success in dealing with bosuns and officers and skippers. I mean, you could always negotiate something. Usually something could be worked out. This one, there was just an impasse. There was no *way*.

The upshot came one day, just as we were approaching Panama, coming up the coast, and I remember there had been a report of submarines in the area. Now, this was toward the end of the war, and it was doubtful, but some oddball, lost Japanese submarine could be in the area. [laughter] Nevertheless, there were reports that something had been seen along the coast.

And so the skipper, of course, this was his moment. "Full alert. All watches awaken on deck." And he wanted four men on the lookout all day long and all night. Now, this meant a lot of overtime, you see. This is breaking out other watches.

And so the first thing I did was say to the crew, "What the hell is going on here, you know?" Because usually you had one man on watch. I was on that first watch, and I went up to the mate's cabin, and said, "Look, this is utterly ridiculous! I mean, not only does this mean overtime—the guys out on watch are going to get overtime—but *four men* on that one king post stretched out there, *standing*, hanging onto shrouds? And going to be up there for an hour and a half every other watch? It's ridiculous!" And I said, "You know, I don't know if I'm going to *do* it!" I said to him just in passing.

He went to the captain and said, "Daz says he's not going to go out there on watch."

Well, this is serious business. When I heard that that had been told the captain, I went on watch immediately. I went up there and got the other guys. We all four went up there.

Everybody was against it. In fact, they were all almost ready to say none of them are

going to do it, and that would have been interesting! [laughter] I don't know what would have happened.

So we went up, standing our watch. When I got up there, I heard this commotion coming from the bridge. And here this old guy with the mate behind him, had strung on two pistols, one on each side on his belt. With his hand on his holster, he was coming down from the bridge, yelling, "Where's that goddamn delegate? Where's that goddamn delegate?" He didn't know where I was. And he was walking down below toward the crews quarters. And I thought he was crazy! He was such a little guy that the holsters almost bore him down. It was very funny if you weren't the target! [laughter] And it occurred to me, he *could* shoot somebody and get away with

it, I mean, for refusing a lawful order at sea. He could have. And I think he was the kind of guy who might have done it.

So finally some of the crew said, "He's on lookout. He's on lookout. You ordered everybody on lookout."

"What are you talking about? The goddamned guy refused a lawful order!" And he goes on. I can remember I was standing up there watching at the passageway to the crews quarters, when this little guy comes out with this big mate looming behind him. And he looks up and he sees me and, sort of crest-fallen, goes back to the bridge. [laughter] You know, it's Gilbert and Sullivan.

But, anyway, *that set the scene. I was a target* and an enemy. That old bastard was going to get even with me.



## A CURAÇÃO JAIL

WE GOT TO PANAMA, and he went ashore, and he went I think to the coastguard headquarters. Apparently, later I learned he had made all sorts of reports. Nothing happened right away, except that when he came aboard, I was doing something on deck with the watch, and I remember him going by and looking at me, you know, like, “You’re going to get yours, bud. You’re going to get yours.” And the mate was shaking his head, and it was awful! It was an awful feeling, a sense of doom. I had a sense of portent! [laughter] And here I was delegate, and I had to go to the mate and continue to carry out beefs that were going on.

The crew at that point began to feel that something’s going to happen on this ship. And so whatever really good communication or good feeling that was in the crew was now pretty well gone, except for these few guys, four or five, that were encouraging me and said, you know, they’d stick with me, and all that.

We had a day or two in Panama, but we weren’t allowed to go ashore. That was

another thing. We didn’t get shore leave. That was an indication something was up. There were orders from shore that we were not to get shore leave.

*Wouldn’t that be very unusual after such a long time at sea?*

Well, we were only there a day or so. It wasn’t necessarily unusual, because certain ports under certain conditions during the war in a sense quarantined ships. So it wasn’t unusual, generally, but in *this* case it was, and we knew something was up.

So then the ship took off, and we went through the canal and through the Caribbean, where there was still talk of subs—German subs in this case. We went in convoy out of the canal into the Caribbean, and then our ship was left off at Curaçao, Dutch West Indies. Wilhelmstrasse—that *beautiful* little, sleepy town, beautiful Dutch town, on Curaçao. And when we got there, we went alongside dock and secured all the mooring lines. And as soon as that was done, a group of, I think navy and coastguard guys

came up to the ship, onto the ladder, and I was called on the deck and put in chains! [laughter]

The captain was up on the bridge saying, "That's the man! That's the man!" And I was in shackles, put in chains. It was a very strange experience.

*Around your ankles and your . . . ?*

Yes. Oh, yes. Had chains on my ankles and sort of handcuffs behind my back.

And the guys were very nice, but they did it. There were about six of them, I guess, in uniform. Then Kim was brought out—Kim, the Korean kid. He was brought out, and he was put in chains. And then Clark, this friend of mine from deck gang, came out and said, "What the hell are you doing to that guy?"

And the captain said, "Keep your mouth shut, or it's going to happen to you."

Well, it did. The next day he was put in chains. [laughter]

Anyway, it was a strange thing, because I remember members of the crew were watching, and three or four—well, these two college kids and two or three others—came out on deck, and they came over, and they said, "Don't worry, Whitey. Everything'll be all right." But the rest of the crew just stayed out of the way. And I had this *wonderful* illumination about how when you get into a situation like that, and you're not fully aware of what you're doing and what the implications are, that people cannot necessarily be relied on to be with you, because it is a *serious* matter.

To them, it's their lives, it's their jobs. They're not always sure that you are the kind of guy who should have been their delegate, but, you know, you were willing and you did it. And they didn't expect you necessarily to

carry out all of their demands. People that demand those things don't necessarily expect you to be so stupid as to follow through. [laughter]

And so in a way you sort of got what was coming to you, you know, "There you are." At the same time, as Clark told me later when I saw him, they were *terribly* depressed about it; there was a real feeling of guilt and shame among some of them, particularly in the engine department, where some of those guys got so damn militant. And here their delegate, Kim, you know, is taken, and I don't remember any of them coming out to see him, you see. And so we were taken over side, taken ashore, and I remember the mates up on the bridge and the captain yelling: "Good riddance!" [laughter] "Good riddance!" [laughter] It was something.

And I don't remember being terribly scared; I wasn't afraid. I was just shocked. I thought, "What the hell is going on here?"

*There must have been a sense of total unreality.*

Well, it was, you know, "What kind of world am I in?" I was thinking, if there's going to be trouble, there'd be some kind of trial, some kind of thing ashore, in Panama or someplace—what would be the usual system of a court hearing? It would be a military court, but, nevertheless, some kind of hearing. But no, I just was taken off.

We were marched over to some canvas covered carryalls, put in, and taken into town to the Wilhelmstrasse jail. The jail was made up of little sort of cabins, cabooses, around a plaza. And they had bars on them and all that. And I was put into one, and Kim was put into another—in little, separate houses in a rather charming, beautiful setting! [laughter] I mean, as I remember, I was thinking, "Wow!" you know, "This isn't bad."

There were palm trees and gardens. I couldn't see the other prisoners at that point.

*But still an eye for beauty. I love it! [laughter]*

Yes. [laughter] Well, it was a nice, little, rural setting. And we were put in there and under guard.

*Well, now, they took the chains off of you when they got you in a room?*

I'm trying to remember. I think so. Yes, yes, they did. Yes, the chains were put back on when we went out of the compound. So we're put in there, and we were there for two or three days. Nothing happened.

I had a lot of time to I think; I wrote a lot of letters to Kathy—long, long letters that she's kept of me ruminating while I was kept in that little Curaçao jail. And we'd go to mess; we were put into shackles and taken into the big mess hall, where there were mostly Caribbean prisoners, mostly African-American prisoners from various places, and Hispanics—obviously all minorities. And as I remember, I was the only Caucasian in the whole thing, and here Kim was Korean. We were quite a bunch.

And, oh, we all were given white cotton or linen uniforms—and straw hats, wide-brimmed straw hats.

*Had anyone told you at this point what's going to happen?*

No, not yet. Not yet. But that first day at mess, I was sitting next to a *very* large, good-looking Caribbean guy named Clive Anderson. *Very* well spoken. He had an English accent, was very carefully spoken, with a very elaborate kind of speech. Little by little we got talking, and I learned that he

was from Antigua, one of the small Caribbean islands, and I said, "What are you in here for?"

"Well," he says, "I reported German submarines!" And he said, "You know, these Dutch, they got some arrangements with the Germans now, and they don't want any reports of these things. I made a number of reports because we could see them, and where I came from, we would see them and report them." Now there *was* a rumor around the Caribbean at that time that German submarines *were* refueling at certain neutral places, like either the Dutch West Indies or elsewhere. And that was just a rumor. Well, here was this guy telling that he had seen these things, see. And he said, "That's why they put me in—to shut me up."

He had a family back, I think, in Antigua, but he had roused about the Caribbean doing odd jobs. Oh, he had gone to school, one of the islands—I don't remember where. And he was a poised, dignified, and very intelligent man. He was in his thirties, a mature man, very intelligent, and highly radicalized, and he helped to radicalize me. [laughter]

When he heard my story, he said "That's nothing new. It happens all the time. We get characters like you through here all the time. You know, the war eats you up and spits you out." [laughter] "You know, the big corporations in the United States are running this whole war, running everything." And he had this *whole* story about how the United States was becoming the wealthiest nation in the world because of the war. "You guys are in a Depression—look at you now. You're on top of the world." He said, "We're aware of what you're doing, and look what you're doing to us down here. We're just your replacement slaves down here. We produce, and you use it." He said, "What you're seeing, is some of what's happening, you're getting a little taste of it. Enjoy yourself." [laughter] "The food's

not too bad. Probably better than what you had on your ship. It's pretty good." And it was. And he said, "I'm taking this time to think things over. I'm writing a book."

He was writing a book denouncing the whole war and the Dutch. He was very angry at the Dutch, because he thought they were secretly dealing with the Germans. He was anti-fascist and possibly a communist—I don't know—but most likely. When I look back, he was a garbled communist like I became. I mean, he had the ideas, and he had done a lot of reading. Anyway, I found him extremely congenial and a bright light.

And Kim, this wonderful Korean kid—he was a great carver. He had a jackknife which they allowed him to keep, and he found pieces of wood around in the courtyard, and he would carve these marvelous, little objects that reminded me of some of the elaborate Chinese carvings I'd seen, but very small. With a pen knife he was able to make these very refined, open work kind of carvings. He carved me a paper-knife. I still have it—beautiful with a handle in this elaborate carving, and he stuck little quartz rocks on with gum for eyes.

He was giving them away to the other prisoners. So he was something of a heroic figure. And he was as radical as any of them when he got going, you know, denouncing the *whole* of the Western world. Oh, and when I think of it now, he said, "Our time is coming, and your time is finished." [laughter] "Look what you're doing to yourselves. You're not only destroying yourselves, you're destroying the whole world." That was about the time during the end of the Guandong period, and the Japanese were slowly being forced out of Asia. [This Japanese force had controlled Manchuria since 1932, and surrendered to the USSR in 1945.] And I would say most of the Pacific was in our hands,

except for the far western area. And so Kim wasn't pro-Japanese; he was anti-Japanese but was saying, "The Asians are going to show you guys. We're going to show you guys." And he was agreeing with Clive, you know, about the end of the Western world, the decline and fall of the Western world.[laughter]

So that was a very rich few days. And then we were put to work sweeping the streets. We were given these big brooms, and our leg shackles were left on, but they were wide enough for us to walk. And we'd go out in the streets in lines, sweeping up the already *very* clean streets of Wilhelmstrasse! [laughter] The sidewalks looked as though you could take food off of them and eat it, it was so clean.

I had a visit from a naval intelligence guy. I forget his name now. A *very* nice, young guy. I think he'd been to Yale, and he was being very congenial with me and saying, "What the hell happened? Tell me about this." And I talked very freely with him and told him about the trip, and, you know, I liked him, and I needed somebody to talk to. He was urging me to explain my side of the case, and, "They're charging you with mutiny, you know. You're going to be charged with mutiny, and that's a very serious thing in wartime. I'd like to hear your whole story." And then as we talked, he began asking questions about the union.

"Did the union tell you to do these things? Did the union urge you to make those complaints at sea? What is your union like?" And, you know, when I come to think of it, if anything, the SUP would be the union the military would praise, because it was anti-union, with other unions, anti-cooperation to a considerable degree, it was very reactionary from the race relations level. But, nevertheless, there was this thing he kept bringing up that somehow or other the union

had been behind it all. I said, “No! The crew did it. We . . . I did it.”

And, “Well, you know, have you read any communist literature, do you get union literature?”

I said, “Yes, we have some even aboard this ship and always aboard ships. And, well, I don’t know which is communist literature, but there’s a lot of literature around.” And I began to feel that this also was part of the setup that was going on. He was a very nice guy. We had long talks about things. He was very friendly, but maybe that’s the way these guys do things.

So the date was set for the hearing, and I remember going into this kind of a courtroom somewhere in Wilhelmstrasse. And the skipper wasn’t there, but the chief mate was there and one or two of the other officers. And there was an array of judges that were coast guard and I think naval people in uniform. I don’t remember clearly who was there, but it was, I think, a coast guard or naval court in Curaçao during the war with American and Dutch administrators. And the presiding judge finally called me and said, “You have been charged with this, this, this, and this,” and named everything, like “refusing to obey an order, urging the crew to dissent,” all of these falling under the category of mutiny during times of war. “What have you got to say?”

And I said, “It is just not true. Those things did not happen in the way that they’re reported here, and they were not as serious as they seem here.”

And the judge said, “Are you saying your captain is a liar?” I’ll never forget it—“Are you saying that your own captain is a liar?”

Well, you know, if I’d said, “Yes, he’s a liar,” I’m calling my captain a liar during time of war. And I said, “I’m not saying that at all. I’m just saying it didn’t happen like that.”

And that was the end of my interrogation. And I was taken out, and others were coming before the court.

I later learned that the chief mate had said that I was probably the cause of it all because I was a very militant, possibly communist member of the union, and a union delegate. And as for Kim, he was just a crazy commie from Korea! [laughter] And we were taken back to our jail and heard nothing more about that, excepting the ship had gone, had left.

I want to say now, because I may forget it, is that months later, I heard the rumor that the ship had gone to the Mediterranean and had been sunk. I don’t know if that’s true. I’ve looked through records, trying to see where the *Castle Pinkney* might have been, but I remember being of two minds: “There goes Captain Stuart.”

But on the other hand, “There also goes a number of other people I knew.” But I don’t know if that really happened. It was a rumor. “Oh, yes, the *Castle Pinkney*, that got sunk in the Mediterranean right after they left Curaçao and had gone across the Atlantic and into the Mediterranean, and it sunk probably off France.”

Anyway, so we were there about two weeks, two and a half weeks. Nothing was said. We just went on doing our work, having our meals. Except one day we were all given new uniforms, new white clothes and clean big, straw hats, big white ones like the sombreros.

*Sounds like kind of a Van Gogh painting!*  
[laughter]

It was! Or Rivera. [laughter] And so we were all brought out to muster in the courtyard, and we’d also been taught to march together. We were lousy marchers—you

know, stragglers in our chains—clank, clank, clank.

There must have been about fifty, sixty of us altogether. And we were marched into town with our brooms and lined up on the boulevard, the main boulevard. And we were lined up in two rows about twenty to thirty feet apart along the boulevard on both sides. So there we were, all in our white uniforms, with our brooms up! [laughter] And we were told that Queen Wilhelmina had come into port, and she was going to drive up to the mansion up this street, and we were there to help greet her. And there were crowds out on the streets. And nobody said anything to us. We were almost like the police! [laughter]

And an entourage came up—beautiful, old-time touring cars coming up. And the front one came with army people in it, Dutch officers and big-shots. And in the next one, this large touring car, open, was this marvelous woman with a great white hat and a flowing, white dress, *very* dignified, sitting in back in the touring car. And she was nodding in her great hat at either side of the car at the crowd. And they were cheering her as she came, and there was a band somewhere. And she came up the street, and in this long line, I probably was the only white guy in the whole goddamned town! [laughter] I was next to Clive; Kim was down the line a bit. And as she came up, I remember she saw me, and she made a very special nod at me! And I'll never forget having that special attention of Queen Wilhelmina in 1945 in Curaçao! And I should have yelled, "Get me out of here!" [laughter] She probably thought I was a Dutchman, and she wanted to recognize her countryman.

And then a few days later we were going to go, and I remember all these guys, many of them I didn't know, all these wonderful Caribbean, African-American, Hispanic, and

other characters, led by Clive, sang us a song, and in Spanish, I think, a song of farewell. It was very nice. Everybody was, you know, yelling and saying good-bye and giving us little gifts, pieces of candy that they filched from one place or another or leftovers from dinners, and just little things, you know, put in our hands as we went. It was all very moving; I was very moved by that.

We were taken away and put on a navy destroyer, in the brig, to be taken to New York: Kim and I, and by this time, Clark. They kept Clark separate from us. He was in another place, I gathered later, because he wasn't charged with the same things we were, or he wasn't as seriously. I didn't see Clark until later.

Nothing else was done—no papers. [laughter] Nothing was signed one way or the other; nobody said anything to me. And off we went on this little destroyer. That was a very pleasant trip for a few days. In the first place, it was very safe, because it was in a convoy going to New York. And the brig was clean. There was a little jail down in the hold, and the navy guys on the crew were *extremely* nice to us.

They'd not only bring us food, but extra food, and coffee at different times, and sit and talk to us. They weren't at all interested in why we were there. If we told them, they would just say, "Oh, well, that's the way it is." [laughter] And, oh! One guy'd even come and wash our clothes, take them up to whatever little laundry they had.

*Did you ever see the man from intelligence?*

No, I don't remember seeing him again. Maybe I would have, but there was nothing significant that happened between us, you know, that I can recall after Curaçao. We just went. A very nice trip and *excellent* food.

We saw how the navy lived. All these nice, little things that they did for us. They looked upon us as pets, you know. “These merchant marine characters! Well, look at them!”

And we’d kid them about the navy, “Look at you guys. Look what you’ve got,” you know.

And they’d say, “Ah, but look at you guys. You can go ashore and see your wives.”

“You do, too. Not only that, they get money every month. Ours don’t. We have to send them our lousy checks,” and so on. We’d have this repartee.

And we got to New York, our shackles were taken off, and we were taken ashore, and told, “There you are. Good-bye.” And we were told to go the next day to the coastguard offices in New York. That’s all. And those were our orders, to go and see such and such a commander or something like that.

And so we didn’t know what to do. We didn’t have much money.

*Were you with Kim?*

Yes, with Kim. And we must have been given a little money. Something that I knew about was the Seamen’s Church Institute. It was near the waterfront. It’s been moved now or torn down, but the old Seamen’s Church Institute was a marvelous place. And seamen, I think, could stay there for seventy-five cents or fifty cents a night and eat for a quarter. I don’t know what it was, exactly, but you could get a little, clean room, and they had a little chow house down in the bottom, for coffee and doughnuts and sandwiches.

And so we went there. It was within walking distance. We walked to the Seamen’s Church Institute, the Maritime Institute, and walked around the streets of New York. It was wild! We felt like aliens from another planet!

We didn’t know who we were anymore. You know, “What are doing here?” [laughter] “We’re free, and yet we’re not.”

And so we went up the next day to this office where a *very, very* bored guy in uniform—some officer, you know—heard our story and said, “Oh, yeah. I’ve got something here; I’ve got something in a file on that.” He said, “You know? That guy Stuart has given us trouble before. He’s a scum-bum, crazy bastard. Nobody pays . . . I mean, he is trouble. I don’t know how he *ever* got papers to go out as skipper.”

And I said, “What are *you* guys going to do? It’s up to you!” [laughter] “We were just brought in the brig from Curaçao.”

“Oh,” he said, “that was to get you safely out of there!” [laughter] He said, “You’re lucky! Look, my advice to you, is to get back to port, to wherever you came from, if you can, and ship out. Just forget it! Forget it.”

I said, “Well, is this going to go on our records?” Kim and I were both concerned about whether he knew about our records.

And he said, “Records? We don’t have any records!” [laughter] He said, “We get a thousand of you guys a week! Just get out of here! Get out of my hair!” [laughter]

I’m trying to remember how I got back to the West Coast by bus. Oh, yes. Our payoff was in Curaçao. We were discharged from the ship, and I guess we got some of our pay at that time—at least part of it—well, at least enough to get back to the West Coast. Kim had to go somewhere else, so I said good-bye to Kim. Maybe he wrote once, or I wrote once to him; we lost touch. I don’t know where he went, but I always thought of Kim as a wonderful guy. I’m an Asiaphile to some degree, and he’s one of my symbols of Asians whom I respect. [laughter]

Kim and I had run into Clark at the Seamen’s Church Institute. He had been kept

separate from us because he was on a different charge, and I learned that the same naval intelligence officer who had seen me tried to get him to testify that I was the cause of all the trouble and that the union had put me up to it. [laughter]

Now, this was Clark's story: he said that they had tried to set him up, and that he had refused to testify. And that's why he was sent to another jail in town and kept separate from us, that he would change his mind and testify against me—or against us.

On one hand, Kim and I would talk and say we wondered if Clark was straight, you know, whether that really happened that way. On the other hand, he had been taken off the ship; he had been in the jail in Curaçao, and I tended to believe him. But that also gave me . . . .

I began to become more cynical than I'd ever been in my life about bureaucracy and about military, about everything that was happening within our society during the war. And I was affected by people like Clive Anderson. I must say, he was an eloquent son of a gun, and his story about the situation in the Caribbean and what was happening to Caribbean culture, the role of the Dutch and the Americans during the war, and the labor conditions on the various islands, all this stuff affected me. As well as Kim—this marvelous, militant, radical Korean, who somehow or other got into the American merchant marine. And he was a citizen. But I don't know anything about his background, and I feel terrible about that. I wish I had asked

more about where he came from, where his family had lived, and what his experiences were, because he was a wild man. When I come to think of it, he reminded me at the time something of Melville's *Queequeg*, [laughter] you know. I mean, he was my *Queequeg*. And he would shout at me at times about, "You damn American! All you do is think of yourselves. You guys, you eat well, you're fat, you're white, and you think everything is your way. And we're going to show *you!*" And I always regret that I never ran across him again. He was marvelous.

I had enough money to take a Greyhound bus from New York across the country and head for home. In those days that was a four-day trip or something. I had gotten a pack of letters from my family and from Kathy and others, worrying about me, you know, what had happened to me.

I had written from Panama and got some mail in Curaçao and in New York. The mail service was sort of divided up in a peculiar way. You would get your mail either when the ship docked, and the War Shipping Administration or company representative would come aboard, the pursers, and they'd bring your mail. Or you'd get them through the navy. And I forget how it was in New York. But, anyway, I had a pack of mail, and read those coming back on the bus, realizing what a furor had been created by my letters from Curaçao. I'm sure, they were very full of drama and theater, because I was half-enjoying this. I was very worried, but I was enjoying what was happening on the spot.



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## HARRY LUNDEBERG AND THE SUP

SO WHEN I GOT back to San Francisco, there was an interim period from about February of 1945 to April in which I was ashore. Had a chance to be with Kathy and little Anya, who was now almost a year old—an extremely rambunctious, beautiful, intelligent little girl, and into everything already and crawling around like a tiger. And it was very pleasant there in our little shingled house on Clinton Avenue in Alameda next to the bay.

But at the same time, I had to go back to the SUP hall. The first thing that I did was go to the Sailor's Union of the Pacific hall on Clay Street to report in. And here I was, you know, and I'd been knocked off a ship in Curaçao and had all these things happen, so I asked to see the president of the union, Harry Lundeberg; I had an appointment to see him. He was a great big, good-looking Scandinavian guy and rangy, always wore a white cap and dungarees, who was something of an icon in a sense to the old seamen on the coast because of his role in early strikes and early seamen's struggles. But he had become very much a reactionary leader in the

sense of not cooperating with other seamen's unions, particularly the CIO union, the competing National Maritime Union, that I was beginning to get interested in because I liked its policies. I liked what it was doing, and I had heard so much about it at sea and read the material.

Its hall was just up the street from the SUP hall, a few blocks away. I never went there because there's a feeling among union people, you don't spread yourself around. You have a certain territory. So I just never went there, though I had met a number of NMU men ashore, and I knew some of them now.

Anyway, I went in first, to see Harry. And he was a gruff kind of a guy. "So, what's up? What's up?"

And so I told him what had happened, and I suppose I had in my mind that the union was going to take some kind of action. You know, that there should be some redress. I was taken off a ship by a madman; I was accused of things that weren't so; I was never charged with anything; nothing ever happened later. I was told by the coastguard to get back and go to sea. You know, what rights

do I have? I mean, I lost *money* on that trip. I didn't get my special pay for sea duty during the war—none of those things. I just got the low wages. I didn't even get all my overtime. [laughter] And here I was a delegate and didn't have a chance to complain to anybody about it!

I told the story of the ship and the awful conditions that existed aboard it. And Harry listened, and as I remember, he said, "Forget it. Get back to sea." That's all I remember him saying. "Just forget it. Get back to sea."

I always wondered about that. In fact, it had a lot to do with my decisions later. But I always wondered to what degree that union, the leadership of that union was involved with the coastguard, the naval intelligence and others. It would be likely, because it was a reactionary union. It was possible. And, of course, we always later thought of it as being in league with the ship owners. I mean, there were stories of agreements between Lundeberg and ship owners to keep the seamen in line.

On the West Coast, there were stories among the seamen in other unions that usually tied Lundeberg to all sorts of conspiracies with ship owners and with authorities. And his total anti-communist stance, very popular with some elements of the country, was certainly not among the left-wing or the CIO union people.

I don't know how much of it is true; nevertheless, I do know that the policy of the union was extremely conservative and out of date, particularly about race relations and the handling of beefs. Actually the patrolmen seldom took beefs directly to companies or to authorities, and I don't recall that there was really that much activity that involved support of seamen's complaints.

Although there was the view among the old-timers in the union that the union was

doing a good job, there was this kind of buddy-buddy relationship. It was a small union with just a few ports up and down the coast, so that there was this feeling of maintaining a kind of solidarity—union connection—with the various halls up and down the coast. But also there were a lot of complaints about the fact that the union was not developing a policy that was facing the facts of the 1940s and the coming end of the war, et cetera.

That few minutes with Harry Lundeberg gave me the feeling that I kept with me; either that he saw me as a troublemaker and had gotten word about it, and I was under surveillance within the union—that was one sort of semi-paranoid view I had, which there was some basis for as it later turned out—or that he just didn't give a damn, and it was just, you know, "Right now our job is to keep these ships going, and you're lucky to be going out, and just get back to work." There was no idea that somehow or other something had been done that the union *should* be concerned about. So that rankled me a bit at the time.

So I was now home and having this wonderful reunion again with Kathy and seeing Anya, this rambunctious, little hellion that was crawling around the house. *Very* bright, *very* alert little girl. She was terrific, and I must say still is. And also seeing my parents and Kathy's parents and putting them at ease about the horrible thing that supposedly happened to me. I remember my mother saying, "You got to get out of there! You got to *do* something! You got to make up your mind that you're going to make something out of yourself. You can't go on going to sea this way! The war is coming to an end, and the Selective Service Act will probably be terminated at the end of the year, and what are you going to be doing now with your life?"

I was very worried about that. [laughter] “What am I doing with my life?”

And I wasn't in a very good frame of mind in terms of going to sea at that time, either. I was feeling, “If this can happen, you know, what's going on?” I was very dim about the meaning of that whole event and the sense of betrayal that I felt, and the feeling of helplessness about big organizations, and how much of this, that nobody could do anything about, was going on during the war.

I had this idealistic sense that it shouldn't be that way, you know! [laughter] I had felt that I had been not only a good seaman, but I'd been a good delegate; and yet, when I came to think of it, I probably did exacerbate things a lot, because I was a big mouth, and I shot my mouth off a lot.

*One of the more certainly sobering parts of your story is this sense of a kind of abandonment and people scuttling for shelter, maybe, when they sensed that things were really coming to a head. Maybe you didn't feel like you were representing . . .*

Well, it taught me something—that is to watch out for my own ego. Ego involvement can be a very deadly thing that is, if you feel you've got to win . . . that you have been set up there to be a leader and to represent people. To take that too seriously, particularly on a little damn microcosm of a ship in the middle of the Pacific Ocean . . .

A situation like that takes a level of maturity that I didn't have. I mean, there are things that I wouldn't have done, or wouldn't

do again, and didn't later. And, also, that you can't expect people to support you under all conditions—even if they have set you up to do it. They've got their own problems, and they've got their *own* personalities. You can't just go by what people say; you have to go by what they do, and you have to also leave enough leeway for the fact that it all could fall apart pretty easily. Well, I didn't know all those things, and I must say, later as a delegate on ships, I was much more astute about this, I was much more organizationally conscious, much more aware of how to go about it, not necessarily to protect *oneself*, myself, but to do a much more competent job—that is, to be more effective, and *not* become a target of attack when it's unnecessary, when the beefs are minor and small and can be solved without . . . . Actually a lot of those beefs on the ship could have been handled by going ahead and doing what we should do and trying to get away with it. Like some of the crew members said, you know, “Ah, let's just lay off all this carping, and let's do our job and sneak up on deck, you know!” [laughter]

And I didn't agree with that and wouldn't now, but the point is, there has to be more flexibility in the way one goes about handling beefs. I was very principled, very hard, and also ego oriented in terms of telling myself that I was doing a good job and that I could do it. Well, the *Castle Pinkney* took a lot of that out of me. I was a delegate for two or three more years *later* on ships, and I was much more aware, much more competent and mature about those things.



## UNIONISM AND MARXISM

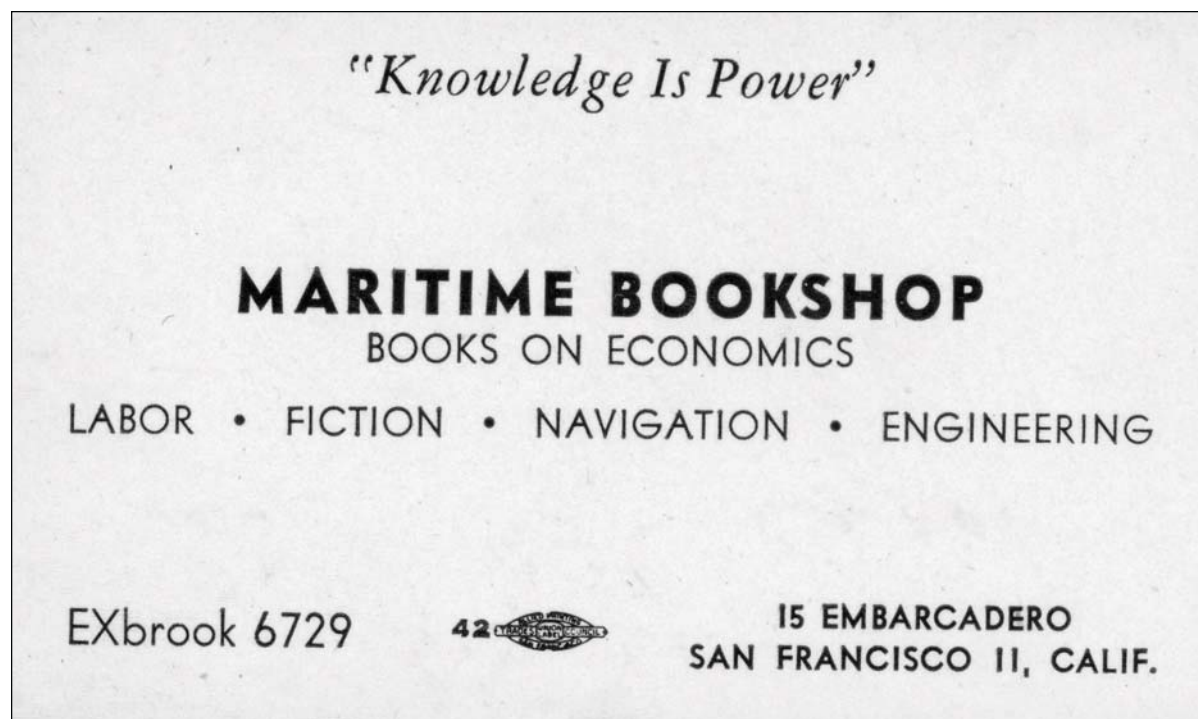
SO, NOW, what did I do ashore? That was a very significant interim—I would say it was a kind of a turning point. It was during that month or two ashore that I not only sort of reconnected with my family and Kathy and Anya, I had a chance to think, like that four days on the bus coming out from New York. [laughter] I did a *lot* of thinking. And I had to hang around the waterfront, you know, looking for ships.

I began to hang around the old Maritime Bookshop on the Embarcadero, a wonderful place. It seems like bookstores had a special place in my life, like in Mexico City when I was a kid. But, anyway, the Maritime Bookshop was a hangout for most of the left-wing leaders on the waterfront. It had a sign above it, “Knowledge Is Power.” It was on the foot of Clay Street. It was a small place, but it was *loaded* with pamphlets and literature. Marxist literature, all sorts of things from all over the world foreign, left-wing literature, novels and books, and a lot of leaflets, including the kind of leaflets that were being handed out on the front by other unions—some of them had come out of the Maritime Bookshop. There was a mimeo-

graph machine, which was pretty high-tech in those days, upstairs in the back, where a lot of the left-wingers would hold their meetings. In fact, leaders of the seamen’s branch of the Communist Party, from two or three of the waterfront unions, would meet up there and discuss things. I wasn’t aware of all of that at the time. However, I was aware I was in the middle of a cauldron. This was the heartland.

And you know, I was very interested in it, and I got friendly with two or three of the guys from the NMU, people that later became sort of heroic figures for me, like Walter Stack and Bill Bailey—and Pat Tobin, who became a good friend of mine. And, oh, there were a number of others that I got to know very well at that time, just by being in the bookstore and having coffee at the little coffee stop next door or at the bar nearby where we would drink beer.

I remember I was ripe for this, because I was beginning to feel very, very disillusioned and cynical about a number of things that I had once felt very firm about. I had a great admiration for what was happening in the ILWU and for Harry Bridges. I knew about



*"The Maritime Bookshop was a hangout for most of the left-wing leaders on the waterfront."*

the attack that had been made on him and about the growing anti-labor legislation in Washington.

Actually the big period of anti-labor legislation was coming later just after Roosevelt's death in April of that year, leaving Truman, who was susceptible to the pressure for anti-labor legislation at the approach of the end of the war. But the portent of that was already going on on the waterfront. We were talking about how this was going to happen and what was necessary. So there was a lot of talk of coming strikes, a lot of talk of labor unrest throughout the country.

I also heard a lot of anti-SUP talk; there was talk against the union that I was in. And I was ready to accept that, because I was at that point very aware and I think deeply troubled by the fact that there were no blacks in the SUP, that it was a lily-white union; I felt susceptible to criticism on this score.

I had been reading not only people like Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, as I mentioned earlier, but Herbert Aptheker's work on the history of the slave revolts. [*American Negro Slave Revolts*, Columbia University Press 1942.] Aptheker was a brilliant historian/scholar, who has never gotten the credit that he deserves. He was at the forefront of historical research and writing into the period of pre-Civil War and Civil War slavery and the slave trade. His work on the slave revolts planned by Denmark Vesey [a free black hanged in Charleston, South Carolina in 1822 for planning an insurrection involving thousands of free and enslaved blacks] I think was the basis of Herman Melville's short story that I later wrote a paper on.

And by the way, there were a number of black seamen and longshoremen who would come into the Maritime Bookshop, and they

would use the place and sit around and talk. So I absorbed a great deal of that at the time. It wasn't all new to me, but it somehow became real. I was beginning to think in these terms.

I suppose I was taking stock on a number things. I even thought at that time, you know, that maybe I should join the National Maritime Union. But at the same time, I felt very loyal to the Sailor's Union of the Pacific, my union since the early part of the war and my first voyages. I'd attended meetings regularly when I was ashore; paid my dues. I knew something about the history of the SUP and identified with some of the old seamen I knew who had been part of those struggles.

*Do you think, also, maybe you had the idea that you could actually be a vehicle of change within the SUP?*

No. I don't think so. I don't think I had that kind of messianic view. [laughter] No, I wanted to be a good union man. I wanted to be a good delegate.

On the other hand, I remember I was talking like this aboard ships. I would say things like, "For gosh sakes, why don't we have any, Negroes on board ship? Why not? You know, there are a lot of seamen that would be available," and feeling a *very* strong anti-black feeling on that topic. That bothered me a lot.

*Well, was the SUP smaller than other seamen's unions?*

Well, it was primarily West Coast, and in numbers it may have been smaller than the NMU became, but the feeling was just that they didn't want to sail with blacks, and, you know, "We got to keep those jigaboos off the ships, for Christ's sakes. You know, they're

taking over everything ashore. We got to keep them out. And look at those checkerboard unions like NMU. My gosh, you see those crews; you'd think they're coming out of Africa."

Well, I was *extremely* uncomfortable with this kind of attitude, more and more so, as I was realizing that somehow or other this was a very backward kind of labor situation, very militant on some levels, the SUP seamen, but very reactionary on this level. It was the remaining container of racist labor views on the West Coast. Here the ILWU was taking the leadership in ending discrimination on the waterfront, and the National Maritime Union, the Masters, Mates and Pilots—most of these unions had begun to desegregate and were very, very open about it, including making a great deal of literature available on the waterfront. In fact, I took some leaflets aboard ships that I was on and left them around, causing trouble sometimes.

But I didn't do it because I had felt I was any leader of change. I just felt that, for Christ's sakes, we should be thinking about these things. There might have been the element that I wanted to change things, but that wasn't my main reason.

*Well, if everybody that felt as you did left the SUP, then there would be no chance for change?*

Yes. And I remember there were always guys on some ships that fully agreed. We could talk about this, and it would be discussed. But then there was *always* another element that was *very* deeply angry about any suggestion that there should be change in the racial structure of the crews; and *loaded* with the most vicious kind of stories about what had happened on other ships. "Ah, yeah, so-and-so with this goddamned NMU ship, the guy's at sea, and while he was at sea, his wife

was going out with some nigger, you know, and has been seen around.” Oh! The stories were on such a level, you could hardly tolerate them. And I began to get *very*, very upset with this.

These experiences and the reading I was doing, like Aptheker’s work, that marvelous history of the American Negro that had never really come into the mainstream United States history, laid the foundation for my main interest when I went back to school. One of the first things I did was take English courses dealing with American history and American literature; my main interest was in this hidden history. This was a few years later, when I went back to Cal.

*Now, I think you said that the other difference about the SUP, too, was that there wasn’t as much ferment about striking after the war as the other unions?*

Well, yes, that came up later, but the main point is that they weren’t going to cooperate with what they considered the commie unions. And, by the way, it was really dirty politics, because later on it was quite clear the SUP had agreements with the ship owners, resulting in higher pay than the National Maritime Union right after the war, as kind of a gift. And one of the elements of the strike, which finally came about in 1946, was to make up for those differential wages that the SUP had managed to get. During the Union oil strike, later, that I was very much involved in—we’ll go into that—it was obvious the SUP was getting quite a different deal.

And so all that was going on; the old Maritime Bookshop, what a marvelous place, I’ll never forget it. I did a lot of reading; I distributed pamphlets—not purposefully, but I’d take them with me aboard ship and elsewhere and read them, and I often was

criticized or sometimes denounced by certain phony members of the gang here and there, you know, like, “This goddamn communist coming aboard the ship with all this literature.” And later this came up against me in a very aggressive way.

This interim was an important period for me. I was also thinking about the meaning of the war. I was *very* anti-fascist, glad that we were winning the war, and was glad to see the Japanese driven back and the changes of fortune in Europe and the fact that Germany was about to be defeated. All this was great. But at the same time it opened *up* then, all of the criticisms of what had happened and what it all meant; whether or not we had really learned anything from that war, and did we really understand the corruption that had taken place in our society because of it, and the lack of clarity about goals? And I suppose I became radicalized in the sense of, “So what now? What kind of society are we going to have after all this bloodshed and mayhem? What have we learned? What kind of society is going to come out of it?” And I became sort of a critic, a social critic in my own mind—a rather uninformed one, but, nevertheless, that was going on.

And, of course, Marxism was an influence, to the degree which I read it—I was never a scholar of Marxism, but, you know, I read it and was deeply impressed by it. There was a lot of Marxist critique going on, a lot of left-wing literature within the unions, that translated Marxist concepts into trade union agendas.

I was mainly *locally* a radical, in terms of local trade union issues and the way we on the waterfront looked at the world. So all my early thinking along those lines was in terms of a local trade union situation; the significance of world events as it affected us, kind of thing.



*How did some of that literature deal with, or did they deal with, Stalin's . . . the Russian iteration of . . . ?*

The communist Left.

Yes.

When I say "left," I mean a broad spectrum of people, but the communist Left, of course, were very pro-Soviet at the time. And, you know, from their point of view, the Soviet Union had led the way—in fact, almost single-handedly won the war!—which, by the way, was partly true in Europe. And the Soviet Union represented an exemplary socialist system and moving toward communism. And there was great praise—some of it well taken—for advances that were made socially in the Soviet Union, and I suppose denying a lot of the terrible things that would come out later that were already rumored in the press, then. The communist Left was pro-Soviet at the time, and its Marxism was directed toward an ideological defense of the Soviet Union. At that time that was not unusual. A lot of people felt that way.

The Soviet Union has made a very great mark in the world, and it made a mark on liberal and progressive thinkers in the United States. So the so-called "fellow travelers" of that period, the dupes of the communists, were many. I would say most of my friends were in a sense fellow travelers. They weren't necessarily Marxist; they weren't necessarily even pro-Soviet.

*I like that term "fellow travelers."*

Well, that was the term that was used for the dupes of the communist, and, you know, all the progressive organizations thought to be influenced by the communists were

referred to as "fellow travelers." And I think to some extent that was true. I can't see any reason why it shouldn't have happened. The clearest statements of policy, the clearest critiques of events, particularly events involving social issues, were coming out of the Communist Party at the time. And so I was very attracted to that.

I think I may have even gone to a Communist Party meeting in San Francisco at that time . . . no, that would be later. I didn't have any direct, formal relationship with the far Left, but I read a lot of them, talked to a lot of them. I didn't even know who some of them were. And I met a lot of other kinds of progressive left thinkers around the waterfront at that time. And I found it very timely.

*I just wondered if there were any intellectuals or literary figures that were overtly left or pro- . . . ?*

Oh, yes. There was a lot of pro-communist, pro-Soviet thinking—a lot of it veiled, a lot of it indirect, but there was no reason why it shouldn't have been overt. The Soviet Union had been part of the war, and they had suffered tremendous losses, and yet they prevailed, and partly because of their system, the socialist system, that made for tremendous patriotism and the urge to defend their country. All these things were considered heroic and remarkable and like our own, by a lot of people here. People like Westbrook Peglar and a number of other columnists were rabidly anti-Soviet and anti-communist, as were a lot of people in the country, people in the political structure, and in government work. But it wasn't for a while—it couldn't be—as rampant and as vitriolic as it became just a year or so later, after the end of the war. During the war they were still our allies, and it was so obvious that we needed them, particularly when they moved into

Manchuria and Manchukoa and fought against the Japanese [1941]. You know, they were obviously our allies, and yet there was a lot of suspicion and concern about communism spilling over the world like the catsup ad, you know! [laughter] But, it was possible for a lot of people to be pro-Soviet and even Marxist and communist oriented in their general way of thinking, without being attacked so much at that time.

So that was the general climate. On the waterfront it was quite clear. I mean, the progressive, left-wing unions were the dominant ones, because there were more people involved. They were united; they had left-wing leadership, and Harry Bridges was this great symbol.

I remember Harry Bridges was a heroic figure who felt very strongly about labor. There were people who called him a commie and things like that, but they still admired what this guy had stood for in the development of the longshore union all those years, *under* attack; and they couldn't deport him, you know. [Bridges was from Australia.] He stood as a kind of an icon in a way, even for those opposed to his views.

In my view, he was never a communist *ever*, I mean, even though *every* attempt was made to tar him with that. I wouldn't have minded if he *was* at the time, but the thing is, he just wasn't. He was a very individualistic leader; he'd *cooperate* with the communists, they were one of his constituencies. He was going to use every possible resource.

All that was fermenting at the time, and I wasn't very clear about it. Nevertheless, I was deeply influenced by it, and I felt that in a way this was the track that I was going to be on. I was more and more interested in trade union activities and doing something in trade unions.

*One comment you made off tape that really interests me is that there was this sense that Roosevelt was enough of a sympathizer with labor to stem a very effective reactionary element in Congress and the Senate.*

Oh, well, yes—not quite in those terms. It was just that he was considered a progressive president. However there were a *lot* of things that the laboring people were opposed to in the Roosevelt administration that were *not* necessarily conducive to the kinds of reforms they were interested in, and a lot of foreign policy they might have opposed, but *in general* it was considered to be a progressive administration, and Roosevelt was considered a progressive president. I can't at the moment think of all the critique that was raised about him, but it was there. There also was a lot of defense of him against the right-wing opposition. But, yes, he was considered to be a great president. In fact—as much as I hedge about it here—when he died in April, there was a *tremendous* sense of—what would you call it?—coming to a brink. “What now?”

Well, of course, when he made Truman his vice president instead of Henry Wallace, that was something that the Left always felt was a great mistake. Henry Wallace was admired, highly, like Wendell Wilkie may have been earlier, as a kind of a left liberal progressive figure in the government. So that later on, Henry Wallace became a central figure when the Third Party movement developed.

But those years towards the end of the war, there was a time of great yeasting, and there *was* a sense of being “on the brink.” Everyone that I knew had a feeling, “What now? What are we going to do now?” And the death of Roosevelt had a traumatic effect. *Everybody* was thinking about what it meant.

There was as much, if not more, public sorrow and feeling and emotion expressed about that death, as there was later about Kennedy, I believe. A great pall seemed to go over the country with a feeling of coming to the end of an era and starting a new one, and of course, this affected the trade unions. It affected the seamen that I knew. It forced us to think about what we were going to be facing.

And, of course, in that period I remember that Harry Bridges became even more important in the minds of a lot of us. He was somebody who had *survived* the era, who had fought through and was still *there*, had managed to maintain his leadership in that union despite all of the attacks that had been made against him and were continuing to be made and would go on being made for the next years.

It brings to mind the song that I used to hear sung—groups of longshoremen in particular—but a lot of us would sing it when we would get together, if we were drinking, you know. How does it go? [sings] “Oh, the bosses, they’re worried; the bosses, they are scared. They can’t deport six million men they know. But we’re going to fight them, fight them all the way; going to build a union and save the CIO.” Something like that! [laughter] The words are not quite that way, but that was the gist of it. And I’d mull that over in my mind a lot. That was one of my favorite songs.

Anyway, so there was something else going on, too, for *me*, at that time. At the Maritime Bookshop—I’m quite sure that’s where I ran across it—I ran across a copy of or an excerpted pamphlet of Ludwig Feuerbach’s book, *The Essence of Christianity*, I think it was called. I remember reading it over and over and over and over again. It had a similar impact as my very early reading

of Ingersoll, the great atheist, and it brought back to me all of my *basic* atheistic feelings—all of that undercurrent of questioning, doubt, and skepticism that I had had, along with these occasional bouts of mysticism and metaphysics and all that sort of thing. Underneath it all was this basic skepticism about religion, about any religion, and particularly the kind of Christianity that I had been exposed to in my family. And here was this *wonderful, brilliant, clear* statement by Feuerbach that all religions and gods were projections of human consciousness. This was very much like—later when I read Marx—the idea that consciousness does not produce being, but being produces consciousness. Feuerbach enunciated that in terms of religion in the most, to me, startlingly clear way—that gods and, therefore, also religious systems, were projections of the human mind, of human cultures, of the way people view themselves on one level, either at their best or at their worst.

That meant a great deal to me. It sort of expressed what I had always had semiconsciously thought and believed. In fact, I developed a kind of a motto for myself that I didn’t believe in gods and could not believe in gods, but damn it, I was a respecter of them, [laughter] because they were powerful, because they made things happen. Human beings had created them to make things happen and to express what they were, and that you could tell a lot about people, about cultures in the terms of the kind of gods they had—what their gods stood for, what their gods meant. And there could be good gods, bad gods, intermediate figures of all sorts, and when you saw what the gods stood for and all the minor gods that surrounded them—like even the Christian god that comes in many, many forms, depending on what parts of the Scriptures one reads and what groups

of Christians one encounters—"god" is a different kind of a god and stands for different things, and tells you a lot about the people who believed in their kind of god. So this to me was a revelation. I remember being thrilled by this little tool I had, to think through the whole question of religion. And it firmed up my non-mystical, my anti-mystical, skeptical orientation to a considerable degree during that time. Along with a lot of other things that were happening to me, this made a great deal of sense.

*I just wanted to ask you if at this time you considered it a tool for understanding individual people, or were you thinking in terms of different cultures and societies?*

Well, both, both. I mean it was a kind of a tool in the sense of when you ask people or listen to people when they talked about religion and talk about God, or talk about spiritual essences and values of the world, you sort of get a tag on the kind of people they are, what they believe, what they feel is important, what their values are. And I remember from then on, all my life, in conversations about religion, I'd always ask more questions than offer opinions; I was deeply curious about what people had to say about what their gods stood for, what Jesus meant to a Christian.

And you'd find this wonderful variety of responses, the things that were picked out of a whole range of legend and myth that a person would pull out that was more meaningful to them than something else. Sure. So it told you something about individuals, but it also told you something about whole cultures and people, you know, what they stood for. And there were always the dissidents who said, "No, that isn't what the gods said; that's not what God believed. God believed something

else." And then there was all the critique of religion within the religions themselves that tells you about the different kinds of people who were involved in the religious system or organization. Sure. To me it was like finding a laboratory process.

*Do you think the atheism, a question of lack of belief on your part, as just on a different level being able to be objective and sample anything you . . . any system, any thought process you wanted to explore?*

No, it wasn't that big. I'd like to think I had had a philosophical transcendence breakthrough. [laughter] No, not that big. Just the idea that here was a series of statements, a way of looking at the things that I had been looking at, that was powerful, that made sense, that, when you applied it, told you something about reality.

*Now, was Feuerbach a philosopher, a social critic?*

He . . . what was Feuerbach? He was a scholar; I guess he was a philosopher, but I have to go look; I have to find out, but he was a very important figure. In fact, later Marx and Engels were affected by him and utilized his ideas, and then wrote a great critique about Feuerbach, because they didn't agree with him fully. They felt that he had romanticized religion; he had actually created the basis for the "new religion," rather than undermining the whole concept of religion.

*Was Durkheim writing at this time? Didn't he explore . . . ?*

He may have, but at that time I wasn't aware of Durkheim's work.

Anyway, one of the things of Feuerbach's that I will never forget—it was so important, in fact, that I even jotted it down—because he talked about change: how all religions change, how they evolve in terms of human beings, how human beings evolved and developed, that their religions and their gods change with them, and that this is the projection from the human consciousness, the human mind. And then he made this wonderful remark. He said, "Thus do things change. What yesterday was still religion is no longer such today. And what today is atheism tomorrow will be religion." [laughter]

That was the sort of enigmatic statement that I love, because it sort of threw every-

thing into this great spinning wheel of how ideologies develop. And it's true: the way many convinced atheists codify their system of atheism to such a degree that in a sense it becomes another kind of religion, or *any* kind of ideology that becomes rigid is in a sense another kind of projection, another kind of religion. This was very meaningful to me. It helped me do a lot of critical thinking at that time and to try to find my way out of a paper bag that I had been in for so many years.

So that was going on, and at the same time, see, Germany had lost the war in April, before I took my next ship. This was just about the time of Roosevelt's death; everything was happening at the same time.



ON THE *DAY STAR*

THERE WAS Victory Day, V-Day, in San Francisco, I remember, as I was on my next ship in the bay. We were getting ready to go; we were out at anchor, fully loaded and ready to leave and here was this *tremendous* celebration. We are on the ship; we couldn't get ashore, but the lights were on. You could hear the horns and the sounds of shouting and exultation on both sides of the bay. The whole bay was lit up, there was this enormous celebration going on. And because we were apart from it, I remember the crew sitting out on deck, looking out at all this, being really very cynical—a sense of apartness, you know. Here, Germany had surrendered, and that's great, but here we are, loading a troop ship. In fact, the troops were still coming, being shipped out to us in the bay to go out into the Pacific, because Japan was still at war with us. And we had this feeling of, "Oh, yeah?" you know, "Victory Day for who?"

However, some interesting things were happening. The NMU, the National Maritime Union, had struck on the East Coast. And this is something that I was very

impressed by. They had struck because ships were already being diverted for commodity trade on the East Coast by the shipping companies. The NMU struck to support using the ships to bring the troops back from Europe and from North Africa and wherever else they were stationed.

They had a one-day strike in support of bringing the troops home, which made many ship owners and the War Shipping Administration very angry, because they were trying *already* to diversify the use of the ships, which were getting in short-supply. The United States did not have as many ships as they needed at that time, and it was getting to be a problem. And, of course, the war was still going on in the Pacific, so there was this great problem of not only the war, but what to do about the changing trade situation in the Atlantic.

By the way, that went on for two or three years, the whole business of the great rush of the United States to *control* the trade and the distribution of commodities to Europe, and the Marshall Plan and all that, which our union was very much opposed to. And most

of the unions were opposed to the Marshall Plan, seeing it as undermining the American merchant marine in a way, but also creating a situation in which trade union interests in wages, et cetera, would be diminished; those interests would be diminished in the interest of getting goods to Europe. At the same time we were very aware of what that movement meant. It meant the great corporations in the United States, the great industries, wanted very much to get in there first, to get into the depressed European market and help rebuild, in quotes, “poor, downtrodden Europe.” Oh, we were very cynical!

I remember we were sitting around the deck as troops were being brought up in these big barges, loaded on. I think we took on fifteen hundred troops. We weren't sure where we were going, but people were saying, “We're going to the western Pacific.” And it could have been anyplace, you know—Japan, Iwo Jima, which had been taken earlier; it could've been Okinawa. We didn't learn till we were out at sea that we were, in fact, going to Okinawa.

*So this was the Day Star.*

This was on the *Day Star*. Yes. [laughter] I'm sorry, Penny, we haven't gotten through these ships yet, or the war! [laughter]

*Well, if you were cynical, I wonder . . . the troops must have felt really . . .*

I don't remember how they felt, except it was a very ragged, scraggly bunch of guys that came aboard. This was toward the end of the war, and things were not as—what was the word we used to use?—gung ho as they had been. And there was a feeling of, “You're going *now* to risk your life, when it may not

even be necessary, and lord knows what's happening over there.”

But I can't speak too much to that, because I don't remember that we talked a lot about that. We just saw them coming aboard and going again into these awful holds and feeling very sympathetic with them. I just remember the crew—I was on watch, and there were three or four guys—watching all this excitement going on ashore, and we weren't in it. [laughter] All the wonderful mayhem and orgiastic activity was going on, and we weren't there to appreciate it, to be in on it! Nevertheless, it was wonderful that that part of the war was over, and yet there was this sense of doom at the other side of the world, where we were going to be heading.

Then there was a question of the Selective Service Act at any time maybe was going to being lifted, and we as seamen didn't know what that would mean for us. It didn't happen until the end of 1945, beginning of 1946, that it was lifted for merchant seamen, but the selective service still went on. There was still a minimal draft, because there were all sorts of problems. I think the Truman administration wanted to lift this Selective Service Act, but Congress didn't want them to, because they wanted to maintain at least a minimal kind of draft procedure to keep the army and the navy, because there was a tremendous amount of attrition—people were leaving.

So while all that was happening, we headed off on the *SS Day Star*, west—this loaded troop ship, heading, as we learned when we got out, for Okinawa. There wasn't the feeling of excitement on that trip that I remember on previous ones, where even though everybody was grouching and, you know, worried about subs . . . and no matter



what kind of orders we got, they were wrong—you know everything was always *wrong*. Nevertheless, there was an excitement about the war still going on, and we were doing something; we were accomplishing something. And on this trip there wasn't. There was a feeling of going into a dark, hopeless kind of situation, because the word was that Iwo Jima had been taken, oh, that Japan was being bombed, that major cities were being bombed at that time.

So the idea was, just almost *any time* the Japanese were going to surrender, but in the meantime people were dying, you know; that was on everybody's mind. "At any moment the war may be ended, but the poor sons of bitches who are being sent in there *now* might be killed. Most of them *will* be killed," as they were. And you know, "What good could those few days mean?" So there was that feeling on the ship. Among the troops, I remember, it wasn't dolorous; everybody wasn't sitting around mournful, but there was this kind of feeling like, "What the hell are we doing here? When is this goddamned thing going to get over?" and all that.

A lot of irritation among the crew, I remember, about small things. There wasn't the same kind of camaraderie that you had on most ships. Even if you didn't like the people that you were shipping with, you felt you were all in it together.

And there were reports of submarines, though nobody could believe there could be any Japanese submarines as far east as where we were and where we were then going, because Japan had really been pushed back, and we had control of most of the seas all the way from the Aleutians down to Iwo Jima and the Philippines, et cetera, and were now concentrating on Japan itself. So even though we had reports of submarines around . . . which was quite possible because there was a

desperation in the Japanese situation at that time. They might have been sending out submarines to make some show of resistance or attack. But we weren't very impressed by that possibility.

One anecdote occurs to me that is an example of the mood on board. It took place one night on watch. The second mate, who was a navigator, was out taking a sighting for navigation, getting a fix. And he came in and says, "Goddamn it, I can't get the . . . " I forget what star he was trying to get a fix on. "I can't get the son of a bitch."

And I was saying, "Well, mate, just wait a few minutes, and go back again. Maybe your eyes are getting watery thinking about your girlfriend."

He said, "I'm not thinking about my goddamned girlfriend." He said, "You know the last time I saw her? She's an astrologer." [laughter] And he says, "You know, she was making my chart, and she was saying, 'You know, Uranus is rising on your chart.'" And he says, "What do you mean my anus? It's your anus we're worried about." [laughter]

And I remember saying to him, you know, "For god's sakes, you know, you sound like everything's going wrong."

He said, "I can't get a sight on this goddamned star. I want that fix, or we're going to be going around in circles," and he says, "And then I'm thinking, she asked me about 'your anus.' Well, the hell with my anus, what about her anus!" [laughter]

I just remember that because it was a touching and beautiful moment on the bridge. [laughter] The second mate tramping back and forth trying to get a fix for the sextant.

Anyway, I don't have a very clear recollection of that trip across, just that it was crowded, and it wasn't like in the tropics; it was cold. So the troops coming up on deck

were always all bundled up in their smelly, dirty clothes, because they couldn't wash them; some would try and throw their stuff over side, and it would take days for it to dry. Oh, there's nothing like seawater that hasn't been completely dried out—it stinks. And after a day or two of wearing damp, seawater-washed clothing, you stink! And so everybody stank, and I remember that. And there was a lot of grouching.

*Were you delegate again?*

No, I don't think I was delegate on this trip, but the next one. I don't recall. If I was delegate, I don't remember doing anything about it. [laughter] I don't know that we had any beefs that you could do anything about. You had the feeling you were out in no-man's-land, no-man's-sea. And I don't know if there would have been anything we could have complained about. I don't remember that we had any beefs with the officers—maybe we did, but I don't recall. But I *do* recall the feeling of going into the unknown and a sense of depression. There was a lot of depression on that ship.

On our way to Okinawa, we had some engine trouble and had to pull off of Midway and get some parts, some help before we moved on. Midway is past the main Hawaiian chain, and way out beyond. There had been a Pan-American airfield there after 1935, then a U.S. Naval base through 1941 or so that the Japanese had taken, and then we finally got them off of Midway in the early 1940s. So by the time we got there it was a major base. And we were told by the guys coming aboard from Midway, you know, "Oh, Jesus, you guys are going west—too bad you're not going east. [laughter] You don't want to go out there! Things are rugged out there.

They're really bad." This kind of stuff was going on. And so then we headed on.

And from there I think we had a small convoy, a couple of destroyers were with us—not to protect us, but they were going, too, and a navy supply ship was with us, too.

*So you weren't taking troops to Midway; you were going . . . ?*

No, no, we didn't even have a chance to go ashore, and who would want to? You looked out at this little strip out there. It was a very remote and isolated-looking place. No, we just stayed there a day, not even at anchor. I think we just sort of steamed around waiting for something that we had to have from shore, then off we went.

And a few days later we approached Okinawa Bay on the eastern side of the island—this large bay that was *crammed* with ships of all kinds: merchant ships, navy vessels of all kinds, a large battleship or two, and it was just crammed, everywhere you looked. That bay was a very large one, and, you know, for miles you'd just see ships. And as we came in, in the afternoon, I can remember we could *hear* it; we could *hear* the battle going on in Okinawa. This must have been in early or mid June, I think. And you could just hear the thunder, and as it got darker, at twilight, the lights of this battle back and forth—you could see these great tracers going across the sky. I had never been *that* close to battle, and it was terribly oppressive, a feeling of . . . it wasn't fear. Some of the troops and crew and all were, after we anchored, just standing, looking at the shoreline of this *glowing* set of tracers and bombs going off from both sides. You could see where the battle lines were, from the sort of northern part where our people were and southern part where the

Japanese were. And this went on and on and on all night. In fact, the sound was so huge, at times there would be shells that would go off on land that would shake the ship—I mean, actually shake the water, the sea that we were in, in the bay. You could feel it through the whole ship, you know—karump, karump, karump.

So that went on all night and for a couple of days. And then all during this, during the day, little by little trying to get the troops off. And they didn't have enough of these amphibian landing boats, or barges, so the troops could only get off little by little. And as each of this bunch went, I remember all of us feeling, you know, an awful feeling that the guys were going *there*. They're going into *that*, you know. Oh, it was just so . . . that was awful. It was awful *watching* them go.

And it took, I think, two or three days for 1200 to 1500 men to get off the ship. And they were a sad bunch—stinking, trying to look brave and like they didn't give a damn. But, you know, they were miserable, and they could *see* what was happening where they were going.

And while it was happening, particularly during the day, every hour or so we'd hear this great commotion of all the ships' guns going off, the tracer shells going up in a little V up in the sky, and there would be kamikazes moving around up there, and then you'd hear "zzzz" like bees, and they would come down, and once or twice they'd crash into a ship. And we heard that one ship at some distance was sunk by a kamikaze. This was the last, desperate moments during the Pacific war, of the Okinawa battle.

*Was there any radio chatter that . . . you know, you said you used to go to the Sparks Radio Shack to try and follow . . .*

Oh, I've missed that. Coming over we'd get radio broadcasts. As I can recall, we got very little news, and it was very bad.

So this battle for Okinawa had been going on from just about the time that we had gotten on the ship back in San Francisco early in April, through May and June. We had come into Okinawa Bay in mid June, so this had been going on for two months or more. One of the worst battles of the Pacific actually took place in Okinawa—one of the bloodiest, one of the most indescribably horrible battles, and we were seeing it there before us, like a hellish panorama. For days we were watching it; day and night these guns were going.

We could also see the slow diminishing of the firing from the south where our troops were moving through the Japanese lines. We could actually see this change. And although we didn't get any detailed reports of what was going on there on the island, we would get reports like, "Things are looking up. We are moving in."

We didn't learn till later that out of 200,000 or more Japanese, oh, god, let's see, 130,000 or 140,000 had been killed on the island. And we had 50,000 or more wounded, many of those dead. And it was a *terrible* thing. We learned about these figures later. But we could *see* it was awful. And all the word that would come from the island would be depressing.

*Was this by radio?*

Well, now and then from people coming up to take the troops. These guys on the pontoon boats, you know, would make little comments, like, "It's pretty bad; it's pretty awful." Oh, and then these kamikaze planes—every few hours we'd hear these

planes and hear all the shooting from the ships, and we'd know that these were kamikazes. At distance we could see them falling into the bay, being shot down. Some would go into the bay. *Every* now and then one would hit a ship. And although we didn't see it, one large cruiser or something had been, I think, sunk in the bay, and at any time it could be us.

And then there was that one day in which we heard the guns stop. I think it was on the twenty-first of June, when the Japanese had finally been completely demolished and with a few survivors, probably had surrendered at that time. And it just came to a stop, deadly still. There is a feeling that one can't describe when something like this happens—this noise for days, and then suddenly *nothing*, absolutely nothing. And everything was still. The day was still; there was no sound from the other ships. But everybody was still listening although the battle seemed to have stopped.

And *while* we were listening, we heard this *deadly, stealthy* sound; this little buzz going on in the sky. And our ship began to fire, and some other ships nearby, and it almost threw us off our feet. I forget what millimeter they were, but seldom did you ever experience those guns going off. But when they did, the plates of the ship would just buckle, and you would be thrown practically down, worse than any earthquake you've ever experienced. [laughter] And they started going off, and we looked up, and the tracers were going out toward one little spot in the sky. And there was this kamikaze wheeling around and diving *right* toward the group of ships that we were in. And it just kept coming like a little hornet, you know, rrrrrr, down, and all the tracers following it. And it hit I would say about fifty yards from our ship, between us and another ship. It had been

deflected, and it hit the water, broke up, and everyone was cheering, you know. And well, between our ship and the next, we saw a head bobbing. It was the pilot, who was still alive, you know. And a little pontoon boat went out, with guys with their guns ready and all that, you know, and picked this poor, be-draggled kid up, and brought him to our ship first, as he was nearest us.

And I wrote something down in my notebook at the time. Yes, I say, "Suddenly one day there was silence. Word flashed among the convoyed ships that the Japanese troops had surrendered, ending the carnage on one of the last bastions of the war. The cheers of hundreds of crews strung out on the wind like cries of sea birds. But in the midst of this strangely dispersed and mirthless celebration, sirens began to wail again, and anti-aircraft guns on dozens of nearby vessels blasted away at a swarm of tiny dots in the sky." (Oh, it was more than one.) "One of these specks dove down directly toward us until we could make out the markings and pathetically antique structure of a kamikaze plane. It crashed unexploded into the sea, scarcely twenty yards to our starboard." Oh, this is more exact than what I was telling you. "The pilot was thrown clear and, miraculously alive, was dragged from the water by an oddly gentle and unvengeful navy launch crew." I remember that. They were very nice to him. [laughter] I think they were stunned. Nobody knew what to do, you know. "The sole living remnant of a failed suicide squadron," because the other ones had been shot down, ". . . crouched spiritless among his captors, barely fifteen years old, we learned, unaware of the surrender . . ."—because he was probably sent off before anybody probably told him about the surrender—" . . . and stunned by unintended survival." He expected to die. "I got a brief glimpse of his fine and passive face

as the launch sped off to a nearby destroyer. And in that unforgettable instant, I confronted the fleeting images of all those demarcated persons,” and I have here noted, like Kyoshi, my friend at college, and Motofuji in Hawaii, “who I had known, who along with me were caught up in a web of circumstance beyond our comprehension or control. What would any of us be like, having grown up in the countries of our parents or grandparents that they had come from? What would the war, or anything else, mean to us then? What made a kamikaze pilot, a Nazi brownshirt, a good soldier? For that matter, what made any of us what we were? And as we leaned against the ship rail, I remember one of us, one of the crew, saying, ‘He must have been doped,’ [laughter] and another guy saying, ‘We *all* are.’ And that tense exchange stuck with me during the coming months.” Anyway, that was something that I wrote at the time that gives something of the quality of the experience to me.

We were told that one of the officers from our ship had to go ashore for some reason, to leave some reports or get some directives as to what we were to do, to sign off the troops that had been taken off and all that. And two or three members of the crew went along with them. I didn’t *really* want to go, but if I had had a chance, I would have gone. But when they came back, I’ll never forget, this one dumb, young kid had a skull that he had gotten from some of the soldiers. It was a Japanese skull, and it had been carved—it probably was from months before, you know—and here it was, a clean, sea-washed skull, and the top was cut off for a kind of lantern for candles! And I remember one of the crew, very angry, saying, “What the fuck are you doing with that damn thing? I don’t want it on our ship. It’s bad luck. What do

you mean bringing something like that aboard the ship?” You know, he was really deeply offended by this kid.

He didn’t know any better. You know, he was going to take it home to his mother or something so she would see what a great souvenir. And then one of the crew said, “Why don’t you get a jar of Jap penises. You know, they’re supposed to be selling them all over the Pacific. Why don’t you bring her something important?” That kind of bantering went on. But that kid, he kept that damn thing and put a candle in it and had it in his fo’c’s’le. And even his fo’c’s’le mates couldn’t stand him, you know, and they wanted to get rid of him, and they were complaining. But it was his, and he had a right to it, this darned Japanese skull. [laughter]

So I think we went back empty on that trip. I don’t recall we had any kind of cargo to bring back. Oh, there were a few wounded soldiers who we took back.

*Were there other merchant marines in the bay?*

There were, and in my early notes I have the names of two or three merchant ships where we knew people aboard, but I can’t remember what they were. We didn’t get a chance to communicate with any of them at that time. It was a messy situation. You didn’t do what you wanted to. You went in and waited and got out as soon as you could.

So, anyway, I think we had some wounded troops aboard—not seriously wounded, just guys that needed to get back. I don’t know what kind of hospital facilities there were either on Okinawa or on the navy ships, but apparently others were going elsewhere. With 48,000 to 50,000 American casualties and the Japanese almost totally wiped out—200,000 of them or so almost totally wiped out—you know, we wouldn’t

expect that any of those guys would be ready to take a long trip on a merchant ship home, you know, without medical facilities. But I remember we had maybe a couple dozen or something, guys that were on crutches or had wounds and things of that kind—apparently guys that could be taken care of by us.

We headed back to San Francisco, and I don't remember any particular event going back, except we were somewhat empty, so it was a very rough trip. The ship was extremely light and bouncing around. But I remember feeling depression; I think everybody was depressed.

*So there was no surety that the war was over, right?*

No. No, that was shortly coming. You see, this was June, and the Japanese surrender was in August, and I was on the *Neptune's Car*, which I will talk about in a moment. But I came back, and I only had a couple of weeks. I don't really recall that couple of weeks

between the *Day Star* and the *Neptune's Car*, or that we even knew what was happening. But I know that I had to ship out right away for some reason, or that I had a chance to ship out. And by the way, the pay was better on these damned trips of this kind. You know, you got war-area pay. It wasn't very much, but it brought our pay up to about what the navy was getting, [laughter] but, nevertheless, it was better pay than we had on other trips.

Oh, there was a lot of ferment on the waterfront. There was a lot of talk of strikes. And in fact, at the end of that year the Committee for Maritime Unity, the CIO Maritime Committee, et cetera, were already beginning to make demands about the end of the war, payments, wages, and I think they were beginning to talk about the Seaman's Bill of Rights and things of that kind. There was a lot of this kind of thing going on, but I don't recall being much involved in it. Certainly I must have seen Kathy and our parents, but I don't recall that.

## THE END OF THE WAR

I REMEMBER almost immediately getting on the *Neptune's Car*. I shipped on *Neptune's Car* August twelfth, and that was just after August sixth—right after Hiroshima.

The atom bomb was dropped just a few days before we left. And all I can remember about that is this terrible shock that something awful had happened and that we were going back into that area. And I'm not even clear about what the reaction was at that time.

*Now in hindsight, we know how immense the effect was, and there are all these testimonies from the people that were on the Enola Gay and what they saw, you know, but was there any sense of that at the time, back in the states?*

Yes. Yes. We knew it was terrible, and it was enormous, that it was beyond anybody's comprehension, and that it had almost destroyed the city. And there was a lot of jubilation. I mean, people were saying, "Oh, we're going to get those damn Japs now, you know. What are they going to do?" And also just a

lot of shock among the people I knew. It was unbelievable. Do you recall that, Kath?

Kd: Oh, I remember when it was dropped. We were living on Chestnut Street in Alameda, and I guess that Anya was not yet a year old. I remember, you know, the total *stunned* feeling that everybody had. It was so awful, you could hardly dare to think about it. And I remember Oppenheimer's statement about his seeing God or something like that when the bomb went off. I think he was referring back to Los Alamos when they tested it. There was a revival of some of that information and some of the worry. Everybody knew that it was a marker of some kind and that nothing would be the same. ["I am become death the destroyer of worlds" is the much quoted text from the *Bagavad Gita* Robert Oppenheimer is said to have uttered when the first atom bomb was successfully tested, July 16, 1945.]

Yes, there was a halfhearted kind of celebration, you know. We'd done it. We had finally put the Japanese where they should

be. I mean, they now would have to recognize that they couldn't go on fighting their kamikaze-like, total resistance to the very end. On the other hand, I don't remember anything but depression—the sense of shock. Wonder of wonders.

Kd: Oh, I just know that it was an *enormous* event that nobody could quite grasp, except that you *knew* that it marked the beginning of something very new and terribly scary.

Yes. And then just a few days later, on the ninth, I guess, of August, Nagasaki. So these things just came *right* after one another.

*Did the public have any notion that a second bomb was going to be dropped?*

Not that I remember.

Kd: None.

No, I think all of this just happened. I don't think anybody knew that . . . they knew there was a bomb and that threats had been made about us having a bomb, but I don't know if anybody had any advanced notice that it was going to be dropped.

Kd: It was a total shock, as I remember.

*Did the second one generate any . . . was there any critique at the time?*

If there was, I don't remember it. I'm sure there was, but it would have been *very* muffled. Anybody *opposed* to this would have had a hard time making a public expression.

Kd: Well, you were quiet about it because everybody was so happy that the war was coming to an end, clearly.

Yes, there were things in the papers about, "We've saved thousands of American lives by doing this." It was all that kind of thing. But I don't think anybody felt jubilant. There were some, of course, but I mean, there wasn't that mood of celebration. *But* then there *was* a *kind* of the feeling of celebration a few days later when Japan surrendered, I think on the fourteenth. And that was the end of the war. They had surrendered. So then that put the bomb dropping in perspective. "Oh, we had to do it, and it was a good thing to do because it brought the war to an end, and thousands more lives would have been lost on both sides. So a few hundred thousand in Nagasaki and Hiroshima, aside . . ." [laughter] I would like to go back over the newspapers of that time and see what was really going on in the press. I don't remember.

As we know now, there was a great deal of confusion in the government about the whole issue of the bomb and the use of it, and charges and countercharges. But at that time, I don't think the general public had any idea of anything, except something enormous had happened, beyond anybody's comprehension. And yet it had brought an end to the war from their point of view. I think Kathy's right that most of the people we knew were just stunned. You hardly knew what to say.

Kd: Well, it was beyond your ability to understand. But you knew it was awful, and you knew that human beings given what they are and not forgetting would go on using it or trying to.



And it was a frightening portent of the future. What is this going to mean? You know, what are we going to *do* with this? What are others going to do with it? On and on.

Oh, this was the signal for the Cold War. And the following year it popped up because, "Supposing the Soviet Union got this? Supposing certain other countries got it? We have to keep it a secret." And would it ever be used against us?

Oh the United Nations was meeting that year. The first United Nations conferences in San Francisco were taking place. So *all* of this was happening at once, with the idea, it can never happen again. It was like after the First World War, my parents saying, "This will never happen again. This is going to be the last war, the war to end all wars." Well, the idea was now, it had to be, because you could kill off the whole human race and destroy the planet. So a tremendous amount of *that* sort of feeling was going on. "What can we do?" In fact, I have some letters that I think you [Kathy d'Azevedo] wrote, that you and Doris and Ellen Phillipsborn were going to meetings in San Francisco.

Kd: Yes.

You were hearing all kinds of speakers, talking about the future. "What are we going to do?"

Kd: Oh, these were terribly hopeful times.

Well, and worried.

Kd: Yes. But very hopeful.

*Do you mean hopeful in terms of some . . . ?*

Things have got to change for the better.

Kd: And the fact that, you know, Roosevelt had been such a positive leader and had set forth such positive principles for trying to resolve problems in the world.

But then Truman was not somebody we felt that positive about.

*I was going to ask later, but I'll ask now. I did want to know if the role of Eleanor Roosevelt was in any way a prominent part of the labor . . . ?*

Oh, yes. To us, to people we knew.

Kd: To everybody.

Yes, maybe to everybody, but I thought there was an awful lot of criticism about her, too.

Kd: She was very revered.

Yes, the people we knew looked upon her as a very heroic woman, as a woman of great principle, somebody who we trusted. Didn't we meet her? Was that later that we met her daughter, Anna Roosevelt? I remember going to progressive parties, one where she was. Do you remember meeting her then?

Kd: She came to visit, where I was working.

Oh. That's right.

Kd: She came to Children's Hospital, in Oakland. The Oakland Child Development Center was a highly experimental, very well thought of treatment program for young chil-

dren. And she was one of the many visitors who came through there to see . . . .

*I was wondering about Eleanor's role, because you said that in general, Roosevelt was regarded by the labor progressive movement as a progressive president. And I just wondered if she was considered even . . . ?*

She was thought of as more outspokenly progressive because he was caught in the web of . . . .

Kd: Oh, I think she also was known to push him to the Left. Oh, he used her information and her point of view and her experience with communities in the country very well, I think.

She was highly admired by people we cared about. I mean, she was a clear, positive force. And I guess there *was* the idea that she had the ear of the president, and she would affect his . . . .

Kd: I just remember when we stayed in New York during the NMU convention.

Nineteen forty-seven or nineteen forty-eight, yes.

Kd: Yes. In the Weiss's apartment on Central Park West. It was so beautiful. And Louis Weiss, who knew the Roosevelts, had a big picture of Eleanor, inscribed personally to him, on his dresser. And he loved her. And he said, "Franklin would never be the man he is . . .

Without Eleanor. [laughter]

Kd: . . . if he didn't have Eleanor."

No, but there was also a lot of hatred of her . . . .

Kd: Oh, yes.

Just like there is of Hillary Clinton, but she had her admirers. She certainly wasn't a very pretty person or good-looking person or anything like that, as I remember, but she had a tremendous amount of power and dignity. I couldn't stand the way she spoke—her intonation and all that. I don't know where it came from. Nevertheless, she had important things to say, and she was usually on what we considered the right side of issues.

Kd: Oh, very much so.

We had great admiration for her.

So, I came back very briefly, and just as I got on the *Neptune's Car*, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and the Japanese surrender *while* I was at sea—just two or three days after we got to sea. We heard first, this shock of the atomic bombs, and then suddenly the Japanese surrender.

I remember on the *Neptune's Car*—although I'm sure it was jubilation expressed everywhere in the country about this—everybody was just sort of depressed. Probably there are many reasons for that.

The *raison d'être* of our kind of work and the kinds of things we were doing—the war—was gone. You know, we were no longer these heroic figures going to sea. That was one part of it.

The other part was where we were going; we were going west, and we had heard we probably were going to Japan. It was interesting and all that, but it was just a terribly depressing thing. *Also*, there was all kinds of talk on the ship that came through the radio

operators' set about fallout, you know, about the dangers of atomic fallout.

*So that was acknowledged.*

Well, it was acknowledged that it was there, but nobody knew how extensive. Nobody knew how *really* bad it was.

*But you did know what it was?*

Yes, we knew that there was a drifting danger and all that, but none of us realized how serious it really was. But this is just part of the view that something horrible had happened out there, and the war was over, a dismal, depressed "end of an era," a *fin de siècle* feeling about, "What now? What now?"

Oh! And I got word that the bomb was going to be dropped on Bikini in 1946. It hadn't happened yet, but I remembered back, when we had gone through the South Pacific, the Ellice Islands, and had taken that one poor, old man from Bikini, who wanted to visit his relatives, and who had heard that they were going to be moved. This was much before anybody ever said that the Bikinians had been contacted. But obviously they had some idea that it was going to happen. So here two or three years later the bomb was dropped on Bikini.

All those things were . . . it was an unpleasant time. Also, I think among the crew, the merchant crew, there was the feeling that we were no longer going to have the status that we had. "We're just a bunch of lousy seamen," you know. [laughter]

Kd: A lot of uncertainty about the future.

There was a lot of uncertainty about the future for good reason, because it was going to happen.

*What were you taking to . . . ?*

As I remember, the cargo was commodities. When we got to Yokohama, I found out what most of it was. It was mostly cigarettes and liquor, you know. [laughter] There were a lot of other things, too—you know, a lot of things for the American troops that were going to be stationed there. Lord knows what else we had, but it was loaded with cigarettes and liquor!

I can't remember what sort of images I may have had in my mind or others had, as we were approaching Japan or Yokohama—what we were thinking in terms of what we would find, the fact we were actually going to be seeing the Japanese, now a conquered people. And Hiroshima and Nagasaki had just happened. All those things had to be on our minds, but at the moment I can't recall what kind of expectations we had. All I know is when we finally got to dock in Yokohama in a very crowded harbor, with mostly American ships, and had our first glimpse of the town, the city, Yokohama, in rubble—it was devastated—I think we took it for granted.

We had gotten across the Pacific to Japan, which had stood in the center of all of the problems that we had had in the Pacific since the early 1940s. There was all of the characterization of the Japanese as barbaric and vicious and horrible, and their social system as totally despotic. And the idea of the emperor and the rising sun and of Japan having almost taken all of east Asia and the Pacific islands, then having been slowly driven back

by us, and all the battles that were reported and the feeling of at last the country had been conquered.

And here we were just a couple of weeks after the armistice. MacArthur signed the peace treaty on the battleship *Missouri* in Tokyo harbor September second of 1945, and we were there just a couple of weeks or so after that. As I remember, the feeling was, "Well, here we are, and the war is finished, and here is what they have." Oh, I can remember guys saying, "Well, they got what they deserved," looking at this rubble of this city.

Cargo was being taken off our ship, and as I said earlier, I can remember slings going over the side with cases and cases of liquor from the holds, of Scotch and bourbon and brandy and cigarettes. [laughter] I had the impression that half of our cargo was cigarettes. And Coca-Cola and all of the trappings of American life were going over the side, and I suppose mostly for our troops. There was other cargo as well—equipment of various kinds. I don't remember the details, but we had a fairly substantial cargo.

And watching as cargo was being unloaded over the side, I became deeply interested in who was getting it and how it was being handled on the dock. It was mostly army trucks coming and picking up the cargo and taking it away. But there were also some Japanese laborers, and they were a very scroungy-looking bunch. I'm not sure what role they had, but there were these very emaciated-looking Japanese on the dock as well.

And one thing that fascinated me was watching the pilfering. [laughter] I mean, merchant seamen are well known for pilfering. Not well known, but I mean we did it, and it was talked about and rumored. I can remember when I was on the YPO up in Kotzebue and Skagway, where one of the sea-

men was accused of taking steaks ashore in a Bible. [laughter] I mean, there were ingenious ways of pilfering and getting things off of ships.

There were a lot of times when, as far as I'm concerned, it was legitimate pilfering. You know, when the troops would be taken back to American ports during the war, they would leave all their gear on board ship, and most of that stuff was either tossed over the side at sea or picked up for lord knows what—maybe just as rubbish before we would leave on the next trip. And, of course, we would take coats; I got some myself, a wonderful Seabee jacket and some woolen dungarees and socks and shoes and things of that kind. And we would all do that, because we'd argue, it was all going to be tossed anyway. So I looked upon that as benign pilfering and, you know, when some guy took home some steak for his girlfriend or his mother or whatever was laying around the ship. [laughter]

There were some cases of merchant seamen and others being caught and fined, sometimes sent to jail for pilfering, but that was for large amounts, taking something very valuable. But the petty pilfering that we did, I considered to be the part of the loot of war, [laughter] and I know the army and the navy outdid us, because they had *good* equipment; they had *good* things to pilfer, and we had the dregs.

But anyway, there at the Yokohama docks, I can remember *clearly*—it was something that really stuck in my mind—seeing certain trucks come in, picking up a load of liquor and cigarettes, and rather than going the way of the other trucks, being motioned in another direction. [laughter] And that would happen about every four or five trucks; there would be some that went another way. And, of course, the rumor was, with proba-

bly a degree of reality, that this was a very flourishing army black market activity.

When I finally got ashore I could see why. I mean, a pack of cigarettes could buy what would be in this country fifty, twenty dollars worth of goods. I mean, you had the impoverished Japanese living in hovels in the burned-out and blasted-out buildings. And they had little markets already, flourishing small markets—a family or two or three people sitting in the rubble with some objects laid out in front of them. You know, for a carton of cigarettes you could have almost anything in sight.

Not only that, people *gave* you things if you looked at it. You just felt you were really among a people who had been brought to the bottom of the heap, and that they in every way were trying to placate the Americans, as though the Americans were going to just kill them or destroy them. I remember feeling terribly weird and even guilty going through town and having people kowtow to me, as though myself and my shipmates, somehow or other were going to hurt them. And these people were really ragged. There were some who weren't, of course; there always are.

I have something I want to read that I wrote shortly after I was there. I recalled the feeling I had in Okinawa about this Japanese “kamikaze kid” falling into the sea, and instead of dying as he expected to do—and would have been to him a noble death—he gets picked up by the enemy and carried aboard. Fourteen, fifteen years old, a scared, totally emaciated kid. And I remembered when one of my shipmates said, “He must have been doped or something,” because he acted so somnambulistic, and another guy saying, “Well, we all are.” And I . . . [laughter] I had the feeling in Yokohama, that this is the ultimate high on the dope of war—the conquerors coming into this absolutely devastated area, where people had a few months before been going about their business, involved in supporting *their* war with businesses flourishing and the city still somewhat intact. It had been pretty well bombed very early. Yokohama along with Tokyo had been bombed repeatedly by Americans. But anyway, there was that feeling of, “So this is it. *This* is what we've done. This is what we have. What are we going to do with this?”



THE WHOLE Okinawa experience was with me all through August on the *Neptune's Car* as we were going to Japan. And when the news about Hiroshima and Nagasaki came, we knew that there were smoldering ruins just to the south of us, I mean, where *tens of thousands* of people had been killed. So all this was with me when we docked at Yokohama in September, where we were [reads] “to unload a cargo largely of cigarettes, beer, and bourbon, et cetera, into the beds of waiting military trucks. In the streets of that bombed out city, the ragged people bowed as we passed as though grateful we did not harm them, and even the most slipshod or otherwise unlikely of us were treated as benign conquerors.

“But I also remember feeling a deep sense of relief and pride that so few Americans of that early occupying force behaved like blustering victors, though some did and were brought in line by their fellows. Perhaps we were all under the pall of the incomprehensible enormity that had led to the surrender of a feared and despised enemy whose pathe-

tic survivors now defer to us with downcast eyes.

“The ultimate retaliation had been vented. There was nothing left to do, but pick up the pieces and go about business as usual. And this well underway, for in every cranny of that ruined city a brisk and all but silent trade flourished between alien kinds. Our soldiers and sailors wandered sheepishly through makeshift marts where emaciated vendors displayed motley assortments of this and that: lustrous porcelain and silks, rare prints and scrolls, wonderful objects of shell and lacquer, heartrending collections of children's toys and garments—all the exotic salvage of disaster spread out in the dust.”

*When did you write this?*

I wrote parts, I think, coming back on a ship as part of a letter. I continue, “American cigarettes could be bartered for anything—even for American money [laughter]—at a fantastic rate of exchange. And there were more eerie spoils of victory than that.

“When a shipmate and I took an excursion down to Kamakura, the conductor on the train refused our money, and the passengers pushed one another aside to give us seats. And we must have been an outlandish sight in our white caps and dungarees and our efforts to be polite through gestures and grimaces.”

And these probably were more ominous to them than had we barely scowled or demanded something. [laughter] I went to Kamakura because I'd heard of the great Buddha, and I wanted to see it; so I went down on this little train with a shipmate, Danny.

[reads] “Finally we walked the streets of that still beautiful city. The people kept at a distance, and even the children seemed not to notice us. About dusk we came upon that great bronze Buddha, seated on a rise of steps at the end of a long park. My usually taciturn shipmate whistled through his teeth in appreciation, and I can scarcely fathom the effect that scene had upon me.

“Then as we stood there, a small, wizened man came trotting in our direction. Bobbing before him on a stick was a marvelous lantern made of a large blow fish, glowing from the candle within. It was a pale, dancing moon, growing larger and more luminous as he approached. Nothing could have been more strange and lovely in that place at that moment.

“And when the old man was within a few feet of us, he came to a startled halt, as though seeing ghosts. I tried to put him at ease by smiling and nodding in admiration at the lantern. He thrust it into my hand and tottered frantically down the path, looking back as if he was being followed. [laughter] I felt suddenly sick and angry. This was no time for sightseeing. My shipmate tried to laugh me out of the deep funk as we headed back

to the station, and I struggled to hide that incongruous blow fish lantern under my jacket all the way to Yokohama and our ship. On the trip home I fussed over it endlessly, soaked it in linseed oil, tinted it, and stuffing and caulking it to hold its shape. It has been with me wherever I have lived, sometimes set aglow by a tiny incandescent bulb, reminding me of that frightened old man, the serene vista of that park in Kamakura, and the end of the war.” And now fifty years later it hangs in this room, as we talk.

In Kamakura on that same little excursion that Danny and I made, an old man came up to us and started talking in English. He was very excited and *very*, very timid, but he was determined to talk to us, particularly to use his English. He wanted to know where we were from and what ship we were on and all that, and then he invited us to his house. Would we come and see his house—a very old Japanese man. And so we went with him.

And he took us into this really squalid ghetto where you went through all kinds of little, muddy, dirt paths, and through these sort of makeshift houses, but some of them rather beautiful, because they were made with sliding screens, and this was at dusk, with the light coming out through them. And it was obviously a very impoverished place or one that had become run down since the war.

He took us to his house and opened up the screens. We took off our shoes and went inside and sat down, and here were these beautiful mats all over the floor. We learned he'd been a professor of Asian literature at the university in Yokohama. After he sat us down, his wife came in and his daughter, and they served us tea.

I remember this little house; couldn't have been more than two small rooms, but it was extremely beautiful. I was impressed by how neat and clean everything was. They had



these little carved tables and a couple of lanterns that were quite beautiful. His wife lit them, and while she was making tea, she went to get various things to put on the table—teacups and little lacquered plates—all kept in little drawers. There were little commodes around where *everything* was kept. Things were folded, beautifully put away in these little drawers, so that nothing was in the room; everything was in these little drawers.

And they were *very* nice to us, very polite. And we had a long talk about the war and how glad he was that it was over, and he hoped that we Americans would understand what they had done and what they had to do, and that even though it was terrible, it was now great that it was over.

I think he sort of saw us as emissaries. Here are these two scroungy-looking seamen on shore leave, and he was treating us as though we were important emissaries. And that made me feel sad; it was a very peculiar kind of thing, having him treat us like honored guests.

And so we had tea and some little pastries. He wanted us to stay all night. He showed us that they had bedrolls over in the corner—these beautiful, little silk comforters and bedrolls. And his wife was nodding and pointing and saying, “Yes,” you know, “you must stay.” But we couldn’t; we had to go back to the ship.

But, anyway, I had my little lantern with me at that point, and he asked about that, and I told him this old man had run away. And he said, “Oh, the man was frightened, but he wanted you to know he was a friend.”

And I thought, “Well, maybe, but the old man looked like he was saving his life when he got away.” [laughter]

And I said, “I felt funny taking this thing, because it was a nice lantern.”

And he says, “Oh, you keep it. You take it home, and you remember Yokohama. Remember this place.”

We left and went back to the ship. But that’s one experience that I remember very clearly, as though I’m looking at it now in a documentary. It is clear and sharp, everything that I experienced and I saw. We went back by train, again people giving us seats, getting up and having us sit down on this crowded train. And I didn’t feel as though people were being polite. They were just doing something that they had to do; you treated conquerors well.

*Were there any other Anglos?*

No. I saw no other Americans down there. There must have been some American army down there, but . . .

*Well, I wanted to ask if you got any kind of formal briefing before you went ashore?*

Not at all! [laughter] Not on a merchant ship.

*Really?*

No. “Just go ashore. Get back on watch on time”—that’s all.

*Well, I was really taken with your description that if there was any tendency for people to bluster about that, people were soon . . .*

Well, to me, that was interesting and important, but there were some incidents I *heard* about Americans actually breaking into houses and taking things. And there were drunken groups going through the city, shouting and yelling at the people, and some fights

and things of that kind. But I never saw it. This was rumor.

What I saw was really a sort of quiet . . . . I felt that the army men that I saw there were very aware that they had an enormously important mission. Maybe *they* had been briefed that they were supposed to act in a certain way. I hope that's the case, because that's something good about what the leadership was telling them and doing.

But I did see a lot of drunkenness. There was the Grand Cherry bar in an old, bombed-out bank building that had been a very ornate building. I remember all the white columns, some of them broken down, inside this very rickety establishment, run by some Japanese, I guess, maybe with American backing. You never knew, sometimes American entrepreneurs were right there, and they may have worked with the Japanese to do this—I don't know. That sort of thing did happen, but here it looked as though it was run by Japanese.

There were a lot of rickety tables around in sort of a large, empty, dusty amphitheater-like space that had been the bank lobby, I suppose, and part of the vaults. And here were these tables around, and a little stage where so-called geishas—they weren't—looking to me like hungry Japanese, middle-aged ladies, most of them, dancing and singing and playing those two- or three-stringed instruments. And every now and then that would be off, and then American jazz and popular music would go on, and then Japanese popular music, wild, blaring, through a bad speaker. Everything was just awful—scratchy records and . . . . Nevertheless, this was a nightclub, the Grand Cherry. [laughter]

And it was *crowded* with American soldiers and military people and some seamen, all drinking warm Japanese, and sometimes American, beer. I think there was some sake—I'm not sure—oh, and bourbon. And

*everybody* drunk. I mean, just a drunken morass.

And these women to me looking very bedraggled and lost and scared. Japanese women of that period, when they giggled, it didn't necessarily mean they were happy. I mean, they were scared. [laughter] And they would wait on the tables, and the guys would make passes at them and harass them and pick them up and carry them around. And they would pretend—I felt, pretend—to be having a good time, and they weren't. They were just miserable, but this was a living. And, of course, there was a lot of prostitution going on.

So that also was part of the scene that I remember. Although I drank a lot, it was a sickening scene. Myself and a group of shipmates would go there sometimes in the evening, but I couldn't stay very long. I just felt miserable. [laughter] The whole thing was a miserable scene.

When I look back, I never was worried about safety. Here we were wandering among these hungry and desperate Japanese people, and you never felt that you were in danger. At least I don't remember feeling that. There was no sense that anything was going to happen to you that you didn't start, you know.

*Were there things like orphan children running around or . . . ?*

Oh, oh, little pot-bellied kids half-naked running around, peering in at the Grand Cherry, in particular, and all these little bars. You know, dozens of little kids peering in and watching what was going on, and holding out their hands, asking for change, and things of that type. Oh, yes, that goes on everywhere in the world, but, yes, there was that. And then, you know, groups of drunken guys coming out and then going on to the next place,

making a lot of noise, yelling and screaming. That's the nearest thing I saw to lousy behavior, but I don't remember anybody ever fighting with anybody or taking on any Japanese person, because they were really so polite and obsequious that I think you would have been ashamed to have even shouted at them, you know. [laughter] And maybe that's how they survived.

*Was there any talk at all about the results of Hiroshima or Nagasaki? I mean, did you hear anything at all?*

Very little. Very little. And certainly not from the Japanese. We didn't have that much communication with them. Maybe some people that had stayed there longer got to know Japanese people well. But even that old professor that we met in Kamakura, he carefully avoided anything that would seem to be a complaint about what had happened to Japan. You know, just saying that, "The war was terrible, and we have to now improve ourselves and move ahead."

And, of course, they did very quickly. [laughter] More quickly than we were prepared to realize. But that patterned cultural obsequious behavior was something I found very distasteful. And yet, when I look back on it, why not? You know, that was a cultural pattern, and it was very useful in that period. It kept them from confrontations. They were expecting, of course, to be treated horribly, because they had been told the Americans were going to come, rape their women, destroy what's left of their homes, kill them, and . . . So I was there in that period when they were beginning to realize these things weren't necessarily going to happen.

That period in Yokohama was, to me, fascinating but miserable. I was very unhappy about it. I remember once I went ashore with

some shipmates, and we brought a couple of cartons of cigarettes each. I don't know; I had some idea I'd go along with them, to barter. We went out to a little place on the edge of Yokohama, a *horribly* decrepit ghetto out on the edge of town. And there were little, tiny shacks, and people had little candles and kerosene lanterns going in the evening. And we went into the back of this little shack, and there was a family sitting there. And they had a lot of things covered with cloth on the side of the room. This guy that we were with took out his cigarettes and laid them down. You know, "What do you got?" kind of thing. We wanted money. That was it. We got twenty dollars a carton. And we were told we had been robbed when we got back to the ship; we could have gotten much more! [laughter]

*What was that? A month's wages? Twenty dollars?*

For us?

Yes.

Oh, no, not a month's wages. No, that would be about a quarter or a fifth of a month's wages. But two cartons, forty dollars, would be a *half* of month's wages. Why sure. But we were told we could have gotten much more. We were robbed. You know, when I think of it, "robbed," for god's sake. Or we could have taken the cigarettes and gotten *anything* in these little fly-by-night markets.

I remember with two packs of cigarettes . . . by the way, I'm not proud of this; I feel very badly that I did this. Later I felt lousy about entering into the goddamn system. But once or twice, I went into one of these little markets, and I brought Kathy some beautiful

eggshell teacups, beautifully painted, some lacquered dishes and hand-carved, wooden plates. We still have them, absolutely beautiful sort of pressed wood-ware and abalone shell spoons and lacquered boxes and containers. Absolutely beautiful things.

I bought two or three of these things to take home to Kathy. But the last word was a little shop in a bombed out building, where on a hanger was this *magnificent* woman's embroidered, silk kimono—one of the long kind that the geishas used to wear when they were dancing and singing. A very heavy silk. And I think I got that for the equivalent of five dollars or something. I forget, a pack or two of cigarettes. At that same shop I got a roll of *absolutely* beautiful silk, for—I can't even remember—either cigarettes or American money. The exchange was amazing. Later that roll of silk—it must have been about, oh, ten yards, fifteen yards—ended up in Liberia on my first field trip as Kathy's ball gown to go to the inauguration of W. V. S. Tubman. [laughter]

*Oh, that's wonderful!*

She had nothing else, so she made a gown out of this roll of silk that for some reason we had taken to Liberia with us. And so that silk had its own trajectory.

But, anyway, I got those few items, and a kimono for my daughter, for Anya, who was then, what, two years old . . . year and a half old. This was a beautiful, padded child's winter kimono with the most wonderful patterns.

So I had, you know, half a seabag full of stuff, and when I got it on the ship, I remember feeling like crap, you know. What had I done? And I couldn't feel better because I was saying I was taking it home to my family. I just felt I had exploited the situation and taken part in the very thing that I was

opposed to. How could I criticize these guys in the army making fortunes, some of them, off of pilfered goods, you know, when I had taken part in this system, or taken advantage of a people who were down at the bottom, in the dregs. And so I didn't do much of that. In fact, I felt that the whole situation was corrupting to us because there was this idea, "Here is everything you can want for so little."

But I have to be fair. There were a number of the guys on the ship who felt like I did, you know, who felt depressed by being there, wishing there was something more they could do. Coming back on the ship one night with two or three of my shipmates, after we had been drinking, one of the guys goes into his fo'c's'le, and he says, "Hey, for Christ's sakes, come here." And his fo'c's'le-mates had two Japanese girls in the fo'c's'le. They were prostitutes—the most sickly and the most mournful-looking two girls that one could imagine. They were trying to be light and humorous and laugh and giggle. And it was heartbreaking, you know.

And we looked in there, and I remember us all saying, "You poor bastards, take those women back. Give them some money, and take them *back*, and get them off this ship, for god's sakes. You make me sick." And the girls were angry at us, because we were interfering with what they were going to get.

And I remember, Danny he reached in his pocket, and he took out ten bucks or something like that, or fifteen bucks, and he handed money to each of them, and he said, "You know, get rid of these assholes that you're with and . . . [laughter] I know them better than you do. Get out of here and find some better business than this." Things like that went on all the time.

All of the contradictions in American values come to the fore. You see people who are very sensitive and very aware, and yet at

the same time they will do things that they regret, they feel awful about later, because it's available. It can happen. "Anything goes" kind of attitude. And you can't blame them in a way. But those little events I remember—the business of guys feeling sheepish trading with these people and bargaining with them. And then every now and then some guy would say, "Here, for Christ's sakes," taking out a wad of money or five packs of cigarettes and putting it down, taking something that wouldn't have cost that much, just because . . . I mean, they were angry—angry at the people and angry at themselves, you know. All that sort of thing comes out under these conditions. It's sort of the extremity of cultural tolerance.

And Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it was filtering through what a terrible thing that was. But we didn't get the full picture; that wasn't getting around, but it was smoldering south of us. So there was a feeling, also, of horror and guilt, of how lucky these characters were up here that they didn't get it. Talk like that was going on, but we didn't talk about it much. It was too much . . . too much to talk about.

One day I remember, I wanted to go to Tokyo, and two or three shipmates and I, we got on this *crowded* train going from Yokohama to Tokyo. It was just *packed*. And it was so packed that people didn't even know that we were among them, and now and then somebody would look at us, and they'd jump, you know. But it was just packed. We were like sardines. It took a long time, and it was a horrendous ride. We got to Tokyo and shopped around—a big place with a lot of bombed-out buildings and all that.

We saw MacArthur, only a few weeks after he had signed the peace treaty, and he was in a big Cadillac-like limousine. And there was a news-reel camera taking a pic-

ture of him getting out, and we were behind it. And the camera passed us, too, and I wrote to Kathy. [laughter] I said, "You know, watch the news reels. You may see me behind MacArthur scowling." Everybody went silent, the American troops that were there just on the streets and the Japanese. It was complete silence. There was no cheering as he got out and went inside. He was a hero at this point. You know, he had done this supposedly remarkable thing of getting to Japan, Tokyo, and signing the peace treaty. But there wasn't any jubilation. There wasn't any feeling that something great had been done on the part of the people there. And I don't know what their silence meant. Maybe it was respect. I just don't know.

So then we went around town. I didn't do any shopping, but there was so much available of the *wonderful* tradition of Japan. Great houses of the rich had been bombed out then looted by other Japanese, so all this stuff was flooding onto the market. My god, anybody who was a collector could have gone mad. The most beautiful—some ancient, antique—pottery and handiwork and silks and everything laid out in the streets, practically.

*Do you think there were collectors, who were systematically . . . I mean at a big level . . . ?*

You can be sure that already the entrepreneur and capitalist spirit were in full bloom, not only on the part of our people, but on the part of the Japanese.

*I just wondered how many museum collections just ballooned.*

Could have been many. But I do know there were army sergeants and commanders who made fortunes, everybody talked about

that, anyway. I don't pretend to know for sure. It's just that that was the rumor. You'd have to be Jesus Christ not to, and there weren't many of them there. [laughter] But, no, I think that some more than others.

*Well, for the most part, though, what you're describing to me is a lot of restraint and recognition that you're among people who have been devastated.*

Yes. But my experience was limited. I was hanging out with a few guys who would go ashore now and then. I saw just what I could see under those conditions, and it was much more complex than that, I'm sure, certainly in Tokyo, which was the center of our operation.

*Well, I mean, from my perception, you know, one generation later, I always think of MacArthur with ticker tape and confetti, and with screaming and yelling and celebration. And what you're describing is just the . . .*

I think of him as the guy that Truman had to fire . . . and for probably good reason. He was an arrogant, pompous character, though he was at one point a brilliant strategic leader. But it also could be said that he was guilty of many excesses that were unnecessary. I don't know; I don't know about all that, but I know that we were not necessarily impressed by him. [laughter] I mean, merchant seamen and the grunts in the army are not necessarily guys who get all that whipped up about patriotism and great heroes and all that. In fact, if anything, "Heroes all got clay feet," you know. You know better. On the other hand, I don't want to be a complete grinch about this. He was a remarkable military leader.

But I don't have too much respect for military leaders. I can acknowledge what they've done that's helpful to us when it happens, or what has to be done, but they aren't the kind of people I hold in high regard, necessarily. And particularly, with MacArthur. There was something about him that rubs people the wrong way, at least, people on the level that I was on. He was an arrogant bastard, and a lot of his troops didn't like him, but that doesn't mean anything. He was what he was.

But it sort of came to a head years later when Truman had to fire him for not following executive orders and going his own way. That was later on during the Korean War. To me, that was pretty much what one would expect him to do. "Old soldiers never die. They just fade away." And I can remember people thought, "Thank god." [laughter] But, that's just one side of world opinion, I'm sure, but that's where I was.

And so that whole experience in Japan is too enormous for me to even cover it all. I mean, there were so many things that happened, so many visual images that affected me—there are hundreds. I think of people's faces and trying to talk to people and finding, you know, there was no way, and that I could not understand them, and they couldn't understand me, and not just because of language, because even when some people could speak some English, exchange was so *guarded*. People were so afraid to talk to us. And to me, that poor, old man's blow-fish lantern is a symbol of all that. You know, I have it; I light it now and then; it's a beautiful thing. I've taken care of it and all that, but what is it? It was thrust into my hands by a scared, old man who thought I was going to kill him. And he looked at me as kind of a white ghost wandering around Yokohama.

And the kids. Hundreds and hundreds of kids. The kids before the adults realized that, you know, Americans were a possible source; there was a lot of begging on the part of kids. Crowds of them. But I've seen that elsewhere in the world, but somehow under these conditions . . . . Oh, I remember servicemen and us giving out lots of money, coins, to the kids, because somehow or other that was one way we could atone for everything that happened. Giving to the adults, you didn't know what

that meant to them. They would have taken it, but the kids, you know, they'd laugh and scream and yell and then turn somersaults and have a lot of fun. And they'd run off showing their loot to their comrades, and so that's another part of it. And a lot of the kids were sick. You could just see big pot bellies and their feet worn and torn. No shoes and torn clothing. It was a very sad scene. So, anyway, that was Yokohama, I guess.





## LEAVING JAPAN

**T**HE OLD NEPTUNE'S CAR took off, and for the life of me, I'm trying to remember. We had to go to some other places, and I think we . . .

*Do you remember what you took on in Japan?*

That's another thing I can't be sure of. I don't think we brought any troops back. I don't recall that. And I don't recall whether we took on any cargo. I can't think of any cargo we would have taken on from Japan.

*Art. [laughter]*

Well, we could have taken loot, yes. And I would say a lot of the crew did have some loot. Nothing very important, the stuff that they had picked up for gifts. Christmas was coming. We didn't get home for Christmas, but when I think of it, buying things in devastated, bombed-out Japan for Christmas at home is an irony beyond my ken at the moment. [laughter] And I don't think that was lost on some of the members of the crew, the ones that I knew and liked. You know, we

were all a little sheepish about what we had had, also about what we'd seen. That must have been true a lot of the servicemen, too. I can't believe that just characters like us on a merchant ship were affected.

*You know what is so interesting to me, it seems, there's a lot of comprehension and discussion about the difference between the soldiers who go and the people that actually see the effects of war during battle, you know. So much of the population has no comprehension of what you're . . . of that effect of war, of seeing conquered people. I mean, there's no other way to describe it.*

Oh, there are people who have seen this kind of thing over and over again, certainly many servicemen who were in Europe and other places in the world during the world wars, or later in the Korean War or in Vietnam, who have seen this sort of thing and had their sometimes horrible reactions to it. But for me and for the guys that I was with and for most of the soldiers at that time, that was a new experience.

*This is going to sound strange, but it just occurred to me—is there any focus in anthropology as a discipline on looking at the recovery of culture after war, I mean, after something as focused and abrupt as a war?*

Yes, there is a small amount of literature on traumatic culture change and devastation of war. But it's amazing how little has been written by anthropologists on war itself—on ongoing conflict. It's usually sort of retrospective, what happened, afterwards, and how people handle it and recover, but not of war itself and the impact upon populations, as it's going on. I became aware of this, you know, recently in terms of the Liberian civil war, that most of the scholars who are Liberianists in West Africa, including myself, pulled back—it was just too much for us to face the destruction of the area we had worked in. We had certain preconceived ideas about it and assumptions about its development and future, and here, suddenly, all that was wiped out. There was this *total* destruction of a culture, of a people and their country. And I don't want to generalize, but anthropologists I know don't seem to be very good at handling this sort of thing when it happens.

Many of us now will begin in retrospect to deal with it, what . . . you know, try to analyze and report what's happening since. But I found I couldn't write about it, even though I had heard a lot and read a lot. Even that experience when I went there right after the cease fire, I found that I was really unable to write about it. I was just loaded with the horror of what had happened to people I knew; also taken aback by the extent of it. I couldn't believe that a whole nation, a country, a collection of small cultures, could be so *totally* undermined and in part destroyed.

And that may be something that I don't think only anthropologists experience, but

people who are on the spot, who are involved with a country—I think it must be very hard to face what's happening until you've had a chance to think about it and look back upon it. So I don't think there is much of a literature.

I understand there are a recent book or two dealing with the anthropology of war. I haven't seen them. But I know I was looking through the literature, the bibliographies, before I left for Liberia [in 1997 with Friends of Liberia], trying to find work on just this kind of phenomena, and I couldn't find any.

When I wrote to Kathy, I say something that refers to this. I said, "I could never be a correspondent, a journalist. I have to think things like this over, digest them. It is just too much to assimilate and venture opinions upon at short-order deadlines and letters," you know. This whole thing was just too big.

*Well, I'm glad you brought that up. Were there correspondents that you admired? I mean, that you admired as writers?*

There were some great correspondents during the war that, you know, reported the war in great detail and with great elegance.

*I just wondered if there were journalists who . . . if you'd ever followed journalism as a medium of writing that you admired and liked and . . .*

No, not really. It wasn't the kind of writing I wanted to do, nor, as I say here, that I felt I could do, because I get dumbfounded and bowled over by experiences, and it takes me—big ones like this—some time to figure out, all the various meanings it has to me, or to even be able to deal with it directly, other than telling little anecdotes about things that happened.

*Have you ever written in some of your fiction and poetry about some of this?*

No.

*Not this particular experience?*

No. Things like it, but the writing that I did that had anything to do with the war was much more abstract, much more subjective. I wasn't interested in conveying information about events, but more about people and feelings and things of that kind. No, as I said in this letter to Kathy, I don't think I could ever be a correspondent or a journalist, because I would have a hard time turning out material that is really significant, like many admirable people were able to do.

And, you know, one has to respect them because they have created a record. But I don't think I could have ever done that. It wasn't my genre. I wasn't constitutionally put together to do that kind of thing. And, in fact, even *now* I find I'm hesitating and finding myself stumbling over the recollection of this, trying to figure out what really was going on, and what was important to me at the time? I find that I'm still puzzled by it, still torn in different directions.

*Well, it sounds like your trip to Kamakura was the only time you really went to, quote, "see a sight" that you might have known about?*

Oh, yes. Well, as I said, this was no time to be a sightseer. I felt strange and funny and a little dirty, being a sightseer when people had faced this kind of thing, and going to their sacred image, going to this great Buddha.

But I remember standing there that even Danny was impressed. I always had the impression that he had part African-

American background and part Latin or something background. A very nice guy, but a very quick temper, and . . . [laughter] and had very strong opinions. But I remember we stood there for awhile looking at this Buddha. It was only the two of us in this great big, empty, beautiful park—maybe people had left because we were there—and being utterly overtaken by wonder and respect for the fact that this has not been bombed, and that this was something important to the people here, the Japanese. And for that moment I didn't feel like a tourist. I felt like I was paying respect to the people. I think Danny, in his way, felt this. We talked about it. You know, "Gee, that was quite something, Danny. Just amazing."

"That was something!" he'd say over and over again.

And it was something. And then, of course, this little guy tossing us the lantern he had lit, I guess, in anticipation of twilight, or because he was going to some dark place. Or he just liked it or something. [laughter] That was right after we felt this strong feeling of respect, but then I began feeling . . . again, we both felt like tourists, you know. And I remember saying to Danny, you know, "This is no place to be a tourist, for Christ's sakes. Let's get out of here; let's get the hell out of here."

And he would say, "Yes," you know, "let's get out of here."

*It also sounds like kind of the ultimate of not being able to have any form of anonymity or blending in. I mean, there was no way to kind of blend into the background and observe.*

No, there wasn't. No. There was so much else that one saw and felt, and it's hard to deal with it all, and I have the feeling of not being able to create a full picture of my own

response and that of the people who were with me, what we seemed to feel and how we reacted. It's just bits and snatches of things. It was a long time ago. My god!

Yes.

When was that? Fifty years ago?

*Fifty-three.*

Well, I mean, I'm kind of amazed that I remember anything, but this has stuck with me. [laughter]

Oh, one little thing, this business of being a tourist, feeling like a tourist. I've always hated that. I've always hated being a tourist. That's why it's difficult for me to travel. Kathy would love to travel more. And to me, to travel to foreign countries and not have a task, not have something that allows me to feel that I'm involved in some meaningful way in understanding the people or what I'm doing, I feel very uncomfortable and peculiar. I don't like it.

One little event of that in Japan was I remember when we were in Tokyo, that day we spent in Tokyo and saw MacArthur, and some of the guys that we were with wanted to take rickshaws. There were these little rickshaws or carts, I don't know what they were called in Japan, but they were little carts with sometimes bicycles pulling them. And they wanted to take that, and I wouldn't do it. I just felt I could not get in that thing.

I suppose it was reading early literature like Pearl Buck on China and all that, and getting not only a sympathy, but a sense of respect for another culture and the way they do things. And there's something about, you know, Europeans coming and sitting with their parasols and hats and bowler hats, in rickshaws—this was to me an image I didn't

want to have any part of. I didn't want to be that way, doing it for the fun of it, or it was just wrong in my mind. And I remember a couple of my shipmates, "Oh, you're a damn Jap lover!" [laughter]

And yet at the same time, because I didn't do it, they wouldn't, you know. There was this feeling, this understanding of not taking advantage. I respected that when I saw it among Americans that I was with. Sometimes they would hide it, because nobody wanted to be a character that's thought of as sentimental. But when somebody would react that way and decide not to do something, I always felt very good. I felt this is something I respect.

*Well, it sounds like it was a subtle thing, too, to a certain extent, where it wasn't anything somebody would sit around and talk about. It was too horrific to talk about what was actually going on, but that there were these subtle ways of kind of acknowledging a sensitivity to . . .*

Yes. And it would come up. It would happen. But, you know, groups of people, and men, particularly, on most any ship, you don't express these sensitivities. You know? If anything, you cover it up by saying, "Oh, those goddamn Japs." I may have even said that myself a few times, because your own real feelings are too sentimental, almost too, in those days, feminine to express.

But when I would see that, when I would see people reacting that way, and I knew what was going on in their minds, I always felt this was a very good thing, a sign of some kind of values there that you could count on. That's interesting. I hadn't thought of that before. That this was a kind of a litmus test for what are basic values, how people respond under these circumstances.

On the other hand there was a lot of talk about the situation there, what we saw, about women, about whores, about being to able to make a real bargain with somebody for a pack of cigarettes, all that sort thing. There was a *lot* of talk of that kind, but behind it all—I have to be fair to the people I was with in this situation—there was also a deep respect, a sense of obligation, having to do with, “We did this.” Even though they had been what they were, and had done the terrible things they did during the war.

Oh, and making a distinction between “they,” you know, the leaders and the army. Oh, this class thing was there, too. I remember some of the older seamen saying something like, “These poor sons of bitches didn’t . . . they’re not responsible for the whole war,” and others saying, “Why, of course, they are,” you know, “just like Germany, the whole German population is responsible for Hitler.” We’d have those arguments. But, you know, we’d say, “Look at these damn people. They’re not responsible for the war. This was done *to* them. It’s the damn system, the *system*. It’s their system that did that to them!” The “System” was always that capitalized word that people use to talk about things too big for you to cope with.

Those arguments would go on. But they really did take the tone of defending the average person, the poor persons who were really pawns in the system. Not that that was really true, but that was the feeling. The pawns in the system were not really responsible for all this. “Just as we’re pawns in the goddamn system, you know? We just do what we’re told. Here, look what are we doing here? All these damn, poor servicemen dead on the beaches of Okinawa and dead on all the beaches of the Pacific. You know, what did they have to do with determining this or

deciding what to do? It isn’t something *they* planned and understood what they were doing. Hopefully, they’ll understand in the future what was done to them, but now they don’t know. They’re just little puppets, you know. We’re puppets, all of us.” That kind of talk went on all the time.

I doubt that that kind of talk was limited to merchant seamen. I think it probably went on all through the undercurrent of life during the war as a kind of escape valve, to complain and grouse in this way about what this big system is, the one that’s incomprehensible, bigger than you.

And a lot of talk, even on this SUP ship, about capitalism, you know. “The goddamn capitalists are making gravy, boy! You think that poor army sergeant over there that’s just had two or three trucks going in that direction for the black market, making a few thousand dollars, maybe fifty thousand? You think he’s anything? Hey, look at the guys making millions and millions and millions all over the world off this war, off of the blood of these poor sons of bitches. Good for him! I hope he makes fifty thousand dollars.” You know, that kind of thing. There was a lot of that kind of talk.

So in a way a lot of that’s admirable. I mean, that kind of talk was a great sense of relief and a feeling that there was some sense in the world. That kind of talk would give you a feeling that somebody is grouching about the right thing, instead of grouching about the chow or grouching about little things—grouching about big things.

OK, so we head back to the states. And I can’t recall where else we must have gone. I do believe we stopped at Manila. We didn’t go ashore; I didn’t go ashore. Maybe we took on cargo at Manila or something, but there was another stop, and somehow or other . . .

*Were you on your own again? Just your ship?*

I don't recall. I think so. By that time the war practically was over, and the Pacific had been pretty well swept clean of submarines. Though there were reports of a few oddball characters, people who didn't even know the war was over.

There was a lot of that reported, you know, instances of battalions of Japanese who didn't know the war was over, were still fighting. And there was that famous character who spent the next ten, fifteen years living alone like Robinson Crusoe and didn't know the war was over and thought we were lying to them when we told them the war was over. [laughter]

Anyway, there was some concern about these things or just an angry member of the air force in a last kamikaze noble deed. In the south of Japan apparently there were pockets of not only resistance, but very angry members of the army or the military, who were still resisting, who were capable of doing something like that, kamikaze raids and things. But I don't think we were really concerned about that at that point. So I think it was Manila where we stopped and took on some cargo or something, and lord knows what it was, and headed back to San Francisco.

## CLASS WARFARE

NOW, HERE the war was over; we had won; and, you know, everybody should have been happy. But I remember a very dismal trip back. We had a word for it at sea—not port fever, the reverse of the exhilaration you get when you’re about to hit a port—there’s another name for it, this dismal feeling of not necessarily wanting to come back. Although the trip had not been a happy one, there was the idea of, “What are we going back to? We’re going back to our families. The war is over; things are going to be different. And that’s the scary part: it’s going to be different. But how different? What would it mean to us?” et cetera. And there was word of anti-labor legislation in Congress and a lot of anti-Truman feeling among laboring people at that time.

There had been talk in some quarters, but not my ships, not on the SUP, but among the left-wing seamen, of a Seaman’s Bill of Rights at the end of the war, where we would get compensated for everything that other servicemen were. And Roosevelt, our hero, had promised the merchant marine that. In fact, I even have a certificate sent to all sea-

men, each seaman by him, complimenting us on the great service we’d given in the armed services during the war and the heroic seamen who had . . .

*Was there any talk, or did you know anything about the GI bill at this point?*

Yes, we knew that that was in the picture.

*And at this point you assumed you would be part of it?*

Yes, we assumed we would be part of it, but that also there would be some special recognition of merchant seamen.

And the Seaman’s Bill of Rights had within it, I believe—it hadn’t been formed yet, but it was being talked about some kind of compensation for merchant seamen for what they had not gotten during the war. And mainly a special recognition of their unique role during the war. And that was being talked about.

At the same time . . . oh, before I had left on *Neptune’s Car*, already in Washington

there were denunciations coming from the right wing in Congress about, "giving the merchant marine anything—for god's sakes, these guys'll turn the guns of the ships on the United States! They're all a bunch of commies." There was already that beginning.

*Don't you think there was a lot of classism to that kind of reaction, too, because a lot of the resistance that I read about to the GI bill at the time, had a lot of, "We can't let that riffraff into the universities," and stuff like that.*

The riffraff, yes. Oh, yes, there was a lot of that, but I don't think it had reached that point at the time I'm talking about now. That was a little later, in 1946 with the seamen's strikes and all of that, that the GI Bill came to a head. But already that kind of talk was filtering through to us. And, yes, class consciousness—using that fancy word—was there.

I don't think most Americans understand to what degree class consciousness exists, and very deeply in American life. You know, people are aware of the class they're in. They're aware of what their status is vis-à-vis others. And in some cases they look upon it as denigration; others, they look upon it as a heroic stance.

And that was one thing that attracted me to the left wing in the labor movement, was *they heroized* the working class. I mean, they were given a certain prominence, a place, a sense of destiny, of potential mastery, of control of their own destinies, rather than merely accepting themselves as a, you know, a strata.

*As worker ants.*

Yes, as worker ants, or as puppets or as pawns of the system, as a lot of these ironic

guys would talk about. "We're just pawns." So my growing sense of this thing called class consciousness was very real at this time.

I was aware that I was an intermediate figure, a person from the lower middle-class, with a knowledge of the working-class, a lower middle-class kind of background, but also from the professional class. And in that sense I was a middle-class kid, particularly at the point when I went to sea; I'd been to college and all these kinds of things. So I was aware of that, and I would say *thousands* of others went through this kind of recognition, awareness. And not only during the war, but everybody does at some point in their life, when they confront who they are in relation to groups of others that they're working with.

When I went to sea, there were many people like me going to sea during the war. But the basic group that was there, the seamen and their unions, were an older, traditional kind of strata. And it was obvious that their values, their interests, their expectations in life were different from ours.

You know, they didn't have, like me, great expectations of wondrous travel and writing and living an interesting life and being somewhat free to pick and choose about directions. I mean, their directions had been made for them. Here they were; this was their life. And that was impressed upon me the whole time I went to sea. They were a class, and the blacks were a caste.

When I read people like DuBois and Myrdal, you know, I began to see and maybe to understand this business of class structure and the relation of class to caste. And, you know, that made sense to me in terms of where blacks were on the waterfront and where they were in my union. They were a caste not to be accepted, except in steward's departments or some other union like



MFOW or engine department or on NMU ships, where they were allowed. But, you know, here we were, members of the same class all the way through, but that caste was not allowed. They were separate; they were different; they were beyond.

*At this point did you see yourself maybe as an uneasy member, but, nevertheless, very much a member or at least a potential member of this class?*

Oh, yes. Well, I have to be careful here, because that's the intellectual struggle that one goes through. I often felt a little disengaged, because I had not spent a good part of my life that way. So, therefore, I didn't always understand, nor was I able to accommodate to that world fully, because, within me, I had other aspirations, other plans. The fact that I wanted eventually to go back to school; I wanted eventually to become some sort of a professional, a writer, or work in universities. These were aspirations that these guys, most of them never even thought of. I mean, it was not their world. So within me was the idea there was a difference that I sometimes had to hide, because it was so much at odds with that world.

However, there were many men at sea that I could talk to because they were very similar. But we were different, though it might not even be detected. You know, we could merge into the rest of the crew.

*Did you think on some level that after the war maybe you'd maintain this identity and role?*

Yes. Because most of this period I had begun thinking that I was going to be a trade unionist; I wanted to stay in trade unions. I wanted to continue in this line, but in a more

active and policy-making way. Yes, I guess the romance of the working class was there. And the more I developed some kind of interest and background in the social literature of the Left, the more I saw this as a desirable way of living, state of mind, a cause.

Nevertheless, always I couldn't help but be aware that I was essentially *not* working class, except that I was working, and I was part of it in terms of my income and all that. But inside I had not been that kind of person, and I had other kinds of concerns and interests that were not of that class. Now, that is a very complicated thing, and I'm not sure I'm stating it very clearly. It's just a sense of—oh, what would you call it?—being to some degree distanced from the reality of that class. Which I respect. I respect that, the awareness of that difference.

When somebody would say something now and then, "Ah, you're just a middle-class kid. You know, you come from a good family; you got all these things. You got all this to go back to," which I didn't really, but I mean it seemed that way. And, "You got all these interests in other things," that used to bother me a great deal at first. Then later I began to realize, well, that's fine, you know. History is loaded with the idea of people shifting class interest and throwing their lot in for a cause.

*Well, it seems maybe the distinction that was being made for you, maybe is that you were choosing this role . . .*

Yes. Rather than having been forced into it, and that I was aware of it. I had choices. I had alternatives, or I thought I did. I had alternatives.

*Well, that's almost the same, isn't it? Just to think you do. [laughter]*

Yes, and to think you do; it becomes almost the same sort of thing.

And yet a class is not an even web. I mean, these people who had gone to sea a long time or been part of the laboring class for long periods of time in their lives, even they were varied—all kinds of varied people with different aspirations, with different notions of what they stood for, and, you know, we even thought of some of the guys as phonies, who would always sort of lord it over us about how they had these other interests, and they were going to do this and that and the other.

They were laughed at as a phonies, I mean, phony baloneys. “Go ahead. Fine. Bye-bye. See you later,” you know. [laughter]

Although I began to be aware that class was not a seamless web, the boundaries not immutable, and merges with classes below and classes above, I nevertheless was aware of a different kind of culture, a different orientation to the world in general, from one class to the next. You're above or below, and the so-called Marxist lumpen was down at the bottom of the heap, which castes are often thrown into.

And so, yes, that kind of thinking was going on. And even in that union, which was a conservative union, there was a lot of class thinking, class consciousness, awareness. And capitalism was not a good thing. It was a bad thing. “Goddamn capitalists” all the time. It was an epithet, you know—capitalist. That was true even in a conservative union. Capitalism was a bad thing, or a questionable thing. And capitalism caused this and caused that and caused that, even by people who didn't know what capitalism was. I mean, it was the tag word.

*It was what now has become “the government.”*

Yes, the big, lousy government, yes. And even anti-communists were vulnerable during the war at least, to arguments about, “Those goddamn commies over there, in the Soviet Union.” Even people who were conservative themselves, argued, you know, “What the hell are you talking about? Look what they got; look what they've done. Everybody's got a job.” And how true that was, we never really knew, but relatively it seemed so. Now why they all had jobs is another question we didn't have an answer to. [laughter] But, nevertheless, there was this ideal, you know, that this was a society that provided you some kind of health protection from birth to death, and you had jobs, and you could aspire to things and do things, and you had a degree of freedom of that kind that you don't have in a capitalist society. “You think you're free? Look at you, bud! If you get sick, where you going to go? Right, during the war, you can go to the seamen's hospital; you can go to one of the veterans' hospitals, sure. But when the war is over, bud, you're finished. You can't go anywhere. You pay for it; you take care of yourself. Well, look over there.”

And fellow Swedes aboard ship would sometimes talk about their great system and how, “Nobody is without medical care. And nobody starves. You're going to get something to eat, anyway. You're going to have some kind of a job.” All that. This was going on among conservative seamen.

So that, when I come to think of it, was one of the real dangers, you see, of the so-called working class. It was vulnerable to socialism, vulnerable to left-wing “propaganda”, and all that. And rightly so.

I mean, the Soviet Union was not the great terrible enemy during the war to a lot of these guys that it was later and might have

been earlier. There was a softening of that view, which I think was a positive thing in American life. I also see it as the basis for the tremendous onslaught that came later to wipe that out, to propagandize that out of the American mind. It was a scary thing for a capitalist system, to see underneath this kind of acceptance, or the vulnerability to ideas of this kind—socialism.

Norman Thomas, the old socialist, went on for years—you know, a heroic figure, [laughter] one of the great heroic figures in American life—was a socialist, you know. He wasn't a communist; he was a socialist. And he had a tremendous effect upon at least a lot of middle class people I knew, who voted for Norman Thomas's tickets and all that sort of thing.

So there was this soft under belly of American life, that something had to be done for in the Cold War. The Cold War was not just directed against the Soviet Union; it was directed against the Left and the progressives in the United States.

This, I began to be aware of; right about this time, this was beginning to dawn on me. And my contacts and friends that I had on the waterfront who were left wing, and the reading that I was doing, began to jell in me. I'd always had ideas of this kind, but now they were beginning to focus. I was beginning to see some implementation, instrumentation, of this through trade unionism, through the kind of unions that I admired, like the ILWU, and like Harry Bridges and that remarkable development of that union on the waterfront.

Things like that, you know, told me that there was a kind of class warfare going on. Why they weren't after him because the long-shoremen were asking for more wages, it was because of their views, the damn ideologies that were developing in those unions that had

to do with a socialist and Marxist perspectives about the world and about the capitalist system. This had to be stamped out. And, boy, a job was done for the next ten years!

*At what point did academia become so heavily identified with the Left? The question I'm trying to ask was brought up by this discussion I read about the GI bill and where the University of Harvard president and the president of the University of Chicago came out and said, "We cannot have the GI bill give scholarships to people, because you're going to ruin education. It's just going to knock down the walls of academe."*

Well, all through my life, universities were looked upon both with admiration and suspicion by average, middle-class people. I mean, with the ideas that were propagated. On one hand, it was very conservative, religious people, who saw universities as a hotbed of atheism, you know, where professors were attacking religion and were leading their children into all sorts of strange kinds of ways of thinking, and separating themselves from their basic traditions and values, family values and all that sort of thing. And, also, places where young people were getting away from their families and doing things that their families did not want them to do, and, therefore, the universities were doing this to them. Yes, there was that. That was very early. That's gone on probably ever since there have been universities.

And then also the idea that very questionable political ideas were being purveyed in universities. I can remember that very early. However, it wasn't necessarily bad, it just was where all sorts of new and strange things are happening, and one has to be very careful. I can remember friends of mine with

their families telling them when they went off to a university or college, you know, “You watch out. Watch out for what they tell you. You have to be very careful to use your own head and think. Don’t let them lead you into . . . . You know, you think carefully, now, about everything that you’re told.” I can remember those lectures. I don’t think I got them from my family, but I can remember other kids’ families.

*So that’s not necessarily a Cold War phenomena at all.*

Well, no, not yet. I can remember this early. There’s always been this tension between the general population and centers of learning and universities and all that. Admiration and suspicion all together. Academics have always been admired as well as suspected. [laughter] Intellectuals are suspect just by the fact that they are specialized thinkers and sometimes believe that they know more than they know, and act as though they do. The notion of the uppity scholar, the uppity professor, I can remember that when I was a kid, you know. Nevertheless, admiration, that’s something one can aspire to be, too.

But the relation of this to class consciousness—to me that was a very important division. I mean, one could be an intellectual in left-wing thinking, even far left, and still be middle class, and not have lost the trappings of the middle class. And, by the way, in the trade union movement and left wing, they were very conscious of this; there were terms for it. I mean, a middle-class intellectual who even might be a communist was in a sense suspect, because you didn’t know where that kind of combination of background and thinking was going to take that person. And I can understand that. There are many alternatives that such a person has in

thinking and in belief that might run counter to the pragmatic required tasks of, say, trade organization or activity. And certainly that caution about the middle class was true of the Communist Party, as I learned later.

I mean, one had to toe the ideological mark, not just because the organization wanted power and control, but because that’s the way you got things done. I mean, you had to have a degree of belief, a degree of commitment—not just an intellectual, abstract commitment, but a commitment in action, a commitment to *do* things, to get things done. And that’s a struggle I think many middle-class people who were in the party and in the trade union movement felt very strongly. They were constantly reminded of it by others. I mean, you know, hard-hat rank and filers would take you on very quickly on this.

*And could you remember any of the terms? You said there were terms to describe the . . . .*

They’re not coming to me now. Oh, at sea there were things like “college boy” and “sea lawyer.” The terms in the left-wing movement also sort of identified people who you’re never sure which side of the fence they were going to be on eventually.

And I struggled with this. I had a *tremendous* admiration, commitment, to the union that I was in—even this Sailor’s Union, as we’ll see, under conditions which will seem ridiculous—and to the idea of the labor movement. But one is tested about that. You know, can you carry through under all conditions? Can you stick with those commitments under conditions where you are going to be deprived of some of your aspirations and your interests and all that? That was talked about a lot later.

I can remember this kind of thing, because there were a lot of people in the left-wing movement at that time, particularly during the war, who had come from other kinds of professional class interests or other levels of interests, who were deeply attracted to the labor movement and felt that it was an important movement to the United States, that it was an extremely necessary kind of a direction of American energies, but at the same time, who were very confused when it came down to certain requirements of taking certain kinds of actions and sticking with something for a long period of time, seeing it through when it became boring and it became dangerous and all that sort of thing. You know, a lot of people sort of fell by wayside. [laughter]

And in a way, in a way, I can think of my own later years later, leaving, going to sea, not just because I had other aspirations, but because it was getting to be, to me, no point anymore, because it was falling apart, you know. But I had alternatives. I had a place to go. Whereas, many of my friends who were stuck and who lost their jobs had an awful time, miserable time, a real depression in the labor movement, in the seamen's union. I had alternatives, so I remember feeling a little . . . not guilty, but aware of that, you know. I was able to get out, and I got out well, because I was given a "hail fellow" departure when I left to go to school, my citation from the seamen's branch of the Communist Party, thanking me for all the great work I had done, you know. Nevertheless, I was able to leave. I was able to go to something else, and it was very hard for some of them to have done the same thing.

So those are the contradictions, and they're there, and sometimes they were very, very severe. I can remember, you know, whole groups of people pulling away from the labor

movement because they had other ways to go. And sometimes even betraying it because their commitment wasn't that deep and sure. And there were all kinds of names and epithets for this kind of thing, and I don't recall them right now.

Anyway, so here we were back in the states, with all these questions. And I'm sure it was true of many of the guys that I was with and *many* other people: "What now?" And particularly in the labor movement and the seamen's union.

Already in February, 1946, the Committee for Maritime Unity was just forming in Washington, and there was a convention on the West Coast, trying to form a united front of seamen. See, what were all those unions? There was MFOU (Marine Firemen, Oilers, and Water Tenders Union), the ILWU (International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union), MEVA (Marine Engineers Association), MCS (the Marine Cooks and Stewards), and the NMU (National Maritime Union). Those were the sort of core of this attempt to form a larger seamen's maritime association in the country. And that was going on in the early part of 1946, as I got back.

I was aware of all this, aware that there was a tremendous ferment on the waterfront. They were seeing all kinds of anti-labor legislation; they were seeing crisis coming in terms of contracts with the ship owners. And my union was looked upon as the holdout that was not going to take part in all this.

Lundeberg was talking about, "This is a political organization. This is the wrong time for seamen to be demanding not only wage increases, but all kinds of . . . forty-eight hours and all that sort of thing." There was a whole series of demands the unions were making, legitimate ones, to put them in line with American labor in general. I mean, all

sorts of demands about working conditions, slight increases in wages, the conditions having to do with health and medical care, about leave—having short vacations after a certain number of trips and time put at sea. All sorts of things that had always been in the offing and thought about, but it was figured now was the time to do it. So the CMU, the Committee for Maritime Unity, managed to get a tremendous amount of support among these core unions.

That was going in early 1946, when I got back, but I didn't know what I was going to do. Here I was, floating around; here was Kathy and Anya, now a little kid, a beautiful little girl, was growing up. Kathy and I still had that little place in Alameda, but what was I going to do now? Was I going to look for a job? Was I going to do something, go back to school? And what I was saying was, "I think I'm going to stay. I'm going to go into trade union work"—the only thing I could conceive of at the time that had to do with a sense of a purpose.

To me, "Here is something really meaningful in the world, and I have been in it, and I know something about it, and I want to do it." At the same time, I had this hankering to write—I mean, I was doing a little writing, and in fact had just won a seamen's short story contest. I had won that, and a couple of my stories had been printed in small mags, and, you know, I was feeling something like a writer. And I knew a number of people around the Bay Area who were doing things of this kind—some of my old associates and friends and my friend, George Leite, with his magazine, *Circle*. And so, you know, I had a number of alternatives and pulls and directions. See, this was the middle class.

But what really got to me was this feeling of great purpose, something of importance—the labor movement and

seamen's unions and the now-pending struggle going on at the end of the war about whether or not merchant seamen, in particular, and longshoremen were going to be recognized for not only their contribution during the war, but if they were going to be brought up to the level of other major unions throughout the country and other laborers. And I saw this as an element of a class war going on, you know.

*Yes. Well, it was a real turning point that you could be part of.*

Yes. Yes, exactly. And I probably was at that time thinking more and more as a Marxist. The kind of Marxist I was, was a kind of, not derogatory, but a funny term, a "hard-hat Marxist." You don't know much about Marxism, but, you live it; you go out on the line with a hard hat. [laughter]

But I was feeling all this stuff through the kind of reading I had done, the literature, and the people that I knew. I was feeling more and more left, and the friends that I had on the waterfront who were communists were very, very congenial associates to me. I liked their points of view; I liked the commitment they had to the union; I liked their understanding of policy, their understanding of events, of the relation of unions to government and the whole social system. They were much more social thinkers than other people that I had known. And they had a purpose.

*Did you know them as communists? I mean, were people identifying themselves as communists?*

Yes. This was open at that time. I don't remember any secret communists in that period. I mean, there were a lot of people proud to be communist. It was quite open,

and that's why the next year or two was such a trauma, when it became dangerous to be a communist. I always felt very comfortable being . . . I was determined to be open if I took on ideologies of that kind.

But anyway, I found this a congenial atmosphere. I liked the camaraderie, the sense of a united purpose. The analysis of events made sense to me. The role of the Left and of trade unions made sense to me, you know, the ideological leadership. And by the way, looking back, when I think of the apolitical American public and labor force today—largely apolitical—there was something rather positive and wonderful about that sector of labor that had an ideological direction, that had a politics, had a notion of political strategy and where to go and how to work, and a sense of long-range tactics and goals. You know, that was a wonderful thing. That attracted me—the major unions as the spokesman for the working class, as people leading the way to some kind of goal, socialism or communism, whatever, all of which fit in very well with any idealistic concepts that any of us may have had. That was a very attractive thing.

And I have to say this, and I'd say it again—not only don't I regret it, I'm extremely grateful for that period. It was positive; it was positive for many people that I knew. It gave them great *raison d'être*, a way of thinking about themselves that was positive. A lot people that I knew, who had been seamen or in other kinds of work in labor, found in this kind of environment a sense of power, empowerment, and a sense of dignity and pride—a pride in what they were. And I don't cut that. That was great.

And in the ideology itself, to the degree which Marxist concepts were presented in some kind of direct and original way, there

was a kind of truth. And I still think that. I mean, I think Marx was a tremendous thinker, made a tremendous contribution to world culture. And Marxism ain't dead. [laughter] It ain't dead, and it won't be, no more than God is dead. God ain't dead, either. He's loud and clear. [laughter]

So, anyway, these were the conditions I was in, and what was I going to do? Here I had a wife and a child. Kathy was working, which helped, and I made a small contribution on these trips. But that wasn't going to go on; and I had to find my way with all kinds of fantasies about what I was going to do.

I had little odd jobs. I think through the California Labor School or somewhere we heard that we could get jobs with the Social Security Administration. Kathy and I both got jobs, handing out checks and keeping records. Well, this certainly wasn't the kind of job I was good at. As I remember, I lasted a few weeks, and Kathy lasted a lot longer because she was a reliable, orderly person. But, hell, I think I must have given out hundreds of dollars. [laughter]

I couldn't argue with people. If they said they needed it, I would sign for it and put their name on the list. And I think little by little, some of the authorities around there began to suspect that something was wrong in that particular window. [laughter]

*And the line was getting longer and longer behind your window! [laughter]*

Yes. [laughter] And I had to wear a coat and tie, and at that time, in those days, under those conditions, that was to me demeaning.

*Had the terms "blue collar," "white collar" been coined at this point?*

You know, I don't think so. I think that was more in terms of East Coast and clerical kinds of work and things of that kind. I don't recall it, though it may have been. But I don't think that was a common term.

So, anyway, there were jobs like that. At least that was one that lasted a few weeks, and we made a little money.



## FISHING FOR ANSWERS

**M**Y FRIEND, Bob Nelson, who was now a second mate or something in the Master's, Mates, and Pilots Union, was in town, and we got together. And we'd always had this dream of getting a fishing boat. He had found one, an old, broken-down, leaky, dismantled fishing boat that he got for, I don't know, a few hundred dollars. At least it would float, but everything needed to be done to it. It was about maybe a twenty-five, thirty-foot boat, and it had a mast. The mast was still there. But all the rigging was gone. And it was, oh, rusty; the paint had all peeled; it was a mess. But it floated. And the bilge was full of water because the pumps weren't working, and there were leaks. So he had gotten this thing, and he had it docked somewhere in San Francisco, at some dock. And he said, "Let's fix this damn thing up and go fishing." Well, this was just made to order for me.

I had nothing else going that was *really* of interest and fascinating. And so I started with him. Kathy was very askance, and probably for good reason, about this. "How long is it going to take you to fix this damn boat?

And how do you know you're going to catch any fish?" Those were the days when you could catch salmon in San Francisco Bay or just outside.

So I spent hours and days on that little boat, *worked* my tail off. And Bob was *really* very good. I mean, he knew about the engine. The engine was, of course, all rusted. I remember it was all taken apart laying around on the deck, in pieces, and he was going over it with steel wool, cleaning and polishing everything on the damn thing, and that took a long time. And I was mostly chipping paint and caulking—I did a good job, a hell of a big job—and pumping out the bilge so that we could caulk the bottom and all that sort of thing. Over the period of weeks and weeks we finally had a boat, but we didn't then have the trolling rig that we needed. I remember that Bob knew all about these things—a *very* informed guy. God, he knew about *every* kind of line and pulley, things that you needed for a fishing boat.

So by this time Kathy was really sure that nothing was going to happen. [laughter] And we were barred from her parents at this point

to eat. And I think that I had certainly used up all the paychecks from the last trip, and there was very little. I was under tremendous pressure with Bob to really do it.

I remember going over with Bob to San Francisco and applying to the International Fishermen and Allied Workers Union. We applied for our union book and filled out all the papers and were interviewed and all that and finally got a union card—I still have my Fishermen's Union card. [laughter] And so we were all ready to go, but we still didn't have our trolling gear, you know, the two trolling extensions that go out, one on each side of the boat.

Bob knew a place *way* up in north bay; I forget the name, but it's a point way beyond . . . oh, gosh, almost to Martinez. There on a projection of land were young eucalyptus trees growing in abundance, and that was where a lot of the fishermen went to replace their trolling poles. It's no longer there, it's all cleared. I remember we spent half a day finding just the right pole. We got two or three extras to make sure they were right, or we had for replacements if they dried up and warped. And so we cut down a number of these poles and whittled them on our little boat.

Bob had finally gotten that engine going, which was a miracle, an absolute miracle. I remember the day when it started, you know, putt, putt, putt, putt, putt, . . . and crun, crunch, and then it would stop, and he'd have to go in and do something. Finally, the damn thing, you know, putt-putt-putt-putt-putt, and we had a motor. [laughter] The screw was bent, I remember, and it was hard to steer, and we were going to get a new one.

But, anyway, we were able to get up there, and we got these poles, came back, and rigged our little boat. And we had a rather nice-looking, little boat. It was named, of course,

because of Bob, the *Peer Gynt*. He was hung up on Ibsen and the whole mystique of *Peer Gynt*, so this was the *Peer Gynt*. And he painted the name on the side, and I'd done a lot of the varnishing, and it was a seaworthy, little dump of a boat! [laughter] And there was a cabin. We could even sleep aboard, and we had a little gas stove or kerosene stove, to cook up some coffee and stuff.

I never brought Kathy down to see it. I was scared. No, I wasn't scared, I take it back. I just thought she would look at it . . . Kathy was pretty sardonic at times, and I assumed she was going to say, "You guys are going to make a living off of that thing?" Yet we had done it, and I was so very proud of it.

It must have been about May of 1946. It took us a couple of months, and then we started to fish. That was it. I was afraid to have Kathy see the boat or pry into our plans. I was scared of her insight. [laughter] Well, I had every reason to be scared. We went out . . . Oh, by the way, all the Italian fishermen, you know, were looking at us like, "Who are these gazoonies coming into our union? Look what's happening to our union." You know, the old Italian fishermen there at the union hall and . . . was it Pier 39? It was way out near Fishermen's Wharf, their office. And, you know, we were really Johnny-come-latelies, a couple of nuts with our horrible, little boat. [laughter] But it was a seaworthy, little vessel!

And so we went a couple of times trolling. And we knew the right thing about bait, and we knew about how to handle our lines and all that. *Not one damn fish*. And we went out four or five times, trolling in places that we . . . However, it was a bad time of year, anyway, and most of the fishermen were going way out in the Farallons. A few were fishing in the Bay; they knew what to do. In fact, a lot of them were net fishing, and we were

trolling, which was high class, you know, but rather inappropriate at that particular time. And for days we didn't get one fish. And it slowly dawned on us. We weren't no fishermen! [laughter] We weren't going to make a living fishing! It was a horrible revelation.

But Bob said he was going to keep the boat and wait until the time was right, but I couldn't wait. I mean, you know, he was a single guy. In fact, he could tie the thing up and go to sea again and get a check. I had to worry about what I was going to do.

As June approached, it was clear there was going to be a major strike. It was set for June 15, and we're talking now about sometime in May when this fishing venture has come to an end. And I have the choice now of taking a ship and getting out and making some money. But at the end of the war, I couldn't really explain this to Kathy, you know, rather than staying and fighting to stay ashore and to find a job and all that, taking the easy way and going to sea and being gone for another few weeks or a couple of months.

It was embarrassing to me to even . . . to try to figure out what to do about this. And there was a strike coming up, and I began to be swept up in the spirit of that, you know, particularly because among the SUP leadership this was looked upon as this horrible commie strike fostered by the Committee for Maritime Unity. And on the other hand, all these other guys that I knew, particularly around the Maritime Bookshop, were talking this thing up as one of the great moments in West Coast labor history, equal to 1936 in the formation of ILWU and all that. So, you know, I was getting swept up in the feeling about this thing. At the same time, I had to have some money. [laughter]

This kind of retrospect, you know, can be very confusing and a bit overwhelming, because when I think of those few months

between the time that I got off the *Neptune's Car* (it was in the early part of January) and the end of May, June, those few months were so loaded with things that I was involved in, trying to work out. The kind of pressure that came from having to make some decisions and then not knowing quite how to go about it, not knowing what to do. Going to sea had been for a number years the only thing that I knew how to do. I was a passing good seaman, and I could get ships easily. I was a green-card, able seaman. And even though it wasn't much money, it was a way to get a job. I could get one tomorrow. But being ashore, and this horrible prospect of how was I going to get work, and what kind of work? And then behind it all were a number of different pulls.

There was within me constantly the idea, "I should go back to school." After all, I'd gotten an A.B. from University of California, and there I was in the Bay Area, with the university right there, and yet I knew I couldn't afford to go to school at that moment. I had to earn a living of some kind.

Kathy was working, which was very good, off and on. She had various jobs. At one point I spent a number of weeks with her with the Social Security Administration in the East Bay, giving out checks, making out checks to unemployed and people who had Social Security checks coming. She was able to get me on, as well.

I recall the feeling of shame that I had when I put on a tie and a shirt and a jacket and slacks. [laughter] I felt I was in a play or a charade. I'd get up in the morning early to get there by eight o'clock and shave and put on these duds, which had been laying around in our closets for a long time. And here I was decked out like a gazoony going to work, instead of putting on my usual dungarees that I wore all the time. And I had the feeling, you

know, I really was a misfit in that particular setup. I would go into work and here were all these guys, these women, at these little windows. Each window had a line sometimes all the way out to the street, of people of various kinds—mostly people that looked like working class or impoverished—lining up to get their checks. And Kathy was a very, very meticulous and careful worker. She would ask questions, then she would make out the forms for her people very carefully. And I was looking over to see how she did it and what she did, but I felt it hard to turn anybody down.

I would ask the questions, but I believed everything they said, like they had to have the money. If they didn't have some kind of a permit they were supposed to show, that they had picked up their last check, or hadn't picked it up . . . I began to pay no attention to that, and I was giving out checks.

Well, I would say in about three, four weeks, Kathy was getting very annoyed with me because she knew that something was wrong at that window, and I began to realize that this wasn't my gig. [laughter] Also, I had too many other things on my mind. I was concerned about getting down to the waterfront every day or two and seeing what was going on, and checking in at the union, seeing what kind of ships were going in and out, talking to people that I knew, and keeping track of the developments in the labor situation on the front. And, also, this great feeling I had that this was a kind of turning point in my life, and I had to figure something out.

Now, I'm not sure that that was before or during the GI bill of rights being made available to servicemen, as they were coming back to the country, and whether the Seaman's Bill of Rights was being talked about or pushed at that time. But merchant mariners had no buffer, no fallback, even though they had

been told that it was expected, that all the merchant marine would be treated like the rest of the armed services. In fact, we'd gone to sea, originally, at the beginning of the war, with that kind of slogan, that we were members of the armed services, and we were doing an important job during the war, and that we expected that our rewards at the end would be similar to the armed services. But here I was, and here were a number of other men that I knew, probably in the very same situation, trying to figure out what now? What were they going to do with their lives? Or how were they going to get *back into* ashore life, having been away for three, four years at sea or abroad, doing quite different work, and now had to return, many, who I'm sure like me, had families.

And had the GI bill or the Seaman's Bill of Rights applied to us, I don't know what that would have meant during that particular crossroads in my life. I'm quite sure I would have gone back to school if I had had the opportunity. I couldn't borrow any more money from my folks or Kathy's folks. They hadn't much, and they hadn't given us much, but sometimes it made the difference between being able to pay our rent or eat. What money I made at sea often was enough if I had a good trip, and I came back with a good payoff. And Kathy working helped a lot. And yet there were times like the one right now there in early 1946 when things were very slim. I mean, Kathy's wage at the Social Security offices wasn't very much, and when I was working there, that helped, but I wasn't going to go on doing that, and she wasn't going to go on doing that. So then what?

Just the thought of going back to school . . . there was a kind of a deep, nostalgic desire, I suppose, to return, but also at that point in my life, I felt that I'd had a lot of experience, but that I was ignorant, that

there was a lot I didn't know that I wanted to know. [laughter] There were things that I wanted to go into. Also, in that I thought of myself as becoming something of a writer, I felt that I needed more background in literature; I needed to have some background in history. In my reading I realized there were great gaps in my knowledge, and I thought that going back to the university would help me fill in those gaps.

Also, I remembered my courses in anthropology, and I had done some reading, you know, while I was at sea. And that was a pull, you know. That was one of the things that I thought I wanted to go into with more detail. I wanted to immerse myself in information, rather than merely experiencing, as I'd been doing. It was all very important, and I was glad that I'd done it, but now here was a kind of a moment of truth; I had to decide on things.

Then those two pulls, you see . . . writing and returning to sea, which even then I saw as a very unrealistic goal for myself—to go back to sea. You know, what was I going to do? Should I be a sailor the rest of my life? Oh, even if I was a good writer, go to sea and try to write myself out of it? [laughter] Or go into trade union work, which at that point would not have been possible for me because I didn't have that much experience, but it was one of the things in my mind? I'd been very interested in labor, the history of labor in this country and the development of trade unions, and I had a sense of loyalty to the union that I was in, even though I was beginning to be a little wary of its policies and think that maybe I was in the wrong union. There was then the pull of the imminent strike and all of the discussion going on on the waterfront among people that I had met and knew, about what the problems were and what they were going to be in the next few

months. The Committee for Maritime Unity had met in Washington, I believe in February of that year. This was a new organization of five, six, or seven unions, maritime unions, that had banded together with the idea that they were going to *have* to face the ship owners and demand some kind of compensation for the period of the war in which the unions had given up a lot of their rights and given up a lot of demands, and now the war was over, it was time to develop some kind of equity.

I remember the CMU not only called for unity of all maritime unions in the event of strikes, which was probably the most important plank that they had when they met in Washington, but that they called for some kind of national uniform agreements from ship owners across the board on equal pay for equal work and on organizing the unorganized. One of the problems looming in the picture was the pre-war problem of what to do about non-union, unorganized workers being used as scabs and finks during times of strikes, or even during regular, normal times, being hired through the back door by shipping companies. The old crook system was looming as possibly returning—people being hired off the docks, rather than through the union hall.

All that was the concern of the unions, and they wanted to develop a national research department in order to research the economics of shipping in the world and political action. And part of that was international communication with unions elsewhere in the world—international union organization. All of these things I found very interesting, very compelling, and sounded like something worth struggling for, fighting for.

So here this strike was coming up on June 15, and it looked like it was going to be a major one; there was a lot of excitement. And

here I was, milling around like some kind of a loose cog in a wheel, trying to decide what I was going to do with my life. This, I found, a little embarrassing to be worried about what I was going to do with my life, when most of the guys that I'd worked with and were on the front didn't have any choice of what they were going to do with their lives. They either went to sea or they starved, or they found themselves as unemployed workers standing in lines looking for odd jobs anywhere they could get it on the front. Yet I also knew a number of men that I worked with who were in a similar plight with me. They had some kind of aspirations to go on to certain professions or to go into some kind of businesses or to pick up where they left off years before, and there was this disquieting sense of being in an interim, being in some kind of hiatus. And I was one of those. I don't think I really knew how many others were in the same spot. I just knew I was.

So all this was going on in that two or three months; at the same time Bob Nelson and I were out every spare minute we had on the damn *Peer Gynt*, trying to get or keep the boat running, and to see if we could fish. [laughter] And as I said, we weren't successful.

Kathy, of course, for good reasons, was urging me to quit going to sea. My family was doing the same thing. "Now, it's time, Warren. You know, the war is over. You got to pick up the pieces and get moving!" And I didn't want to move in any of the directions that I could think of. Even going back to school sounds like something too far-fetched at the moment. I mean, how could I, with a wife and a child and with no skills and no money at the time, go back to school? It wasn't like when I was single and the years before when things were cheap. But it was getting more expensive to go to school and

more expensive to pay for rent, more expensive to live. And we had a daughter, and possibly more family coming. And somehow or other that was just a dream, the idea of returning to school, although it was always there.

*When you did think or dream about going back to school, did you always have in mind going and staying in the Bay Area and going to Berkeley specifically?*

Oh, sure, because it would have been even more far-fetched for me to think of going away to some distant university. The expense was bad enough where I was! Here I was, within blocks of the University of California, and I knew people there, and I had friends that had gone and were going there.

*And it was still a very exciting atmosphere. I mean, it was everything that you wanted for . . .*

Ooh, Berkeley was a great university, even *then*. [laughter] But yes, it had a great attraction; it was the lodestone. And I used to go up there and hang around people that I knew, certain professors that I knew in the English department, in the history department, now and then visit them. Paul Radin, I would visit him when he was in town, and, you know, it kept alive that spark, that feeling that I would go back. However, I had to sort of discount this in my life, because it wasn't realistic at the time; I needed a job!

I had to have a job, and I had to have a job that I could do, and I felt terribly inept. I think it's very hard to explain something like that. A guy goes to sea for four years, you know, a highly skilled seaman, and then feels utterly inept ashore. When I would think of

various jobs, I realized I would have to train to do them.

All right, so I *did* have some jobs. One thing I could do was standby work out of the union hall. There were jobs frequently on the board. You'd go where a company wanted somebody to stand by on the ship while it was at dock or while out at anchor, and the crew had left and been paid off, and only the officers were coming and going. And you'd go out and stand by, a sort of watchman, or they might hire two or three people to stand watches and all that, taking the place of the crew, doing odd jobs on the ship—cleaning up, scraping, painting, polishing, seeing to it that instruments were clean, and all that sort of thing. These were sometimes right in San Francisco Bay, or, at the most, on a shuttle up and down the coast close by, down to Monterey or San Pedro, or north to Seattle. That was the longest.

And I didn't take any of those, because the situation at home was such that I really felt I had to stick around. And Kathy was getting very tired of my absences, and I was getting very tired of them, too. I was feeling the burden of not having had a consistent and responsible relationship at home. And Anya was now two and half, and I just felt the need to be around. She was a delight and began to react if I went away and all that. So I would take standby jobs in the bay. Every few weeks I'd stand by a night or two out on anchor by a dock and made fairly good money, because there was overtime involved and all that. So a little came in from that, that was very helpful.

Nevertheless, it was sporadic; it wasn't what you can call "a job." It was just a series of little jobs. I got into the truck drivers union, and I would drive just delivery trucks to stores, delivering various kinds of com-

modities to stores. And I did that for two or three weeks at a time. Odd jobber.

It was very nerve-wracking, as I remember, because all during this were these pulls. I mean, I had to go over to San Francisco to the union hall—I wanted to do that. I had to hang around with my friends over there and talk about what was going on. And the whole thing . . . when I think of that three or four months, I don't know how one does all those things at one time! It was doing just too much at one time. I guess the word is *flailing*. I was flailing. And then, the other major pull was my writing. About that time—I have mentioned this earlier—I won a merchant marine short story contest for one of my stories, and Joseph Henry Jackson, who was the literary editor of the *Chronicle* at that time, was one of the judges. And he wrote a long column in the *Chronicle*, touting this as one the best short stories he had read, and, "Here was d'Azevedo on his way to being a great writer," and all that. Well, this was very charming. It was very invigorating. At the same time, what was I going to do about it, you know? [laughter]

I was working on a collections of stories—that's right—called *Sargasso*, because the whole idea of the Sargasso Sea was a kind of an important metaphor, symbol in my mind during that period. I had four or five stories, and I was going to finish up two or three more and put this little book out called *Sargasso*. Well, Jackson had mentioned that in the *Chronicle*, that d'Azevedo was about to publish this book. Now, based on that, I got letters from Houghton Mifflin and two or three other publishers, asking me, you know, would I send them the manuscript? They liked my story, and they wanted the book.

Well, this was a whole other thing. This meant sitting down, taking the time, finding

myself a space, and getting some writing done. I was also doing a little painting, and I had sold two or three paintings at the United Seamen's Art Exhibit in New York, and that was delightful.

But, you know, these things come far and few between, and in the meantime, I had to earn a living. I had to figure out what I was going to be doing. So it was quite a morass, a stew.

*Could you explain the metaphor you were referring to, the Sargasso Sea metaphor?*

It was an important metaphor to me, because the Sargasso was that great, mysterious area around the Caribbean with all the weird myths and stories about strange happenings, lost ships . . . . Of course, up to this day, you know, airplanes are still reported lost in the Sargasso and all that sort of thing. And stories of flotsam, these strange floating islands of seaweed with various kinds of sea creatures attached, using the bottom of them for food, and with long, trailing tentacles. I mean, a mysterious and wonderful area. I didn't have to develop much of a myth, because there were many myths about the Sargasso Sea, but the idea of what the Sargasso was was for me a metaphor for years I'd spent at sea, for things that I'd seen and experienced. In fact, that phrase, "adrift in the Sargasso," was for me a powerful image.

*Was it sort of the idea that the things that endure or float to the surface or have some meaning or whatever, are somehow nevertheless accidental? Is that part of it, that there isn't a necessary single theme of cause and effect?*

[laughter] No. No. It's just that it was this wonderful, mysterious, mirage-like area that I had been through and could sort of see why

people felt this way. When there are no storms, this flat, glassy sea with clear water, loaded with jellyfish, and at night, highly luminous. And the sea just seemed to twinkle with all sorts of light at night.

But then there were also stories about the Sargasso. During the slave period, slave ships would come through the Sargasso, and there were reports of these deep fogs and mists that ships would be lost in for days, and then coming out, would tell stories about how they'd gone around in circles, and their compass didn't work, and . . . . I mean, just a place of marvelous mystery and of myth and fiction. Most of it was just fiction. You know, even today, a squadron of planes goes off, and then disappears in the Sargasso, you see. Well, all through the last three, four hundred years of history, these stories about the Sargasso have come up. So to me it was a metaphor for that mysterious area of the world and oneself—adrift in the Sargasso, which, in a way, is a good metaphor for that four years I spent at sea, I think.

So, anyway, all that was going on between January and May. Also, in May the CMU had had a convention in San Francisco. They met to reaffirm the unity of the West and East Coast unions, maritime unions, and also set a date for a strike. June 15 was the deadline they gave to the ship owners to renew contracts with the changes and demands that were made by the unions.

And those demands were, when I look back, very minimal. I mean, you know, forty-hour week at sea, overtime, and an increase of wages that I think was seventeen dollars or something like that a month, certain safety regulations, health care . . . various kinds of demands I don't remember right now. But they were very sort of ordinary demands. And when you look back, I mean, they were minimal, except to the ship owners it was



considered to be the end of the world. “These are the commie unions asking for too much.”

The SUP that I belonged to took a similar . . . at least the leadership took a similar view. In fact, Harry Lundeberg and the leadership of the union said, “The commie unions are now striking in order to get power and to drive us off the West Coast, to take over.”

And it’s interesting, the SUP had *already* gotten some of those advantages already in their contracts. They had a nice buddy-buddy relationship with some of the ship owners who saw the handwriting on the wall and thought, “Let’s take care of this union, and this will put the other ones on the spot.”

A lot of us could see that happening. And even some members of the SUP that I knew felt that this was a very, very risky and a slimy strategy on the part of their own union. And so *all* this was happening.

Oh, by the way, I have to go back to my award on the short story contest. Not only was Joseph Henry Jackson one of the judges, but Albert Wetjen, who was a minor, but well-known writer of sea-stories. Jacland Marmer, also a well-known sea-story writer at that time. And who else? Oh, C. S. Forester, author of the Horatio Hornblower series. And then Herbert Diamonte who had been one of my professors at the university English department, and Claude Mayo, who was superintendent of the California Maritime Academy. That was a weird, strange bunch of judges. All of them but one said that my story was really was the quality of Defoe. I guess it was Marmer who said he didn’t like my stream of consciousness style and that the content was a little bit overboard, but he said it probably was the best story. They all liked it except for C. S. Forester, of the Horatio Hornblower series. [laughter] He wrote very straightforward

adventure tales of the sea, which I had read a lot of when I was a kid. And he said he didn’t think there was much in the story. He was the only one that was negative.

*What was the name of the story?*

That was “Pier”—just about a pier-head jump.

*Oh, “pier,” the pier you tie up to?*

I originally called it “Pier Infinity,” because that was my cosmological reference. But this young editor that I’d sent it to of *Interim* in Seattle said, “Nobody will know what you’re talking about. That’s OK to call it ‘Pier.’” I just thought of a pier-head jump, getting a ship at the hall, and then getting ready to go, and getting out to Pier 60, *way* out at the end, taking cabs and going down the dock, leaving everything behind, and heading out for lord knows where. You didn’t know where you were going. It’s called a pier-head jump when you get a ship, and you have to be there that same day, practically.

*Oh, I see. So no preparation at all . . . .*

It means the ship is leaving, and you got to get your ass out there right now. I had a few hours, and I just, you know, dropped everything and went. So I wrote about that, about this business of breaking with the shore, getting on a ship. The minute you jump on it, the moor lines come in, and off you go. I mean, it was that kind of a story, and it *was* sort of “stream of consciousness.” I don’t think anybody talks about that now, but old C. S. Forester didn’t like it, that stream of consciousness, like Joyce and others were writing, and it was avant-garde at that time.



TROUBLE WITH THE SUP

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I WAS GOING TO SUP meetings regularly. I kept up my dues always, and I went to every meeting when I was ashore, and I saw this growing move within the SUP, distancing themselves from the CMU, and making statements that the CMU and the threat of a strike coming up was really a plot with the commies, you know. And actually I think what was going on was the SUP was worried about their diminished power base, that they would be left in the lurch.

At the same time they also had a pretty good, at that time, agreement with the ship owners, and they wouldn't have wanted that jeopardized. And here now was this CMU representing a *lot* of maritime workers, and from the point of view of the SUP, communist led. This wasn't really the case, but there were certainly a lot of communists in those unions, and there was a much more left-wing orientation to policy. But Lundeberg used the communist label as a way of whipping his membership into line to oppose the strike.

*So it was effectively kind of the idea that, "Gee, you've got a good deal, and we've negotiated this . . . ."*

Yes, "and these guys now are going to mess everything up and it's the commies that are doing it."

*Was that effective?*

You know, let me think of the guys that I worked with in the SUP. They had heard all this stuff before. You sit there in the meetings, and you let the leadership rant and rave, and you go out and go about your business. But this was getting serious, because everybody knew that something was coming up. And there were a *lot* of guys that I knew in the union who'd sit around talking, saying, "We should be joining this Committee for Maritime Unity, we should be joining the strike. And, you know, we're not only going to be left behind, but it makes us a phony union not to be involved."

There was all that kind of talk. But I don't know, I imagine there were many who believed exactly in what the leadership was saying and many who just didn't give a damn. I mean, it's the same kind of mix you're getting in the American electorate today—the same kind of a thing in the union. [laughter]

But I was all fired up, and a few of the guys I knew were all fired up about it. I had a very romantic concept of trade unionism that I've already talked about earlier. But I felt a deep loyalty to the idea of the union. I was a member of the Sailors Union of the Pacific, and damn it, I wanted to be a good one. And after the mutiny, even though I was a little bit discouraged by the reaction, or lack, to my coming back with this horrendous tale of real abuse at sea, I nevertheless felt that if it wasn't for the union, we'd be back before the 1930s with crimps and the worst kind of conditions aboard ship, and that people like me probably would never have even dreamed of going.

*Did you ever write a story about the mutiny?*

No. I was going to, but while it was hot I didn't do it. No, I don't know why I didn't. I have a lot of letters that give a pretty good picture, but no, no I didn't. I didn't write many stories, but the ones I did were good.

*That's important.*

Yes, it is.

So, you know, as a kid from a relatively, I suppose, secure middle class family at the point when I left home, and as a college boy, from the crew's point of view, it was an entirely new experience to learn what it meant to be a member of a trade union, and I was deeply affected by it. This meant a *lot* to me. It became the scaffolding on which a lot of my reading went and the development of sort of a left orientation to class struggle and to socialism, the kind of foggy socialism that I had in my mind at the time. Of course, a lot of this was syndicalism.

Actually a friend of mine, who I'd known at school, who I have mentioned before,

George Leite, used to argue that I was an anarchosyndicalist, and that was fine. But, you know, "Don't go too far left, or you're going to end up in the hands of the communists, that'll be your finish," and all that. In fact, he wrote me a postcard, a very sarcastic one when Nelson and I were trying to get this fishing boat, *Peer Gynt*, going. [laughter] I think he was a little jealous because he wanted to do the same thing. He and I had always talked about getting a fishing boat, and here I was getting it and all that sort of thing. But nevertheless, he wrote this letter in which he says, "When did you become a proletarian?" [laughter]

And then he takes me to task for thinking that I'm a working man, given my past and all that. And this hurt, this bothered me because it was partly true, and one of the things that I was also very concerned about and aware of. And he found this Achilles heel, and he was poking away at it.

And then he says, "You know, you guys got a boat called *Peer Gynt*, so why the hell don't you read what Ibsen said. You know, Ibsen was a kind of a radical anarchist, I suppose, in his political thinking."

And then George sends me this quote from Ibsen—I'm not sure where it came from—"The state must go," it started out, "nor will I have anything to do with revolution. Undermine the state concept. Establish free choice and its intellectual implications as the soul determineth for a union. That is the beginning of freedom. That is worth something. A change in the form of government is nothing but a fussing about degrees. All that is just nonsense." Well, that's probably the last word in anarchism, and he could have been a Wobbly, you know.

So George, as a guy interested in the arts and something of an artist himself, was part of the reason why I was withdrawing from so

much of that. This was the sort of rarified world of the avant-garde intellectual, who, at the most, was a nihilist. You know, “To hell with everything.” And, “Down with the state. We don’t need states. The beginning of union is to do away with governments, do away with everything.” And, you know, I felt that what I was hearing here was the kind of prissy intellectual prophylactic world isolated from the real world that I felt I was dealing with; this was the artist vanguard, the artist prophet, the artist guru, and all that sort of thing, which I had a certain sympathy for, but at the same time, here I was at the point of my life where I was trying to make a living, trying to figure out what to do with my life and I was getting this kind of crap, you know, from a friend of mine, really kind of telling crap. It made its mark because those were the things I was worried about, concerned about.

And he had read this draft of mine, *The Enormous Outhouse*, my second article that I never published about Henry Miller, about what Miller was doing. I had great admiration for his work until he began to talk about himself as this poor deprived artist. Why isn’t the United States doing something for its artists? It does something for its screen stars, does something for this and that. Well, I agreed, but the point is there was something about it that sounded childish and naïve and beneath him, and so I was reacting to that. Here was a guy I’d admired who I thought was acting like a fool. So I overreacted in a way. Nevertheless, that was part of all this stuff that was going on at that time. And what a soup, right? [laughter] I think I was reacting to what people and Americans in particular, the set that I had once been part of, do. They tend to make icons and heroic, almost mystically heroic figures, you know. The heroic artist kind of thing that might

apply in a few cases but is most often a part in a drama. It’s a posture, and I react against that. I have never had any use for gurus of any kind.

*But wasn’t there quite a following? I mean, weren’t people clustered around Big Sur? Wasn’t this when Henry Miller was in Big Sur and . . . ?*

Yes, there were not a lot of people, but yes, there was Anaïs Nin—I think I’ve mentioned this before—Durrell, the early pre-beat group. I had been down there. I don’t think I met Miller. I met his girlfriends, his wife, and Jean Varda the artist, and Jaime de Angulo who wasn’t part of the group, but he had a place down there. Yes, it was a kind of a center, and Miller was sometimes there, and then George Leite went down there. I think he did most of the work on the early issues of *Circle* down there. It was exciting and a marvelous thing; but this business of somehow turning an individual into this god-like sprite—I’ve always reacted against that. I don’t think I’ve had any gurus in my life. I’ve known some and I’ve been interested in them, but the nearest might have been Harry Bridges for awhile. But there was nothing saint-like or Christ-like about Harry. [laughter]

There were great figures that I’ve had a feeling that I would probably agree with and support and follow. Not really follow . . . I never felt like I wanted to be a follower of an individual who had a mystique or a philosophical view of the world. And if they talked about or put themselves in that role, I always had a deep reaction against them, a negative reaction. It’s one thing for people to look at them that way, but if somebody takes themselves seriously and actually promotes that view of themselves, they’ve lost me, you know. Well, I felt that Miller had done that.

Oh, yes, and my reading at the time . . . . How did I have time to read? But I did. I remember re-reading, I think, or reading Tom Paine's *Age of Reason*. The long discussion he had of the place of organized religion, I remember, threw me back to Feuerbach, and to Ingersoll, the sort of atheistic orientation. [laughter] Well Paine didn't write as an atheist, but he certainly laid the groundwork for it in the *Age of Reason*. You know, he proudly denounced . . . .

*So this is still a persistent theme. I mean, you're still very interested in the role of religion.*

Oh, yes.

*It's what you were observing.*

Oh, god yes! Oh, yes. Yes.

*Well, what was going on in . . .*

In religion?

*. . . formal religion at the time? I mean, was there something in particular that . . . ?*

Nothing that I was connected with except, you know, through my parents' families. They were very religious, but nothing new or different. I don't remember the evangelists who were running around making a noise at the time. But, no, I'd already disconnected myself from any formal religious interests, but I still had a sort of a religious orientation to things. I still do. The word religion doesn't cover it—a feeling of the grandeur of the cosmos kind of thing [laughter] and a secular humanistic religious orientation that I still had, and I was still concerned and interested in anything that was written or said about

this, and so Tom Paine was one of my readings at the time.

But mainly, I was reading people like Maxim Gorky, who I thought was a *masterful* short story writer; I was reading his short novels and stories. And this gave me some idea of another kind of writing I might do, which, by the way, I tried later, and very unsuccessfully. When I tried to write socially conscious stories and write in a more conventional style, though I wrote well, to me, they were dismal failures. I have numerous manuscripts of attempts to do that, because the left-wing socialist realism had begun to make sense to me. To me, it was reasonable, but I realized it killed whatever I had, that it wasn't for me. Steinbeck was, to me, a great writer. Dos Pasos, Theodore Dreiser, people like that, were great conventional writers, and I admired them, but when I wrote that way I felt it wasn't me, it wasn't right. The kind of writing I did and would have gone on doing was much more experimental, avant-garde, close to poetry and all that. That was a struggle.

*Do you think you were exploring that kind of writing, too, in an attempt to kind of bring your urge to write into some sort of form of social relevance so you could pursue it?*

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I felt that, you know, what I had experienced and what I was seeing I should be able to write more directly about. Now, there was a way of doing it, but I didn't find it at that time. I would have had to struggle and work very hard at it and concentrate at that to find my way through that problem of realism against experimental avant-gardism and how to merge them. It can be done, but I didn't do that.

And so I was reading, you know, trying to get models—Gorky, Dos Pasos, Steinbeck,

and Dreiser. These people were very compelling writers. I still respect them. They're great writers. But I didn't feel that I would ever write like that. One reason I tried to was that one of my hopes at the time was if I could ever write a sort of a straightforward story or novel, I could get a fellowship to Stanford or someplace like that in the writing department. I was thinking of trying to get into one of these writing programs. And my attempts were rather dismal, as I remember, very forced and not right, not the easy flow of my earlier writing. So, this was a rough three or four months, I guess, when I'm adding things up here! And also the whole business of trade unionism and work, labor; the whole question of labor was not only symbolic, but a real thing to me. What little I knew of Marx and some of the Marxist writers, the business about class consciousness, I was mulling all these things over. I didn't know much about it. I was very poorly read in this, but the little I read had registered to some degree: The whole idea of recognizing that one's work, the way one worked, affected one's consciousness, the way one saw the world and what one felt about the world. I realized that over the past three or four years, I had lived in an environment in which my attitude toward the world had shifted, I mean, my feelings about things, my sense of values, of what was important and what wasn't, and who were real people and who were bullshit artists, you know. All these things I was working over. And one thing that I did know, and part of my loyalty to the trade union movement at the time, was my recognition while I was at sea—despite all the things that went wrong and all the people I didn't like as well as those I liked and all the unpleasant things as well as the powerful, exciting experiences—one thing that I remembered most of all was the community of work. How doing the same

kind of work, how a group of people working together, no matter what their differences are, find a way to get along and to solve problems.

*I think that came out really compellingly when you were describing the rhythm of handling the coal, because you certainly described the drudgery, but you also described something else that sort of unified the work gang.*

Oh, yes. It's a kind of music, a kind of dance, where you're so aware of other people and where they are and what they need and what you can't do to disrupt it and what you must do to carry on. And it gives you energy, gives you a tremendous amount of sustaining energy.

Well, then you could take that as a metaphor for the whole business of work. One learns to accommodate, to labor with others and to understand the world in the terms of the needs of those others and yourself. All this fit into my sort of emerging left wing philosophical consciousness, I suppose: class consciousness and the whole idea of the Marxist superstructure; that the base of so much of human conscience in life is one's economic position and labor, where one is. It opened up things to me like why people thought the way they thought, in terms of the kind of world they lived in, the kind of level, you know, of my own parents and my friends, the kind of lives they had lived, the way they earned their living, had a lot to do with the way they looked at the world around them, not entirely, but to a considerable extent. This was something that never had really occurred to me until this sort of later period as I was moving into the deep doo-doo of decision making about the world and myself and all that. [laughter]

And also, I had done a little reading on the history of the SUP and realized that the

earliest founders were communists, you know, back in the 1880s, 1885 or something like that. You know, the International Working Men's Association, out of which the SUP came, was founded by two or three communists, among others, and here the union was denouncing communists! [laughter] And the key figures in the early strikes, recognized by the SUP but minimized in their historical statements, were communists.

That stuff began to register on me, you know, that the real action here, the things that had been done, the important things that were happening even right now in May 1946, it's the communists on the waterfront, giving leadership to the trade union movement and giving it a policy, good or bad. They are the ones who were out front. They were *there*. They were on the spot. That was very impressive to me.

The ones that I knew on the front were all guys that I had a lot of respect for: Bill Bailey and Walter Stack and Alex Treskin—Treskin comes up in a little different context—and later on Pat Tobin, who was a close friend of mine. These guys and oh, ones that were killed during the struggles—well, I won't mention their names here—but these guys were, to me, brilliant laboring people. They were hardworking, highly aware, knowledgeable people in the labor movement, and they had the respect of the people in their unions. You know, even those who might be opposed to them in terms of their political views recognized their value as members of the union. These were guys that could be counted on to stick with something, to do something, and they were militant. They were militant, and they were outspoken, and they could talk. They were great soapboxers, which always helps in situations like that.

OK. About the sailors union: in 1885, the Coast Sailors Union was formed, and Andrew

Furusetz, who was a more conservative leader of the union, nevertheless was a *great* labor union leader. Later on he became very reactionary. After the turn of the century and after the first world war he became not only staunchly anti-communist but somewhat reactionary in his decisions. But he had been a great union leader. He helped form not only this SUP, but he had been a very important part of the earlier union struggles.

And then, of course, in the 1920s the IWW, the Industrial Workers of the World, were calling for one big union, and they were mostly syndicalists, anarchist-syndicalists. There were some communists among them, also Trotskyists, and the whole business of Trotskyism is another matter. But they were part of the formation of this union that I had belonged to, and this was a pretty known and radical bunch. In 1920 to 1922, I guess, or 1923, there was a great West Coast waterfront strike, and the Wobblies (the nickname for members of the IWW) had been *very* instrumental in that and had been some of the key figures.

They also helped form the seamen's clubs along both coasts. These were little clubs, usually in the missions, like the Seamen's Church Institute in New York. Missions have these institutes all over the country, but within them, these seamen would form these seamen's clubs, which were radical syndicalists, sometimes commie, clubs.

*When you say syndicalist, I don't know what that . . .*

Syndicalism promoted one big trade union over the world. Eighteenth-early nineteenth century socialism—the camaraderie of the working class joined together in one big union, and therefore, all these little unions are piddling things. And so the anar-



chists, Wobblies, you know, their idea was to destroy the company. [laughter] You can even destroy a lousy union by warring from within. It would seem to be nihilist to other people. It had a name. But some of these Wobblies were just plain anarchists, you know, destroying, throwing things overboard. “The hell with you, to hell with governments.”

So anyway, these very radical sorts had been very much a part of the formation of the SUP. So I began to think well, “What has happened to this union; the changes that have taken place, particularly under Lundeberg after Furuseth and everything?” Under Lundeberg, there was sort of this daisy-chain setup with the West Coast ship owners, you know.

*Can you talk more about the seamen’s clubs?*

The seamen’s clubs were essentially formed by IWW-member seamen who, when they’d get together ashore, would have these discussions that were Marxist as well as Trotskyist and just plain working-guy syndicalist.

*And the relationship to the seamen missions was that they would just simply use the missions as a place to gather?*

Well, yes. Here they were staying in . . . they’re called missions, but they really were little hotels with cheap food. The Seamen’s Church Institute was a very good example—it’s still going on in New York—and they were in almost every big port. The missions would set up some kind of place for poor, lonely merchant seamen, and little did they realize that they had this nest of vipers . . . planning strikes and the end of the government and all that sort of thing. [laughter]

This work consciousness was very important to me, the idea that I had really, for the first time in my life, understood the power of common work and as a glue of human relationships and the basis for an orientation toward life in the world—that one’s view of the world is based upon one’s close, hard, comradely work with others. This meant a lot to me at the time. I romanticized it, I’m quite sure, but it was important.

And I was reading Dubois, *The World and Africa*, which I mentioned before, I was always reading in that. To me, that was a powerful book. It had come out, I think about that time. And of course, my scripture for that time [laughter] was *The Myth of the Negro Past*, by Herskovits, which I always went into whenever I was trying to think through the problem of race relations on the front, and not only at sea.

I think I mentioned earlier a deep problem that I had about the fact that our SUP crews on deck were lily white and about the strong anti-black feeling in the SUP, as against this other union that was ending segregation and putting out a *tremendous* amount of propaganda on race relations and opening up the union to all comers and had them on board ships. I mean, we could see them, you know, the “checkerboard crews,” as we called them—the guys that I was hanging out with called them.

Oh, and then I ran across a little pamphlet at the Maritime Bookshop on Embarcadero by Herb Tank, who was a member of the National Maritime Union. It was called *communists on the Waterfront*, and it came out in 1946. I got a number of copies of this little booklet that sort of dealt with the history of the waterfront, the strikes and struggles from the point of view of the Communist Party and what the Communist Party

had done. Well, I read that over and over, and I gave it away to some of my friends. It's probably one of the bases of why they tagged me. But I thought it was just a marvelous left-wing pamphlet. Herb Tank was a good writer, and he laid it out; it was open and frank, you know. *We* communists have done this, and we have done that.

Well, I was thinking about that, too, you know. Where was I politically, where was I in terms of my general view of things? Other unions were pulling themselves together, revving themselves up for this coming strike, June 15, and there was an awful lot of strike talk on the front about this that was to take place in a few weeks.

*Is there any activity particularly around May 1 on May Day?*

If there was I don't remember. I don't think I went to a parade like I did later, but you can be sure there was a lot going on on May Day in those days.

Anyway, this is toward the end of May with the strike being talked about for just a few weeks later, June 15, and I think I'd just come in and just made the SUP meeting after coming off the ship that I had been a standby on for overnight. I was on my way home, but I wanted to go to the meeting first and then I would be going across the bay to Alameda, later. I think I called Kathy and said I'd be home later because I have to go to this meeting.

So we went to the meeting, and there were quite a few guys there, and there was the usual business meeting first, talking about the problems with ships and thieves and things of that kind. And then Harry Lundeberg got up and started talking about the coming strike and about how the SUP could not allow itself to be pushed around by

these other commie unions, that it had its own independent work to do on the front and it would do it, and they would keep a good eye out on what these guys were going to try to do, on and on and on. And I remember getting very upset, more and more angry, really.

I was with a friend of mine—I'll use his nickname, Sharkey—a very good friend of mine, and I'd shipped with him a number of times. He was a very hardworking, good-hearted guy, very simple and direct and all that. And he and two other guys were sitting with me, and right after Lundeberg spoke, I got up and just asked a question.

I said, "I'm just asking, you know, as a member of the union, I want to know why it looks as though we're being asked to go through the picket lines of these other unions when they strike. Are we supposed to go on the ships through their lines? You know, I've never done this before, and I thought our union believed in the solidarity of the workers," and all that sort of thing. And then I sat down, and there was complete silence in that room. I'll never forget it. It was my first experience with mass pulling away. [laughter]

*Censure?*

Well, not censure so much as just, "Wowie!" you know, "This guy's crazy," you know. "He's way off beam." [laughter] No, it wasn't censure so much as just shock. Nobody did that at these meetings, and I was stupid enough not to be aware that you don't do that at Harry Lundeberg's meetings, at least not that way.

He got up and ranted and raved for about ten minutes at me, calling me a commie. You know, "We got the commies in the union, we got this going on," and then laying out his view of the strike, and we were going to

have to strive to stop it. And then he stopped talking, and couple of other of the leaders got up and carried on the meeting and Lundeberg got up while this was happening. He went and talked to two or three *great* big beefy guys right next to the podium, and they were talking and looking in my direction, while the meeting was going on.

I think I was probably scared, as they say, shitless and didn't know it. [laughter] I just was thinking, you know, "My *god*, what is happening now? What is going on?" And these new guys went around talking to others all around the edge. They were all standing around, like, well, Harry's goon squad—these *great* big guys standing around the edge of the meeting, you know, about every twenty feet like an armed guard. As the meeting went on I thought, "Well, d'Azevedo, you've done it now. You've opened your big trap and here you are." And I remember taking out my seaman's wallet and then handing it carefully to Sharkey.

I didn't know what was going to happen to me. You know, they might take away my union card I have an early union card. I had a *good* union card from the beginning of the war. I think it was down to . . . I don't know, thirty-eight hundred, or forty-two hundred, which was an early card. After the war, my god, there were guys who have cards way up in the twenty, thirty thousands. So, you know, I didn't want that taken away from me, because I thought that they were going to try to do that.

I'm thinking, "What are they going to try to do to me? They're going to try to somehow disgrace me or something."

Well, I had a little money, not much, and I gave it to Sharkey, and he put it in his pocket. And the meeting was over, and I remember I felt like a condemned prisoner. I got up, my knees were shaking, and yet I felt,

you know, "I've got to do it." I know there were a lot of guys in that room I know agreed with me, but they would never have been so damn stupid as to do that.

I remember there were some guys that sort of walked next to me and bumped into me and looked friendly and then moved away, but most of them just went down the stairs, the long stairway you had to go down to Clay Street; this was the old building on Clay Street. And the others just sort of looked away, and nobody wanted to be identified with me except these few who were showing in some kind of little way, you know, "Too bad, Whitey, but . . ." [laughter]

And the crowd went down the stairs, and so I went down the stairs with Sharkey who was behind me. We get out to the street, and there as the rest of the meeting is dispersing or going off, was a circle of about I'd say ten, twelve guys, big guys. And as I went through the door, the big guy at the door *shoved* me into the circle, and for the next ten or fifteen minutes I was beaten, pushed from one to another. I tried to fight. I feel proud of myself. I stood on my feet. I never went down but I was beaten to a pulp, because I'd be pushed from one to another, and each one as I got to him would, you know, hit me.

*What time of day is this?*

This was night, around nine o'clock or something like that.

*Were there people just walking by?*

Oh, no, Clay Street in those years was empty. Except for the meeting, nothing was going on and it's right down by the waterfront. I don't think anybody . . . but later, some cops came. Oh, yes, the cops came, because some of these guys had told them that

a guy was being beaten up. That's the best that they could do for me. I think maybe Sharkey had gone and done this, you know, called for help. Anyway after about ten minutes, I was a bloody pulp, and yet I stood on my feet. And to this day, I'm proud of that. But, you know, [laughter] what could I do? I hit and all that, but . . . oh, one of the guys was a pugilist, had been the lightweight champion or something, and he was the one that shoved me, and he would just give me the worst of everything.

So in a few minutes more, I think I would've gone down, but a couple of policeman came and broke it up and said, "What the hell's going on here? What is going on here?" And these guys pulled back and said, "We don't know. We don't . . ." Oh, there's something about a goon squad that's the most terrifying thing in this world. I have the greatest sympathy whenever I read anything in the press about somebody who's been descended upon by a group of guys who have beaten them up or give them a bad time. The sense of helplessness is enormous. You just feel like it's the end of the world. Literally anything is going to happen.

And all I remember feeling in kind of a daze was, "I'm still on my feet. I'm still on my feet," you see.

So these police came up to me, two guys and said, you know, "What's happened? Well, what happened here? What did they do? What did these guys do?" And the first thing in my mind with this ingrained union loyalty, was I wasn't going to turn anybody over to the cops, you know, the goddamned cops, even though the cops had helped me, stopped the beating and kept me from getting killed for Christ's sake. [laughter]

And, you know, they're asking "What happened?" and these guys are standing

around watching me. So I felt very important. And I said, "I fell down the stairs. I fell down the stairs."

"What are you talking about? You didn't fall. We saw these guys pushing around."

I said, "No, they were probably trying to help me. I fell down the stairs."

"Well, then there's nothing we can do then," you know.

"Well you can tell me where I can get some help. I'm bleeding."

So one of them took me around the corner. Somewhere down there there was some kind of medical center, little place in a hole in the wall, and I got bandaged up and patched up and cleaned up a little bit.

Sharkey came with me. Sharkey couldn't do anything, but he stood by. He says, "Whitey, that was the most terrible thing I ever saw, and I didn't know what to do, and I would have . . . couldn't fight ten or twelve guys."

I said, "Forget it, man. I understand." But I was a wreck, and he saw me home across the bay on the night train, the old train that crossed the bay. Here I was, I looked like somebody coming out the hospital, you know.

*Did people just sort of ignore you or . . . ?*

Oh, no, *no*. [laughter] They were wondering what happened. And, of course, then I got home. It was terrible. Kathy was just terribly upset. And fortunately Anya was staying with her grandmother at the time. Yes, boy. Anyway, I had to explain to Kathy the whole thing, and she took it pretty well, but I mean, I think it was very hard on her. I felt awful, you know. Here I was, I was supposed to be looking for a job and figuring out how I hoped to get on with my life, when I go over and get *dumped*, you know.

It took me a week or two to repair, and my face was banged up for months after. But fortunately, no broken bones or anything.

*Or concussion or anything like that.*

Yes, Well not that I know about! [laughter] Well, look, I mean, who knows? I love that. Anyway, no, I just was bruised, cut, banged up. I fortunately didn't lose any teeth. I could have. I had oh, bruises all over my upper body, you know, black and blue, but no broken bones. I think I had a sore rib or two for a few weeks, but I was lucky. Oh, and I had a bad foot, ankle, I'd sprained or that somebody had stepped on or . . . you know, I was limping, and I looked like hell. And my eyes were mostly swollen shut.

*So you were around the house? I mean, you didn't go to anymore meetings?*

[laughter] Not for awhile, not for a few days. No way. No, I didn't go back to the hall. So I was at home for a few days, but oh! I did get up. I was so deeply . . . not only upset

but outraged by this, that I got up the next morning and I wrote a statement describing what had happened, because I knew that they were going to try to get me now. I was going to be expelled or something. They were going to have to do something about this. This meant something to the leadership there. They were going to use me as some kind of an example.

So next day or two days later, I got a letter, a copy of charges filed against me, by somebody—I forget his name—boat number something or other, charging Warren “Whitey” d’Azevedo with disrupting a meeting and disrupting crews that he worked on by passing out commie literature and on and on. These were charges, filed by them. And I thought, “Oh, this is it. This is how they do it. This is their way of doing.” And then another letter came saying I should appear for a hearing in two weeks or something like that to face these charges, and I had no intention in this world of going up to any meeting at that hall, you know, to face any charges, and wasn't able to for awhile. [laughter]



## JOINING THE NMU

A FEW DAYS LATER an interesting thing happened. A knock came at the door, and there were three guys that I knew from the front, from the Maritime Bookshop, I knew to be communists: Alex Treskin, and I forget . . . Scotty Edwards was one, Bill Bailey and two or three others. There were about three or four guys. And they brought me some candy or something, you know, very nice . . . [laughter]

And they said, “You know, we heard about this goddamn thing and we want you to know that we understand what happened to you.” They were on a recruiting mission. I didn’t realize it at the moment, but later it occurred to me, and I thought, “Well, why not?” you know, for Christ’s sake. They were not only sympathetic, but they also said, “And we’re inviting you to join the National Maritime Union. You would be welcomed. In fact, the book is waiting for you if you want it.”

Well, that pretty well set me up. You know, and I thought, “Ye gods, there is some justice in this world,” you know. [laughter]

And so, you know, it took me a couple of weeks or so, but I went over to the NMU

one day, and it was Scotty Edwards, I guess . . . one of these guys said, “Come on in here,” and introduced me to a bunch of guys on the floor, saying, “This is the guy. This is the guy that took on the SUP and told them off.” And by the way there was a big article in the *People’s World*, the local communist paper, the party paper. Everybody read the *People’s World* in those days. I mean, even if you weren’t . . . it was a well-known paper.

And there was a big article on this poor guy in the SUP who had been dumped, you know, stuff these guys had heard from me when they came over to visit and they immediately guided the press to this story. That’s the way the party worked, and I had no objection to this. To me it was fine, you know. They were on my side, somebody was on my side and understood. And I thought, “My god, I’ve been acting like a communist, so maybe I am.” [laughter] You know, “Maybe that’s the way it is.”

And they gave me a union book, and they gave it to me with *great* fanfare. You know, “Hey, Whitey, we’re glad to have you.” Daz, Whitey, whatever. “Glad to have you in this union, here’s a book, and we’re making you

an offer right now. You can be a member of this union right now and can ship out of this hall *any* time you want.”

Wow, you know, what a feeling. So from then on the NMU hall, which was two or three blocks up the street on Drumm Street from the old SUP hall . . . I used to go up and down there to get to the Maritime Bookshop past the SUP hall, and I had this wonderful feeling, “Well, you sons of bitches up there, here I am,” you know. And I’d go to the coffee shop with some of my buddies, never alone for awhile.

*Yes, I wondered about that.*

Oh, no. I had to go with people for awhile until we saw the lay of the land. But I met up with some of the guys, the leaders of the SUP. Wiseberg was one of them, I think. Anyway, and I went up and said “Hi,” and all that. You know, they were being very pleasant. To them it was all in a day’s work; they had used me to intimidate the membership. At the same time I felt pretty good because I had beat them one. I was now a member of the rival union, and glad to be. And, you know, so what are you going to do?

Oh, yes! Oh, god, yes! There was that wonderful moment a few weeks later. The strike was almost on, and I was on the front and part of the strike committee. Just from the floor, you know, people were asking, “Do you want to be a member of the strike committee?” And I had gone to one of the NMU meetings and I raised my hand, and we were thinking, “Now, how are we going to reach these SUP guys about the strike?”

So I was part of the committee that made a poster, and we titled it “Appeal to Reason.” And I think this came from something Andy Furuseth said that went way, way back. In

great big block letters, we appealed to the members of the SUP to not fink on us in a strike, to support the strike or at least *not* go through our lines, you see. Oh, I remember the wonderful feeling I had being part of this, to do this, you see, because it was my own feeling, and now I could express it and do it.

So we made these big posters. They were big. They must have been three by four or three by five, these *enormous* posters, and we took them up to some shop we knew uptown, and they ran them off for us—I don’t know, about 100 copies. And then how to get them out. We were going to plaster the waterfront with them. There were about ten of us, the committee, and oh, it was wonderful. [laughter] All my feelings of anger and resentment left. I mean, it was so positive. I was doing something *right* in the right way.

So one night was chosen. We were going to paste these all over the telephone poles and all over the sides of buildings all through that part of the waterfront. But what about safety? Supposing they had their goons out because they might have gotten word?

The longshore came in on this, and I would say about ten cars of longshoremen came, organized in a couple of days. They went on both ends of Clay Street, the two blocks where the SUP hall was, from Drumm Street to the end of Clay Street on the Embarcadero, and pointed their headlights down both ways so we had a highly illuminated street. It was bare and nobody was out. I don’t think anyone was in the hall, you know. [laughter] And they said, “Now, d’Azevedo, this is *your* job. You’re going to paste it on the door of the SUP.”

And I went there with this bucket . . . somebody gave me a bucket of paste and I pasted two or three of these great big posters all around, right on the front door and on



the sides and a couple on the street. [laughter] And then the cars pulled away, and I had the most wonderful feeling of what would you call it? Retribution. [laughter]

But . . . well, that doesn't capture it. It was bigger than that. It was . . . you know, this was justice and I felt good.

So that was really the end of that particular episode. From then on I got *very* much involved in the NMU. And how did I make a living? [laughter] Those problems that I've been talking about were still there. And there I was swept up into this, willingly, but at the same time I knew that I was avoiding major problems. And I don't think Kathy was happy about this, but she supported me in these things.

Well, that dumping at the SUP hall, late May of 1946 created something of a turning point for me. Actually, it made some decisions for me in that a lot of my personal concerns that I had been having about what I was going to do seemed pretty well cut out for me. I felt very strongly there was no turning back now. I couldn't just leave the waterfront like I was being urged to do by some people that I knew, and by family, to come ashore and stay ashore, the war was over.

But in a way I was out of one war and into another. There was a war going on on the waterfront, and I had just seen one aspect of it that hit me personally. A lot of the things that I had been thinking about having to do with the seamen's and waterfront trade unions on the front in San Francisco and the Bay Area had begun to play out, and it dawned on me that this was a very critical time. Not that I made any concrete decision, but I was sort of swept along by events.

An organization called the Committee for Maritime Unity had been formed in

January in San Francisco, partly under the leadership of Harry Bridges with the leaders of five or six local unions also taking part. The idea was that there was going to have to be some kind of concerted action with regard to the changing situation on the front after the war.

The ship owners were already making all kinds of threats about taking away the union hiring hall and about lowering wages, saying that they were too high, which was ridiculous. The seamen were getting at the most thirty-seven cents an hour, and for many seamen there was still a fifty-six-hour week instead of a forty-hour week. Conditions were, if anything, worse right after the war than during the war on ships.

Also, shipping was getting tough. There weren't as many ships plying. In fact, some of the jobs that I had during that period were short layover runs, taking a ship up to Suisun Bay for what's called the "mothball fleet." And a lot of American ships were being turned over as foreign flag ships, reducing the union aspect of the maritime trade. And things were kind of tough.

A lot of seamen weren't able to get ships. They were out of work, and there had to be some kind of concerted action, and the Committee for Maritime Unity was an organization that had a program, a clearly defined program for presenting demands to the government by June 15 of the year, just a few weeks off from the time that I left the SUP.

By the way, I don't know if I mentioned it, but the charges brought against me by the SUP were that I had distributed communist literature aboard ships, which in part may have been so, but it wasn't just Communist Party literature; it was trade union literature that was produced by a number of the unions. And as ship's delegate on the ships that I was

on, I always thought it was a good idea to bring these things aboard. Sometimes what we called the “phonies” aboard the ship would throw them over the side. But, nevertheless, I would take them and leave them around in the mess rooms, and others would leave other kinds of literature. So it wasn't just my own doing. But that was an excuse for making charges against me.

Another charge was that I had revealed the contents of a meeting, which was against union rules. That was, I suppose, a legitimate charge. On the other hand, after being beaten up and close to incapacitated for two or three weeks, I felt that I had to present my side of the story. And I did, and I wrote a short two- or three-page statement in which I outlined what had happened at that meeting in late May and the fact that I was dumped, and this got into the *People's World*, the left-wing, Communist Party newspaper in the Bay Area. And I guess that was all right with me; that was the only way that my position could be disseminated. And that was, by the way, done by these three or four guys who came to see me in Alameda after I was dumped, came over from the NMU, and they were members of the party, as I remember. And I was always grateful to them for, you know, the concern that they had, offering to help me get into the National Maritime Union.

*Was “getting dumped” the vernacular or euphemism for getting . . . ?*

Beaten up. Getting beaten to a pulp. “Dumped.” I mean, dumped by goons.

And so I wanted to show my position and also give my book number in the SUP, because they tried to say I didn't have a book number. I had an early book; I'd been in the union for four and a half years, and I was a bona fide able seaman and a good seaman,

recognized to be a good seaman, and had been very loyal to the Sailor's Union.

*Did the mutiny ever come up in any of these charges?*

No. But it came up in my mind . . . when I reflected, you know, at that time, that I'd always thought of Harry Lundeberg earlier as a great union man, as a vigorous, militant union guy who had been in part of the early strikes and a protégé of Andrew Furuseth, although Lundeberg declined in his later years. Here his position was clearly changed from the kind of militancy he had demonstrated earlier. He had been arrested for mutiny in Norway when he was on a ship in the Indian Ocean, and, you know, this was touted around among the membership as one of the signs of his great militancy. And, also, he had walked off a ship sometime in the early 1930s, I think; walked off a ship that he was on because he wasn't going to go through picket lines, and, I thought, “My god, you know, this guy's a good leader of this union.”

So when I was dumped for raising questions within a meeting about going through picket lines, to me the irony of that created some disenchantment with the leadership of that union. I developed other kinds of feelings of disconnection with the union later—that is, its position on minorities, particularly on Negroes. In those days we referred to African-Americans as Negroes.

There were those lily-white ships, and that had begun to bother me, and I wondered when they were going to change their policy. The other unions on the front, the five or six maritime unions and the Committee for Maritime Unity, were all desegregated and had desegregated crews. And the Sailor's Union of the Pacific continued its very, very restricted policy. I don't think there was any

ruling on this. That was their position: you didn't hire blacks. I can remember in Seattle one time seeing a dark-skinned guy coming into the hall to get a union book and being told by the dispatcher, "I'm sorry, we don't take Negroes."

And he says, "I'm not a Negro I'm . . ." I forget what he said. He was either an Indian or a Mexican or something. But, "Sorry, go and see the business manager," and, of course, he didn't get hired. But that was the general thing. It was a reactionary union as far as race relations were concerned.

And although that wasn't the entire sentiment among the members of crews that I was on, it was strong enough so that had there been any black person sent out from the hall to take their place within a crew, a lot of the guys that I used to sail with in the SUP would not have allowed him in the same fo'c's'le, might not even have wanted him in the mess room eating with them. Now, of course, there were blacks sometimes in the steward's department, but from that point of view, that's where they're supposed to be—serving food to the mess. And there were some on the black gangs (engine crew), but, "Sure, what do you figure, those guys down there . . ." As long as they weren't living with you, it was all right.

It reminded me, also, of those incidents up in the Bering Strait, with the question of whether Eskimos could eat aboard our ship or not, particularly way up at Point Barrow, with the Inuit guys, who were very hungry and wanted to eat on board ship, and my own problems about that as a delegate—how to handle it.

So all those things were a source of friction in me, about, you know, what I felt about the union. Nevertheless, I had a loyalty to the idea of the Sailor's Union, its history, the fact that it had been involved in some of the

very earliest seamen's struggles on the West Coast. And I felt proud of it—up until the very last. And when that happened in the hall, I'd already begun to feel dissident enough so that I felt I had to raise my voice about it and say something.

But I expected I'd get support. I thought, you know, that somebody would say, "Sure, why not?" or that even Lundeberg would say, "We don't intend to walk through those picket lines." Of course, at the time, he was letting it be thought that he wasn't going to recognize the June 15 strike organized by the Committee for Maritime Unity. That doesn't mean that he would have actually gone ahead with that, because a lot of his members would not have gone through picket lines. But I thought, you know, there would be some discussion on this. Not a bit. Just, it was brought to a close, the discussion, and a few minutes later I was dumped.

So to me that was a turning point. There was something to me wrong with that union, something basically wrong, and my loyalty toward it was considerably diminished. Maybe I retained a loyalty toward its history and what it had stood for but not toward what its role was in the present maritime situation.

So that was going through my head, and I felt I had to stick around the front. I joined the National Maritime Union, as I've already said, and I felt I had to stick around until after June 15, at least, and see about the strike—taking some part, not just leaving. It was the wrong time in my view, to leave, and I didn't want to.

Kathy went along with me on that, but it was very hard for her. She was hoping that at last I'd stick around and either get a job or go to school—at least be a more consistent member of the family than I had been. And, of course, this was a problem for many seamen, and I had, I guess, a lot of support in

the sense that most of the guys that I knew had the same kind of problem.

Things were getting very tight on the front, and June 15 *did* come, and the strike didn't take place because the ship owners partly settled at that point. My feelings about the SUP were exacerbated at that time, because the Committee for Maritime Unity negotiated a settlement of something like a seventeen dollar monthly raise, which seems terribly small now, but it was something, but the trouble was, there weren't enough ships for people to even be making their monthly salary. And confirming the forty-hour week, and confirming the use of the union hiring hall, rather than hiring overseen by the ship owners. And, of course, no good union would have accepted that.

And while this was going on, the SUP . . . Lundeberg was carrying on unilateral negotiations with the ship owners, and got twenty-two cents an hour and a better settlement, which of course meant to everybody I knew collusion that one had always suspected from Lundeberg and his ilk, talking about his great independent union that wasn't going to join with the commie unions. What he did, he did an end run. And the ship owners, quite willing to divide labor on the West Coast, gave him a better settlement in order to keep the kettle boiling.

And it *did*, because immediately then the CMU—Committee for Maritime Unity—put up a challenge to the ship owners, saying that they were going to strike later in the year. I think they set September as a possible strike date, unless they got the equivalent of what had been given to the Sailor's Union in their sellout, as it was considered to be by the people that I knew, and certainly by the National Maritime Unity people, as the most obvious indication of collusion between union leadership and . . .

It happened also later. Lundeberg did this later on with the Taft-Hartley Bill; he made his own independent . . . went and saw Taft himself and worked out a deal for the SUP. In every case, this undermined the unity of the waterfront unions and got him something at the expense of other unions. So that helped me confirm my view that I had done the right thing and that I was on the right track.

Other things that were happening at that time on the front . . . I was hanging around the Maritime Bookshop, my old digs, and the California Labor School, where there were a lot of people that I found very congenial, a lot of very left-wing people. And the thing that struck me at the Maritime Bookshop, I began to be aware of the kind of literature that was available.

There were *numbers* of pamphlets and *very* good materials on the "Negro Question," as it was called in those days, and for example, the struggle against white chauvinism. And there was a *considerable* kind of development of literature on the question of race relations throughout the CIO unions, but particularly, I think, headed by ILWU and the seamen's unions on both coasts.

And that I found very exciting. It was something, you know, that I felt in a sense hungry for: where was there leadership . . . policy leadership with regard to the whole question of the role of the African-Americans in American society, particularly at work in the industrial unions? Here was laid out a policy, what to do—how to go about recruiting, bringing in Negroes into the union, and seeing to it they had a chance to move up into leadership.

The NMU had African-Americans in the leadership, in the top leadership, Ferdinand Smith and others. I'm not going to name all names here. I'll name names only of people who were self-admitted and known left-

wingers, otherwise, I probably will not do that. Not that they'd mind, but why do it? So, anyway, here in the top leadership of the NMU, and then I learned also in the American Communist Party, were African-Americans in top leadership. And I'd come from a union in which I hardly ever saw blacks, except either in the steward's department or in the engine department, and on some ships none at all, and where the issue hardly ever came up except in a negative way. And here, suddenly, the whole thing was open. The world seemed to be open. This was something that excited me a great deal. Here was an opportunity, yes, to link myself to something that I saw as positive.

Also, strangely enough here, back in the 1940s, pamphlets on the "Woman Question," on male chauvinism, and I can't help but insert here that there's no doubt that the left wing in the United States in the 1930s and the 1940s were in the vanguard of these movements: I mean, clearly defined policies having to do with the necessity to hire women, necessity to have them in the unions, necessity to have not only women's auxiliaries, but women in leadership, and to fight for the rights of women in various industries. Also, very profound discussions about the role of women in families and the obligations of husbands, and taking swipes at seamen and longshoremen for, you know, not doing enough to see to it their wives have an opportunity not only to read and go to meetings, but to take part in activities and to have some role in the movement.

I found this exciting. You know, no one else, as far as I know, was talking about these things. If there were such other movements, they were awfully quiet. These were clearly defined policy statements, propagandistic to a considerable degree, and most of them Communist Party literature. So little by little

I began to think, "Well, ee-gods, the source of a lot of this thinking is the Communist Party itself."

I'd always sort of wondered about that, and the fact that the party people that I knew, even some of the most uneducated, working-class guys who were members of the party, had positions on these things. They were committed to expressing themselves at least on these matters, taking a stand, and regardless of their private lives, they at least took these positions in their public life. And I admired that.

So, see, the June 15 date went by, and I didn't have any job, so I began taking again more of these standby jobs—taking ships either to the mothball fleet at Suisun or just around the Bay.

*You mean by that actually going with the ships that were going into mothballs?*

Taking them up there, helping to dismantle them, putting them in mothballs, and standing by guarding them. [laughter] Then the crews would come aboard. I don't know what union handled those crews, but the shipyard and the mothball fleet crews would come aboard and start dismantling, taking off usable stuff, and leaving them just a shell of the former self.

I must say I pilfered some things now and then. I'd pick up these beautiful brass fo'c's'le hooks and various kinds of brass fittings that they were just pulling off and putting in piles, you know, in the middle of decks. And I remember taking a few of these in my pocket, and I had them for years, just admiring them. These beautiful solid brass hinges. They don't have them on ships anymore. Beautiful stuff.

All these ships then were left at anchor and tied up, and that was our job, to help tie them up and get them in shape for long-term

storage. So I took a number of these ships, and that was fairly good pay when you got such jobs. There was a lot of competition for them. But the few I had certainly kept a little income coming in.

*When you say there was a lot of competition, was it strictly a matter of being there when the opportunity came up, or . . . ?*

You mean getting jobs?

Yes.

Oh, well, through the hiring hall you have a number. You come in and you register, and then you got a number.

*But you have to be there, don't you?*

You have to be there. So, you know, I'd wait, and then I'd see my number. If it wasn't going to come up for a couple of days, I might take off, but you better be there when your number is called, or have an excuse that's validated, or you're out of luck.

*So if you had valid excuse, then you wouldn't necessarily lose your place in line?*

No, but it had to be awfully good, like you were sick or something, like a doctor's excuse, or you had to be awfully good at faking it. You know, there'd be too many guys behind you raising hell if you didn't have a good excuse. No, it was tough, and there were a lot of guys looking for work.

So the few times I was able to get one of these was a lot of overtime. You know, my gosh, you might make as much as seventy-five cents an hour or a buck an hour, or a little extra. [laughter] And then there were ships taken now and then to other docks,

from one dock to another in the bay or around outside the bay down the coast. Tugboats were very important, but that was a tugboat union, a different union. And, yes, there were some guys struggling to get those jobs, getting into those unions or into the longshore union. I did do some longshore work on temporary permits. That's another thing, yes—on temporary permits, when they needed extra men, and there weren't enough men to fill the dock crews. I did a little of that, but it was hard to get on because those were good jobs, well-paid, hard jobs. But, you know, they would line up their own people first.

This was the beginning of a kind of depression on the waterfront, and one of the beefs of the unions was that the United States was allowing American ships to go under foreign flags and non-union crews and was not building its own merchant fleet. And so there was a lot of action in Washington by the national NMU and other seamen's unions, trying to get the government to continue building ships and using them in the post-war trade, rather than allowing the ship owners to circumvent the trade unions. So there was a real move-on to pitch out the militant trade unions at that time, and it was a clearly defined, concerted effort. And the Truman administration wasn't too helpful in this, and that was another beef we had, that Truman allowed himself to be maneuvered on these matters, as far as the big ship owners were concerned.

So, anyway, during this period, when I was sort of humping around on the front, trying to get jobs, I was learning an awful lot about the five or six other unions, meeting a lot of people from different unions—the Marine Cooks and Stewards, the Marine Firemen and Water Tenders, and the ILWU—and making some very good friends

in the National Maritime Union, and being sort of, I suppose, taken in as a kind of neophyte by some of the far lefties.

Alex Treskin (he's now dead) was one I'll name in particular: a wonderful guy, one of the men who had come over to Alameda, and he was a red-hot commie. And, you know, he always was called the "party hack" by the non-communists. "There's a real party hack." He was an open, soapboxing guy, and yet a very good guy—very hardworking, very committed, and he, I guess, could be considered an exemplary member of the waterfront Communist Party. He was very vocal in the union. He was at all the meetings, the NMU. He was always up with the party position—known for that, openly so. His views weren't always accepted, but often he made such good points that his position *was* accepted.

And others, like a good friend of mine I can name, Pat Tobin, whom I got to know very well. In fact, later I shipped out with him a lot as a partner. And people like Dow Wilson, whom I admired—a young guy, with whom later I helped to hold and organize the Union Oil ships, a very clear, very intelligent, brilliant, young guy. I don't think he had much formal education, but he was very clear, very on the ball. Whitey Hansen was another and, oh, a number of others. Bill Bailey, who wasn't NMU, but a marine fireman and well known, almost famous, ex-communist on the coast [laughter]—and by communist, I mean up until recently, he was sort of the spokesman for the Left in various documentaries and things of that kind. An ex-communist only in the sense that the Communist Party almost dissolved later on, but, nevertheless, great guy. Walter Stack—the wild man, but a wonderfully committed guy. I'll never forget Walter. He was a very witty guy, and he used to tell stories. He was

very anti-psychotherapy, as it was the thing to be, you know.

*Is that right?*

If you were left wing, Freudian psychotherapy was bourgeois individualism and subjectivism and could be misleading and all that. But, anyway, Walt had been doing a lot of reading, particularly about Pavlov and conditioned reflex, and he found that very interesting, but he was very cynical about it. He said, "What is this goddamn conditioned reflex thing, you know? What good is it going to do anybody in this world, anyway?" He said, "I had a dog one time. I had a dog," he says. "You know, and that goddamn dog would piss on the floor. And I couldn't get it to stop, and every time it'd do it, I'd pick it up and put it out the window. Yes, on the first floor; just throw him out the window. And the next time he'd do it, I'd put him out the window. You know," he said, "that goddamn dog. You know what he finally did? He would piss on the floor and jump out the window!" [laughter]

He had a whole number of conditioned reflex stories, but that was one that I remember that I liked. And then he would tell stories about how he worked in a slaughterhouse at one time when he was younger, and how he hated that goddamn job, and he hated the floor manager. They were killing sheep—way at one end of the yards they were killing sheep. They'd put them on these conveyor belts, and they'd start butchering them at one end. And he says, "I was up at the other end where we had the heads, and I had to take out the eyes." [laughter] "And we'd take the eyes and put them in a pile, to go on a conveyor belt. And they'd go by, and this goddamn floor manager would be over at the

end, and he'd be watching, counting every piece that went by, and checking up on us, and guys would get fired. And it was hot and sweaty and smelly, and what a horrible, goddamn job." He said, "Every time I eat meat these days or eat meat on a ship, I think of those goddamn conveyor belts, and . . ." And he says, "But I had the job of eyes. And I hated this guy, this manager." And he said, "I started piling them up, like a little pyramid, with all the eyes looking in one direction. [laughter] And I had them focused, so when they'd go by him, they would be looking right at him, right up at him—all these eyes staring at him!" He says, "You know that guy? I don't think he knew what I was doing, because he began to think there was something happening on that conveyor belt. And you know, he left the conveyor belt and began to stand around at the beginning of the belt, so that he couldn't see." [laughter] He says, "Well," he said, "maybe that's conditioned reflex, too. I don't know, but," he says, "you got to use every weapon you got in this world."

So I just told that, because somehow or other it wasn't just political talk. There were these wonderfully bright and aware and cynical guys on the front.

So I recall that during this period Alex Treskin, this wonderful guy, began talking to me about the party. Why don't I come to the meeting? Why don't I think about joining, because he says, "You know, your attitude is pretty good. You seem to know a little bit; you've been around the front."

I had been doing some work at the union hall. I would help pass out leaflets for the union and oh, I don't know, a number of other things that I did, little things around. Oh, I took minutes of meetings occasionally, because I could write fairly fast and type them up. And though they had secretaries, I'd help

And little things like that. So I began to be thought of as a guy who's, you know, a likely party member.

So I decided to go when the party had a meeting on Broadway in San Francisco, way up at the end of Broadway. And so I took Kathy. We went over one night, and there was this *big* . . . there must have been six, seven hundred people or more. I mean, these are the days when the Left had something going for it. And here were mostly waterfront people and their wives and all that, and members of the party or prospective members of the party. And they had a meeting, and they talked about the waterfront situation; they talked about the world situation, what was going on, and various kinds of congressional and senatorial acts, and who was good and who was bad, and local elections and things of that kind. And it was very interesting, because, you know, here were some people who had some idea of where they were going and what they wanted to do, and they had a program.

And by the way, there were a lot of African-Americans there; there were a lot of Negroes. Not a lot, but, I mean, I'd say, you know, there were forty or fifty, which was a lot in those days to be around, and these were mostly longshoremen and marine cooks and stewards guys and their wives.

*Well, there's a lot of de facto segregation in those years, too, wasn't there? I mean, not just instituted. I mean, you rarely saw truly integrated . . .*

Oh, yes. Oh, no, it was very unusual. Here was a group that was desegregated, wide open. There were a number of Chinese there who were very active in some of the unions, Mexicans, and, you know, it was just a motley bunch, and I felt very . . . I don't know. I



felt good about that. It made me feel I was in the right company, the right climate.

Kathy was a little uncomfortable, because although she was very progressive, as my friend Trot—one of my seamen friends—would say, “Hey, Kathy’s a very progressive girl.” In those days progressive meant liberal, you know. You’re a good, liberal person, but not really left enough, you see. But she was progressive; she was a progressive, at least, I’d say.

*At least progressive! [laughter]*

She was, you know. She was certainly pro-union. She was very militant about that and about the women’s questions and things of that sort. A very advanced thinker, but this was a little bit further than she was ready to go. But she went, and she watched with great interest and has said she even enjoyed it.

But then to me the topper was, at the end of the meeting, Alex jumps on the table way at the end of the room and opens up singing “The International,” you know. I’ll never forget that. This whole group burst into singing “The International.” And I was thinking, “Here San Francisco, California, six hundred or eight hundred people are singing ‘The International.’”

And what it brought back to mind, something very moving, is that when I was on the YPO, way up the Bering Strait on our way to Point Barrow in 1944, we had passed through Big and Little Diomed Islands and the narrowest straits between Kamchatka and Alaska, and Sparks got on the radio a broad-

cast from Kamchatka; it was “The International” sung by the Red Army Chorus, and that’s a pretty powerful bunch of singers.

And here it was, we’re in the middle of the war, and, you know, concerned about subs and everything. On the one hand we had “The International,” and on the same program, “The Star-Spangled Banner” was sung with a great big orchestra and all that. And I remember feeling this *wonderful* sense of a bizarre connection between two cultures when I was up there. Here was the passageway where the Big and Little Diomed Inuit and Aleutian peoples would go back and forth in the wintertime on the ice to Kamchatka with their families and over to Alaska. And nobody could control them. The Americans were worried that they were spies for the Soviet Union, and vice versa, and here they’d go back and forth. And here, right up there we’re getting both “The International,” sung by the Red Army Chorus, a magnificent chorus, and then “The Star-Spangled Banner.” And I remembered at that time thinking, you know, these two anthems, what they meant to me and to others that I was with, was, two great countries, two great cultures, finally finding some kind of rapprochement during the war. And here I was in San Francisco with Kathy listening to “The International,” Alex Treskin on the table, and I was thinking, you know, “My god, here I am in San Francisco, and they’re singing ‘The International,’ you know.” [laughter] That’s been always to me a very moving thing.



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## THE COMMUNIST PARTY

I'D ALWAYS FELT that I was a very, very patriotic American. I always felt that I could never have been committed to any other country at that time in my life, that this was my country. I was very proud of its heritage, but I always find that the heritage I acknowledged was a dissident heritage—I mean Tom Paine, John Brown, Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, all the great dissidents, the abolitionists, were to me the *real* heritage. And then there was another dark heritage, which was that of the Right, that of the reactionaries and conservatives. Very simple-minded, but, I mean, you know, I felt very patriotic in that in a sense I felt I would do anything, take any role to support what I considered to be the positive side of the evolution of American democracy.

So the concept of belonging to an organization which promoted and felt connected with another country like the Soviet Union was a little problem for me—not a big one—because none of the communists that I knew, at least not to me and not in the literature that I read, ever took the position that Soviet Union was the country that they wanted to

belong to. They merely admired certain features of it, and certainly the communists admired what they thought to be the socialist development that had taken place and the great improvements in Russia since the revolution. All these things were very important ideas to them that should be applied in the United States.

*So it was more like a model that was admired, rather than . . . ?*

A model. The Soviet Union was a model. Therefore, during the war, at least, to protect the Soviet Union against the attacks upon it . . . all the way back to when the Western countries—England and the United States, in particular—were supporting the white Russians against the red Russians, the Bolsheviks, all the way back to the idea that there was an element in the Western world, the capitalist world, that was out to destroy the Soviet Union and its gains, this made sense to me. And I felt very identified with that idea.

*Well, I can see it. I mean, you were living it—the whole dispute between labor and the ship owners circumventing . . . .*

Well, sure. And the Soviet Union was backing the trade union struggles in the United States and all over the world.

*And ship owners, I mean, the way you described it, were reactionary wanting to go back to total control.*

Yes. But they are bastards, is really one way to say it, you know. The Soviet Union at that time was backing trade union movements throughout the world. International trade union movement was very strongly supported, and I guess there were a lot of Soviet representatives in it. And this left-wing trade union American movement was identified with the international trade union movement. So the Soviet Union had a very positive place in the world at that time, from the point of view of the American Left who were *not* necessarily at all interested in destroying the United States, you know. [laughter] It was just the opposite; the idea was that the only way the United States could *survive* was to have a rapprochement. Later on would be the breakdown of the Tehran agreements and all that sort of thing with Roosevelt, and then the Cold War began.

*What agreement?*

The Tehran Conference. Churchill, Stalin in 1942—something like that, 1941, 1942 . . . had been a great moment to a lot of people not necessarily left-wingers. You know, Europe, England, United States, and the Soviet Union had joined in this understanding about their role in the post-war world in supporting democratic movements,

things of that kind, and cooperation with one another. [The Tehran Conference was actually in 1943. Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin met and agreed on Allied war plans and post-war cooperation in the United Nations.] So with the breakdown of that after the war, and the beginning of the Cold War, there was a great deal of bitterness about the United States taking the wrong turn, that it was now capitalist interests, the corporate interests of the United States, who were going to see to it that there was not going to be a continued rapprochement.

Now, at that time, I wasn't aware, nor were most of the people I knew . . . or we didn't believe the things that were going on in the Soviet Union that we would have deeply disapproved of. In fact, to this day, I'm not so sure how much of what is reported is real. Nevertheless, obviously Stalin was a despotic character and became that in his life, and the attacks upon him by his own party later on, certainly revealed a lot of the things that were wrong within the Soviet Union that were sometimes terrible, terrible things. Nevertheless, at that time, I don't think we took that seriously, and we didn't believe that; we saw this as propaganda.

I have to say right now, regardless of whether this was true or not, I think the positions that we held in those days were good ones. The positions in the trade union movement, positions about race relations, about male-female relations, about the prospects of democratic reform within the United States—all these things are as important now as they were then, and the Communist Party was the vanguard of those movements at that time.

So it wasn't until years later that I began to realize that there were things about not only the American Communist Party but about the Soviet Union that I would have

deep criticism of. But I wasn't the only one. A lot of people were also beginning to have doubts. And it was very tragic. It was a tragic breakdown of what I considered to be a very important movement in the United States.

So at the time, I was coming to this in a real way, and at that meeting, by the way, I decided to join the party. And I have to say now, too, I never got a card; I never was a "card-carrying communist." But I don't remember anyone who carried a card. I think cards were way back at the turn of the century—the IWW. And early communist movements, as well, might have had cards, because there were so few people, you had to carry it to be identified. On the other hand, it was dangerous to have one. I don't remember any member of the Communist Party carrying a *card*. You paid dues, had your dues just like you were a member of the party. I always got a kick out of that. You know, "Are you a card carrying member of the Communist Party?" [laughter]

I could honestly say, "No, I never had a card!" [laughter]

*Yes, you could honestly say no! [laughter]*

They never had them. And the "red card," which everybody thought you had . . . You know, obviously, a communist has got a red card. They don't got no goddamn card.

So it was about this time, after I became a member of the party, that I became aware of this famous Duclos letter. Jacques Duclos was a member of a French party, who wrote a letter actually to all parties, mainly directed to the American party, criticizing the position of the American Communist Party during the war period when Earl Browder was leader of the American Communist Party. Browderism, as it began to be referred to, was a period of a united front of all progressives

in the country. A dissolution of the Communist Party as such—that is, it became the communist political association instead of the Communist Party of the United States. The whole idea was to develop a broader rapport with various segments of the American public, who were progressive, and who one could work with to develop new strategies and new programs in various organizations and in labor and on the front. So in the period prior to my joining the party, there had been this popular front type of orientation of the Communist Party.

*And is that what you said became known as Browderism?*

Well, yes, then Browderism began to be a bad word. That is, that Browder had in a sense undermined the militancy and power of the party and its correct program, becoming a social democratic liberalism.

So in the early 1950s this was a very real thing going on within the party. There was a lot of contention, a lot of argument. In fact, I appreciated this, as I liked this sort of open party, and people were arguing about policy, arguing about what they should be doing within the party.

*The early 1950s?*

Early 1946. The 1945 Duclos letter had been like a bomb, very much like the Khrushchev speeches later on about Stalin. It really hit all the far Left very hard and was picked up, of course, by the press. Oh, god. You know, "This party can't get itself together" kind of thing.

And the fact was, these wonderfully fruitful discussions and arguments were going on. A lot of people left the party at that point. A lot of people who had been sort of popular

front people and progressives, liberals, who had in a sense worked with the party and all that, began to withdraw on the basis that this wasn't what they had in mind. So there were two sides to this question being argued about Browderism you know.

Earl Browder actually did something very important for the *American* communist movement by opening it up—I mean, from their point of view—to a larger playing field with more people involved, and the party was probably at its largest during the war. And there was a great deal of excitement in the literary field and in the theater and in film. That's the period when all the great left-wingers were writing scripts and writing great films. Later, of course, they were brought before the McCarthy committee, and that ended their careers for a while. But it was a very lively period.

The people who had been involved on one level saw this as being the proper role for a party in the United States. Then there was the other side . . . I can remember many sides, but the main other side was that this was an incorrect Marxist position, that by dissolving the Communist Party publicly, they had taken away the revolutionary character of the Communist Party.

And by the way, that word *revolution* gets bandied around, and I don't recall *any* communist that I knew—on the waterfront even, or in an industrial union—ever thinking in terms of armed insurrection against the United States. That wasn't the kind of revolution meant. No, things may *come* to that, but nobody thought in those terms. That wasn't the way you thought of revolution. It was a hard-hitting political fight, struggle for not just reform, but for change—getting it where you could—and that the unions were the main weapon. The working class of the United States is the one that could make

these changes, and that that was revolution; that was the concept of revolution. Anything like the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 in Russia was something considered not necessarily possible in a country like the United States. You didn't *have* to do it that way. You had other ways to move within a large, quasi-democracy, like the United States. You had all kind of instruments to use to carry out a revolution.

*Yes. Well, I mean, you had access to the press and everything.*

Yes. Right and you moved by entering into various organizations and presenting a program and then called for change. That's the way the people that I knew thought about it, talked about it. And *no one* carried guns or prepared themselves for armed insurrection, though they were *accused* of that, and the press was constantly full of stories about armed insurrection and this sort of thing. [laughter] "The communists are trying to create a revolution in the United States."

*Was there any kind of move to . . . like gun control?*

At that time?

*You know, did we have that at that time?*

Well, it was illegal, Penny. It was much more illegal to have guns in those days than it is today. Carrying a gun made you immediately . . . that was a felony to carry a gun. In fact, I'm not very clear on this, but nobody had guns. Nobody cared, nobody talked about getting them and using them. But what amazes me now is, here was a movement of people accused of being ready to take over the United States; I mean, it was so ridicu-

lous when I come to think of it. “They’re going to take over the United States by a violent overthrow of the government of the United States,” which was the thing that you were asked in loyalty oaths later on. “Do you believe in the violent overthrow of the United . . . ?”

I could honestly say, “No!” you know. “Change, yes.” And it might take a lot of doing to make change, but, you know, armed overthrow of the United States? Nobody took that seriously within the party. At least that isn’t the way you thought about it. It just wasn’t there.

Then I’m thinking of now. We have militias running around the country, developing great caches of arms—I mean, even illegal arms—and the poor FBI seems to be unable to do anything about it, you see. And yet a group in Philadelphia of blacks who won’t come out of their building when they’re ordered to, you know, the whole block gets put on fire, and people are killed. And the Black Panthers—oh, wow! They went after the Black Panthers lickety-split, and communists during the late 1940s and early 1950s. I think the communists were fair game, and the propaganda was *enormous* about what they were prepared to do. They were accused of impossible things that they could not have done. And then today, you know, people can develop caches of arms and have standoffs with local authorities, and the FBI seems helpless.

The FBI wasn’t helpless in those days, and the police weren’t helpless in those days. I mean, you could get your head cracked just by passing out leaflets in the wrong place at the wrong time in those days.

When I look back, I’m thinking, “For god’s sakes, I’m glad I was part of a movement in this country for a brief period of time where there was a clearly defined policy, program for change, and goals for change, in

terms of how it was to be done and what ought to be done.” A lot of them were unrealistic, unattainable, but, nevertheless, they were good goals, positive goals. And that’s what motivated most of the people that I worked with.

My connection as a member of the Communist Party at that time was localized. I was a seaman; I was a member of waterfront unions and trade unions. Trade union issues and the organization activities with regard to trade unions on the waterfront were my main concern and my main identification. I didn’t have a lot of understanding or even great interest in theoretical Marxism or in the big issues that had to do with political forces in the world, though I had some notion that I’d gotten by osmosis, you know, through others and through propagandistic literature that I was reading and all that—all of it which made a kind of sense.

And I was aware of propaganda. I knew what it meant when things were biased and weighted to one side, and I could discount that. Nevertheless, to me, what counted were the *issues*, and the issues were clear and well defined. And if the actions with regard to them made sense to me, that was a positive thing.

So I felt that being a member of the party at that time was for me an important step. And I’m very glad that I did it, and I would never regret having done it. I don’t even regret anything that we did at that time.

I regret not knowing more. [laughter] I mean, I wish I’d’ve had more . . . . But if I had known more at that time, I wouldn’t have done all the things that I did; I would have been an intellectual soapboxer dissident.

I spent at least a few years being a part of an organization that I felt was on the right track and doing the right thing. And when I felt it wasn’t, I withdrew from it, but I didn’t

attack it, because I still think it's one of the better things that happened in American life.

I think the whole period of the American Left from the turn of the twentieth century through the 1940s and 1950s was one of the few bright spots in the development of modern America. And that light has just about gone out, and it's scary; it's scary that it's gone out.

*I was really struck with your statements about patriotism and how being left wing and communist . . . but even just left wing, how the far Right has really appropriated patriotism for themselves.*

Well, they always did. Not just the right wing-capitalist, corporate America has to use the flag and patriotism as their *raison d'être*, as the thing which gives them legitimacy. "Now, look what they're doing for this great country?"

So, anyway, my own involvement and that of the people I knew intimately on the front was really in terms of trade union issues.

Most of us at that time took criticism of the Soviet Union or any so-called revelations of ills within it as really right-wing propaganda. I think we had good reason to suspect that, because the media was certainly not very reliable on matters of this kind. And we saw ourselves in battles ideologically, and actually, in terms of our work.

But I don't think I ever felt the Soviet Union was an ideal society. Maybe there were some people that I knew and worked with who looked upon it almost with mystical idealism. And some of them even went. Some stayed; some came back soon, you know, as it turned out to be a rather ordinary place and not necessarily what they thought. [laughter] Others were absolutely enthralled

by it and stayed. I mean, not people I knew, but I have heard of such people, and I read about them and all that. That never was a problem for me personally. I had no desire to go to the Soviet Union and join in that society. I was an American. I thought that my job was here; this was my ship, and I was going to work on it. [laughter]

Also, it didn't bother me if there were things wrong with the Soviet Union. I didn't see the Soviet Union as necessarily the only answer to where the world had to go. Then and to this day, I've had the view that things like socialism and ultimate communism in the Marxist sense have to be dealt with experimentally throughout the world over time. These are evolving things, and societies have to evolve. Certainly the first attempts and experiments with great reform movements, with new kinds of approaches to democracy and social systems, isn't something that's going to happen overnight or in one generation. It isn't one country in this world or one section of the world that's going to suddenly become an ideal society.

I didn't think the Soviet Union was an ideal society; I didn't think that I would particularly want to live there. It was another culture. It wasn't the kind of place that I felt that I might personally be comfortable in, though I *admired* what they had done, admired what advances had been made, and I admired the fact that a good portion of the population was very supportive of what was going on. And certainly there were all kinds of struggles involving pogroms and assassinations and arrests and things like that, as one would expect of a post-revolutionary government.

*Right. Were you at all aware of the incredible ethnic diversity that was part of the Soviet Union?*



Yes. Oh, that was the other thing: the national question. Lenin on the national question, which everybody read. I mean, the fact of the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic Soviet Union and the problems of development under those conditions. We saw it as a kind of a model, again for what had to be done here. Oh, that's an interesting thing, where that went.

Anyway, I just wanted to make clear that then and today I didn't look upon the then-Soviet Union as an ideal society; I saw it as an experimental one, just as I view China in that way. These are various experiments in social change, *drastic* social change, that I think are remarkably important in the world. I mean, they have to take place, and over time things are either going to go that way or the other way. The other way is a frightening descent into fascism.

Fascism and communism are two entirely different things, regardless of the old image of the snake biting its own tail, symbolizing as they used to say, you know, "The far Left and the far Right meet together." You know, bullshit. I mean, they are different in their aims and their organization and what they *intend* to do and say they're going to do.

Every organization gets corrupted under certain conditions. Every organization eventually falls apart and has to be renewed as something else. And the Soviet Union, to the degree to which it adopted measures, despotic measures, that could be likened to what was done in fascist Germany or in Italy, needed to be broken up. And it did; it fell apart. The experiment did not work, but it made a tremendous mark on the world while it did work. It made a mark on a good part of Europe and a mark certainly on the disparate people of the Soviet Union of the time; it made a mark on most of Europe and a good part of the Asian world.

This business of "Marxism is dead," well, the hell with it, those ideas are not dead. They're alive, they're cropping up everywhere in the world, and they will continue to crop up. They're part of the evolution of social systems, the struggle to create social systems that accommodate the problems that face human beings in the world. And that will go on and on and on. And to me it's laughable, the business of the death of Marxism, if what they mean by that is the death of the Left—to hell with it. It's everywhere. And those ideas are alive. They're alive everywhere. And I still hold them, and I still feel part of that.

I think it's tragic what happened to the Soviet Union, only because it's tragic that a great experiment went wrong. And it didn't go wrong because it didn't have the right values, the right orientation. It did, but human beings are frail. Look at this country [laughter]—the constitution and the way it's interpreted by some of the people in this country. And, my god, if we were in their hands . . . well, we are. [laughter] But, anyway, that's neither here nor there.

The thing I was going to mention about the national question and the Soviet Union: In the early 1930s, I guess—1930s and 1940s—the Communist Party in the United States had a very militant position with regard to the so-called Negro question, the idea of self-determination of the American Negro. There was talk that maybe a good part of the American South, where there were predominantly African-American populations, should be made into a Negro nation, or that that was what African-Americans wanted, that they did constitute a kind of nation in the United States. This followed Lenin's notion of the national question, and I think that was also written about by Stalin or whoever wrote for him.

So that that was one of the early views, before the Second World War came along, the very messy business of the Soviet-German pact in the late 1930s, which was a great problem for the Communist Party, of course. The party and the Left in the country had generally been anti-war, you know. "Stay out of the war; leave it alone." Part of that on the part of the communists, was to protect the Soviet Union. But it was a very disconcerting period for them. That was prior to my time, you know, but when I look back, it was a very real problem. Here is the Soviet Union who needed to be protected against the onslaught of the capitalist West, had made a defensive pact, because, from the point of view of the Soviet Union and the Left, there was fear that the United States and England were plotting to allow Hitler to conquer the Soviet Union. There was some reason to think that maybe something like that was afoot in a sense. "Stand back. Leave them alone." So the Soviet-German pact was looked upon as a defensive move on the part of the Soviet Union to keep the Germans off them for a while, and only for a while, because a few years later, German armies moved in on the Soviet Union, and there was a lot of suspicion in the world that this was something that the Western world was not too unhappy about. But then the Soviet Union did a great job of fending off the Germans.

Then there was a great shift when Germany attacked the Soviet Union, and Europe was at war with Germany, and England was up against the wall, and the United States finally got into the war because of Japan, and there was a great shift. Now the Soviet Union was an ally, you know. [laughter] Now the party made its tactical move, shift; suddenly the war was the most all-important thing. The war against fascism

became also the war to protect the Soviet Union.

I think these are legitimate ends, but it was a messy strategic, tactical period of floundering left-wing politics and all that. Nevertheless, very logical. One could see it: so the Soviet Union is finally an ally, and, therefore, we should go to war, fight like hell.

So when we entered the war, the Soviet Union was at war with Germany, and we were allies with Europe, and Japan was an ally with Italy and Germany, and there was total cooperation on the part of the Left with the war effort. This was one of the criticisms posed by the Duclos letter and the anti-Browder faction later, that in doing so, they compromised certain basic principles that they'd always had. One was on the Negro question and also on the struggle against capitalism. Now everybody was in league with the great corporations and the great companies to produce ships, to produce materials for the war effort, and not in any way to interfere with that—a no-strike pledge in a sense, you know. The party even supported the idea of no strikes during the war.

All right. In a way one can say that was a good policy, but at the same time the struggle for Negro rights was put on a shelf. Negroes and the Negro question was no longer seen in terms of self-determination of a Negro people in the United States, in a sense, an incipient nation, but was seen now as "integration." And that was the integrationist period. "We should now struggle to integrate, and the Negro people must be patient, must join with us in getting the war won and in putting aside their grievances." Just like labor, "putting aside their grievances in order to win the war." That was one of the attacks on Browderism—you know, "You put aside basic principles."

All of this brings up the case of the Trotskyites—boy, the Trotskyites on the one hand and the corporations on the other. Leon Trotsky was assassinated in 1940 or so in Mexico. One story was that he was assassinated by Soviet agents, another was that he was assassinated by a disgruntled South American leftist or by somebody who was crazy. The Trotskyists were always accused by the Communist Party, by the Left, of being in a sense underminers of left policy because of their hatred of the Soviet Union, of Stalin, and hatred of the American Communist Party because it stood for support of the Soviet Union, which they wanted to see dismantled. So from the Communist Party point of view, the Trotskyites were always sabotaging, undermining the left-wing—communist left-wing, at least—efforts to fulfill the program.

To some extent I see that that was true in things that I didn't know when I was in the SUP, but learned afterwards, because I was doing some more reading about its history. For one thing, the so-called Trotskyites had a major role in the development of the Sailor's Union of Pacific. At the very time when communists were being kicked out and, like myself, called a communist . . . not at the time kicked out of the union for a position, but suspected of being a "red." Trotskyites were in the leadership of the Sailor's Union of Pacific, the Trotskyites and the old Wobbly anarcho-syndicalist element, who I have a certain admiration for. But I began to think about the link between the syndicalists and the Trotskyists, as, in a sense, not only sharing anarchistic, but sometimes nihilistic views. You know, "Bring down the whole structure; let it fall apart. And then out of the ashes comes the new world." You know, "If you can't win, destroy. Throw the stuff overboard." [laughter] "Wreck the com-

pany—everything." And we had a view, right or wrong, that a lot of the intellectual Trotskyites on the waterfront would rather see a program destroyed or a beef lost than allow the communist Left to have any credit for what they accomplished—that in a sense they were destroyers. Well, it's known that in some cases, Lundeberg, for instance, went directly to corporations, the ship owners, and to politicians to make deals, to undermine, to sidestep the Left. So this kind of wrecking (we considered it union wrecking) and the wrecking of the left program was part of the warfare on the front. I mean, "a Trotskyite" was the worst thing you could be called. Next to a phony or a fink, a Trotskyite, from the point of view of the Left, was the worst thing you could be called.

And I must say that from my personal connection with the few I knew as Trotskyites, I always felt them a little slimy. They were intellectualized; I thought they had come into the labor movement as equals to the Communist Party people, but, nevertheless, saw themselves in a sense as intellectual leaders. They saw themselves as superior to the people they were working with, that they had . . .

#### *The thinkers versus the doers?*

Yes, that they had some ultimate knowledge which nobody else had. Now, that's maybe unfair. But I felt that the ones that I knew personally, there was something about them that I didn't like but that could have been just a bias that I had developed on the front.

So the relation of that to the race relations aspect is that the Trotskyists in the SUP never raised the issue of race relations, *never* raised the question of hiring blacks. That leadership was silent on this, to me was an

indication of not only wrecking of the left program as part of their strategy, but that they didn't want to take on an issue that was so deeply ingrained in the culture of the people they were working with. They didn't want to take on racism. They didn't want to have to struggle and fight against these deep-rooted prejudices that existed, and the people I was working with did. They risked their lives sometimes, risked their lives to get blacks on ships. Two or three guys that I knew very well were killed in Galveston, Texas, and in Houston, for just that issue—bringing blacks aboard ship, getting them from the hiring hall to the ships, and the goons trying to keep them off. Floyd Hayes was a young kid that I admired a lot—he was killed in Houston. Out on the railroad tracks goons attacked him and killed him because he had insisted upon . . . .

*And what year . . .*

Well, that was a year later during the 1947-1948 strikes. But, anyway, that issue was very much alive. As I remember, the Trotskyists, unless it was something they could use to disrupt a meeting or disrupt a program, never brought up the race relations issue. They were afraid of that.

There were a number of African-American and other minorities who were very, very active members of these other unions on the front. I mean, it was to me a pleasure to go into the ILWU hall and see all the African-Americans waiting, along with the whites, for jobs. And in my own union, to have black members of the union (now, there weren't many, but, you know, they came and went out to sea and back) attend union meetings, talking aggressively, talking authoritatively, making demands, arguing with the leadership, arguing with other members of the union—this kind of aggressive dignity . . . . They had a place; they belonged. And I delighted in that, and it convinced me I was right when I saw that. I felt what I was doing was the right thing.

Of course, later, during the strike itself, when the strike finally came, this to me was even more important. I began to see how valuable it was for that union to have this non-segregated membership and how *ugly* was the poor SUP with its all-white crews, trying to get on the ships and fink on us during the strike. And black members of our union fighting like hell—well, that's because they weren't going to let that union take their ships, see. So it was quite a time.

## THE PUBLISHED AUTHOR

OH, DURING that year . . . I'm spending an awful lot of time on 1946, but it was crucial, and it was during that time that galvanized me to the idea that maybe I'd go into trade union work, maybe that's where I would stay. On the other hand, I knew that I wouldn't do that. I knew that that wasn't my forte. I would not be able to have a sustaining power or the kind of mind to do the kind of work that I admired certain others doing. I mean, the tremendous commitment, the focus, the hard work. I could do that, but not for a lifetime. Not as a profession, you know. And yet I had great admiration for it, and I wanted to be part of it for a while.

Oh, yes. Well, I think it was during that period, that there was a little group called the Progressive Seamen Writers or something of that kind. And I'd already won an award or two and had some of my things published. And, oh, yes. There were two members of my union who belonged to it. One guy—I won't mention his name—was a good writer. He wrote conventional sea stories and labor sea stories, which I wasn't able to do well,

but he had a knack for it. He had the language and the feel for it in the way that I wouldn't have had. And there was one other whose name I don't remember. There were about twenty guys, I guess, and they would meet at the California Labor School once or twice a month when they could and talk about their work and read their stories and things of that kind. And you didn't read your own; somebody else would read your story.

So one of my stories, "Deep Six for Danny," was read by . . . who was it? I forget. And read kind of well. And there was a kind of a stunned silence, because it was very, very, avant-garde, subjective, and poetic. And, as I remember, it got a hell of a lot of criticism, for, you know, quaintism—dealing with the quaintness of the sea and people in it, and for picking out the kind of things that had emotional and poetic value, but, you know, where was the real guts of it? That was one type. Then there were others who, you know, liked it, particularly Sam (I won't mention his full name), who said, you know, he wishes he could write like that. And, well, I wished I could write like *he* did. [laughter]

And it was a very enlightening thing. I mean, it was hard, and I remember being deeply bothered by the criticism and, you know, partly agreeing with it, that although I thought what I had done was artistically valid and good, that I had missed out on reflecting what I knew and thought objectively about situations.

*Social relevance, do you think?*

Yes, but I wasn't writing about the big issues that were facing these guys then—not that a writer has to. But that in some way or other it was detached. It was . . . I wish I could find the words for it . . . that it transcended the situation. It dealt with emotional and spiritual problems, you know, which are important and good, but, then the question would have to be, is that all I had to say about that world? Is that what I had to say? And I asked myself that.

So I was troubled. I had problems about that, and I remember trying to write other kind of stories and, in my own mind, failing miserably.

I just wasn't going to be a working-class writer; I wasn't, you know. That isn't what I was. However, those subjects I could write about in my own way would not be necessarily acceptable to some of the people that I worked with. I began to realize that the kind of artistic images that one makes on one level of observation are not going to be meaningful or acceptable to the very people you're concerned about, if you don't have the language and you don't have the gut issues that they're concerned about, you know, at heart. The other thing I could say was, well, this other kind of writing that I do brings out things that people in their reflective moments, and in time, see in themselves, all that. On and on. I can't really talk very flu-

ently about it now, because it's to me very complex. But, nevertheless, it was a problem in artistry for me, an artistic problem, as well as a personal problem within myself.

*But in a way, it seems to have some really direct parallels between being an anthropologist observing and accurately communicating some reality and the political consequence of having done so.*

And more than that. It's like the discussions that have been going on, on reflexivity in our field now about what relevance does it have and how does it communicate to the very people you're working with? What is being returned to them? What's the feedback? You see.

And I suppose it was the same kind of thing going on in my mind at the time: What relevance does what I'm writing have, as much as I feel that it's artistically sound, meaningful, important, and there is an audience for that out there somewhere? Not here where I am working; not in this world. I don't have the tongue, or the mind, that experience to be that for these people that I'm working with, in terms of what's going on now around us. Rather than thinking of something transcendent that goes beyond all this that in some kind of timeless way has meaning, power, what's the relevance now? I have fed from this trough, these people this last four or five years of going to sea and being a seaman. I have fed from it; my notebooks are full of observations about them. But how can I translate that to something meaningful back to them?

And I'm not able, apparently—at least I wasn't at that time. And what I was writing began to kind of pale in my mind as being . . . oh, having what was then called bourgeois idealism involved, dealing with the world as quaint. Not that I thought it that, but it might

come out as quaint, making the feelings and the emotions of somebody going to sea romantic, romanticized. Even Melville did do that. I mean, Melville had more of the sea as he knew it in his work than I would in some of those stories, as much as I thought they were good, and others thought they were good.

But those discussions were good, because I heard some of the guys' work and thought some of it was lousy, and I thought, "Oh, Christ, you know, this guy'll never be a writer." Others were really brilliant, wonderfully sharp, focused kinds of observations and statements about a way of life. Others moved aside and talked about families and talked about relationships and things of that sort. All were very real things, and here was my highly specialized, effervescent, avant-garde kind of writing. I struggled over that.

It was part of a struggle that never got really resolved, but I felt that I was not going to be that kind of writer—wasn't going to be a writer as a profession, because I didn't trust myself to really do what I wanted to do with it. I think. I'm not sure about this . . . talking about things I haven't really worked out.

*Well, it's also the question that we've raised much earlier on—who you were writing for when you were writing, because maybe you didn't want to . . .*

Oh, yes. Well, at that point I was struggling to know and understand and accommodate and be accommodated by this world that I was working in. And I was highly sensitized to the way those people felt around me, and what I did in support of it.

The upshot is that during this particular period I questioned whether or not I could be or wanted to be the kind of writer that I had thought of being in the last few years. Other kinds of issues, other kinds of interests had taken hold. And I guess I didn't feel capable of approaching those issues with the kind of writing orientation and skills that I had, and I didn't know if I could make that transition—whether or not I could ever write in some way that fit the role models that I had at the time in literature, whether or not I could ever write, "a working class story or novel," whatever that might mean. Whether or not I could actually express those kinds of issues, those kinds of observations, and those meanings. I didn't feel that I was ready to do that or didn't even know if I was capable of doing it. And at that time other things were occupying my mind totally. I was completely involved, really, in understanding the kind of world I had moved into, where at last I was in the crucible of what might be called the working-class crisis and learning about it and feeling that in a way that was my job; that's what I had to do.





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## MOVES AGAINST LABOR

**N**OW, THIS WAS in the spring of 1946 when I was now a member of the National Maritime Union and taking part to what degree I could in the activities preparing for the June 15 strike—at least the proposed strike on June 15. So that I attended meetings; I attended every union meeting. I hung around at the bookstore, which I finally found was really the center of the seamen's branch of the Communist Party. That's where we met.

And all this time I had thought that something like that was the case, but now here I was actually up in the back room, upstairs in the very back room, in the little office where we used to meet and discuss strategy and what was going to be done, how the preparations for the strike were being made, what our program was, how we were going to approach certain issues with the membership at meetings of the union. And I saw the role of local communists in unions.

All this was to me not only very exciting but very positive. I felt that the men that I worked with and was meeting, learning from, were probably the most committed men in

the union. They really cared. They had a tremendous sense of loyalty not only to the union and to unions on the front, particularly all the seamen's unions, but they had a grasp of the political situation in the United States and the world, which I didn't have.

A lot of that probably would have been things that if I had known more, I might have had more disagreement with, but I didn't. To me it filled a great void. I began to understand certain kinds of forces that were at work in the country and in the world that I hadn't even thought about before in any clear way. I began to see that the ship owners were at least our immediate barrier to any kinds of gains on the front, and that they were really united, and that they had a good part of the government with them—that they could work closely with government agencies and that their pressure on the Truman administration was enormous.

And even though the Truman administration had many people in it who were friendly to labor, and that Truman himself may have had some holdovers of the character of the Roosevelt administration,

nevertheless, the pressures at the end of the war on the government to suppress labor, to take advantage of the strength that corporations had, was enormous. And laboring people felt that; they knew it, also, internationally.

For example, the ship owners were aware, the laboring people were aware, certainly, unions were aware, that shipping was getting scarce; not only were prices going up with post-war inflation and prices going up for commodities and goods, but jobs were scarce. And the salaries: you know, fifty-three cents an hour was one of the averages back in the 1940s, and guys were lucky to pull in a salary of \$130, \$140 a month. Some made more if they could get overtime, and yet the overtime issue was unclear, and there were always fights about overtime—what was overtime and what wasn't and how much overtime and what people were eligible for it.

All these things were very clear to us as an increasing pressure upon laboring peoples. And in our case, the seamen's unions and the waterfront unions were confronting that it was getting impossible to earn a proper wage, and that a great many men were going to be out of work and were already out of work. There were fewer ships.

Now, why were there fewer ships? There were fewer ships because *every day* in all the ports of the country we were taking ships to the boneyards, to the mothball fleets; the older ships were being sent up. And what was happening to the other ships? We used to talk about the thousand disappearing ships, the thousand missing ships.

These ships were all put under foreign flags. Panama had one of the largest merchant marines in the world, and Liberia later. [laughter] These little countries that didn't even have navies had the largest merchant fleets in the world. And this was the dodge—

the ship owners in collusion with the government, really—to avoid dealing with American labor, avoid the impending demands being made from all unions, not just the waterfront unions.

All over the country there were post-war demands for making up for lost time. The unions in most cases had pledged a no-strike position during the war, had put dampers on their demands, as they had a patriotic interest in aiding the war effort. And here, now, at the end of the war, there was absolutely no give on the part of the ship owners to make any kind of adjustment in our wages, after their enormous profits.

Their profits were not just the profits that came during the war. It was not just that, but they were subsidized; the companies were subsidized for the use of their ships, and the insurance covered all the hundreds of ships lost during the war. These companies got an unbelievable recompense in insurance, paid by the taxpayers. They had millions of dollars in profits because of the war, and it appeared to us they planned to keep them. They planned not to in any way see that as something that could be returned to some degree to labor.

And, of course, from a Marxist point of view, from the Communist Party's point of view, this was exactly the kind of effect to be expected, where labor was the last thing that was considered in production—labor as a commodity and as an instrument in utility could be used and discarded. We could come and go. So 60,000 men are without jobs in the industry. So there are no jobs, no ships. *No one* even considers the possibility that they might need welfare, they might need some kind of aid during this period of transition. That was the last thing in the world. It was thought of in the GI bill for the returning veterans, all to the good.

The Seaman's Bill of Rights was earlier attached to the GI bill and was held up for two or three years in Congress. I think it was a Senator or Congressman Case, who made a speech on the floor of Congress, denouncing the merchant marine as all communists who were going to turn the guns of the ships upon the United States, and why would they deserve any kind of aid? And this is where 6,000 men in the merchant marine had lost their lives, the highest percentage in any of the armed services. And here was this insulting, vilifying, demeaning kind of reaction from our government. Well, the anger was deep, and particularly among left-wing laboring people and seamen. And it underscored and gave credibility to all the basic Marxist notions of the ruthless behavior of rampant capitalism, given its head.

*Were there any political figures who championed the opposite position from, say, Senator Case? I mean, were you aware of that?*

Yes. I don't remember their names, but, yes, there were a few senators and congressmen whom we looked upon as friends in the government. I'd have to go back through the records to see who they were.

Well, one of them was Henry Wallace in the government. And, of course, he emerged later as somebody backed by labor as a Third-Party leader, because of his role not only during the Roosevelt administration, but even during the Truman administration. He was outspoken in support of labor and the needs of the underclass. He seemed to have a clear view of the kinds of problems that were impinging in the United States.

*But in early 1946, it is very clear . . . I mean, the GI bill had been passed, and it's clear that the maritime community had been left out.*

Not only that, but worse than that was just about this time, Truman, poor Harry Truman, allows himself to be used to call upon the veterans to go back to the induction centers to join in brigades to take over the ships if there's a strike. I mean, he helped to create a division. And, of course, animosity was easily aroused—it wasn't there during the war—but easily aroused about the merchant marine and labor living off the fat of the land, supposedly, while servicemen were dying abroad, which is ridiculous when you look at the actual facts and what was actually going on in the world, particularly the number of seamen who were killed, the number of ships that were destroyed. And this horrible business just before June 15 . . . Truman in a sense allowing himself to be the spearhead of a threat to use veterans, and actually opening up the induction centers to men who, instead of going into the services, could work the ships.

Apparently few veterans applied for this. It was a lost cause. In fact, it was never talked about after the first few attempts to do it, but that kind of thing clearly demonstrated to us what the issues were that we were dealing with and who our enemy was. I suppose at that time in my life, I was getting my first real taste of class warfare.

You know, I'd read about it and thought about it and talked about it, but here I was seeing it. I was looking at it in the face, such a clear example of class division, and of the total arrogance and power that was posed against a few thousand men who were working ships—ships that were making millions for certain corporations, the Pacific Ship Owners Association, for example, in which some of the most lucrative shipping companies were just pulling in millions.

When they felt that they could get a government subsidy for getting rid of an old ship,

they would send it out to the mothball fleet, and they'd get paid insurance; they'd get paid more for putting a ship in mothballs than the ship could have been bought for. The government could have bought the ship for seven million dollars instead of giving seven million dollars in insurance and used as subsidies for the ship owners. So it was a rapacious period of *rampant* greed for these companies. When I think about it now, it's been fifty years ago, I can get just as mad now as I got then, because it was so clear; it was clearly defined, clear-cut.

And in my view the members of the Communist Party that I was dealing with on the waterfront, in the trade unions, were the clearest people that I was working with. They seemed to know what they were going to do. They had a program, they had a goal, they even had a long-term socialist goal, which I didn't have any opposition to. I'd always been, I guess, a quasi-socialist in my head. I've always thought that if the world was going to improve, it was going to be toward a socialist type of organization of some kind or another. And so that was an easy move for me from my kind of middle-class liberalism, to an idea that socialism was an end. But that wasn't the real issue; it was just there. I took that for granted.

The transition from socialism to communism was to me a sort of a wild, long-range view, as it was to most of the guys I was working with. They didn't talk about the eventual communist structure of world governments and all that sort of thing. That was *way* beyond our thinking. It was a kind of an image, an icon. "That's a wonderful end, like heaven, you know," but in the meantime there's a job to be done, and a socialist perspective was the clearest one that we could think of, that anyone could think of right now for winning strikes, winning pork chops, as we said—the

gains that were necessary for workers on the waterfront. And that was the aim of all of the actions which we took.

All of the issues were in terms of what could be done, strategies to improve the conditions of seamen on the front. That was to me totally acceptable, and to the degree that that was Marxist . . . We used to call it "hard-hat Marxism" Marxism on the job that emerged right out of the work that you were doing. What you saw with your own eyes told you what the forces were at work and what the job was that had to be done.

And I still feel that way. I still feel that movements of that kind are the most positive movements, in *our* society anyway, and certainly have been in Europe and elsewhere. And whether they're called Marxist movements or revolutionary movements or whatever, there has never been a revolutionary movement in the world in the last hundred years that hasn't been affected by a general Marxist set of principles and ideas, other than something like national socialism and things of that kind on the other side.

Whether they think of themselves as Marxist or not, those are the values, those are the principles which emerge. They emerge out of the real situation—class consciousness and awareness of what has been taken from them, the alienation that's been created by capitalism or neocolonialism. It's there.

So the idea, you know, that Marxism or anything like it is dead is ridiculous, because Marxist or not, in situations—the reality of human relations and oppressive societies—these ideas emerge; they're there. The only counter to them is usually fascist dictatorship, something called national socialism, which is an entirely different world in terms of values, in terms of ends, and if sometimes the so-called socialist revolution begins to look

like nationalist socialism, then it's sick. Then there's something terribly wrong with it, and something is so corrupt at its core because of the human actors that it *needs* to be finished.

That may have been true of the late Soviet Union. I am not ready to sign off on that. But that can happen. It could happen to China; it could happen to any of the former socialist democracies in eastern Europe and *has*.

I mean, their agonies of change are enormous, and we have yet to see what's going to come out of that. They haven't gulped down so-called free-enterprise capitalism very easily, and it's made some terrible impacts upon the people. On the other hand, we'll see. We'll see what emerges out of those changes.

In the meantime, Western free-enterprise, capitalism in its new late form, is terribly powerful and doing its job. And we'll see where *that* goes. We'll see what happens to so-called capitalist democracies and major ones like . . . .

*Well, it seems like either system, either capitalism or communism, left on their own . . . . I mean, each needs the other for the balance.*

Each has the seed of their own destruction if they're not carried out in terms of the original principles.

*Well, it seems also that each is a necessary counterpoint to the other. I don't mean in a right and perfect world you have both systems. I just mean to even discuss these ideas . . . .*

Yes. Oh, I see what you're saying. Well, it is a conflict; it is a contest; it is tit for tat. [laughter] And if there wasn't despotism and a ruthless, greedy capitalist system at its base, maybe there would not be the counter action that leads to dissidence and revolution.

I mean, I don't know about that. All I know is that this is what we have and that the ability of our system to appropriate basic human values in order to alienate people from reality is enormous. I mean, look at the advertising industry itself, what it does with values.

*Well, we call it advertising if it's for capitalism, but it's propaganda if it's . . . .*

Well, oh, it's the most well-heeled propaganda that the world has ever known, and the most powerful and the most effective. I mean, you get Coca-Cola in every country of this world. Even people who can't afford to buy a cup of rice can get a bottle of Coca-Cola anywhere in this world.

When I was recently in Liberia, what do you know, in the markets where people are trading for a cup of rice or trading for any old torn shirt and all that, here is a great big rack of Coca-Cola for sale for five cents and ten cents a bottle as against what it would be here in this country. *Anything* to get people interested. A big sign in war-torn, destroyed Monrovia, "This is Marlboro Country." Here is a sign, ten feet high: "This is Marlboro Country." And you look around, and you say, "Yeah! Man, it is Marlboro Country!" [laughter] Yes. And they made it; they made it.

I'm being playful and cynical here. Nevertheless, those kinds of feelings, that kind of thinking, came very sharply to us back there in the 1940s, at the end of the war, when there was some hope that there would be some sort of changing course in American life, that the so-called capitalist system would have some flexibility, tolerance. Looking back at the Roosevelt period, the New Deal and all that became these kinds of icons. What has happened to the New Deal? What's happened to Roosevelt's legacy? The fact that

Roosevelt himself and his administration was constantly under attack from the Left—“they’re not going far enough”—nevertheless, in perspective it began to look like, “Hell. What’s happened? Even that’s gone; even that has derailed.” And we saw just the opposite. We saw a concerted move to keep labor down, to keep it where it was, *even* to the extent of getting rid of American ships

and turning them over to foreign flags. Not getting rid of them, because the companies were still making millions from them, but to avoid having to deal with the American worker, to avoid facing this obligation to pay back what had been given not only during the war, but for a century or more of oppression, of seamen, in this case. So that’s the kind of issues that we were facing.

## LEFT-WING LITERATURE

**I** WANTED TO CLARIFY a couple of things that I think you probably think self-evident, but I just want to clear it up. These meetings at the Maritime Bookshop were specifically for a collective of waterfront unions, or for the Communist Party, or . . . ?

Oh, no. I probably wasn't very clear on that. No, it was just a meeting place. It was the place where we could go to have discussions. And it would be very informal, and there'd be three of us . . . or more.

*Oh, I see. They weren't like weekly meetings?*

Oh, no. There were meetings of the local Communist Party, the Bay Area or San Francisco Communist Party, that would take place once a month or something of that kind—larger meetings. No, this was just the place where the seamen's branch of the Communist Party and their friends and people who had similar ideas could go and meet and talk over things. For example, we'd be at the union hall, and some issue would come up about a coming meeting. And we were won-

dering, "What position should we take on this? What would be the best course to take in this? What role can we play in it?" And we'd say, "Let's go down to the front." And then four or five of us would get together and sort of hammer out a program. "This is the best way for us to go about it this meeting."

*I see.*

"How are we going to bring the membership with us?"

*You mean the membership of the union?*

Of the union, yes. "In what way are we going to be able to present a program which they will accept, which they will understand, and yet that is progressive and moves in what we consider to be the right direction."

*And were there unions that were more ideologically compatible? Or was it kind of split still?*

Oh, there was always a split. In those days we called anybody who disagreed with us

effectively a phony [laughter] or reactionary, and in some ways I'd still say that, because they usually were. But, no. There were the five or six maritime unions that had formed during the spring of 1946, the Committee for Maritime Unity. There were communists in them, and sometimes partly in leadership—not entirely. They weren't controlled by the communists or anything like that, but there were communist seamen among them. So that the seamen's branch of the Communist Party involved all the party members who were in seamen's unions. That was it. Now, there were, of course . . . .

*And that included the longshoremen, too?*

The longshoremen, primarily, because they were the most important, effective, hard-hitting union on the front. In fact, the longshoremen gave a kind of a leadership, which was resented, of course, by the right wing unions and certainly by the AF of L—see, these were CIO unions. The AF of L union, of which the SUP was part, of course, was violently opposed to the ILWU and Harry Bridges and all that—the old enemy of the old craft union people, and certainly of Harry Lundeberg and Joe Ryan of the AF of L. And the old SIU, which was still organized—the SUP was part of that—was anti-CMU and violently anti-communist. Now, when I say that, I mean the leadership of those unions. Actually, there were a lot of members of the SUP—I know because I'd been a member—who were very sympathetic not only to the Committee for Maritime Unity and the plans for the strike that were coming up, but were even friendly to the propaganda the communists were putting out, because it was clear, because it talked in terms of the issues that they were concerned about, and full of information. I mean the pamphlets

that came out from the party on the front out of the old Maritime Bookshop. All these violent, *marvelous* pamphlets (I'm glad I still have some of them—they're quite wonderful) on every question—white chauvinism, male chauvinism, the meaning of socialism, the national question, what happened to the thousand ships? One after the other, leaflets, which were informative. Propagandistic, sure, and biased and all that sort of thing. Nevertheless, basically, what little information a lot of these working guys had came from these sources.

Now, they had their own literature. The SIU, SUP, anti-communist literature primarily, claiming to be the leaders of the working class on the waterfront. And our question was, "Show us what you're doing."

*You made the point earlier that the Maritime Bookshop was the first place you'd really seen kind of revisionist literature available, revisionist slavery history and on black history in general. Was that literature available in any other mainstream bookstores or . . . ?*

No. Just in left-wing bookstores, and these were scattered around the country. There was one in Berkeley that I went to as a student, and here and there, there were either communist or labor-oriented bookstores that you'd get some of this kind of literature, but most of it was just passed out. For example, I bought quite a good book by Harry Haywood at that time, called *Negro Liberation* that wasn't available anyplace except on the front. Also works by Claudia Jones and Pettis Perry, black left-wingers, and communists, I think, in some cases, writing in *Political Affairs*, their articles were turned into pamphlets, made available. These weren't available anywhere else. I had never seen them, and by this time . . . .



*And you said even Aptheker?*

And, oh, and Herbert Aptheker, a noted scholar, his work was hard to find. Even W. E. B. Du Bois's work.

Oh, Myrdal was probably one of the first breakthroughs. Gunnar Myrdal's work on the American Negro somehow hit the fan just at the right time, the time of the United Nations meetings. I mean, this was such a powerful piece of scholarship. Yes, it was read widely. But a lot of other work of this kind you only got it through left-wing bookstores.

Earlier we used to get them on ships, because they're handed out by guys, like I became, you know. I began to pass them out, too, because to me they were important information and opened the eyes, you know. You'd think like, "God's sakes, what they're saying is true. This is just the way it is. Why don't people notice it? Why hasn't it been said before? Why aren't the newspapers saying it?" [laughter] You'd get these facts that could be verified and were always later, you know.

Like now, it takes years for the press or for institutions to face up to something that was said ten years before. Like, "What was the effect of atomic radiation?"

And, at the time, "Well, it's nothing. You are safe. Nothing is going to happen." On and on, you know. Not . . . you can't say lies but misinformation, dissembling all along.

The value of this literature was to make one aware of how one was being manipulated by the press, by owners of great corporations, by the government. Suspicious and skeptical and to question, to me that's enlightenment. Even if great mistakes were made about it, and it was abused, it was enlightened, because nobody else was doing it.

No, it was hard to get that kind of literature. I used to take bundles of it home with me and give it to my friends, much to my

regret sometimes, because they looked upon me as getting red hot. Oh, I used to be warned by some of my friends, "Hey, you know, Warren, for god's sakes, what's happening to you? You're getting to be, you know, a wild . . ."

*When you said "take home," do you mean literally back home to the Bay Area or the . . . ?*

Well, yes. Back to the people that I knew and my old friends.

*Like George Leite?*

Well, . . . yes, even him, but other friends that I had, people like Bob Nelson.

Oh, Bob Nelson, by the way, although he was now Masters, Mates and Pilots and was going to sea as a second mate and a first mate, he was getting radicalized, and I felt happy about that. He didn't agree with how far I had gone along these lines.

*Now, what union was he in?*

Masters, Mates and Pilots. He'd gone up, he'd become an officer, and he was more than equipped to be one, and he became a progressive officer. He became a progressive member of the Masters, Mates and Pilots, calling for, "Where are the black mates and skippers? And why don't we have any in this union?" And calling for support for the seamen's strikes. And he wrote me friendly letters about my position on things.

However, he would stop short at the fact that I had become a commie. "Now, Warren, that's a little bit too much. You know, you better watch it. You're getting yourself in deep," and all that. And that was the way a lot of my friends felt, you know. They were all progressive usually, left-leaning, but that's

going a little far to actually join the Communist Party.

I'm not a joiner. You know, I joined unions because that was work, getting a job. But joining a party or a movement formally was a rare thing for me. Most of my friends were to some extent anti-organization in that sense. You don't do that; you're above all that; you're above joining these things. But I would proudly state that I was an open member of the Communist Party, that I believed in it—not *believed*, but I felt that this was a useful, important thing to do.

*Well, when I asked you about the meetings, I also wanted to try to get a picture if you went to various informal gatherings, and if the Maritime Bookshop was a place where people could talk strategy and . . . ?*

Yes, and they were usually informal, over some event, some issue that we needed to get together and talk about.

*Right. But in addition to that did you go to meetings of the party, big meetings?*

Yes. Whenever I could, I'd go to the large meetings, where larger issues were discussed, having to do with the Bay Area or California, positions on the political scene.

*But was there a lot of rhetoric and talk, and I don't mean that pejoratively at all. I just mean was there talk about solidarity?*

Oh, of course.

*You know, "Don't buy Ponds hand cream," or is that yuppie politics? [laughter]*

I don't remember that. [laughter] But, yes, we'd take positions in the larger unions about

support for other groups that were either boycotting or picketing or calling on, or writing to congressmen. And we would in turn support certain movements. They would ask for support, and then we would talk about strategy and goals. You know, "What strategies should we use? What principles are we . . . what are the issues we're really concerned about here? What is the role of or the obligation or responsibility of party people in labor? What is the best course to take in a particular situation?"

Sometimes we agreed; sometimes we didn't. And I had more disagreement with the larger party meetings than I had on the front, because on the front I could see what was going on, and I understood the people that I was with. And usually we'd come to some understanding about how we were going to do things, and I usually felt that it was right, that we were doing the right thing. We made some mistakes, and then we'd talk about it and work it out. And, now, as for the larger party apparatus, I didn't really become familiar with that till later.

*But you gave me a title, the Seamen's . . .*

Seamen's Branch of the Communist Party.

*Was that a formal entity within the party?*

Yes. I belonged to *that*. I was inducted into the Seamen's Branch of the Communist Party, which was part of the Communist Party. And I didn't carry a card. I just was inducted merely by going to a particular meeting where two or three of us were called up, and we were read sort of the principles of the party, and asked about our loyalty not only to the party but to the working class and to the unions that we belonged to, and to soli-

parity with our members. And we said we agreed, and then you were a member of the party, and you paid your dues. As long as you paid dues, you were a member of the party. So I always paid my dues up until . . .

*Did you get newsletters and things like that?*

Well, leaflets. Oh, there was the *People's World*, which was the party newspaper, and I think still . . .

*But was there one specifically for the seamen, do you remember?*

No, those were mostly leaflets, and we put out our own newsletters.

*Were you involved in that writing?*

Later. Oh, yes. In a few weeks I was very much involved in writing leaflets. I wrote innumerable leaflets, and some of them were opposed and discarded, because they were considered to be a little bit naive and super left, you know, a little bit overwrought, which I was. [laughter] And so quite rightly, some of my leaflet layouts were . . .

*Were you pretty young? As a member of the party?*

Oh, at twenty-six or so, no. There were younger ones—I mean, there were all ages. I

would say most of the guys I knew were somewhere in their twenties and thirties. I mean there were some very young ones, with people eighteen, nineteen, people in their sixties and seventies. Sure, it was a wide range, but the ones I knew on the front were working people, and there were older ones—guys in their forties and fifties. Yes. I hadn't thought about those things, Penny, but you're bringing back ideas.

*Well, when you said that some of the things that you produced were considered naive, I was just wondering if that was a function, too, of just your pure . . . sheer enthusiasm. [laughter]*

Not youth. I was a neophyte; I had just come into this kind of direct relation with the Left on the front and this kind of organization. And so I was gung-*ho*. I was feeling, "Oh, my god, let's get this job done! Let's have the working class put up a real fight here," and all.

When I come to think of it, I was not only naive, but worse than that—out of my element. I mean, I was a—what was it called?—a left romantic, you know, and that got taken out of me pretty quickly. I got a lot of understanding and training about how to reach people, how to deal with issues in the kind of union I was in and the kind of people that were in it.



ONE THING that I remember *very* sharply, somewhere there before June 15 when the ship owners gave in, because they saw this tremendous unity of the Committee of Maritime Unity, even though it had been sabotaged by Lundeberg's SUP . . . . And they too finally joined in, because they could see this powerful solidarity that was on the front. And we were all set, and the strike was all set. In fact, I was even elected to the relief and housing committee and all that sort of thing.

By that time I'd sort of made my mark, and I was not shipping out, but I was doing a lot of standby work and a lot of work on the front, which I'll talk about. But one of the things that we wanted to do was to put special pressure on the ship owners, to show the solidarity of the front. So a march was called on the Ship Owners Association on Montgomery Street. Montgomery Street . . . if you're going straight up Clay, you run into Montgomery Street, and that's the very important mercantile office section, and the Ship Owners Association or the Pacific Ship Owners—I don't know what they were

called—Pacific Ship Owners Association had its offices there, and a number of other large corporations. You know, like the Wall Street of San Francisco.

And so we called a march. And I swear—I can't remember exactly—there had to be eight or nine thousand people in that march. It was enormous. We went up Market Street, went from Drumm over to Market, and almost filled the street. I remember this *large* bunch of . . . not all seamen, there was also many other unions that joined in in support of us. And here were all the people I knew and their wives. Kathy couldn't come over, but there were a lot of women and a lot of working women.

It was a *very*, very exciting day, as I remember, marching up Market Street. And we did have the feeling, you know, that this is going to do it, you know, if nothing else does. These are all the illusions one has. "This has got to convince them! They better come through." Well, in fact, it partly did.

We went up to Montgomery and turned right, I remember, into this kind of a Wall Street, you know, with very tall buildings on

each side of the street. And on the one side were the ship owners offices in a large building, and there were other offices, too. And we had our loudspeakers, and we played music and sang songs, all the union songs and “Solidarity Forever,” and all those things. [laughter] And while we were down there giving speeches, all these windows were open, and all these little heads were looking out, all the way up, I don’t know, six, seven floors . . . however tall they truly were. And they were throwing little paper cups full of water down on us, so it was like it was raining. It felt like it was raining. They were throwing *hundreds* of little paper cups full of water down on us, you know! [laughter] And it was wonderful! We looked up, and we were waving at them and singing to them. And they were obviously furious, you know. “What are they doing? These . . . this rabble,” you know.

*With little paper cups! [laughter]*

Yes. These little paper cups full of water! It was just beautiful. I mean, I’ll never forget it, because the incongruity of it was so marvelous. And we would shout up, “Hi,” you know, “Come on down; join us.”

And, “Oh, no,” they’d shake their heads! [laughter] *But* people, various secretaries and others from other parts of the place, were coming and standing with us, you know.

So I got this taste of rally, of mass movement, which I hadn’t really experienced before, which was extremely powerful. That many committed individuals . . . most of the guys there and the women who were with them were loyal union people. There were a lot of people there out of curiosity and all that, but most of our union who were ashore was there. The ILWU was there, the Marine Engineers, the Marine Cooks and Stewards.

And, you know, it was a marvelous thing. And that gave me the feeling of what the power of resistance can be, and we stayed there a couple hours.

The police came, tried to take our mikes away from us, because it was disturbing the precious work of the company offices! [laughter] But we managed to prevail in that. And so that came to an end, and we marched back.

Within a day or two, the ship owners gave in—not because of that, but because it was obvious the union was ready to go on strike, even though the Ship Owners Association and certain elements in the government had tried *every* way to diffuse it and to disrupt it and use the AF of L against us. But it didn’t work, see, because the AF of L union saw that this was really going to go, and they better get in on it, and they did.

It was a solid front, and the ship owners came through with part of the demands. I think we had a demand a for forty-hour week, and we got a forty-eight-hour week. We had demands for a twenty-five-dollar-a-month increase, and we got seventeen dollars. And there were certain flexible agreements about overtime, things of that kind—*but* not the whole package. I don’t remember all the details here, but the unions decided . . . the CMU decided to accept that as a first step.

And then after they had accepted, they discovered that the SUP had made an end run around us, had gone to the ship owners and got ten dollars more a day than CMU had, and gotten other . . . [laughter] This is a beautiful example of ship owner manipulation—not just ship owners, capital . . . how corporations deal with labor. And they felt so powerful at that time; they weren’t going to allow these lousy, little *unions* to interfere. So they were willing to give up something just to stop that, but also to show their

strength, while making deals with certain of the unions to disrupt the unity.

*Yes, because they'd know that was . . .*

Yes, right. They saw that this affected us, because we could see the break in the ranks and all that sort of thing.

So then we had to set a new strike date for September (I forget the date—late September or something), using the power of the CMU to put up the rest of the demands to get what we had not gotten. And that was the period in which I got very deeply involved in the pre-strike preparations, became involved in all levels of union activity and in the local seamen's branch of the party activity.

I'm trying to remember what the first thing . . . yes. The original strike organization had set up a number of committees. Not only the CMU, the NMU, our union, had set up strike committees and appointed people to different functions—finance, budget, welfare and housing, a food committee to get food.

The guys were off on the beach now. There were no jobs. That's right, all the unions had not settled, so we were still really on strike because of certain other unions of the CMU who hadn't yet finished their negotiations. So the ships were still tied up. Only a few were getting through that we'd allow. The passenger ships, I think, we allowed through. Any ship that had returning GIs on it or were going out to aid our troops abroad or anything of that sort, any relief ships, we'd allow those ships to go, but no regular commerce. Oh, we had committees that had to investigate and check on all these.

*When you say, "allowed to go," how could you physically prevent . . . ?*

Just take the pickets off, allow people to go through the picket line. You couldn't stop a ship. [laughter] But that usually did the job, if you had a solid position on the front, other unions tended to respect . . . very seldom would anybody try to go through those lines.

*I see. So when you say "allow," you mean . . .*

You would announce that that was open.

*I see.*

That was not a "hot ship," we'd say. There were hot ships and cold ships. But, "That ship's not hot," and, therefore, you could go through, and we'd take our pickets off for the while it took to carry on those activities. So that took a lot of organization. There would have been committees that would have worked getting information on . . .

*Was all this gratis? All your involvement on the committees—was that donated or volunteer, or was there pay?*

Not at that time. There were times when we got strike pay—very little, I remember. And Kathy was working at this point, and I had made some standby.

Well, I was still doing that. Whenever a ship would come up for standby, to hold the ship, or even to take it to mothballs or something like that, it was often allowed . . . I don't remember . . . there were certain ships that you could work on. It was very hard to get those jobs, because everybody wanted them.

*Right. No, I mean were you paid for the work you did for the union.*

No, no, no. There was strike pay at times; during the actual strike there was a pittance that people got on the front.

*So everybody got . . . ?*

Not only strikers, but the people on the various committees in the union, might get a little bit more, because our expenses were very high. We had to run around and have transportation, all that sort of thing. But it was very little. Gosh, I can't remember now, but it was not enough to live on at all. And Kathy was working, and we borrowed money during that period. That was a rough time. But I also remember it was rougher for a lot of others.

Toward the middle of the summer there, I became the chairman of the housing and relief committee for the CMU—not just for the union, but for the Committee for Maritime Unity. And that was a eye-opener. I learned more about what was really going on in that world around me doing that.

In the first place, I had to find housing for guys that were on the beach and had no place to stay and were broke. So I and others would go and make deals with certain little hotels on the front, really broken-down, fleabag hotels, dormitory kind of hotels. And we would make deals with them for so much a night for seamen. We rented bunks, and I think in one place we had three hundred bunks in two enormous dormitories. And we had to have guys set up to handle this, to have a desk. And people had to have chits; they had to get a chit at the union, and then come, so they could have a night's free lodging. And we had to have all kinds of rules and regulations about drunks and guys who were off their tops and all that, and what to do about them. And it was an enormous job.

*Sounds like government. [laughter]*

Worse. [laughter] No, it was terrible, because there was so little money. I don't know, we had to pay these fleabag hotels, you know, a buck and a half a night for these guys. I don't know if it was that much.

And then we had to set up soup kitchens. I went around with the rest of the members of our committee, and we found one called Dolores and Pedro, was it? A little restaurant down there that suddenly became the most important restaurant on the front. I mean, they agreed to serve meals at a very low cost, like a soup kitchen. And they made good meals, and I don't know, it cost the union fifty, seventy-five cents. But that was expensive for that many people. They were serving 150 to 300 meals a day after the full strike got going again.

And then there were the welfare problems. There were guys with families, and a lot of them lived in hotels in that general area. A lot of black seamen lived up in the Fillmore District and all that, but some lived in these waterfront hotels.

And if anybody looked at the waterfront today, they'd never believe what the waterfront was back in the 1940s. I think the upscale hotel was the YMCA, you know, and there were all these sort of little hole-in-the-wall hotels, some in quite bad condition and all that, and others not too bad. But a lot of seamen were living down there in these places at very low rent. There was rent control in those days because of the war, which later was lifted, and all these places became upscale and remodeled and gentrified and all that.

So a lot of these guys were coming in, just saying they couldn't feed their kids, their wives, they couldn't find jobs, and it was



really terrible. And food was terribly high then, as against wartime, when even under rationed conditions, what you could get was fairly reasonable. Suddenly the prices skyrocketed for everything. So here was no wages or low wages and high prices.

And so our committee, one of our jobs was to go around and meet the families and see where they were and find out what their problems were—do a survey. Well, that was an extremely eye-opening and in some cases miserable experience. There were, I guess, dozens of white families, guys with their wives or with a child or two, or with a relative or two, living in one room, and one bathroom for a floor, and cockroaches and rats and things of that kind. They claimed things had not been as bad before, during the war, because during the war they had money, and they could keep things up. But now their whole time was spent looking for work—either he goes on the front, and his wife couldn't get work, and I'd see these little kids, you know, in the shoddiest of clothes, and . . . well, not even going to school. They didn't have anything to go to school in. That wasn't true of all the seamen, because some of the seamen had saved a little money and lived fairly well and were in slightly better places, but these were the ones that were down and out around the front.

And then I visited a few of the black families both out in the Fillmore district, which was sort of like a ghetto—I guess not a ghetto, but where a lot of blacks lived—and in other areas, out in outer San Francisco and then around the front, where here and there blacks could get rooms and apartments. And these families were really in bad shape. I mean, there was *no* chance to get jobs. One guy, I remember, whom I knew on the front—very nice guy—he was working part-time as a jani-

tor to make, I don't know, a couple of bucks or whatever it was, and his wife was out doing washing and things of that sort. So they had a little money, but it wasn't enough even to pay the rent, and they had four or five kids. And they were *really* a family, because they had relatives, who would come in and bring them food from uptown. And I got the feeling it was the white families that were isolated; the black families I felt all had a network. I began to feel there were two cultures at work here; I got the picture of two different cultures.

The black families and the black seamen and their wives that I visited seemed to have some kind of sense of belonging to another network. They were poor; they had nothing and were sometimes desperate, but they weren't going to starve because they had others.

The white families—and I'm generalizing, because it wasn't entirely this way, but in a lot of cases—were totally isolated. I felt they had no connections, that they really were in desperate shape, and, also, that they felt more reliance on the union, in a sense, as a community. They were, in a sense, more committed union people because that was their community.

Whereas for the blacks, the union was a vehicle to get something done, like getting a job and keeping a job, which was very important to them, but there wasn't the same sense of *élan* or loyalty to another organization. They had loyalty to family or to themselves or their group. I remember at that time we used to talk about it and think of it as a reactionary tendency among the working blacks. [laughter] And, you know, it *wasn't*; it was that they had entirely different . . .

*It's almost like you're talking about an identity.*

A different identity. Although those unions were so much in advance of their time, as far as race relations were concerned, there was a lot of misconception. And I remember even at that time thinking this when I visited these black families, of either seamen, longshoremen, or members of other unions, and some of them even non-union that we knew about.

There were two African-American members of our committee, and I won't mention their names because they were party guys. They were very, very sharp, very good. If it hadn't been for them, I don't think we would have been allowed in some of those houses, because there was a lot of suspicion. These were the times when even though the unions were becoming non-segregated, there was still a lot of feeling in homes about danger. And I had a feeling that in some cases that I—myself and these two or three other white guys—were the only whites that had been in some of these homes, that they'd ever seen inside their own living room, sitting and talking to them. If it hadn't been for these two very good guys that were with us, I doubt that we'd have been allowed in.

And the conversations were to me fascinating, because they didn't have the same take on the union or on the left-wing movement or communism that the whites had. They didn't give a damn about that. I mean, I remember one guy telling us . . . a very fine, middle-aged man, who was a longshoreman, I think, saying, "Look. You know, the union has done fine. I've got a good job and we're working. I'm willing to go out on strike for that union, because it's really done something for me. I don't know where I could get another job. And those jobs, when I have them, we're able to live on them." And he said, "But, you know, I don't feel as though that's where my major loyalty in this world

is. My loyalty is to my family. And as for," he says, "you commies," because I told him I was a communist, "as for you commies," he says, "fine, do your thing. But leave me alone." [laughter]

I mean, you get these wonderful kinds of responses and takes from people. I began to realize where we stood in the world, and I didn't think there was anything reactionary about that position at all. Just the natural suspicion, the natural self-interest of people who were on the bottom. And their major concern had to be food on the table for their family and paying the rent.

So we spent a lot of our time going around to landlords, making arrangements for extension of time for people on rents; the union taking a kind of responsibility for that and sometimes getting in too deep. And talking to these white landlords and sometimes Chinese landlords was interesting, too, because every now and then you'd run across one who'd say, "Yes, of course, you know. I'm on your guys' side. You know, you're right." And, "Sure, tell them they can stay there until the strike is over, and I'll even charge them less," and all that. One Chinese guy did this.

But the others were adamant, you know. "They got to pay. What the hell? You strikers are just causing trouble in this town," and on and on and on. You know, class differences again.

You'd see it everywhere, you know. "You people are causing all . . ."

And, of course, the press was there. Even the *Chronicle* and the *Examiner* were blasting the unions for disrupting the waterfront. "Here was the end of the war, and we're about ready to enter a period of peace and prosperity. And these damn unions look what they're doing. They're disrupting."

So you found yourself right in the middle of these issues. You saw the reality of what was going on around you.

And as for the African-Americans that I had met and that we went around to see when I was on this committee, and the ones in the union, that was the period in which the communists, as I had said earlier, during the Browder period, had taken the view to defer the struggle for Negro rights during the war in the interest of the war effort, like the pledge for no strikes and all that. And then right after the war, I think I did talk about the Duclos letter. Well, right after that, and the deep, internal self-criticism that went on within the party during that period, there was a shift back to the notion of the Negro constituting a separate nation. "Black" and "Negro"—all those terms we used to use. In fact, *Negro* was the term we used. That was the nice term in those days, the acceptable term. Anyway, there was a shift back to the idea that the African-Americans constituted a nation within a nation, that this was in keeping with the Marxist position, particularly the Leninist position on the status of nations.

There was a lot of writing that came out in *Political Affairs* and many pamphlets on Negro self-determination, and discussions of the Black Belt in the South as constituting areas where there were majorities of Negroes, and, therefore, that they should have representation that might make those areas constitute, really, a nation, a territorial nation, even, if that's what blacks wanted. Nevertheless, the idea was that they culturally constituted a nation, and then from the point of view of political status, a nation within a nation. This was a restatement of the concept of caste. I mean, they were a caste, and no matter what else was going on with them, they were separate, and, there-

fore, they would determine, or they had the right to self-determine, their status.

Certainly not all African-Americans at that time would have agreed with this or even thought in those terms, but a lot of the leaders, a lot of the intellectuals in the movement, in the trade unions, who saw the idea of at least the American Negro being able, potentially to consider themselves a nation or a national entity, that was something that if that's what they decided, it would be backed and acceptable to the party.

Now, the idea of nation, of course, is a sticky wicket, because there was something called "bourgeois nationalism" and also "black bourgeois nationalism," which meant that the small, emerging middle class of African-Americans in this country were mostly people, who, if they talked about a Negro nation, thought of it in terms of a sort of a copy, a ditto of the American nation, with all the same class structure kept intact, and themselves as the cream on the top of the milk bottle. Du Bois called them the "educated twelfth," or something like that. This elite would be, of course, the bourgeoisie of the Negro nation, and therefore, just a copy of what they had left. In fact, later on in my life I thought of that in terms of the Liberian experience, where American blacks went over from the South as freed Negroes and set up a caste system, a class system that in many ways reflected what they had experienced in the American South.

So that was part of the party's position, supportive but aware of and very careful about *that* direction of nationalism. And Lenin had pointed out these dangers of bourgeois nationalism. On the one hand, nationalism was regarded as a perfectly useful and sometimes a very important tool in the development of consciousness, of identity, of cultural identity and solidarity among

people who had none and, therefore, was to be encouraged where it was on that level. *But* when it wasn't based upon a basic working-class structure—that is, where the working class itself was not the one promoting nationhood and taking a new, advanced, progressive position within a nation—then it was something reactionary.

So the African-American members of the party and others who supported this, when they wrote about it, wrote about the fact that it first had to be a working class-movement among African-Americans that linked itself to other minorities and other groups within the total national structure—whites and all—and move for working class advancement within the country. And in that context, Negro nationalism made a progressive impact. But if it went to the idea of reconstituting the class structure of the very big nation that they were becoming part of or had a new part in, then it was reactionary.

So those arguments were going on within the party, and people like Haywood, oh, and Claudia Jones, in particular—I had a lot of respect for her—and Pettis Perry were laying out this reconstituted line of the Negro nation, Negro liberation and self-determination. So that was to some extent affecting also some of the people that I knew outside the party in the union and elsewhere, the idea of black separatism. Some of the black seamen that I knew and went to sea with later, espoused black separatism, a separate state. “We’re going to have our own state, set up our own government,” all that. Well, I don’t think that we opposed *that*. You only did so if it didn’t have within it what we considered a Marxist working-class orientation to the development of socialist . . .

*When you said “we,” are you talking about the communists?*

The communists. We, the vanguard—we guys, [laughter] we guys and gals, who were the vanguard, and the African-Americans within the party. The idea was that there had to be the class consciousness and the working class struggle aspect in the development of whatever was nationhood, with a socialist perspective, working toward a socialist type of organization. And then, of course, that kind of nationhood was to be commended and backed. But as soon as it became a Xerox of the present structure of the American nation with its middle-class bourgeoisie capitalist structure, with the workers in the same position they were currently, then it was reactionary and to be opposed.

So that was a real battle going on all the time. It was a theoretical battle going on within the party, outside the party; the Trotskyists took this up. The Trotskyites, the Socialist Workers’ Party, was doing a lot of work—theoretically. I never saw them out on the front talking to blacks. [laughter] I never saw any Trotskyite blacks. Well, there may have been. But in their leaflets and all, they were always touting this separate Negro nation and the international working class involving the unity of all minorities throughout the world, with the American black nation contributing to this movement. So there were all sorts of forces at work.

*Was the Socialist Workers’ Party a Trotskyite group?*

Their theoretical underpinning, was Trotsky—Trotsky and his theories. The idea that you couldn’t have socialism in one country. It had to be worldwide was one of the major positions, that anything short of that, like the Soviet Union and the Stalinists, from their point of view, would fail. Partly not only they but others were right—Stalinism was the

great enemy. You could not have socialism in one country, that if you didn't have a worldwide movement in socialism in many countries at one time, you could not possibly survive, that it would fall, it would decay within itself. In a sense what later happened in the Soviet Union seemed to warrant that, but that's not what they meant.

Therefore, anything the Communist Party was for, the Trotskyists by principle had to be against, so that there was a great deal of undermining and wrecking that was going on, at least from our point of view. The Trotskyists in an organization, like the ones in our union, we just knew when they got up what they're going to do. Anything that looked like the membership was going to follow us on something they had to oppose and undermine, merely because it was communist suggested, or they saw it as a Stalinist plot or whatever. So they were our enemies on the front. And, of course, the Sailor's Union of the Pacific was a hotbed of Trotskyists, or had been in the past.

*Yes, weren't they the ones throwing the hammers over board?*

No, those are the old Wobblies. Oh, no, the Trotskyists I don't think had enough guts to toss anything over side. Most of them were intellectuals, and I don't think many of them went to sea. [laughter] They were thinkers.

There was the rumor that Lundeberg had spent a lot of his time out at Joan London's—that was Jack London's daughter—at her place out in Sonoma, someplace. Yes, that they had their little pads out there where the Trotskyites would go out and talk and scheme, and lead Harry in his political . . . . I don't know how true this was, but that was the common talk on the waterfront. Joan London may have been his girlfriend, even,

but I don't know, you know. I'm not saying any of this is true. There were all kinds of rumors.

*It's just what was said.*

That, you know, she was a kind of a patron saint of the lefties within the AF of L and the Trotskyists and the old Wobbly types and all that.

No, the Wobblies, even though a few of them were left or what little was left of that movement, they were anarcho-syndicalist, and they believed in one big union. I mean, their idea was to wreck anything that owners had. I mean, you destroyed the infrastructure of the goddamn capitalists, and that way would force them to face the fact that labor was the only thing that kept these things going, that their machinery was all meaningless without labor. It was worthless, you know. "Wreck it. Tear it down. Destroy it."

I knew of old seamen who used to talk that way on many ships that I was on. "You know, if we were doing anything important here, we'd be wrecking the ship, running it up on the rocks! We can do that. We have the power to do that. The ship owners only have the power to take our labor, but we got the power to wreck their goddamn ships!" [laughter]

The Trotskyists only went that far when they were dealing with the Communist Party. The Communist Party had to be wrecked, or should be wrecked; they shouldn't be allowed to get credit for anything. And I suppose there was a lot of tit for tat in that, too, but I didn't like the Trotskyists I knew. Not because I was just given a bias by the role I had, but they were, to me, middle-class intellectuals who had deigned to descend into the working class to give leadership.

*So it sounds like what you're saying is you felt there wasn't the humanist connection that the communists had to . . . I mean, real concern for . . .*

Not from my point of view. I mean, they seemed to me to be—oh, gosh, what would you call it?—independent revolutionaries, moving here and there like little bees looking for the honey, from this flower to that flower. I never saw any concerted, clear program on their part, though they may have had it, if I had known more about them. But their program seemed to me mostly to be to create dissidence, to create disagreement and suspicion—particularly, suspicion of the leadership of the waterfront unions, which was then pretty well friendly to the Communist Party's position, particularly Harry Bridges, the great enemy of what we considered to be the reactionary phonies on the waterfront.

But my memory of this is dim and biased. All I remember is what I felt about this. And I always still have a feeling of repugnance about the Trotskyists that may be terribly unwarranted, but a feeling that they were living in an entirely different world than the rest of us were in and that they were schemers—schemers of another kind than we were. We were schemers but schemers toward a given set of issues that had do with trade union positions. We had the feeling sometimes that their idea was really if you bring the institutions down, if you destroy—they're something like the syndicalists—if you destroy, then something will come out of the ashes. And I had the feeling often that they would just as soon see a strike lost in order to *teach* the workers their lesson, show them that things aren't to be handed to them, and that these guys, their enemy is really vicious and terrible and horrible. You got that feeling of a weird bunch.

But, as I say, this is pure hindsight, pure personal bias. Except I've read nothing since, in what reading I've done in political literature or readings of Trotsky, which I find extremely difficult to read, just as I do any of them. Stalin is difficult to read, Lenin but I've read nothing in Trotsky that I feel congenial to any view that I had. I mean, I felt his idealism was dangerous. It was the kind that leads people to do things that are destructive to themselves, destructive to their own interests. You know, world revolution is a kind of meaningless slogan that has no meaning at all, except in a very long-term view, and waiting for *that* before you do anything, before any country makes an experiment toward socialism, you know, I always felt was utterly wild and ridiculous.

But, anyway, as I say, these are things I'm no expert on, and I'm just talking about biases at the moment. So where were we now? Anywhere? Oh, yes. Among the African-Americans, the seamen, and party members that I knew, one of the major interests they had was the struggle for representation—representation in government, representation in the union. And, of course, the thing that gave them a certain confidence in the ILWU and even the NMU and the Marine Cooks and Stewards was that there were African-American leaders in those organizations. In their major policy-making committees and in their structure, there were Negroes in important positions, and *that* was one of the things that made sense to them, and if they had a positive view of the Communist Party, it was that the communists fought for that sort of thing.

But a lot of the other things, aside from basic pork chop issues, basic day-to-day economic issues, was, I felt, part of another culture among the black families and seamen and longshoremen that I knew, that their

interests in the party were really in terms of what they could get today and tomorrow, and that told them whether or not an organization was worthwhile. Could they get jobs? Would somebody help them to get and keep jobs?

The fact that we went around getting landlords to get extensions on rent or lowering the requirements of rent made more sense to them than *any* kind of political issue or anything else. *That* made sense, and it was a one-time thing. So, OK, the party is doing it now; doesn't mean that next year they'll do the same thing. These people are too hurt, I mean, not only . . . but for generations. They understood and were suspicious even of a handout, but they were ready to work. But they also had this network of family.

I'm talking about, you know, a few dozen people, a few dozen families that we saw, so that I can't generalize too much. But, nevertheless, I did have a sense there was some security in the network of family, uptown people, people from Fillmore. They had families that did have some jobs, helping the people on the front and all that. And the white groups were more atomized, and as I say, the union was for them a community. That was their community—the seamen in particular.

*This is sort of a side issue, but do you think that the white families actually were removed from a network of family—that they really weren't from that geographic area—or was it just an attitude?*

I don't know. I just felt they didn't have it. They seemed to have no resources, emo-

tional support resources or anything of that kind. Oh, there were sometimes just two or three people, the man and his wife, who, you know, he left in an apartment when he went to sea and then with a kid or two. Whereas most of the black families had a lot of people. Not only more kids, but other members of the family. Even these *very* run-down rooms and hotels they were in, there were maybe four or five people sleeping in a couple of rooms and everybody using a kitchen from two or three other rooms and apartments. There were a lot of people, a network of cooperation, which, as I say, was not present among others. I may just not have been observant enough, but I early got a feeling that this was a difference.

I had a sense of cultural difference that was deeper than just being a member of a union or a seaman or whatever. And the long-shoremen in particular . . . these guys had had fairly good jobs during the war, made very good money, and they were ashore, you know, and they had families. And there was a feeling that their main concern was keeping those families fed, and that the union was just a vehicle for them.

I didn't get a feeling of great loyalty, except among the left-wing African-Americans, who could see the role of the union in a longer range struggle for status and position and things of that of kind. But I may be wrong on that, but I just had that strong feeling at that time.





**I** WANTED TO ASK you how the problems you've been describing square with the image that I've always had of the post-war era as being this great period of opportunity for everyone?

Well, but that's exactly what the general climate was. Before and during the war, there was in a way so much different than in contemporary American life. There was a sense of hope, the sense that the future is going to be better, things were going to improve, there were going to be more opportunities for people to get back during a period of peace, and to have a better way of life. It was a general feeling of opportunity. Despite the depression, despite the horrors of the war, there was this quite different atmosphere, quite different mood in the country.

And at this point that I'm talking about now [after the war], with the disappointments and the anger of people against ship owners, against the government, and seeing somehow their hopes for change diminished and all that, nevertheless, there was the idea that you could do something about it. There was a lot

of optimism about winning the strike, optimism about what you would have after we beat those goddamn ship owners, and there was always the feeling it was going to get better rather than "It'll never get better," which you hear now, you know.

*Right, the apathy.*

You hear everywhere now, "Things are the way they are, and get what you can for yourself, because it's a rough world out there." And we didn't feel that way.

*Well, your attraction to the party and the opportunity to be part of some fundamental kind of social change sounds very optimistic to me.*

Yes. I thought the party was one of the many answers that there was to social change and to the direction that our country should go in.

*And your expectation that the country would change, that fundamental social conditions could be changed.*

Yes. Oh, I *did* believe that there was logic and reason and intelligence within government and even in politics, and even among corporations and in the capitalist class. I mean, there was reason to feel there were elements who would be supporting us. By the way, the whole movement for a Third Party with Henry Wallace and all that was, we felt, a mass movement of the more positive, far-reaching, vanguard movements among the middle class and the capitalist class that saw reason. [Henry A. Wallace (1880-1965) was elected Vice President in 1940 with Roosevelt and was presidential candidate for the Progressive Party in 1948.] I mean, imagine thinking that Henry Wallace would be president of the United States. That shows how optimistic we were and maybe naive politically. We did believe it was possible. We did believe it was possible.

You didn't you say, Kath? Yes?

Kd: I really never did.

Well, except you went to meetings and wrote me letters on the LP *St. Clair* about the wonderful meeting you went to where Wallace spoke, and there was such a whoop in the air, and people were so excited.

Kd: Yes. That's true.

You didn't buy it yourself. [laughter]

Kd: No! I didn't think it would carry.

Yes. Well, in a way I never actually thought we . . . . But I thought it would make a very important mark in American political life, that it would make a change. And, in fact, in a way it did.

*It did?*

Yes, it did. But the point is we thought it was going to be a more powerful statement than that.

*Well, being the generation I'm a part of, I can't help but make . . . when you're . . . when you talk like that, I just think of all these parallels to the attitudes that were so prevalent in the 1960s this real expectation that things would never be the same afterwards, and many things have not been the same. But the expectation was for so much more, that there wouldn't be this reactionary . . . .*

You felt this optimism.

*Oh, yes, the same level of enthusiasm and . . . .*

Well, so that was a carryover from the 1940s and 1950s.

*Well, that's what's so interesting.*

And it took a long time for deep, profound cynicism to set in or disappointment or a feeling that the whole thing was circular, you know.

Just before you came today, I was watching television, which, by the way, I had never seen television back in the 1940s. [laughter] I mean, we didn't have television. We had the newspapers, radio, and leaflets. Nevertheless, I turned on the news and saw the arrival of Pope John Paul—or Juan Pablo, as he is called in Havana—being greeted by Fidel Castro, dressed in a business suit and looking very distinguished in his beard and being extremely nice and helpful to the old pope as he walked him to the podium where they spoke. And I tell you, it gave me a tremendous sense of the span of time to hear Fidel make his first remarks.

In the first place, I've always seen Fidel Castro as one of the heroes of the twentieth century. Regardless of whatever may come out in the future about that regime, nobody can take away, from my point of view, the gains that were made in Cuba, in the Caribbean, and in Latin America because of the 1959 revolution that Fidel was one of the leaders of. And here he was, this guy who was managing to sustain his situation, to sustain the remnants of the revolution against the most powerful nation in this world, the United States. To me, there's something heroic about that in itself.

Now there could be characters who think it would be wonderful if they were deposed and gotten rid of. However, I can't think that about Fidel Castro. I see him as a remarkably positive influence in Western hemisphere life.

Here, he gets up and says very quietly and calmly . . . his first remarks were to the pope, "Before Europeans came to this little island, there were many, many people here. There were hundreds of thousands of who lived here. They're all gone. They are gone. They were destroyed; they were decimated by getting enslaved, by disease, by outright genocide. Then came the people from Africa who were brought here to take their place, and they're still here; their descendents are still here among everybody else. We are now a very, very complex society, and yet we've had to suffer many, many, many difficulties. And those are the people you see here today."

And as the camera went through the crowd and the honor guard that had come up to honor the pope, every other one of them was black. And I'll tell you, there was something kind of . . . I thought, what an image for the world to see that in this place where fifty years ago I can remember Havana and Cuba meant marimba bands and sort of light-

skinned Hispanic orchestra leaders—I can't remember some of their names—going around the country and on the radio, and stories of casinos and the high life and all that; never anything about the outlying districts of Cuba. And now those people, at least, have come forward. And even though there's still a lot of poverty, there's education—illiteracy is probably one of the lowest in the hemisphere—a health system which at least delivers what they're able to deliver equally to most of the people. And I thought, "Well, what a marvelous statement," you know, watching this.

And then comes the pope, a very dignified, tottering old man with great power behind him, representing one of the most powerful domains in the world (the Catholic church), and he stands at the microphone and says in his quiet voice . . . I think he was speaking Italian in translation. I don't think he was speaking Spanish; I think it was Italian. And the first thing he says was he is grateful for the welcome he received from the people of Cuba. And for the whole speech, he spoke of the gospel and the reign of Jesus Christ and of the mysterious ways of God, and that he saw now the possibility for the church to grow and to return to its former glory.

And I'm thinking, "Former? Former glory and eminence? What was the church doing during the Batista regime? What was the church doing at that time? What would they have done to the few—like, later on in Latin America, the liberation Catholics, whom they ex-communicated by the hundreds—what would they have done if somebody would have stood up and spoken for the kind of things that the revolutionaries did a few years later?"

Nonetheless, it was a powerful speech about the importance of faith and justice.

And I'm thinking, "Justice, buddy. What about justice for the Indians?" Oh, and his advisors didn't tell him not to say this; they should have. He mentioned Christopher Columbus, when Christopher Columbus came and planted the cross. And I was thinking, what are they doing? Fidel had just got through saying that right after this the Indians were decimated.

Anyway, that throws me into gear, back almost fifty years, when at least on the waterfront in our union and other unions of the maritime union group, preparing and involved in the strike, we were passing out leaflets in support of the people of Cuba against their regime, against their dictatorship; threatening often to refuse to load ships that were carrying cargos that were . . . . In fact, we were doing that in cooperation with a lot of South American seamen's unions. We were in a kind of an agreement that we would not unload certain cargos if they were on strike, or if they were in any kind of difficulty, we would support them. So there was this international aspect that was extremely important.

We were very aware, and always in our newspapers and leaflets, we were always bringing up the Cuban situation and Guatemala and Peru and Chile and Brazil and examples of terrorist and fascist-oriented regimes, dictatorships, which our corporations were supporting. Our ships were carrying cargos from these areas, an extremely lucrative kind of a business.

With the war over, we felt that there was a great move now to remove the power of the trade unions—particularly seamen's unions and longshore unions—in this kind of protest against certain kinds of foreign shipping, and in the demand for wage increases, et cetera. We knew that our strike was in relationship with and in support of

the Hawaiian sugar workers and the Cuban sugar workers. The reaction of the ship owners and large corporations in this country and of the government, the Truman government, we knew was now to restrict the growing power of the unions in the post-war period.

And one of the things that made this very clear was the Marshall Plan. Marshall had made an extremely positive and we thought progressive plea for aid to war-torn Europe, aid to Japan and to Germany for European recovery. The European Recovery Act was in the making, and yet we suspected and knew just exactly what was going to happen, and it was happening there in 1947 and 1948, that part of the European Recovery Act—what became known as the Marshall Plan—was no longer exactly what George Marshall had suggested; part of it was that trade would take place and commodities would be moved in *the least expensive way*.

Well, what did this mean? We saw what was happening. *Half* of the American merchant fleet was now being turned over to small countries (like Liberia). It was no longer going under the U.S. flag; they were going under foreign flag ships. Well, the wages were sometimes half or even less of what they were in this country. So one of our worries and fears was that the real strategy of the rightwing in this country, and of the shipping corporations, was first to remove the basis of our strength, which was our jobs. If you remove ships from the American flag and yet keep them under control of the American owners, you are doing part of the job; you are weakening the unions.

Part of our strategy was to maintain the strength of the seamen's unions and continue to crew the ships that we'd held. And little by little, they were being removed; there were fewer ships. By 1948, it was getting very clear that shipping had diminished to such a degree

that there was a kind of a depression in the shipping industry for seamen, not for the ship owners.

Not only that, but the ship owners were collecting these enormous insurance subsidies for ships that they'd lost during the war. Billions of dollars went back to the ship owners for ships that they had lost. Nothing went to the crews that had manned these ships, and the Seaman's Bill of Rights went down the drain in very short order. Any kind of aid to the seamen who had worked on these ships was fought tooth and nail in congress, and yet the ship owners were taking in billions in insurance policies that were tax-payer paid for the ships that they had lost. So these were part of the issues.

And somehow when recently on TV we [Kathy and Warren] were listening to Fidel and John Paul . . . [laughter] the wonderful difference in their approaches to the world brought this back to me. Back there fifty years ago, we saw this kind of thing coming. It's the kind of thing we were fighting against. And I must say that if I had not been in the Communist Party and on the waterfront, I would never have thought of these things in this way. It never would have come home to me so directly. Maybe years later I would have reflected this intellectually, I would have read and begun to understand historically what had gone on.

But I feel that I was living it. We were living the period in which—because of this vanguard kind of revolutionary organization that we were a part of, because of its Marxist orientation—we were probing, curious, demanding answers, suspicious of bureaucracy, suspicious of governments and their actions, and it brought about a kind of a consciousness that I feel very grateful for. I feel that this was a turning point in my life, at least, and may have been for many others that

I knew at that time. There were some who were this way their whole lives, but it happened to me in my twenties, when I began to feel that I was involved in a very direct way with historical events and seeing them with a kind of a clarity that, by the way, Marx called "true consciousness."

I hate these old terms, nevertheless, "true conscious"—meaning seeing things as they are, rather than as they are dished out to you through media, through the power of general knowledge, through the views that are contained by and from the traditions of your background, and all that—meant suddenly seeing through and saying, "My god! *This* is what's going on, not this that I've been told. It's this!"

And this sort of enlightenment took place among many people that I knew, seamen that I knew, while they were at sea and during the period of strikes. There was this kind of deep emergence of an awareness in people's minds, ordinary guys. It was as though they suddenly *saw*, they suddenly realized what was happening, as though the fog had lifted. And, "My god, there it is. It's as simple as this."

And class-consciousness—as much as that can be distorted and lead people into all kinds of extreme and probably distorted views—nevertheless, to some degree, it led to a clear picture of the kinds of issues that were involved and who was taking what side. "What side are you on?" That's a little song we used to sing, a great union song, "What side are you on?" And I think that business of seeing sides, seeing class division, understanding some of the forces that work in it was what that experience was for many people.

I talked to somebody just the other day who had been in the National Maritime Union at the same time I was. I didn't know

him, but he was on one of the Union Oil ships that I'll talk about in a few moments. I was on another ship, and we were both delegates. And he's now still in the union. I called him, because I couldn't remember what year it was that we lost the Union Oil ships. So I called him.

And here he is in a hall in which very few seamen are now being sent out. The hall probably services a couple of ships a week or something of that kind. And the trade union situation seems to be dead. This is after fifty years since the period when it was among the most vigorous set of organizations in the country. And now there is this lapse into a kind of a depressive mode for seamen's unions on the coast. The ILWU is still strong, but not like it used to be, not with the same kind of far-seeing programs that it used to have.

So he said, "Why are you asking?"

I said, "Well, your secretary said that you were the only one who had been around long enough to know anything about the 1940s, the last fifty years."

"Well, that's right. I was sailing Union Oil ships."

And I said, "Well, so was I." Well, certainly within a moment, we were talking a common language.

So I said, "Well, what year was that?"

He said, "That was 1946."

I said, "How could it be 1946? I was sailing on Union Oil in 1948. In fact, I was on the *St. Clair* for a whole year. That was my source of income."

"Oh, well," he said, "I guess I forgot. I guess it was 1948. That was when they started beating us to shit." [laughter] "Yes," he says, "It used to be we could tell the ship owners what was going to happen on ships, but now we have to beg them . . . ask them what we're going to do. And there are not many ships left, and we lost Union Oil."

All that was happening in 1948—that's about the time that I saw the handwriting on the wall. And then the other issues had to do with wages. I mean, you know, we were making thirty-five, fifty dollars a month, and during the war it was up to seventy-five or a hundred and we were working a fifty-eight hour week.

The pork-chop issues, as we used to call them, had to do with getting down to at least a forty-eight hour week. That was what the strike was going to be about, that and having some kind of health measures and security for seamen—recognition of time off when they got ashore so they could see their families, various kinds of things that had been denied them all during not only the war, but before the war. And the view was that the ship owners were making an enormous amount of money. The profits were enormous, and there was an expansion of the trade, while every move was being made to diminish the income of seamen, even diminish the power of the unions.

And then the Taft-Hartley Bill was in the making at that time, which was one of our greatest targets, because it took the position that the hiring hall could not be the exclusive way to hire a seaman. And there was the beginning of the anti-communist crusade. That trouble-making left-wing people in the union should be dismissed, gotten rid of. And this gave rise to, a few years later, the screening process in which left-wing seamen with a left-wing record or even a staunch trade union leadership record were denied the right to go to sea. That happened just after I stopped going to sea.

And in a way, I wish I had been around when that was happening, because it would have sort have given final closure for a period that to me was very important and would have helped me see the thing much more

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clearly in terms of what was happening to seamen. I saw this actually somewhat from a distance, because I had then gone back to school and all that. Nevertheless, all these things were in the offing.

China was an issue. This was the period in which Chiang Kai-shek was beginning now to get in confrontation with the Left in China, and the preparations were really underway now for a revolution that was going to take place a few years later, the Maoist

movement. And the United States was supporting the most, right-wing elements, and encouraging Chiang Kai-shek to take such a course. And so we were opposed to that.

All these things were going on. I would say the seamen's unions—and other trade unions, where the Communist Party was so up on what was going on and gave so much leadership to an understanding of events—was one of the great advantages of that period, one of the great advances that were made.





**N**OW AS I THINK I've mentioned before, I had just gone over to the NMU a few months earlier, and here comes the strike. June 15 passed without a strike, because the ship owners settled, because there was such a strong labor front. Truman had announced that he would not tolerate a strike, and that he would get the troops out, if necessary, to run the ships. Poor Truman. I guess he had his positive points. And this poor guy, though, he didn't know what to do with the fact that there was this strong Committee for Maritime Unity, and a tremendous amount of support from the rest of the trade union movement in the country in 1946, and international support.

Trade unions were declaring all over the world, especially Latin American and the Caribbean, that they would not work cargos of American ships during a strike. Well, Truman announced that if there was a strike, he was thinking seriously of putting the troops out to do the work, and also that the policies of the unions about hiring halls were much too stringent and that this was interfering with American trade and American

growth and development and that the unions are trying to get political leadership in the United States, and this was not going to happen, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

But the union position was so strong that by June 15, the ship owners signed a contract in which we got the forty-eight hour week and a number of our demands, and everything seemed to be fine. There was no strike, and everybody had gone back to work.

But as September came along, we saw another problem looming. The Sailors' Union of the Pacific, that had been my good old lily-white union, had worked up a settlement with the ship owners on the West Coast giving them an extra five dollars a month wages. And the SUP in the Gulf had gotten something like ten dollars. Well, this created a great disparity. Now we saw it exactly for what it was.

This is the kind of divide and rule thing of many power sources, and in this case, American ship owners. They were seeing a way to divide the unions: "OK, you damned reds in the ILWU and the NMU, we're going to show you! The SUP is a union we can

get along with, and we're going to give them a better settlement." They did.

Well, of course that meant we had to put up a fight. So we declared September 15 was going to be the day to strike. And we did go on strike, and we were on strike for weeks.

And that was a difficult one, because our support was not as good as it had been, but it was still good. People were *tired* of the strikes and threats of strikes, and other unions were having their problems. Nevertheless, we were on strike and that's when I was elected just after being a few months in this new union, chairman of the housing and welfare committee for the maritime unions in the Bay Area. I think I talked about this experience of setting up soup kitchens and hotels for four or five hundred men all over the Bay Area and learning an awfully lot about the conditions under which seamen lived when they were ashore—about their families, and about the various segments. The black seamen, as I have talked about, at least the ones that came from the San Francisco area, had a much more secure kind of community situation than whites. And so did the Chinese.

I don't know if I mentioned the Chinese. There were a number of Chinese seamen, not so many in the NMU, but certainly in the Marine Cooks, and Stewards, and some of the other unions. And I got to know two or three of the Chinese seamen very well, and we'd go out to Chinatown.

I recently saw a documentary on the development of San Francisco Chinatown, which was fascinating, because I had forgotten so much that had to do the Chinese Exclusion Act back in the early part of the century. Then the earthquake in which Chinatown was laid bare. It looked as though an atomic bomb hit it along with a good portion of the city, which by the way, a lot of the people in the Bay Area were delighted

with. I mean they had wanted to get rid of the Chinese anyway, even though the Chinese were supplying a tremendous amount of cheap labor and all that. Nevertheless, the Chinese, the Mongolian, the oriental shadow loomed over the West Coast.

In the period when I was growing up, I think I mentioned, my Aunt Edith whose one prejudice was with what she called the "Chinks" and anything "chinky." She would have nothing to do with anything "chinky," and she was terrified of Chinese.

Now this wasn't true of my mother. I don't think it was of my mother's other sister, and I don't remember it in the family, you know, an anti-Chinese feeling. But my aunt had it for some reason. She would not go to Chinatown. Didn't I mention that she was afraid of being taken, that there would be trap doors in the street and she would be sold into white slavery?

She was an hysterical lady, but I loved her anyway. Aside from things like this, she was a quite wonderful person. [laughter] But anyway, this was during the period following the First World War where that feeling about the Chinese was still extremely strong in the Bay Area.

The Chinese were really not comfortable anywhere else outside of Chinatown. You didn't see many of them around town except the few that were working in various businesses and lower-level employment. Like blacks, you just didn't see them. We "whities" just did not see these people who were taking away our civilized life, et cetera.

So there's where my aunt grew up. She grew up, you know, in the early part of the century in Oakland and in the Bay Area when the strong anti-Chinese feeling was developing or had developed, so that by the time I knew her and grew up in the 1920s and 1930s, she was still imbued with this feel-

ing. She wouldn't eat Chinese food, because it was full of dog and rat and lord knows what . . . oh, and bug juice—all these terrible things. Oh, it was wonderful when I think of it. I think it's one of the reasons why I used to hang around and get Chinese food. I loved it. It was my reaction to that.

So anyway, all that was in my mind and my memory, because I guess I really was a Bay Area person, where I'd grown up; it was my turf. So I knew these two or three Chinese guys that I liked a lot. A couple of them were on my committee, and I was always aware that they were always a little bit more aloof from what was going on than the others. I mean, they had families. They had places to go. They had their community, where we guys had family scattered all over the area. Our homes were in god knows where—Berkeley, Oakland, San Mateo, or from some other state. And most of the Chinese guys came from that area; this was their home.

And I'd go out with them sometime, because we were working on the Third Party, trying to recruit people or register them for the Third Party. I remember I went to their homes, to little flats and apartments and things like that in Chinatown. They were *extremely* polite. They were not militant, nor were these guys.

They were supporting the strike because it was their work, and they were a part of the community of seamen as well. And they understood—probably in a way better than the rest of us how difficult it was to fight bureaucracy and big power. And so I always felt that they were very sort of low-key about everything, and I used to sort of propagandize them and try to get them excited about issues. And they were extremely polite about it and nice, these guys. But [laughter] it didn't register. I don't recall any Chinese or Japanese . . . Well, there were hardly any

Japanese around at that time in the maritime. But I don't recall any Chinese leadership in labor issues at the time.



When I look back, it's a matter of great satisfaction, in a way, and wonderment about how a group of men like the seamen who were around the front at that time, and the leadership in the unions, how they could organize these strikes and the picket lines. It was amazing the amount of solidarity that existed; that you took this rabble from the waterfront . . . from waterfronts throughout the country, with a lot of foreign seamen as well, and coalesced into these well-organized little groups. All spontaneous, all organized for maintaining picket lines, maintaining soup kitchens with Marine Cooks and Stewards running soup kitchens ashore instead of on ships, and finding money. In fact, I remember going out and hitting up all kinds of small businesses and people in the community for donations for the soup kitchens. All this going on, spontaneous organization.

I remember being in wonder about it, how we managed to do it, carrying on for a number of weeks a successful strike with guys really very hungry, people in need with families either elsewhere or in town. And we had a sort of a welfare committee going out collecting clothes, collecting food, bringing it to various families. Milk for the kids, I remember that we used to go to grocery stores and . . .

By the way, the Chinatown grocery stores were extremely helpful; they gave more than anybody. Yet they didn't talk of issues or anything, but they gave. So we'd go up there a lot.

We got most of our help from lower-middle-class businesses—the small businesses, not the big ones—smaller. The big ones were always saying, “You guys get off the

street. Stop. What the hell are you doing? You're wrecking this community," and all that. The *San Francisco Examiner* was always loaded with headlines about how we were destroying the economy of the West Coast. But you didn't hear that from people who had small little shops and little grocery stores on the corner. They always gave something—a bag of fruit and this and that and the other thing.

So you learned a lot. You learned a lot about where the support was, and you got it from people who didn't even particularly know why you were striking. They just thought strikes were good. Anybody that creates trouble is OK. You know, "Yes, give them hell!" That kind of thing. But if you asked them what the issues were, they wouldn't know.

But *that* kind of feeling, and then the solidarity on the front with hundreds and hundreds of guys, every morning collecting to go out and replace the guys that were on the lines with their little fires in ash cans and all, keeping warm. September is pretty cold in the Bay Area. That part I remember now with great warmth, the sense of solidarity, which some people grew up with, and I did in a sense in my family, but not in terms of working, a feeling of solidarity with other people doing the same kind of work. And that was, to me, a revelation, and an important one and made a shift in my view of things.

Oh, by the way, during this period, the California Labor School was going full blast with classes in history and language, black history and world history and literature. That's where I met the writer's group, the Writer's Workshop that met at the California Labor School. I've just recently discovered that Alexander Saxton, whom I knew . . . . He was a radio operator in the radio operator's

union and chairman of that writer's group and had written two novels at the time, and I've just been asked to review one of them that has been reprinted after all these years. *The Great Midland*. And I really didn't know about his novels. I just knew he was a writer and that he had published. But now I find out that he had written two novels during the 1940s about workers' conditions and strikes in Chicago.

*And you've just recently been asked to review it?*

Yes, by the *Nevada Historical Society Review*. [laughter] And I was called, would I want to do this? Somebody said, "This might be your era."

And I said, "What are you saying, sir?" [laughter]

And he had heard my remarks at the McMillan lecture a few weeks ago, and I said, "Well, send it to me." And here it was, Al Saxton's novel.

So I called Al Saxton. He's retired and had gone into history at UCLA. And so we reconnected. I said, "Al, I've got a picture of you on the waterfront back in 1947 giving a speech at the foot of Clay Street at a rally. Are you interested?"

"Oh, yeah!" So anyway, he was chairman of that group, and it was there—I think I earlier talked about this—that I began to realize that the kind of writing I was doing was not the kind . . . . Although I liked what I did and thought it was fairly good, I didn't feel that I was able to write the kind of things that I was experiencing. I didn't feel that I was either ready to do it or that *that* was going to be the thing that I was going to do. So that was a great transition for me, too, during this period. That's very complicated, and

I'd have to take a long time to try to explain what was going on here.

*Well, it sounds like, to be consistent with a number of things that you've already said, that you had certain demands that your creative life be consistent with the social good you were trying to . . . .*

Well, I don't know if that was a demand of mine. I think it was just a fact of life that if it isn't, you feel disjointed, you know. I don't think that I made that demand; I think that life made that demand on me. "How can I deal with this?" And I remember trying to write some stories about the front, the little time that I had for that. And it was kind of interesting and good, but when I looked at them, they were kind of dead. They didn't have the fire and . . . . They had the feeling, I mean, the ideological orientation and all that, but there was something missing in terms of myself that had been in my earlier, more romantic, more idealized work. And I realized it was a great gap between what I had been and what I was becoming.

And one thing that occurs to me that was happening to me, was I was getting humble. I felt like I was ignorant. I didn't *know* so much. There was *so much* I didn't know about the world and what was going on that I wanted to know, and I felt that I really needed to be a student. I needed to study, I needed to know more about history.

It was either that or becoming a trade union pie card! for the rest of my life and trying to get . . . .

*What's a pie card?*

An official, somebody in the trade union movement, paid by the union. Somebody

whose career is that. So that was one possibility, because I was very attracted to the trade union movement and all that. But on the other hand, I didn't think that that was my forte; that's not what I could do well. I didn't feel confident about myself in that. I felt that my class background would interfere with it too, that I had so much to relearn and to re-live. The other thing was just to learn more, you know.

I felt that I was stupid about so much of the world, so much of what was happening in the world, that I didn't have the kinds of data, the kinds of information to make good analytic judgments, independent ones on my own, and all that. And what the left-wing and the party and the trade unions had supplied to one degree, in terms of giving me some kind of orientation and explanation of events, I wanted to be able to do myself. I also wanted to be able to be critical of *that*. You know, I wanted to be meta-critical, in a sense. [laughter]

Anyway, that was going on. And then, of course, this was my first break. I mean, it was almost a year since I hadn't gone to sea. The transition from one union to the other, preparation for the strike, and then the strike in September, and here I was pretty much a waterfront activist and participant. I was getting now and then a *little* strike pay and things, but it was extremely minimal. Those of us who were sort of full-time doing strike duty, and the membership too, we'd get something. I forget what it was, but it was *minimal*. It was a few dollars a day kind of thing, and that wasn't enough to keep the family up.

Kathy began to get interested in early childhood development, and she had a job at a nursery school in the Bay Area in Berkeley. She loved it and was able to make a little. It wasn't much, but with that and

borrowing and scraping here and there, we were getting by. But it was a rough time.

I was totally involved in the waterfront, and it must have been very hard on her. But she was young and healthy and handled it really well. [laughter] This was near 1948, just before Erik was born, and Anya was three or four years old.

Oh, I have to do a little *déjà vu* anecdote here. We had moved . . . I think I'd mentioned we were now living in Berkeley at a place on McGee Street with Mimi and Ted Odza. She was a dancer, and Kathy would dance with her troupes, and they would sometimes dance at events at the California Labor School. It was very much a sort of a left-wing liberal, Bay Area kind of atmosphere during that period, which was very good. It was a kind of glamorous period in which there was a very progressive, hopeful ideological wind in the . . .

*Well, even though you weren't making money . . .*

[laughter] More like borrowing money, yes.

*. . . and you weren't sure where this was all going to lead, didn't you have a lot of support from Kathy and your circle of friends for your activities?*

Oh, yes. We had a lot of different kinds of friends, and I would say some of my older friends that I had been involved with when I was pretty much a member of the literati, it's all scattered, but some were a little askance at me getting involved in this way and saw it as a kind of a detraction from what I should be doing. A detraction? My god, it was *the* attraction. But we had a lot of other friends who were professionals, intellectuals, musi-

cians, things of that kind, who were very progressive and liberal in their orientation. And that sort of set of people partly admired what I was doing, but felt that how the hell was I going to make a living? And would I go on being a seaman, kind of thing, but were, nevertheless, very supportive of that.

Then Mimi and Ted Odza kept me afloat in a way. He was a gardener; he did odd-job gardening and landscaping, pretty much on his own. He was a great big strong, New York kid—Jewish kid, who later became a sculptor, and a rather good one. (He came up to the University of Nevada, gave an exhibition.) Ted and Mimi, who were New Yorkers, were living in this house with us. We had sort of bought it together, and they had upstairs, and we had downstairs. And Ted was doing this odd-jobbing and asked me if I wanted to go out. And now and then I'd go out with him, and we'd mow lawns and dig up backyards and fix fences and cut down overgrowth. It was a few dollars but really not enough to keep us going. I was doing that off and on in between things.

But I remember Ted, because he was a great bullshit artist from New York. He had a tremendous ability to do snow-jobs when he wanted to, because he had a very serious, rather dignified look when he wanted to.

I remember an old lady who had a big old Berkeley house, a shingled house like a Bernard Maybeck house, and we were pruning all of this wild undergrowth in her *large* yard. We were pulling up in Ted's little truck and noticed a great big vine climbing up half the side of her house, and we were afraid she was going to ask us to remove it, because it was enormous. And she came out, and says, "What is that plant? I've wondered for years. It's taking over, and I don't know what to do with it. It really isn't very important. I think I should take it down."

He said, "Oh, don't do that. That's a trasfurzoria." [laughter]

And she says, "Oh? Is it?" [laughter] "Is it?"

He says, "Maybe we'll prune it a little for you, but I would just not touch that." We had no idea in this world what it was, right? Still to this day, I don't know. Maybe it was passion fruit or something. "Oh," she says, "Oh, well then we better leave it."

From then on, whenever I worked with him, whenever we came across a plant we didn't know anything about, we'd say, "That's trasfurzoria." [laughter]

"That's a trasfurzoria." [laughter] I'll never forget trasfurzoria.

So, based on Ted, I would do some of this by myself. I went out in my car sometimes with a lawnmower. And one time, somebody called and wanted to give me a job to put in a lawn, and I remember putting in this horrible lawn on a slanting street. And I spent more money putting the lawn in than I made, because I wanted to do it right. And I ended up by doing a good job, but I made nothing. In fact, I was in debt. So anyway, that was off the sea, the shore-side aspect.

Oh yes, and then on McGee Street, I remember Anya. There she was, three and a half years old, *beautiful* little girl, absolutely lovely creature, sweet and very demanding and very spoiled. Everybody loved her. I remember when Kathy was at work one time and I was staying home and taking care of her, I was painting. In my leisure, at times I would do drawings and painting, and I had them stacked up on a chair, the ones that I had done. I had a stack of about twenty or thirty. And I was drawing away, and she came in, and she was dragging her wet diapers behind her. She had them on, actually and was soaking wet, and I had not changed her. And she came in, this lovely little girl with her

wet diapers, and she sat on my paintings and soaked them right down. [laughter] And I said, "Anya! Look what you've done to my paintings!"

And she says, "I'm sorry, Daddy. Excuse me, Daddy."

She got right up, and there was this mess. And you know what I thought of? Chiura Obata way back with the overflow of my bathtub on University Ave. in Berkeley, and Chiura Obata's work was all soaked and in a great big pile. [laughter]

This was retribution. I'm getting mine back. My daughter has peed on my work. [laughter]

And now that I think about it, this is about the same time that I took Anya over to the first May Day just before the intended strike in June, the first May Day after the war. Those days this was a tremendous affair, trade union and working class event in San Francisco. A long parade, thousands of people, different unions dressed in their sort of conventional iconic attire, the seamen with their white caps and black Frisco jeans and white shirts and all that. And I took Anya over and have pictures that I really cherish today, with two or three of my friends in the union standing on Market Street with Anya between us and on Whitey Hansen's shoulders with the parade going on behind, you know.

Those were glorious moments, and when I say glorious I realize that this kind of nostalgia can be very tiresome to people. Nevertheless, there was no doubt about it, those were great moments in the life of that city and the life of the coast when there was a tremendous feeling . . . positive feeling. Anybody who was opposed to this kept their big mouth shut. I mean, nobody could deny that this was marvelous. And the newspapers tried to cut it down and make snide



Warren with Anya and seamen gathering at the union hall for the 1946 May Day parade in San Francisco.

remarks but didn't change the fact that we prevailed.

That sense of prevailing was so important to the people that I knew on the front. They felt . . . you know, you felt power. So I've always had a great—how would you call it?—a great sympathy for . . . empathy for anybody who is looking for empowerment, the sense that they are somebody, they belong to something that has value and power, and can express it publicly before others. Like during the civil rights marches and things of that kind. You know, this is one of the few things that brings tears to my eyes was that period. These people felt so good doing something where they felt that they had made a dent on history. Well, we felt that way.

And you asked about Kathy. Of course she was supportive. She was very supportive

but not living in a very pleasant set-up. It was kind of tiresome.

*And maybe you've just hinted at this and maybe I'm over-interpreting, but it sounds like even from the level of your creative life, from your writing on through, that you're still aware, in spite of the fact that you feel great community and sense of purpose and involvement with the seamen in the union, you're still aware that these . . . this is really not you, that you're going to end up doing something else.*

I think so, but I was very confused about it. No, I think those were the pulls, and there was a lot of confusion in my head about what I was going to be doing, and it went on for quite a while.



But no, I just knew that I probably was not going to stay there doing that kind of work the rest of my life, though I had times when I thought I could and I might try. I just knew that it wasn't for me, that I really wanted to do something else, that I wanted to learn. I wanted to go to school, and I wanted to study other things and become knowledgeable in a way about things that I didn't think that I knew well.

*Well, you've brought up a really compelling, for me anyway, idea.*

One thing that I just want to say . . . because I had friends—Pat Tobin was one—who really were knowledgeable and who really did have a feel for that world. And there were two or three guys like that who I was fairly close to, and I had great admiration for them. In a sense, I tagged along behind them, helping out and doing things, because they knew how to do it. They knew what to do, and they had the feel for the organizations, they had the feel for the kind of issues that had . . . .

Kd: It was their life.

It was their life, yes, and quite a different thing. Their life, that's right. It was *their* life. That's the thing they had, the only thing they knew how to do, and they did it well. They were smart, extremely able people. Well, I

didn't feel I could do that, that I could do anything but be a hanger-on. And yet there was a pull in that direction. But no, I never felt that this was what I was going to stay at. But I have always felt I was so *glad* I was there, that I had done it. It was a transition point in my life that was extremely important, but I must say, I didn't have any idea where things were going or what I was going to be doing at that point. I worried about it, but I didn't know.

*Well, it'd be really difficult to disengage from something that involving, and after-all it is "a worthy cause," unless you had a real direction that you were headed for. I mean, it would be really hard . . . .*

To leave. Yes.

*It would be hard to leave something like that.*

People that might have gone into it superficially because they were there and that was the only out they had, I didn't have too much respect for. I knew some of them. Their commitment was . . . not their commitment, their *abilities* were shallow, their feel for what they were doing. That's right. It's the people whose life it *was* and who were also brilliant that really to me were heroic figures that I have a lot of respect for, and I don't think . . . I *know* now I didn't think then that I could meet those standards.



## LEAFLETS AND IDEOLOGY

**T**HE POINT you made about the party and the radical Left being a source of information that was available in no other way is something I hadn't really thought of. And you're saying that you wanted more information beyond the world you were being exposed to on the front.

Well, beyond *that* particular view of the world, that orientation of the world. I mean, to me, the world was a hell of a lot bigger, the world of ideas was a hell of a lot bigger, and I had seen very little of it. I had the feeling that I was something of an ignoramus, that I was learning a lot, but I wanted also to be self-critical and be able to be critical even of *that*. I wanted to go beyond it. I didn't know what or where, but I just felt that there was something larger that I wanted to grasp. And yet I felt I was expanding enormously, exponentially under those conditions.

And as for information, yes . . . to this day, I go back to some of my old files of what was going on then, and I'll tell you, the Left, the Communist Party of the waterfront, the seamen's branch and the San Francisco

branch of the Communist Party, and what little I knew about what was going on nationally, they were the vanguard of information about what was happening politically, what was happening in terms of economic forces that were impinging on workers. And I mean, there was in their organization information you could find out, maybe biased, maybe to some degree distorted and from one slant; nevertheless, we didn't get it from anyone else. We weren't getting even the *other* view very clearly, see. That was one of the clear things that I knew for sure.

I understood the term *vanguard* as the people with whom I was working who were interested in what was happening in a deep way, more than any other people that I knew. I knew a lot of very intelligent, brilliant people doing other things. But their grasp, even their interest in larger political affairs or what was going on in the world, was lazy and easy, you know, like most of us today. I think I'm that way a lot today because of a change in circumstances and all that, a kind of lazy view of the world, but that was *engagement* where ideas and facts were meant as

something to be *engaged* with, to *do* something with, to try to understand.

*Well, the ideas could result in real consequences to real people on . . .*

Yes, yes. We would do something about it. In fact, they affected your daily life. Maybe there was . . . I guess there were intellectual circles in the world, at large universities and elsewhere where there was a kind of analysis going on in which a lot of the stuff that we were concerned about was being discussed on another level. *We* didn't have access to that. Our access to that was minimal. Our access was through the voices of the local left-wing vanguard.

*Now the pamphlets that you were writing . . .*

[laughter] Yes. Those wonderful things.

*Would the topics arise out of a kind of a committee meeting, and someone would be assigned to write, or would you write these things spontaneously and contribute them, or how did that work?*

Both. Both. There were times when we'd get together at the Maritime Bookshop, and this would happen in the larger city, in the section meetings of the party. It would happen also on a state level and all. You know, there was a need for information to be disseminated, P.R. to get out on something or other issue. And either a group would get together and map it out, and then it would be mimeographed off, and then find ways to distribute it either through the press or other ways. Or somebody would dream one up and come in and say, "What about this on such-and-such an issue?" and it would be approved or disapproved. And a number of my early ones were disapproved because they were . . .

I use the word "naive." I think they're more than naive. They were just plain bad. [laughter]

I mean, I was obviously very abstracted, my language and the way I'd deal with things, and instead of picking out the issues that were au courant, I tended to focus on big nebulous theoretical issues. I have a leaflet here I'll show you one of these days which is, "the *world* crisis and capitalism" kind of things, you know. And of course, what you had to do was have the feel for a particular issue at a given moment that people were concerned with *now* and what kind of information you had about it. Oh yes, we were turning out leaflets every day on something or other.

And that's another important thing, the dissemination of information and news. Now outsiders and people elsewhere are going to say, "Oh, well this is your propaganda, you know. You're influencing and distorting the information—lies to people—and leading them." You don't *lead* people. I mean, a lot of people just ignored our leaflets and threw them away. They had no time for them. [laughter] But some did.

And what kind of information was it? I don't think any of it was lies that I can remember. It was a point of view. It was a *take* on what was going on, and it was a warning. Usually a lot of these things were warning about what the ship owners were trying to do and what a rival union was trying to do, or some bunch of finks here and what happened in Seattle with a bunch of scabs going aboard ships and information that they didn't get in their regular press.

Empowerment, though that is a kind of a faddish word, expresses that sense of having some effect or import in regard to events, a feeling that one counts. And I saw that happen to people who began to feel that way under the influence of trade union solidarity

and mobilization and having a clearly defined goal and knowing where the resistance was.

By the way, this was happening, you know, about the time that Churchill gave his infamous or famous iron curtain speech in this country and defined the policy of containment, or at least set the scene for a policy of containment of the Soviet Union and developments in eastern Europe. And the beginnings of the Cold War really were taking place at this time. Well, in a sense, that's the way we felt on the waterfront, not just the party, that we had an iron curtain around *us*. We could only get information by knocking down the iron curtain that'd been built around us by the ship owners, by the corporation-owned media, and, you know, by that part of the community that looked upon us as an endangerment—the “red scare,” and all that sort of thing. We felt the Cold War was upon *us*, and we used that language. As I remember, some of the leaflets talked about, you know, “What iron curtain? You know, *here it is.*” [laughter] “We can see it right around *us.*”

Those things, being able to point out and pick out things like this as issues of understanding and awareness are what I consider empowerment. That's what empowerment is all about.

*At this juncture, were you aware that to be a member of the Communist Party was a detriment to finding work outside the waterfront?*

Good question. You know, at that time I think we were aware that . . . I, by the way, never kept my membership secret. I mean, if anybody asked, I would say, “Yes.” I was an open communist, and that was, I think, true of most. Later on, toward the 1950s, there was a period that I'll talk about later. But, for the record, I was very much against the under-

ground movement that took place after the arrest of the communist leaders. But that's another matter. But, no, we were aware that it was marginal and that it put us in a marginal position and that there were situations that we would encounter where that might be a detriment to employment or things, but that was before any loyalty oaths or things of that kind were forced upon us. No, I think it was the opposite. I was kind of proud of being in the party. There was the feeling that we were part of a revolutionary movement.

Again, the whole business of advocating the overthrow of the American government is a lot of bull. I mean, I'm sure there were communists who thought that way, and I'm sure various kinds of other groups thought that way, who had a nihilistic and anarchistic view. I don't remember any communist I knew talking about the revolution as an overthrow of the United States government as we knew it. It was the idea of a revolution in development of large-scale movements that would eventually bring about a more socialist orientation in the country and then eventually socialism in the withering away and the dying away of the present system.

Now, I thought that was pretty idealistic. I don't know if I ever really thought it was going to happen in my time, but we used to joke about revolution in our time, you know. It was just, “When is it going to happen? Where is the revolution?” some guy would ask, you know. [laughter] “Gee, I've been waiting, for a few years now, and I don't see no goddamn revolution!” [laughter] And that was a joke, that everybody realized that this isn't the way it went, that that was an idealistic kind of thing, that socialism was a goal—communism, in the Marxist sense, even beyond that.

And there has been no communism developed as a system in the world today, and

there has been no really clearly defined and stable socialist system. And certainly the Soviet Union is an example of a failed socialist system, though not entirely failed—failed in many ways. Same with China.

The remnants of the good parts of those failed systems, however, are going to be with us a long time and are seeds of new growth all through the world. The whole idea of the death of communism, I find really funny and ironic. It ain't dead nohow, nowhere, because it's like a religion. It's like the Rapture and the Second Coming and all that sort of thing. From the political angle, it's that kind of goal, that kind of long-range, idealistic notion of the way society ought to be ordered and the many, many forms it could take and all that. It's a principle of human relations.

And I think most of the people I knew felt that way. It wasn't a matter of revolution *now* or revolution tomorrow. The idea was of revolutionary activity, bringing about eventual basic change in a system.

And it ain't happened. [laughter] It ain't happened anywhere in the world to any degree, which a lot of people I knew could agree with fully.

I mean, a lot of people left the party in the late 1940s and 1950s because they felt that it was kind of moribund, and it was hanging onto a way of looking at principles and values that were not applicable or not real. And after the Browder experience in the 1930s and early 1940s, referred to as revisionism, bourgeois revisionism, which the Duclos letter was meant to undermine . . . . The Browder period idea was that capitalism, the American bourgeoisie, was full of intelligent and logical people who would slowly reform toward a more socialist orientation a la Roosevelt, et cetera, et cetera. But this was looked upon as true revisionism. This was

ignoring the facts, ignoring the reality of historical development and change, which I agree with.

Nevertheless, the party and its ideologies got old, they become rigid, and they lose their flexibility. And I think that happened to the American party. It certainly happened to the Soviet party even more so, in a deeply disturbing way. But that wasn't socialism. That was *failed* socialism.

It was a failed movement, and there's failed capitalism, too, and when capitalism fails, it's equally disastrous if not more so. And what is capitalism, you know? There are as many kinds of capitalism as there are capitalists, as there are . . . .

*A super cynical answer to that would be, "It's human nature."*

Yes, well, which we don't believe in. There is no immutable human nature like human biology, and that's not entirely immutable anymore, either.

As far as I'm concerned, most people in the party were not Marxists. There were some, I would say, religiously oriented socialists and quasi-Marxists. Marxism, as such, as a movement, as an ideology, has so many facets and so many advocations in so many ways, that I would say that most of the people that I knew, some of them were struggling to be Marxist and knowledgeable and all that, but that most of us were not really intellectually Marxist.

I think even to this day I'm not. I just know that certain principles, certain things that I read in Marxist literature and in Marx, I think are brilliant and clear and true. How they're applied to the real world and utilized is a matter of hundreds of varying applications.

For a while the party had that for me and for a lot of others. And then it began to sort of chew its own tail, like many movements. Movements die out, movements wither. That does not mean that the ideas wither, you know, or that the impulse for those ideas wither. There's enough left in this world to make Marxism alive in various places of the world, that the idea of the death of communism, meaning the death of Marxism, is so utterly stupid and naive that I wonder if it's not purposely so, you know.

So we got through the strike and have been talking about the impact upon me. But it was a remarkable thing, because we did make gains, tremendous gains. And it was a jubilation, a feeling that labor unions were on their way to helping reform the American system, that we were going to have not socialism necessarily, but we're going to have a highly progressive, more enlightened kind of government with more attention to workers, to the impoverished, and to minorities.

And, of course, the civil rights movement hadn't really even begun except in the seminal way that it had been going on for years. Lynchings were still going on in the South. Our organizers in New Orleans and Texas and in the Gulf were getting beaten up by right-wing goons. A friend of mine was killed in Texas on a railroad track, because he had been a leader in a movement to open up shipping to blacks in the South. He was white.

*This was like in 1947?*

This is 1947, 1948. I don't mention his name, but I knew him well, and he sailed with me for a number of years. Ordinary guy out of a working-class family and a staunch trade unionist and something of a lefty, Marxist, and became a member of the party. And he

went to the Gulf because he felt that the main thing to be doing would be organizing the unions in the South and trying to make a dent in the discriminating policies even on *our* ships down there. Some of our ships would go down there, and the crews would shift from black to white. Members of the crew would be taken off, and some of the patrolmen in those areas were very right wing and were racist themselves. So the idea was to go down and create some knowledge and information. Well, that got him killed, found out on the railroad tracks. He was dragged out and beaten up, and I think he was shot. That was common. We kept hearing about it. Lynchings were going on. As of 1940s lynchings were common things.

The party was one of the few organizations . . . the instruments for knowledge about this. I mean, our papers, our leaflets talked about these things. You saw them in mainstream newspapers merely as little news squibs—you know, somebody was lynched. But we'd go into it. Who did it? Under what conditions? Well, of course, this wasn't considered very nice on the part of people who disagreed with us. [laughter]

Nevertheless . . . so 1947, of course, Taft-Hartley was really beginning to hit it at this time with a call for no political contributions from unions. We were not to make any political contributions, no sympathy strikes were to be allowed. Hiring could not be restricted to union halls. There had to be sixty days strike notification, you know, all this sort of thing. Well, this was the iron curtain. You know, this created the sense, "They're closing in on us. This is what they're going to do."

I remember about this time, too, there two little events. One was Anton Refregier, who was a muralist, a painter. He was quite a

guy; he was very left. And he had done the murals at the post office annex up on Rincon Hill in San Francisco, where during the 1935, 1936 strikes there had been a confrontation with police and strikers—the ILWU on Rincon Hill—and I think some men were killed. It was a famous event, the Rincon Hill affair. And there was a post office on Rincon Hill, and later on, in the 1940s, Anton Refregier, this muralist, was commissioned to do the murals. And they were very powerful leftist murals. And then in 1948, there was a move to cover his murals because of their content. And, of course, we set up picket lines, and we saved them then. I would imagine they're still there. This was a period a lot of the great muralists were moving around the country, and Refregier was in that movement.<sup>1</sup>

Then the other great thing that I'll *never* forget, because later on when I met Melville Herskovits, the anthropologist, this was an important connection with him. In October, right after the strike, Paul Robeson came to San Francisco, and we asked him to give a concert on the waterfront.<sup>2</sup> And I'll tell you, I've got to find if anybody took pictures of that. *Thousands*—not only seamen but trade unionists—throughout the Bay Area were gathered down at the foot of Clay Street where we used to meet. And there was an old truck that we used to use, a great big, flatbed truck that we used to stand on, and it had a microphone.

By the way, before he came to town, it was the party that decided to protect him, because there was a lot of anti-Robeson feeling in the community from certain sources. You know, here's this red, this guy who was committed to the Soviet Union and all that sort of thing. And we felt that he needed protection. [There had been at least one attempt

on his life and many threats by this time.] I was very disappointed. I didn't get to be on the actual group that went to guard his hotel room and to take him around town, but I was on a committee to plan this. And so he was given protection by not just the party but a number of other trade unions took turns day and night guarding Paul Robeson, which I thought was kind of wonderful and beautiful.

And he was a great sort of lumbering guy and very dignified and low spoken, and I didn't get a chance really to talk to him or anything, but I'd admired him enormously. And so Robeson comes down to the waterfront with our committee and is put up on this flatbed truck with a microphone and sang for an hour and a half to two hours.

All the old trade union songs. "Which Side Are You On?" which he sang with such tremendous power. And, you know, thousands of guys and their wives, and a lot of the women from the trade unions and townspeople were there. People were solemn. It was, you know, a great moment. And then I remember he sang this last song; he sang a spiritual, but it had this tremendous resonance with the events of that time. It was called, "There's a man a-going around taking names. Have you ever heard that spiritual?"

No. "*There's a man going around taking names?*"

[sings] "There's a man a-going around taking names. There's a man a-going around taking names. He's taken my father's name, and da-da-da da-da-de. There's a man a-going around taking names." And it goes through a whole family, but then he added things about "a man going around taking my



partner's name, taking my brother's name." Just beautiful. People were crying. And so that was to me one of the great moments on the waterfront.

Years later, when I met Melville Herskovits at Northwestern, it turned out he had a great admiration for Robeson. He not only had all Robeson's records, but he had known Robeson and others during the Harlem Renaissance earlier in New York. So when I told him I had heard him sing on the waterfront, that was my first connection with this great man, whom I'd gone to study with. And I had records that he didn't have; I had all these 78s that were sold on the waterfront at that time. But that was one of the great things that happened on the front that I remember. It was a spiritual meeting. It's easy to forget those things, how powerful they were. I have to find out if there were any photographs of that event.

Those were the things that were going on in 1947. Of course, Harry Bridges<sup>3</sup> was constantly under attack. There were right wing attempts to deport him back to Australia. And so we were always out defending Harry. (Sings) "The bosses they are worried; the bosses they are scared, They can't deport six million men, they know. We're not going to let them send Harry over the sea. We'll fight for Harry Bridges and build the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations]." Nevertheless, all that was going on, too.

## Notes

1. Anton Refregier (1905-1979) was a Russian-born New Yorker who was commissioned to paint 27 panels, some depicting controversial subjects, including the 1934 waterfront strike that lasted 82 days and paralyzed shipping on the West Coast. San Francisco police shot 31 men, killing three. The push to cover this and other of Refregier's murals was led by Republican Senator Hubert Scudder and involved Richard Nixon. The murals were saved and have been recently restored.

2. In the post-war years, Paul Robeson (1898-1976), a noted athlete, scholar, singer, and activist, was blacklisted after being listed as a communist by the House UnAmerican Activities Committee. He was often refused rights to perform. A self described "anti-fascist and independent," he continued to fight for social justice for blacks and was selected as one of five chairs of the Wallace for President Committee. He campaigned throughout the south on behalf of Wallace and against the Mundt-Nixon Bill, requiring registration of Communist Party members and communist-front organizations.

3. Harry Bridges was one of the leaders of the 1934 strike on the waterfront, and formed the ILWU from the Pacific Coast division of the ILA. From 1939 on, his aggressive labor tactics and alleged communist affiliations resulted in conservative efforts to have him deported to Australia.



## CONVENTION DELEGATE

**T**HEN THAT WAS the year in which I was sailing on the Union Oil ships. There were six or seven Union Oil ships on the coast that the NMU had pretty much control of supplying crews for. And I sailed for that whole year and part of the next year on the LP *St. Clair*. And I think one short trip I made on the SS *Victor Kelly*, later in the year, but I became an old hand on the LP *St. Clair*.

I was sailing coastwise ships, because I didn't want to take long trips abroad. I was trying to make that slow adjustment about leaving the sea, by getting back every couple of weeks instead of every few months. Back to a home base and being able to stay over for a trip, maybe, you know, for a week or two or three or four weeks at home.

But, you know, I was elected delegate; I was ship's delegate for a whole year on that damn ship. We'd come in every two weeks, go up to Seattle, up to the Columbia River, those two little ports . . .

Kd: Astoria.

Well, Astoria, yes, but I'm trying to think of the other one.

*Now, was this the first time you'd been a ship's delegate since you'd joined the National Maritime Union?*

Good question. I guess these were my first NMU ships. We'd go up to Seattle, to Vancouver, out of Oleum on the East Bay near Crockett and Rodeo—Oleum was that great big Union Oil center and dock there—then down to San Diego, Port San Luis. Made one trip to Santa Diego Guatemala, and all this was on oil and gas tankers. So I got to be an old tanker-hand in a short time after two or three or more trips, and particularly on one ship.

And, of course, by then, I was an acknowledged, known, left-wing member of the union, and the SUP was trying to get the ships and was creating all kinds of hanky-panky with the company. They wanted very much to control those ships for the SIU. And in that they were coastwise, it was possible

for groups that knew each other to get on these ships. So I had a coterie of five or six guys. [laughter] We were all red-hot reds.

And by the way, within that year the ship got to be known among company stiffs as the "Little Kremlin." [laughter] And the phonies, though, as we called the right-wingers, would sometimes come on the ship, sent on by the right-wing faction in our union to try to undermine our position and take over the ship.

This was the period when we were getting ready for the NMU convention in New York, at the end of the year, which was a very important event. It was the first post-war convention, so the issues were very sharp about what the union's position was going to be. Since most of the people going to the convention were going to be delegates from ships, the idea was to get on the ships and get elected delegate. So I knew I was going to be, because I had been a delegate on the ship. [laughter]

And the phonies would come aboard, and they'd stay one trip, but they'd figured they couldn't get anywhere. They put up their literature, and we had ours all over the place, and at our meetings, you know, we'd laugh at them. We'd just call them the company stiffs, the stooges, right-wing stooges, and they were a lousy lot anyway. I mean, they were disgusting.

When I look back, I mean, they really were. It wasn't just because of their positions. They were a scroungy bunch. Anybody who was scroungy in our group straightened up pretty quick after a while, you know. But they were just scroungy. Usually heavy drinkers and very right wing and anti-communist and all that.

Dow Wilson, a friend of mine, was delegate on the *Victor Kelly*. And there were two or three other guys on ships. So the Union

Oil ships were pretty much in the hands of the Left, and we wanted to keep it that way, at least for the convention. And I got along pretty good with that crew. I was a good seaman, and I learned about tankers pretty quickly, and I'd work on the ship and also on union business very well. And there was a lot of information on the ship. I could type, and I could turn out material and type up the meetings. I think I was accepted and liked by most of the crew.

*How about officers or, I mean, the company . . . ?*

I don't remember having any trouble. In fact, I remember on the LP *St. Clair*, they all sort of knew me, and they knew I was a red and would make jokes. But I don't remember having any altercations about things.

*Did you feel you were listened to if you had beefs that you carried forward?*

They weren't big beefs. These were fairly new ships, and things were fairly clean, and the crews were fairly efficient. It was our job as left-wingers to see to it our ship was well-run, that the crew knew their job and did their work, so that if there was a beef, we had something to work with.

Now, there's the kind of a ship from the old Wobbly anarchistic orientation, where you did what you wanted. "Goddamn it, the company can screw themselves, or we'll toss things overboard, or to hell with it."

On the Left, there was this kind of feeling, "You got to do a good job." And when you're in a work situation, that's important. And the party members, the trade unions knew that; you had to be a good worker. You had to do your job, or nobody's going to listen to you about anything. You'll just be a

freeloader. “What are you doing? You can’t even do the job. Get the hell out,” you know.

So we felt it was very important that the members of the crew that were known as the Left did their job. We were very hard on those that screwed up. I would say, dictatorial, you know. [laughter]

We had little meetings, or at the ship’s meetings, we’d just turn on guys. A lot of criticism; we took this idea of self-criticism very seriously.

This antagonized a lot of regular members of the crew, and certainly the right wing, the idea of self-criticism, you know. “Now, why in the hell did you do that?” I mean, “you better apologize to the crew for the position you put us all in.” It was almost a schoolmarmish kind of an attitude. Nevertheless, it worked, and we had a very well-organized crew.

I felt it was a home. That’s a joke at sea. “He’s made the ship a home, and you can’t get him off the ship.”

And so it was called the “Little Kremlin” for all that year and into the next. And I was elected the delegate to the convention.

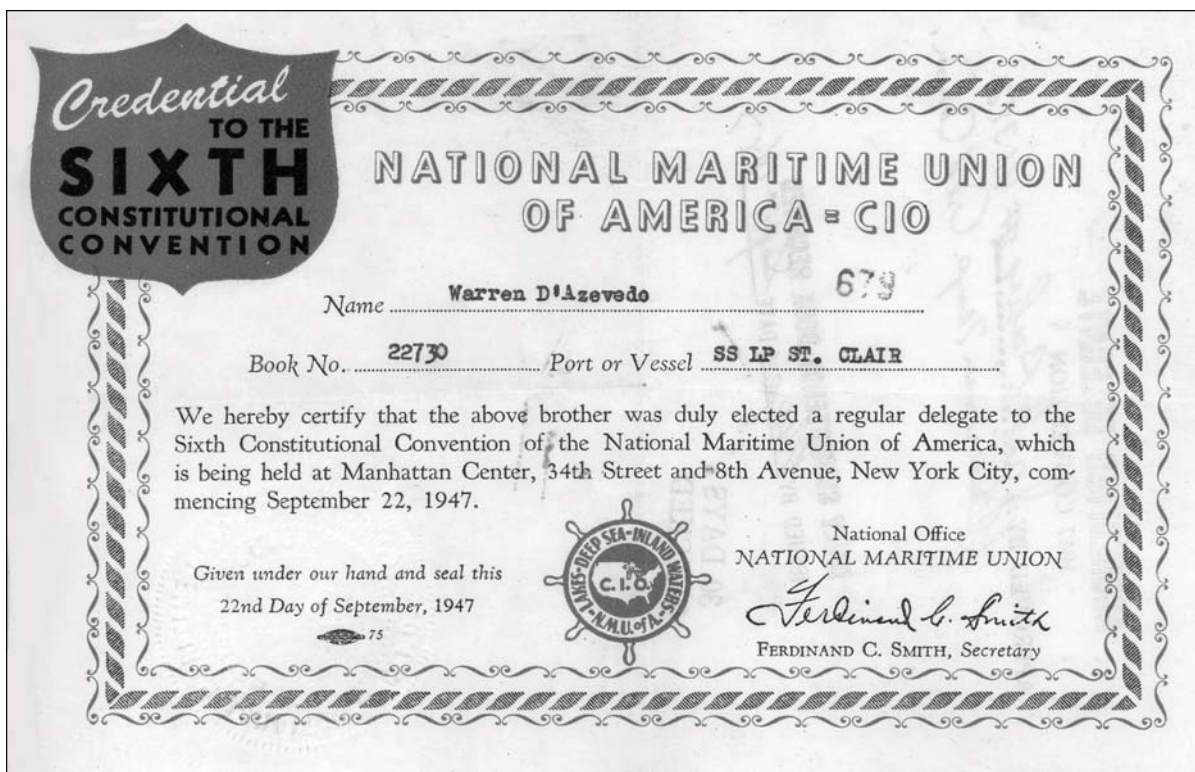
Kathy and I went out to New York on the train. In those days, we took the *train*, and we had a great trip with three or four other guys from the union, Pat and . . .

Kd: It was wonderful.

Oh, you enjoyed it, really?

Kd: Oh, yes.

You never told me. You said you enjoyed going to New York, but you enjoyed the trip on the train?



“And I was elected the delegate to the convention.”

Kd: I don't remember the train. [laughter]

I do! [laughter] I do! for three, four days.

Kd: I remember the trip coming home very well, because we drove, and that was wild!

You know, that's right, we came back with a party in the car. But, no, going out there, don't you remember us going out to the smoking car? You probably decided to go to bed then. We'd stay up all night arguing politics and trade union . . . .

Kd: I probably did. [laughter]

*Now, where was Anya?*

Oh, Anya was left with her grandparents. Oh, we wouldn't have taken her out on this particular trip. It was wild. When was the union meeting? Oh, it was the end of September. This was at the end of the strike when we pretty well . . . . No, this was the end of a strike threat, because each June 15 and each September was a new period of negotiations, and there was always the potentiality of strikes at those periods. But this was the end of September, when we met in New York. And how long did that last? It was about a month, three weeks in New York.

Kd: Oh, I don't think . . . .

It was an enormous meeting with hundreds of delegates. And I think out of the seven Union Oil ships, most of them had delegates who were politically left. Four or five of them quit.

The crew had to elect you and give you a written program, a set of issues that were

important to the crew. So my crew did that. I typed it; I had the typewriter. I got elected, I would say, unanimously.

Well, there was one guy, one poor guy—I'll never forget him—who voted against me. And I was very hard on him, and then I learned that he couldn't read or write. He was a really deprived character from a very rural background, and he was very right-wing. He was something of a tool of the Right, a young guy, and he used to sit in the meetings and sing that old song [sings], "There are going to be some changes made," a popular song at that time.

And he would sit in the back mumbling this song, and we'd have to shut him up. [laughter] I mean, he meant it, because he wanted some changes in the structure of leadership.

And then I learned he couldn't read at one meeting. I turned it over to him. I said, "Look, you're making so much noise, here, you run the meeting and bring up anything you want. Here is the last resolution of the crew." This was during electing me to delegate. And he looked at it, and it was so sad. I felt crushed. I felt like such a bastard. He was looking at it and making up stuff as he went along. He was making up what it was, and kept going down the line. The whole crew started to snicker, and I felt so awful. You know, I didn't want to expose him or anything, because obviously he would die rather than have people know he couldn't read.

And so I said, "That's great, you know. Fine. Let's have a vote," you know. And it ended up where he was running the meeting, that was voting for me. [laughter]

But I'll never forget that and being humbled by realizing, you know, that this poor guy was not dumb, just wrong; that he felt so badly about it, he was making things up. You know, mouthing it, and it was awful.

So, anyway, aside from him, I think I was unanimously elected. So we got a paid trip to New York.

*[laughter]* New York City!

New York City, across country. And when we got there, we could have stayed at a sort of a seamen's hotel or whatever it was . . . .

Kd: Oh, we started out in a seamen's hotel of some kind. I can't remember where it was.

Oh, did I take you to the Seamen's Church Institute? I'll bet you we did.

Kd: We stayed some . . . we were with all these same guys.

We stayed at the Seamen's Church Institute. It was not bad, kind of a run-down, frowsy place, but it was clean and then we had friends . . . Kathy had some close friends.

Kd: The Goldwassers. *[laughter]*

Goldwassers, who we knew at Berkeley, whose parents lived in New York, and they were in New York, and we got invited to stay at their place on Forty . . .

Kd: Central Park West. This *huge* apartment.

Overlooking Central Park. I felt really very funny about this.

Kd: I just loved it.

*I'm sure you did!* *[laughter]*

I just didn't feel it was right.

*You probably had to dress in disguise when you were leaving the apartment.* *[laughter]*

I don't know. I mean, the guys that I was with were guys that would have jumped at it if they could have done it. No, it wasn't that. I just personally felt I wanted to be down there grubbing around, doing, you know, the trade union thing, but I felt it meant a lot to Kathy, and I have to admit it was more comfortable. *[laughter]*

Kd: It was wonderful.

And they were just great people, such nice people. Oh, and the woman . . . what was her name?

Kd: Annie?

No, who had been Harry Bridges's lawyer?

Kd: Oh. Gee, what was her name? I can't remember.

Anyway, one of the sisters of the group had been Harry Bridges's lawyer.

Kd: I can't remember her name. Anyway, she was Harry Bridges's lawyer. [Carol Weiss King (1895-1952)] They were very liberal, leftish people. She was a very successful lawyer, and she had been a social worker. And her statement was, "The only thing people in the ghettos could do is have a revolution. There's no way anything good is going to happen with the current . . ." This was back in the 1940s.

Well, that was bourgeois idealism. *[laughter]*

Kd: Well, she was very involved.

Oh, she was quite a lady. Yes.

Kd: And she and her mother had contributed a great deal of money to Wiltlick, which was a very famous school in Upper State New York that took ghetto kids and tried to, you know, give them a chance in life. And who is this? This is a very well-known black man who did very well.

So, anyway, we had this great place. But I didn't see much of Kathy, because I was down at the convention. Oh, god, they met for ten hours and twelve hours a day if not longer. Oh, more than that, because I was up half the night. Pat Tobin and I were on one of the resolutions committees and were assigned the foreign policy resolution, and there were two or three resolutions. In fact, in the sixth convention report our resolutions are there.

Pat and two or three other guys, we would throw these ideas around and I was the typist. So here I was typing up the resolutions that were presented the next day at the meeting.

And as far as I remember, all of our resolutions went through. My foreign policy resolution . . . I was very proud of it, and I don't remember a word of it. But I made the main contribution to that.

And so we were up half the night (and had to be on the floor at nine in the morning), many nights, writing up resolutions and drinking at a little bar near the place, an Irish bar of the old kind, you know, where they had a bar lunch, with pickled herring and all sorts of big, sour pickles and lunch meats and spreads and everything, and beautiful breads all laid out for free. [laughter] And you'd go there and sit and eat and have a beer. So we'd

go down there in the middle of the night. But Kathy was in the lap of luxury. [laughter]

Kd: I loved it. It was great.

West Forty-second, was it?

Kd: Yes, Central Park West.

Central Park West. All I remember is the bathroom.

Kd: Huge. Like on the third floor, and it was . . . gee, there must have been five bedrooms, and it was a really big place.

It wasn't so luxurious.

Kd: No, it wasn't.

It was just grand, nice, old-style New York, bare apartment.

Kd: They had had five children in their family, and most of the kids were grown and left, and I was a friend of the daughter, and I had also met the parents. So they took us in without a word. And I remember it was rather embarrassing, because a lot of these guys from the waterfront and from the convention would be calling in the middle of the night. They would come in and wake us up! [laughter]

But I remember sitting . . . they had these great old-fashioned windows, big panes of glass, and you could open them and get the breeze from Central Park. And then the great big, old-fashioned enamel tub in the bathroom. And you'd turn on the water, and it'd come out like a gusher. And then you would lie in there looking out over Central Park. I'll never forget that.



Kd: That was wonderful.

That *was* wonderful. But I saw very little of it. The meetings were wild, and there was a tremendous amount of contention. It was the beginning of the rift . . . .

*How many people would you say were at this convention?*

I'd say eight hundred who were delegates. There were a lot more people there.

*Now, were you elected specifically to be a delegate for the convention?*

Yes. Yes. I was a ship's delegate, anyway.

*Right. But in addition to that, you had to be . . . .*

I had to be elected to be the convention delegate. You had to be very formally elected from a ship or from a union hall, as somebody who was working in a union hall, you had to be formally elected by the membership.

So I remember this enormous hall. I would say there was six, seven hundred right on the floor, and then hundreds up in galleries and everybody probably yelling to get to the mike. Joseph Curran, who was president of the union at that time, was in the middle of a *great* rift within the union, between the Left and the Right. It was the beginning of the breakup that created a right-wing movement in the union, and Curran became really the leader of the right wing and, of course, was our enemy. He was our target.

He had the power of the right wing in the rest of the unions, and even the AF of L was with him, and the press adored him. And he was saying, "We got to get rid of the communist control of this union. This union's got

to be given back to the rank and file." And he had a group . . . there was a group called the Rank and File Caucus, which was the pro-Curran group. And during the convention this began to come up, this deep split.

We had seen Curran as a moderate leader who was friendly to the leftists and the Right. And then we saw him emerge from that meeting as a voice of not only the Right, but of a changed, new policy union, where he was supporting elements of the Taft-Hartley Bill, where he was beginning to support the SIU and Lundeberg, and calling for unity between the AFL unions and the NMU and other CIO unions, and began to work to pull our union out of the CMU, to destroy the Committee for Maritime Unity on the coast.

So during 1947 we saw the weakening of the unity of the unions on the West Coast, and the NMU was no longer a strong member of that group. We were on the West Coast in San Francisco, but no longer as a really positive force. I mean, there was too much dissension within the union. *Every* meeting that I went to at the union hall in San Francisco was a melee, was a riot of pro- and anti-Curran forces.

And, of course, we were anti-Curran. And I think we realized at the time this was the beginning of the closing-in on the union. The anti-communist movement was really going strong. Curran was heading it up—the leader of our union and of a strong union had turned right. So that was happening at that convention.

And as exciting as that meeting convention was, it was agonizing to see this happen. All the old leaders of the union—Ferdinand Smith, Blackie Myers, and a number of left-wing leaders—were beginning to be shoved aside, and a bunch of the right-wingers were beginning to take hold.

The membership was very confused. There was a very strong left membership in the union, but there was a lot of confusion among the rest of the union. And Curran had a lot of clout, and he also had, we now know, ship owner backing.

*But that wasn't suspected at the time?*

It was claimed and suspected, and we felt we knew it, but now we did *know* it. Not that it was dirty work. He was right wing. It was like becoming a Republican after being a left-wing Democrat. I mean, he shifted his view, and he always wanted to get rid of the communist leaders, those that he was working with. He began to feel they were trying to overshadow him, and they were smarter; there's no doubt about that. They had a lot of support from the union, and he wanted to get rid of them. It was politics within the union as well as politics outside the union.

Oh, but the New York papers were praising him during the convention. We used to bring them in. And some of our people would get up and say, "Look at what the *New York Times* is saying. 'Curran bashes reds within union.'" I mean, "This is our president?" He was becoming the "golden-haired boy."

So all this was happening. But it was a very exciting and marvelous meeting. I'd never seen a big trade union meeting before, watching how *that* was organized and seeing all these *characters*, for god's sakes, managing to carry out some really very complicated and marvelous organizational things, was something to see. All of our committees were meeting, and the *commitment* of people, you know, meeting at one o'clock in the morning to turn out a resolution and actually being there and staying sober . . . . [laughter] I mean, even that, you know, was wonderful.

And, so anyway, then we came back by . . . whose car were we in?

Kd: Well, it was . . .

Somebody was driving it.

Kd: . . . Janet.

Oh, Janet Tobin.

Kd: . . . Roberts.

Oh. Oh, *Phillip* Tobin.

Kd: And his . . . .

Kathy, your memory is marvelous.

Kd: I don't know whether they were married or whether they were just, you know, girlfriend at that this time—Dagmar?

Oh, and Dagmar.

Kd: Beautiful?

Oh, yes.

Kd: I forget who else. Was it Ikenson, Trot?

Oh, Trot was with us?

Kd: Somebody like that.

No, Trot wouldn't have . . . .

Kd: And Pat Tobin. It was a crowded car.

*I'll say! [laughter]*

With this packed car we drove from New York all the way back to the West Coast.

Kd: Yes. We went through West Virginia, where I'd never been in my life. And it was beautiful, you know, like everything you ever read about Appalachia, and really eye-opening for me. I loved the trip; it was marvelous.

I hardly remember . . . .

Kd: We got to see so much.

I hardly recall, but it's just nice to know we did it. Oh, my god. Did Pat and Janet get along? They fought so much.

Kd: They fought a lot.

Yes. [laughter] They were both members of the party, and they fought over politics. They fought over everything.

Kd: She was very aggressive.

And she knew about male chauvinism, and damn it, it wasn't going to happen to her! [laughter] This was, you know, the accusation of chauvinism, male chauvinism, for god's sakes. This is no longer just a guy not doing right. This is a damn chauvinist, and, "You're no goddamn Marxist," you know. "What kind of a Marxist are you, for god's sakes?"

Kd: All words and a lot . . . . [laughter]

Nevertheless, it was the opening way to the whole movement. I mean, I admired that. As crazy as it was and nutty as a lot of it was, who else was doing it?

Kd: That's true.

*And this is such an eye-opener for me, because I mean, I really did think that it all started in 1960. [laughter]*

No. And it was going on at least ten years before then and longer in the party—I would say back to the origins of the party. But it really began to take off in the 1930s and 1940s.

Kd: Yes.

So, anyway, we came back, and there we were. And I went back to the *LP St. Clair*. Oh, yes, during the convention, as I recall, I kept getting telegrams from my ship, from Johnny Ara and Floyd Hayes, who later got killed (he got killed in New Orleans, organizing). Johnny Ara, a Basque kid from . . . I'm not sure, Nevada or Arizona, but he was the Spanish Civil War-type, you know. Too young for the civil war, but he came from that ilk in the Basque community. And, of course, he and I were buddies on that ship. And Floyd



*Left to right: Floyd Hayes, Johnny Ara, and Warren d'Azevedo on the LP St. Clair.*

Hayes was a great big lunk of a guy, very, very left—trade union left. He was in the party, but he didn't give a damn about party policy or ideology. He just believed that, "Working guys stick together, and you got to stick it to the ship owners in their ass. To hell with them." It was that kind of thing. But he was loyal. [laughter] Loyal and committed.

Johnny and Floyd were left to be in charge of the ship, I mean from the union point of view. We weren't "in charge" of anything. I'm talking as though we owned the ship—we practically did. And the rest of the crew was in very good shape; good steward's department, all for us, and all that.

And so I'd get these telegrams almost every day from the LP *St. Clair*. I felt wonderful. You know, "Keep up the good work, Whitey! Hey! Hey, Whitey, give them hell. Don't let them do this." And sometimes policy statements too, you know. They didn't

realize that I only got the mike twice the whole time I was there. But because this all got reported on . . . you know, anything from ships had to be reported at the convention, so the minutes of the meetings included any messages read from ships.

Well, LP *St. Clair* was always there, you know, to Whitey d'Azevedo. [laughter] So that was wonderful. And they really were geared up, the whole ship. It's amazing. They were doing their work but having meetings, setting meetings every couple of days about the convention. What a period! I don't think anybody does that anymore.

Kd: Probably not.

*Well, one of the things that I think was happening was that the labor movement also created this identity and pride of association. But I think part of the myth that we perpetuate now is that labor,*

WUT18 INTL FR SS L P SINCLAIR PD THOMASTON RADIO  
VIA MACKAY 20 OCT 10 1700GMT

WARREN DAZEVEDO

NMU CONVENTION 346 W 17ST NYK

HELLO WHITEY EVERYTHING OKAY BZXXX OKABY BACKING YOU 100 PERCENT GOOD  
LUCK

STCLAIR CREW

HELLO WHITEY EVERYTHING OKAY BACKING YOU ETC

I THOUGHT SO THAK U YECM

R WUT 17-18 NDW

"And so I'd get these telegrams almost every day." Telegram sent to delegate d'Azevedo at the NMU convention.

*that kind of labor, is merely a step that immigrants have to go through on their way to become something else.*

Right.

*And that the land of opportunity will automatically enable people to leave that life. But from what I'm getting here, is that there were people who . . . .*

That was their life.

*And it was a sense of pride.*

To many. Not everybody. Some people were just doing their job or their work. But there was always a contingent in there, pretty sizable, at least during that period of the Left, that felt emotionally, and in some basic way committed to that work and to that domain of life—working-class struggles kind of thing, trade unions, and seamanshipness.

*Well, it's different if you perceive that as something of a stage or a phase that people are forced to go through. It's different than if you perceive it as a life that people will stay in.*

Well, there are a lot of people who want to do something else, who wanted to stay ashore, get jobs and all that, but didn't feel they could.

*And probably, if they'd had a choice, wanted more for their children. Is that part of the . . . ?*

Oh, yes. Well, there weren't many . . . those were the days in which you didn't hear too much about bringing up children. I had. I heard about it because Kathy was a main purveyor . . .

Kd: It was very important.

. . . [laughter] purveyor and propagandist of that area. But, yes, you know, I would say not everybody felt the same way about that. There were a lot of seamen, at least, whose families were somewhat at a distance, or they saw occasionally. They'd think about them, worry about them and all that.

Kd: They led very separate lives, I think.

Yes, there was a little difference between the seamen and the ILWU that worked ashore. The ILWU had families, had homes, they were a settled group of men whose families were there and whose women were involved in the union. There were women's auxiliaries and all kinds of activities for women in the union. And a lot of talk about women's rights and giving positions to women and women's struggles and things of that kind, at least on the Left. But seamen, I don't know how much that's changed. I mean, I don't know if anybody's done a study of seamen these days. There used to be some old ones. But that would be a wonderful thing.

*It would.*

I might do that in my old age, which is not far away. [laughter] That NMU convention, the Sixth National Convention in September and October, was a real turning point in the history of the union, at least as I knew it, in the time that I had been familiar with it. It had been a rather staunchly progressive union under progressive and left leadership all during the war and up until the 1946 strike. But then along with a very large movement in the country, which is part of

the whole building up of the Cold War orientation, there seemed to be a concerted move against trade unions generally.

Employers and the government were using the Taft-Hartley Bill in every way that they could to not only discourage union membership but to undermine the hiring hall practices of the union and to build up resistance to any kind of a strike action and cooperation among unions with regard to strike action. And even the Smith Act was coming into effect. Now the propaganda was that the trade unions were run by communists who were out to undermine the government and doing everything they could to foment dissent against the government.

There was the beginning of a real setback in the unity and solidarity of the maritime trade unions and with regard to other trade unions in the country. The issues at the 1947 NMU convention were clear but extremely complicated with regard to factions that had begun to develop within the union. There was what we began to think of as the Joseph Curran faction. He had been the head of the NMU for a number years and had the support of the Left and was to considerable degree cooperative with the most progressive forces in the union. But with the convention it became clear that he had another agenda.

It was apparent that we were now entering an entirely different period. Here we'd had a successful strike, and the Committee for Maritime Unity, at least on the West Coast, was in the process of developing an even stronger unity with other unions in the area.

Among the moves that they were making, this right-wing caucus . . . in the first place, they not only took these disruptive positions at the meetings, but they were organizing alternate meetings before and during

the convention in which they were laying out a program for developing control of each of the sessions, placing people throughout the hall who could be called upon by signals to raise objections or to boo certain of the speakers. Also, they actually kept certain of the people who had come to the other meetings that they had called, actually kept a lot of the delegates out. A few of them were dumped and roughed up. It was the beginning of goonism in the union in a way that we had not seen before.

*Did you have any anticipation that this was going to happen before you went?*

Yes, there was some feeling that there was a growing right-wing organization. The caucus had already formed. But we didn't realize that Curran had gone as far in being part of this kind of movement until he got to the convention. The convention really gave him the opportunity to expose this whole new set of tactics that he was getting for his own power, to get rid of the Left, because he felt that they were interfering with *his* maneuverability.

For example, he began to talk about pulling out of the Committee for Maritime Unity, that the NMU was being compromised by being part of the CMU on the West Coast and even on the East Coast. It became very clear.

When I say "he," I'm referring to Curran, but nevertheless, it wasn't just Curran. It was a fairly sizable but relatively small group within the union, a very effective group, carrying on this program.

The other aspect of it—they were careful on this—was to actually oppose any movement to support foreign seamen, to develop any kind of cooperative role with foreign seamen's unions. Even with the Puerto

Rican and the Mexican members of the union who had been there all during the past few years, there was on Curran's part, really, a movement to diminish the number of non-citizen people in the union, which meant, really, minorities. They did everything they could at that convention to minimize or slow down any kind of resolutions with regard to blacks in the labor movement and for blacks in the union to have any particular support.

For example, there was really a terrible thing going on in New Orleans and throughout the South, and even in our own union. There were real discriminatory and racist policies. And they disrupted any attempt to discuss this or bring it forward. Everybody was very concerned about the New Orleans case, where one of the local union officials was openly going along with the Southern program of maintaining separate crews—black crews and white crews—or discriminating against blacks. And we had a number of organizers down there trying to do something about that. In fact, that's one of the places where a friend of mine got dumped and killed for taking part in organization.

It was very hard to develop a program on these things because of the disruption and resistance to doing so on the part of Curran's group. They even talked about compromising our position on the Taft-Hartley Bill, of going along at least with the letter of the law on the hiring hall aspect, mainly because they saw it as a way of doing the job they wanted to do, to get rid of the communists and the Left. Curran's group saw this as a way of weakening their position by compromising on the Taft-Hartley Bill.

All this was going on at that convention. I got elected to the resolutions and education committee of the convention, and we saw this going on. There were one or two members of the caucus there, and in every

way they tried to slow down the work that we were doing or to change our focus to either a useless generalization or to take away any of the gains.

*So it was real sabotage.*

Well, it's hard to call it sabotage. It was a different program. I suppose it's what any group does that's a minority and has a strong agenda. They do try to interfere with and discredit and disrupt the work of the group they're opposed to. I can't call it sabotage. I mean, I guess in a way it was, but that's not the way I look at it. It was a warfare of ideologies, of ways of looking at things.

*Was there one particular spokesperson for the Left that was a focal point for Curran's . . . ?*

Oh, we had a number of them: Ferdinand Smith, who was a black member of the NMU central committee; Blackie Myers, a long time member of the union and a highly admired seaman and leader during all the earlier strikes and a very clear spokesman for the Left at the meetings; and oh, a number of other people. Because actually, there was a very strong progressive group within the union and in the leadership.

So this was Curran's attempt to undermine that control so that he and his group would have more power, that he himself would have more leeway. And we suspected him of all kinds of secret deals with the AF of L, unions, with the ship owners, with the politicians. A lot of that, I think, was possibly true, because in his view, he was saving the union from the communists. You know, this is just a whole different agenda.

And the degree to which he was doing this at the meeting . . . I think this disconcerted us. We weren't expecting that quick a

shift on his part. We found ourselves fighting it at the convention, which had not happened before. We found ourselves defending ourselves against his moves and his group's moves and struggling to get our position across.

So I was helping to write the foreign policy resolution, the resolution on education, the resolution on a Third Party. That's where I began to get very interested in the Third Party, because we were pressing for the Third Party.

Now we had two different oppositions in there. First, the caucus people looked upon the Third Party as a loser anyway; why waste the energy of labor on this? If anything, you know, we should be presenting our own candidates, and who's going to beat the Republicans and Democrats anyway? Then there was another position from the Trotskyists. And here's where I saw them at work. The position that the few that we knew of were taking and disseminating within the Curran caucus was essentially the idea, "No, we can't support Wallace and people like that who are petty bourgeois Social Democrats. We should be pushing for socialism, we should be pushing for a *labor* candidate for president, not these representatives of the Social Democrats in American life, et cetera, et cetera." This, to me, was typical of the Trotskyists' position. You raise impossible idealistic ends that seem almost to be planned to disrupt any kind of effective tactics in a political movement.

And, of course, our view was that the Democrats and Republicans are both anti-labor, doing a hell of a job on us. Look what's happening with the Taft-Hartley Bill and the new Marshall Plan coming up. The fact that 60,000 seamen's have gone down the drain and 1,000 ships are going into mothballs, for

which the ship owners are getting money for every ship that goes into mothballs.

Every ship that was sunk in the war, they got insurance coverage. They made billions. The figure that we were tossing around was eight to fifteen billion dollars of tax payer's money went to the ship owners during and at the end of the war, and *they* were the ones resisting even a dollar an hour raise, you know, for seamen. And they had this great pool of looted dough they had gathered during the war. So that was our position.

Truman and the Democrats, except for a few . . . I mean, there were people like Wallace and a number of other congressmen and senators who had a fairly good position, but they were swamped by the political strategy that Democrats were using at the beginning of the Cold War, which was, "You gotta suppress these left-wing unions that are interfering with the development of our policies internationally." And that's why foreign flagships were encouraged. Panama had at one point more ships in their merchant marine than the United States. [laughter] I mean, these were American ship owners flying Panamanian flags. God, what were some of the other countries? Argentina, Honduras, later Liberian flags.

*How about Greece? Was Greece a big player?*

And Greece. Greece, of course, was under a terribly despotic regime at that point. And the Democratic Party was developing the strategy with the European aid program [the Marshall Plan] to send a great deal of money to the governments of Greece and to Turkey. Turkey had been neutral during the war, and Greece had strong fascist elements.

And you know, the whole plan was to support the very countries that we had been



fighting. Germany and Japan were to get the lion's share of the aid. Why? So that we could take over the industries that they had and make use of their expertise in production and business, that we would control by giving money. And the countries that had worked with us—not necessarily European countries, but all the little countries of the world that had been part of the anti-fascist movement—we weren't giving anything to.

And you know, all this kind of thing came out in discussions during the convention, so that our view was that a Third Party was a very likely thing for us to be supporting, and Henry Wallace had been in the Roosevelt administration and probably one of the most eloquent spokesmen for the Roosevelt position and very pro-labor. Even though he was being called a communist in the press or a dupe of the communists and supported by communist fronts throughout the country, nevertheless, he had made it very clear that he was not a communist. Nevertheless, whoever supported the program [including communists] as he saw it, they would be acceptable within the Third Party. In fact, I think he made a remark at one speech that he could expect by polls that had been done, at least one million or two million votes right off the bat from American voting, and that if he would denounce the communists, he could get four or five million more. [laughter] He said he wasn't going to do that. Well, of course this really went over great with the Left.

The idea was that this would at least demonstrate the feelings of the American people, to support a Third Party under these particular conditions. So I wrote a couple of the resolutions about the Third Party, that we should be supporting it, that got accepted by the convention. But that doesn't necessarily mean anything under these conditions, be-

cause you could get resolutions accepted and then undermined, and then nobody pays any attention to them.

And then while this was going on, I had a very effective and good connection with my ship, the LP *St. Clair* on the West Coast. Oh, here's the crew: Johnny Ara, Floyd Hayes, Ron Elon, a number of other guys sailing up and down the coast sending me daily dispatches and suggestions for resolutions. [laughter] It was just marvelous. And every day, I'd get this little packet from the LP *St. Clair*, "Whitey, we've had a meeting, and we want you to raise . . ."

They didn't realize that I got the mike three times during that three weeks and that, you know, it was almost impossible to get anything said on the floor. The only way I had was to use the resolutions committee to get some of these things through, or in *The Pilot*, which was coming out, the union paper, in which some of the letters and resolutions from ships appeared. Well, our ship had more resolutions and more letters in *The Pilot* than any others. They were just wonderful. These guys were really working!

And I feel so badly as I look back on all that energy these guys had developed, and they had this crew solemnly behind them, and they were also getting the other ships in the Union Oil fleet to send in resolutions. They were writing resolutions for them to sign and send in. And I was sending them statements, asking the ship to sign them and send it back to me, so that I could get it before the resolutions committee. And so that was a very exciting part of that and to me, very endearing as I remember back, what happens with a group of men under these conditions when they feel something can happen.

Of course, I kept them informed about what the Curran caucus was doing back there,

and they would send telegrams. They didn't have any money, but they'd take up a collection and send a telegram denouncing Curran's position on this or that or the other thing, and then letting me know that there were moves on the West Coast ships on the part of Lundeberg and others to take over the ships.

There was one ship, the *Victor Kelly*, and they were getting very worried about the crew on that ship that was a caucus ship and was disagreeing with almost every one of the programs that we were developing in the left agenda. And so they were letting me know. I fortunately have saved some of those, and there were wonderful dispatches back and forth that we had.

And I was amazed that they could do it. These guys were working every day full-time,

you know, three watches, going up and down the coast, hooking up for oil at the various ports on the coast, and then somehow or other they managed to get these damn telegrams and dispatches off. And that was a wonderful sign of what can happen in an open, democratic, progressive union.

It just didn't have a chance to go anywhere. I mean, when I look back, this tells you what happens at moments of great resurgence in movements like the labor movement. There are moments in which people coalesce, are able to cooperate in ways that they don't at any other time, and that they feel they're doing something important. So that, to me, was something of value.

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## EDUCATING UNION MEMBERS

THERE WAS SO MUCH going on at that time that had its roots in all the issues taking place in American life. People were very aware and alert to what was going on, and internationally—not only the crew on the *St. Clair*, but all over. Progressive crews—I keep using the word progressive, and I mean left-wing oriented crews—were sending telegrams to us in support of the Honduran seamen, the French workers who were on strike and the seamen who had a particular strike during 1947 or 1948, support for these international unions, denouncing our policy in Chile and Guatemala and U.S. support of fascist regimes in South America and in Europe. A lot of awareness that, you know, you just don't find so much today among people, because there's not this kind of excitement and hope that organization gets somewhere, and the labor movement had it at that time.

It had the momentum of the 1930s and 1940s and the short-lived post-war excitement about how things can change, the world can change. The UN was having its sessions. We also had resolutions in support of the

United Nations, and of course, some of these others were against having anything to do with the United Nations. You know, the old line, "America must solve its own problems. We can't let ourselves be led by these foreign agents, some of them which we were at war with."

There was this absolute chaos of ideas with some sort of central major momentum based on an enlightened view of the world. And I think of that ship, the LP *St. Clair*. You know, these guys were reading *everything*. They were reading international affairs. A lot of it was left-wing literature that was being sent to them or that they had picked up, but a lot of it was just the regular press. And they were reading all this stuff and beginning to get ideas about it.

And so on the education committee I wrote a resolution—and there were two other resolutions—on developing an NMU or a seamen's education committee on a national level in which all new members of unions would have to go through an education process about the history of the labor movement, about the role of their own union in the labor

movement, that most of these guys didn't know, that they got by osmosis. And foreign seamen or non-citizen seamen or seamen without much education in our country or the language would be given English instruction, would be given instruction in how to use libraries, and all this kind of . . .

So, you know, it was an exciting time. And there was a lot of *really strong* support behind us for this kind of . . . So those were two resolutions which had gotten through and were accepted, you know, sounded good, "Fine, let's do that." But my view was, and I think there were many others that felt that, each local hall should have an education committee in which there would be these classes available to seamen ashore.

And the California Labor School, of course, was a perfect place for that. It was already set up, and so there was a lot of this kind of education already going on. I even taught some of those classes.

I did it at the union hall on black history, Afro-American history. That's where I began to get interested in it after reading DuBois and Herskovits and all that. I don't think I was very expert, but, you know, I was bringing out this kind of material.

*Was the idea that it was mainly for African-American people to learn about their . . . ?*

*No.* The idea was all seamen should know this history and a kind of a left history of the United States—Herbert Aptheker's work, and even some of the communist literature, like William Z. Foster, people like that, who had written on American history from a left perspective. There was a lot of literature of this kind around, and we were feeding that kind of literature out. No, not just for black seamen. No, mainly for whites, because the position of the Communist Party was you

don't go out and teach blacks about discrimination, you work on white chauvinists, you work on whites. In fact, any black member of the union would tell us that forthrightly.

I can remember very well on a Union Oil ship I was on, in which there were two black members of the deck gang, and I would . . . I think the left-wingers on the ship and the crew were competing with each other how much they could talk to these guys and preach to them about party policy and to recruit them. [laughter]

There was this sort of recruiting frenzy going on, and it was kind of silly, as we were told in no uncertain terms. I remember this one young guy who I liked very much. He was a very bright, eager, open young guy from—where was he from?—Louisiana or something. He'd had a very rough life, but he had some education, and he was very bright, read a lot. And I used to go in and talk to him, you know, on the ship when he was off of watch and where I was. And I'd talk to him about my opinions and what he should read and things like that, and he said to me, "Will you shut up?" [laughter]

He said, "I don't give a goddamn about all that." [laughter] "What are you talking to me for? Leave me alone about that. If you haven't got anything else to talk about, if you can't . . . I mean, you know, this is no way to talk to people. Haven't you got anything about your own life and just daily things going on and what's going on? I'm tired of listening to that crap," and "Leave me alone if that's all you've got." [laughter]

Boy, I tell you, that hit me hard.

*Oh, I bet.*

Oh, and I realized the truth of what I've always known, you know. You don't try to tell people who have experienced what's

going on in the world about discrimination and inequality and all that. You talk to the ones that are hardest to talk to, those damn redneck bastards that are also on the ship. He says, "Go tell what's-his-name! Go tell what's-his-name what you've been talking to me about. He needs it. Leave me out of it."

So we got trained in no uncertain terms about that sort of thing. I had that happen to me a number of times.

*What was the general atmosphere at . . . ? This is a very general question, but did you have any sense that there was a kind of a reactionary movement in the university system? I mean, as far as education was concerned, was there already a move to sort of close down on the Left?*

You mean at that time?

Yes.

Yes, well, there was. That was the beginning of the anti-communist movement. Not the beginning. I mean, the emergence of a very strong reaction.

*Well, the picture you've painted, the California Labor School is kind of this hotbed of leftist . . .*

It was a hotbed, and it was denounced as a hotbed. But the California Labor School is different than, let's say, the university, right across the bay, or San Francisco State College.

*Well, I just wondered if you were aware simultaneously what was going on . . . ?*

Oh, yes, but I wasn't that involved. I certainly knew that there were movements on that campus against the Left—quiet though, because universities were very progressive at

that time and to have right-wing positions was a little difficult. However, it was there, and it was expressed in all sorts of ways and in policy. Later, I knew more about that than I knew at the time, but certainly it was there.

But I think the university was the bulwark of defense of the progressives. I mean, they were resisting the loyalty oaths and things of that sort at that time. The beginning of loyalty oaths, the beginning of scrutiny of people for their political opinions and all that was just beginning, but it was strong and it developed much more later. But I wasn't involved at that time. I was involved really with the trade union set-up on the front.

*And before we move from that topic, I just wondered, was there any reaction to opinion about the G.I. Bill and the fact that the merchant seamen were left out?*

Oh, of course. Oh, it was one of those bitter things that was mentioned all the time. You know, the Seaman's Bill of Rights just sort of hung around for a couple of years until finally it just got the ax. The Case bill . . . I forget what year that came out. I don't even know his full name. Senator Case, who denounced the seamen, "We can't put them in the same category as the loyal men who risked their lives in the military, because they could turn the guns of the ships upon the United States," you know.

*Well, you know, the reason I'm asking—and this is kind of leaping ahead a little bit, but it really struck me while you were talking about your involvement in the education committee—that this would also offer a counterpart to the kind of education that the G.I.'s were getting under the G.I. Bill. And I just wondered if that incredible flux of returning soldiers from the war created a dif-*

*ferent political atmosphere on campuses where it would be harder to be critical of the government.*

I think it did. But, you know, in the big universities that I'm aware of, that was clearly defined as a change in orientation among the student body, but not that much. There was still . . . I mean, the 1960s were coming up. The universities were still fighting about whether ROTC should have rights on the campus and all that sort of thing. Universities were also being denounced as hotbeds of red propaganda. I suppose that a reactionary atmosphere was there, but I don't . . . I know it was there, but not enough to do anything but exacerbate the . . .

*Oh, the polarities, maybe.*

. . . the polarity of the debate. And by the time the 1960s rolled along, it was hardly a debate anymore. There was a lot of anti-war feeling, a lot of strong anti-fascist feeling, moves against anti-Semitism and all that were still very important in the intellectual life of campuses.

We had some connection on the front with universities. There were student action committees. For instance, there was a "Students for Wallace" committee that I had connection with the following year when I came back. During the strikes, we would get delegations of students from the various colleges and universities who at times would come down, help out on the picket line, take up picket signs, express their support at meetings. There was a lot of that kind of thing. I don't think they necessarily represented the majority of students on these campuses, but they were the left students. And yes, we were aware of their presence. And the Third Party movement, we had a lot of connection with them.

The California Labor School was a kind of an intermediary with them. There were a lot of intellectuals there and a lot of people from the universities and colleges. It was a very exciting kind of renaissance atmosphere around the labor school. Lots of great things were happening in classes, in lectures, in performances, various kind of theaters.

*And what was the affiliation? I mean, who was paying the teachers' salaries?*

This came from donations to the school from trade unions and others. There were a lot of private donations.

*Is the school still in existence?*

You know, I am not sure. I don't think so. I doubt very much. Right now I couldn't pinpoint it, but I don't think so.

*It's really an interesting phenomena.*

It was a very exciting little center for years around San Francisco. David Jenkins headed it up during that time, and he was a very able guy, had done a lot of good work. And it also was a center for the Third Party organization, later on; and it was a *meeting* place where we could go for our usual meetings, you know, of inter-union meetings—that's where the writers' group met, all that sort of thing. And people that I knew were teaching there.

*Were you doing anything with your writing in the writers' group at this point, or were you completely caught up in . . . ?*

Not at this point, no. I was going to the writers' group occasionally, but I wasn't writing fiction at the time, no. No, I had a full

plate, and I was very glad to be involved the way I was.

*And were you teaching when you were on this education committee?*

Every now and then. Yes, when I was in port and particularly, you know, during the strike. And then later on during the Third Party movement in 1948, I had regular classes who were mostly Latin American, Hispanic seamen. A few blacks would turn out, but as I have said, they had their own places to go.

*So were you teaching black history?*

Black history and then also labor history and then English, which I'm not very good at—I guess maybe not as a second language, but you know, the rudiments of reading and writing and writing essays and things of that kind. It wasn't very developed; it wasn't a very expert kind of thing, and I wasn't the only one doing it. There were others doing it too.

We had a joke about one guy—what was his name? He was a “true intellectual.” But anyway, we used to joke about a course that he was teaching at the labor school on history of socialism—from the amoeba to socialism [laughter]—in which he dealt with the whole history of the universe. And people used to go because it was so funny.

*[laughter] Oh, that's wonderful.*

Oh, what was his name? I forget it now. But you know, there were all kinds of things going on. And there were also classes that people were giving on how to make out forms, how to apply for unemployment insurance, how to raise an appeal, all this kind of thing.

*Did journalism ever interest you at all? I think I asked you that once before, but it just seems like the writing on current issues . . . .*

No, first place, the opportunity didn't present itself, and I don't think I ever had any desire to do that. No, I didn't. It's an interesting question. I don't know why, but “journalism” is something that doesn't appeal to me, although I have written things that have a journalistic ring to them.

*Well, it's just, you know, the whole concept of the power of the press, and if you're involved in a political movement . . . .*

Well, I wrote a lot of leaflets, and I would send short articles to the left press and things of that kind.

*And we don't really have an equivalent. I mean, leaflet writing is not . . . .*

Well, I did it just because it had to be done and learned how to do it. God, at the convention, I was writing a lot of leaflets. And later on, I think I wrote a good part of the leaflets for the Third Party movement out on the waterfront, you know. But that's another thing. I never thought of that as journalism. It was propaganda—pure propaganda. [laughter]

So anyway, about teaching: I think elsewhere in that piece that I showed you that I'd done on Herskovits and going to Northwestern, I mentioned a class I held at the NMU hall, and I was using Herskovits's book *The Myth of the Negro Past* as a text. It had just come out . . . no, it had not just come out, but it was available at the Maritime Bookshop. And myself and an African-American guy that I knew who was a member

of the union, we both gave the class. And he got so engrossed in that book that he could hardly take part in the class.

The class, there were eight, ten, fifteen seamen sitting there wondering why they were there, and he would over and over again read the section on remarks of people in Guyana about white men. And he loved it, he'd repeat it over and over again, and I said, "You know, you've got to get on to the rest of the book." [laughter]

*One more question about the labor school. These classes that you would teach, would this be like for a week or two weeks or drop-in classes for seamen when they were on shore or . . . ?*

They would be announced, and they would go on as long as there was anybody around to talk to. And you know, seamen would come and go and there would be different people lots of the time at almost every meeting, but there were a few that would sort of stick through. And there were no exams, nothing like that. It was really discussions—lectures and discussions and reading.

*Right. So this was a real focal point for seamen to gather and something for them to do and learn.*

If they wanted to do it. And you know, very few took advantage of this, even when we had rules that everybody had to do this. There was one class we had on the history of the NMU and the waterfront unions, and it passed as a motion at one of our meetings that every member on shore had to sit in on these classes and take part in them and show he had attended. Well, you couldn't enforce it. There was no way to enforce something like that. But we just did it, you know, whenever there was time to do it, whenever we could. It would just be posted on the bulletin

board, and then certain times of the day or on certain nights of the week, we would do that. But there were so many other things going on, this was not a major thing.

But at the convention, myself and others had written resolutions pointing out the need for the union to do this in every port, and where every ship should have an education committee. In fact, our LP *St. Clair* had a ship's education committee and all that sort of thing, as did most of the ships in the Union Oil fleet in 1947, 1948.

OK, so that was the climate of that period, which was extremely—what would you call it?—invigorating and absorbing. I mean, I remember that everybody I knew was *totally* absorbed in these issues and events, and that somehow everything was focused on that activity: the convention, going back to the ports and carrying the message of the convention and running off the resolutions as leaflets and getting them on ships and maintaining this network, this connection.

But then in the midst of this was this growing right-wing, I would say at that point, a highly disruptive group within the union. And I'm just trying to think if there was anything positive about what that group stood for, and I can't, because I'm too left-wing in my mind to think anything that came out of that whole trend within the union as positive. [laughter] The only thing was, I think, it forced the Left to reevaluate its position of leadership—that there were a lot of infractions, there were a lot of people who were somewhat corrupt and who had done things that shouldn't be done and that deserved to be exposed. And maybe that was the only good thing that came out, but it was a little too late, because the movement now was the other way. And I suppose the tendency was to support anybody who had a left-wing background, because it was getting to be a matter



of trenches now . . . I mean, defending the Left, which was getting hit from all sides. And the worst was yet to come.

So that had changed the mood, in a way, from a feeling really of going some place, of a united union with a united agenda that had been going on for years from the 1930s, to the beginning of effective attacks from outside and from within.

*What was the opportunity to actually change the leadership or to depose Curran? I mean, was there any talk of that?*

Oh yes, we had an election. Was it that year? They had annual elections.

*Oh, every year?*

Every two years. I can't remember now. But an election was coming up. And of course, then, we were opposed to Curran. And he and his people were accused with interfering with the election and all that, just as our people were—point, counterpoint.

But he managed to slip through, because he had been a leader with a long history of connections to the unions. So there were a lot of members of the union who were confused about that.

Curran was losing the support that he once had, but watching him on his feet, he was a very wily and eloquent guy, and he had been a very hard-hitting, militant labor man in the early period of the union. He had a record behind him as good as any of the left-wing people, you know, Blackie Myers and others. And they were as shocked as anybody at what was happening to this guy.

But it had gotten to the point where I remember that although it wasn't easy to denounce the people on your side who you felt were ineffective or weren't doing their job properly, it was getting now to the point of defending what there was of the progressive Left. And it was a very confused period in that sense.

So anyway, we get back to San Francisco on that trip that I talked about, all of us packed in that car. [laughter]

*That was a lot of people. [laughter]*

I'll tell you, it was something. Exhausting, but we were young. Even Kathy liked it—survived it. And so we headed back from the convention.



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## AFTER THE CONVENTION

**B**Y THIS TIME we had moved from McGee Street with Ted and Mimi Odza in Berkeley, into another place, a place of our own. Gosh, when I think of housing at that time, we had to borrow money to pay \$8,000 for a house. I don't know how we did it. We borrowed \$2,000 and had a loan or something like that. But imagine, this is a house I wish I had now, a little place on Francisco Street, a house of our own.

*Now where was it? In Oakland?*

In Berkeley. And we had that for a number of years. When I finally got through Northwestern and fieldwork and came back and taught at Cal, we still had that house. But we couldn't maintain it. We weren't making anything. Even when I was teaching I was making nothing, you know. [laughter] But anyway, we managed in that.

So I get back, and of course what was facing us then was disseminating all the information from the convention and then developing our strategy—the Left—to combat this right-wing move in the union. And

every union meeting was a shouting match between groups. It was debilitating. It was not good for the union.

*So this is on the home front also.*

This was in San Francisco, my home front, yes, and I'm sure it was true in every port to some degree.

We were trying to fight the Taft-Hartley Bill and refused to accept the inroads on the hiring halls. And Curran's group was making compromises. We felt that the SIU in the east and the SUP on the coast, the AFL unions, were now really making a move, seeing an opportunity, because of the disruption in our union, to raid our ships, which eventually happened.

So my job when I got back was to get right onto a ship. And I got back on the LP *St. Clair*. It was wonderful. I can remember going back to that ship, and I had a reception committee, when I finally went aboard. I went with my sea bag and I had a bunch of literature and all that. And the guys were all waiting for me at the gang plank, and what

did they sing? They did sing. I wish they had sung the "International." [laughter]

They sang some labor song—I forget what it was—and I came aboard, and Johnny Ara came forward, and he says, "Why, we got a gift for you." And somebody had made a monkey fist, a beautifully intricate knot.

*Oh, it's a knot. That's right.*

Well, it's a very complicated knot around, usually, a bolt of some kind, and so it's very heavy, and it has a loop on it, to be tied to the lanyard that you use when you're coming toward a dock. When you get close enough, and everybody's always watching who can do a good job on this—I got pretty good at it—you toss this monkey fist with the lanyard behind it onto the dock so that the dock crew could pull in the mooring lines. So here they had a fancy one dipped in red paint. [laughter]

And "From the crew of the LP *St. Clair*, in honor of Whitey d'Azevedo, who has done a good job at the convention," and all that.

By the way, when you asked last time about the officers of these ships and their view of our crews, it was very mixed. Because I remember one officer telling one of the right-wing members of the crew that Union Oil was going to take care of us. They were already making deals with other unions. And, "Just put up with them for now. Don't even complain, because we're going to deal with them." But there was no *open* hostility. They were very careful with us. In the first place, these crews were well-organized and good crews. They did their job. But they also made demands, and you know, mainly about payment.

*Well, you did make the point very explicitly that these people did recognize that they had to do a*

*really good job, so that they couldn't be faulted for not doing a good job.*

Well, we saw to it. We saw to it. When a guy would come aboard after getting a job out of the union hall, we let him know, "Look, you're on a ship now where everybody really has to do a job. And we're not going to let the company have any cause for real complaint against our efficiency and our job as seamen. But at the same time, we expect *full* cooperation and support on any beefs we got on the ship, you know. And we got a beef that might be a good one, and we want unanimous support from this end, and anybody who doesn't like that, then get off and get on another ship." And we got pretty ruthless on it. We got dictatorial. And when I come to think of it, it wasn't very democratic. [laughter]

Yes, it was, because this was a majority of the crew voting at ship's meetings to do these things. But you know, there was a lot of pressure. Some of the guys that came aboard hated us and couldn't stand it and would get off and report the goddamn Kremlin ideology dictatorship . . . . [laughter]

*[laughter] The Kremlin?*

"That guy's sailing that goddamn red ship," and all that. But not much. We didn't have much of that.

But our beefs at that time on the ships had to do with Union Oil tanker practices. We'd be sent sometimes out to do spray painting in enclosed places, in the ship's passageways and things like that. So we would let a patrolman know, "We're going to put this up as a beef, and we're not going to do it." And we'd usually win *these*, you know. Or if it was necessary, then we'd get over-

time, you know, that sort of thing—overtime, we were doing dangerous jobs.

I can remember going to sea on tankers before that, where nobody would even dream of complaining about going down in the tanks and breathing the goddamn fumes for hours at a time or spray-painting. But by this time after the war, we were able to complain about it.

There were all sorts of beefs mainly about overtime. What was overtime? What did you get overtime for? Did a mate have a right to call the men off-watch after two hours, put them on deck for two hours, and then put them back in the sack and then bring them out again? Does he just pay them for the time that they're out, or does he have to pay continuously when he's interrupted their sleep and free time?

So we had beefs of that kind. And oh, port leave: These ships were at anchor a lot, so how did you get ashore? And if there were no launches ordered from ashore, the crew was stuck, didn't have a chance to get shore leave. Well, we had beefs about shore-leave, beefs about did you get overtime if the company didn't get you a launch and you were stuck on the ship during a time when you could be ashore. [laughter] You know, continuous beefs of this kind.

But I must say at that point Union Oil was not intimidated by us, certainly not, but the crews of these ships they realized were a powder keg, that they could strike. And they would and be fairly unanimous. Out of the seven ships, at least six would have struck. The trouble is, we weren't getting the support from the union that we had before, the same kind of support. There was too much division in the union. But in San Pedro, we could have done it; we could have tied up every ship that came into San Pedro, because

there was a good, strong hall and dispatcher down there and official on the port. [laughter]

But anyway, this went on, see, through early 1948, and I stayed on the LP *St. Clair* off and on. I'd come home for two or three weeks. I'd get off and I'd have time ashore, and Kathy and I could be a family for a period of time. Kathy was working. She wasn't happy with this kind of life, and I was only happy when I didn't think about it. Because I was pretty pissy. And so this went on during the first part of the year [1948].

Oh, and also during this period of time— at the convention, there had been resolutions—I helped to write a leaflet on white chauvinism and the Negro in the union, which was very critical of even the Left: that the union wasn't doing enough of the job within itself to educate white seamen about chauvinism and to press for *full* equality of blacks in the unions; the fact that we had been much too lazy about taking on some of the unions like SUP, who were completely lily-white or even in our own union in certain ports in certain parts of the country where real discrimination was still taking place; and that that had to be a real movement within the union.

Well, this was a period in which the Communist Party was doing a tremendous amount of work on this, and there was probably as much literature [as on any other topic] on what was called the Negro question at that time and even on the so-called woman question, and black women and the discrimination against them. A tremendous amount of internal education was in the Communist Party about this and also having to do with the shift from the Browder period in the 1930s and early 1940s in which the party had realized, after that famous Duclos letter, and begun to examine itself and realize that it had

taken an extremely almost reactionary position in the first place, during the war saying that we must not bring up these issues during the war. Everything is for the war effort, we must not pursue . . . . We had a no-strike agreement, which I don't think anybody really complained about then, but also that we wouldn't raise issues like discrimination, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. That wasn't said, but it was in effect.

None of these things were carried forward after the war, and the Browder position was somehow or other that capitalism after its success over fascism was going to be a much more tolerant and much more benign capitalism than it had been in the past, and all that sort of thing, which of course was a lot of bull. And it took the party a real hard turn-about to begin to criticize itself and to develop a new program. Then also, among American blacks, there were all kinds of new movements—the Muslim movement, self-determination, the Negro Nation. These were post-Garveyite kinds of things going on and some of them were very strong. There were also strong neighborhood organizations among blacks around fair employment practices.

All that sort of thing was happening, and the party felt that it wasn't getting sufficient leadership or wasn't taking sufficient part. Although ideologically it was involved, it was not actually doing it. So there was a big push for us to get out in the community and do these things, which we were doing, as I said before. Not only during the strike period, but in-between we had sort of educational squads that would go out and visit white and black families and offer support on fair employment practices, or support in any kind of issue taking place in the neighborhoods in San Francisco over housing or employment, et

cetera, et cetera. So there was this move to get involved again, to do more about this.

*You were living in Berkeley, though, and were you going over to San Francisco every day?*

Commuting every day, yes.

*How? Driving, or . . . ?*

We had a little old—what was it?—a Chevy, the kind that still had the blinds that pull up and down. [laughter] It was probably a 1930s or 1940s Chevy. We got it second-hand for fifty dollars or something like that.

*But you'd pretty much go to San Francisco every day?*

Yes, well, every day that I had something to do over there. I spent a lot of time there. Yes, I was involved with the union.

*Right. And were there Communist Party meetings there too?*

Yes, and also on the East Bay, but because I was a seaman, I attended those in San Francisco. Oh yes, the party meetings were there.

*I was just trying to get a picture if Berkeley and San Francisco were really this collective . . . .*

It was about fifteen, twenty minutes in my car. And there were buses. I mean, you could take buses over, and public transportation was very good at the time, street cars and buses. But that little car, that little flivver, it was great. They used to call them flivvers . . . [laughter] old flivvers. Model T Fords and flivvers. But that one was a joy. It

had the tassels on the blinds that went up and down. [laughter]

It was built square, up and down, and little narrow tires. But that was very common in those days. That was the second-hand car that most people had.





## THE THIRD PARTY

SO ANYWAY, I'd go back and forth between Berkeley and San Francisco. And then the Third Party movement really got underway, and I got elected to the "San Francisco Maritime Workers for Wallace" as chairman of that committee for the joint unions. I had already been elected in the NMU, the local hall, as a chairman for the Third Party organization.

*For all the maritime unions.*

For all the maritime unions, I got elected chair. So I was pretty busy with that.

And I was writing a lot of literature and leaflets. I think I wrote most—I still have some of those of the literature for the Wallace campaign. But I was involved in educational activities, going around and having meetings in neighborhoods and other unions and there and now the occasional waterfront rally.

*Was this very much concentrated on the maritime community, or did you have links with . . . ?*

No, we had links with others. At least the Third Party thing was broader than the

maritime unions. But that's where most of our activities were. But nevertheless, I used to go to Third Party meetings there that were San Francisco-wide or Bay Area-wide.

And of course, then, the C.P., the Communist Party, had a lot of meetings about the Third Party, which was very interesting, because they had a mixed position on that. First place, they saw Wallace as the best possible nominee of a Third Party.

*You'd made the point before that during this time people truly believed change was possible. And I had wanted to ask you that with all this work you were doing for the Third Party, if you had any expectation that Wallace would actually be elected or not.*

No, I can't say that any of us were quite that naive. The thing is, though, that we did think that it was possible for there to be a large movement in the country—a very large, effective movement that would express a new program, a more progressive program. And I don't think that I felt there was a chance that Wallace would be elected, but I thought that he would be elevated to an important posi-

tion in American life as a spokesman for a movement, which he was allowing himself to be, and he was a very eloquent spokesman of that position.

I heard him once or twice; others that I knew heard him. And I don't think he was being wily or duplicitous. I think he really meant what he said, you know, that he represented the most progressive aspect of the Roosevelt period, and he was staunchly pro-labor. And he supported our strike. He did not red-bait, he didn't denounce the communists. And we felt, the far Left felt, that here was a guy who would give expression to the feelings we had, that most people had about what was wrong with the Democratic Party and the Republican Party at that time. We didn't think we could vote for anybody in either, you know.

It was really one of those situations where the Democratic Party was behaving in a way that made it a very dangerous kind of party for labor in this country, so that really our feeling was to get up the biggest vote possible as a demonstration of American opinion. I think some of us had overblown views about *how* big it would be and *how* much of a movement it would be, but there were reasons to feel it would be sizable. And it was worth working for.

Now, of course, there were elements not only within the union, but in the local community, the *left* Left . . . . What was the word we used to use for those? There was a word for the left Left beyond comprehension, the Trotskyites being among them, who were saying, "How can you set up a social Democrat who is a tool of the imperialists, like Wallace et cetera, et cetera. Let's run a labor person," you know, who would get ten votes in the whole country. You know, that kind of . . . . And there were those who were then

denouncing Wallace as a red, as a tool of the communist front.

*A dupe, like you said.*

Dupe. And he wasn't a dupe, but he certainly was supported by every left-wing organization in the country. Who else did they have?

*Was the fact he was a Quaker make him a target, or was it a non-issue at that time?*

A target for whom?

*I mean, was that a point of criticism, that he was part of a minority religion?*

I don't recall.

*Well, maybe it wasn't even an issue.*

I don't recall that being an issue. That doesn't mean it wasn't. I don't think that the matter of him being a Quaker came up except maybe positively. You know, the Quakers were an admirable sort, honest and hard-working and all that.

*Right. But they might have tendencies toward naive leanings toward the Left. That's all I was . . . .*

[laughter] That could be.

*I'm just wondering. You had been talking about the uneasy relationship that the Communist Party had, the position that the party took with Wallace as being an acceptable . . . .*

Well, at the beginning, because the idea was we have to be careful here, because we

don't know what Wallace would do with the kind of pressures that were . . . you know, it would be embarrassing to have him shift positions and select Joe Curran or something like that. Also that, you know, he may have been a progressive, but that doesn't mean that he would agree with us on a lot of basic issues, and he certainly didn't, but enough so that we felt confident on it.

Also, this whole issue about whether or not it was the time to support a Third Party, whether that wouldn't be a waste of effort and maybe a disillusionment to a lot of people who would get all involved and then be deeply disappointed and all that sort of thing, whether or not we weren't doing a disservice to . . . . There were different kinds of opinions expressed within the party at that time.

In fact, I even have some of them here where I remember giving . . . oh, in an East Bay section of the party, I was asked to speak on the Third Party. And I remember going through two or three of the different opinions within the party about it, and that these were things that we had to resolve in some way. And my own view—and that of a great many people—was that this was an opportunity to make a statement within American life about where Americans wanted to go, what they wanted to do after the war. And if we couldn't get everything we wanted accomplished, we could at least . . . it was a progressive position.

So this progressivism after the problem of Browderism . . . there were a number of members of the party that were very suspicious of and wary of anything that smacked of that kind of Browderist revisionism supporting somebody who represents a sort of a social Democratic position that could go either way. But I think the position prevailed that what else was there? What were we going to do? Sit out the election or call for the

impossible people to be elected or develop little tiny groups throughout the country that would have no impact at all?

The Socialist Party was out of the question, because they had now become Trotskyists and were denouncing communism. [laughter] I had once felt very positive about Norman Thomas' Socialist Party when I was much younger, but I began to see that it had been taken over, really, by a strong reactionary anti-communist position. So they were running candidates, but they were nobody to support. And there was the Labor Party in the East Coast that was trying to get formed, and later on the West Coast.

But here was a major American figure who had a good position, and there was a strong feeling about the Democratic and Republican Party, and our feeling was we should support this and go along with it and give it everything we've got. And so I remember as a party member and a chairman of the Seamen for Wallace and Maritime Committee for Wallace that I felt that the most important work of the party, at that time, would be to support a Third Party movement and do everything they could for it.

So of course the counter to that is that, in doing so, the Third Party became the target of every kind of anti-communist red-baiting propaganda in the country. Oh, *all* the press at that time—I even have some examples here, you know—that Wallace was surrounded by, was captive of the communists, and how could he let himself get into such a position, and he must be a very naive person to think that the country isn't aware that it's a communist movement and on and on. The press was just loaded with this stuff. We were used to that sort of thing, but we were worried too about its effect upon development of a Third Party.

And so anyway, my job, as well as a number of others who were working on it, was to go out to campus communities, and also set up little neighborhood meetings in mainly working-class neighborhoods. Not just trade union things. We'd go out and announce that we were going to meet at somebody's house for coffee and cake, and talk about the Third Party.

And I think that was fairly effective. We reached a lot of African-Americans that way and a lot of Hispanic people, some in the unions and some non-union. And it had a good effect, a positive effect, and it gave us a feeling of being connected with the community.

And there were meetings that we organized at the universities. I didn't go to those in the East Bay, but I mean San Francisco State and others, we'd have little socials, that students would hold or something like that. And we'd go and speak our piece as trade union representatives of the Third Party movement. And now and then we'd speak on the radio. We'd be interviewed always hostilely. [laughter]

*Oh, really? Always hostilely?*

Well, I can't remember if they . . . Well, I mean, there was always the undercurrent of edgy, you know, "What are you people doing, and who do you really represent?" But we were able sometimes to get our position across. The newspapers, of course, they might interview people. I was interviewed by the *San Francisco News*, I think, one time, and of course it just came out in a garbled horrible fashion, and I was embarrassed. I never did it again.

But then there was our own press, *The People's News* and others, and our positions

were presented there. And we saw to it that that paper got around everywhere and was distributed, almost like a leaflet.

So that was very time-consuming and involving as well. And then getting on the LP *St. Clair* every time I could get on. When I was ashore, I would be doing this, and then I'd be trying to maintain some kind of connection with my family.

*So you'd be on board ship, say, like a week at a time?*

Oh, no.

*A few days, or . . . ?*

Well, you might be signed up for a couple of months, but you'd come back to port and you'd have time off, you see.

*OK, I was just trying to get a feel for how long you were at sea now.*

I'd be signed on a ship for a period of a month or two, like the LP on one of its runs, and then you were sort of committed to be on it during that period, but then you'd come back to San Francisco or Oleum on the Oakland side, and you'd have a week, three or four days while it's loading.

*I see.*

And I could get home and have to get back on the ship when it was ready to make its run. But I'd be back, sometimes, every few days or a week, depending on what the run of the ship was for a few days at a time. Or at the end of the run, then I'd get off in a proper fashion and wait to get hired again. Depending on what I had to do ashore, I might be

home near a month or more. So I made two runs on the LP in 1948 when all this was going on.

But then all this time, Kathy was pregnant with Erik. And the time was looming in September 1948, which was a rugged time. Everything was happening. And Kathy was doing very well. She was very healthy and very active.

*Now she was active in working in the [children's] nursery?*

Yes, to a considerable degree, but she was doing other things as well and taking care of Anya and busy with a circle of friends and all that, and her family.

As the time loomed, I began more and more feeling that, "My god, what am I doing? Here Kathy is about to have another baby, and what am I doing? I'm not around. I've got to get to her." And I would go over and stay for a few days.

And then finally time came where she had to go to the hospital, and I remember, you know, just dropping everything on the front that I was doing and going to Keizer Hospital and sitting there. And I wanted to go in, I remember wanting to go in to see her. In those days, when I look back . . .

*So barbaric.*

Well, barbaric . . . it was just so different. "Oh, no sir. You can't go in. That is just not allowed. It isn't the thing to do. And, she is resting, and she needs to be left alone," and all that. She was asking to see me. I did get in to see her a couple of times, but I couldn't get in there as things began to develop. And she did take a long time.

So I remember the nurses coming, and even the doctor one time, saying, "Look, why

don't you go home? You know, go some place."

I said, "Well I want to be here when it happens."

"Well, it's not going to happen for a while. It's going to be two or three days. She's so slow, and she's slowly working up to it. She needs her rest, and she doesn't need . . . You can't do anything now." Imagine that. When I look back on that I just get furious. I wish I could go back and raise hell, you know.

So I went over to the front and spent a couple of days. I came back, and I'd go to the hospital and I'd see Kathy briefly, but then I had to leave. They wouldn't let me stay. And then I would go back to the front. And I was at the Maritime Bookshop one afternoon, and I had been up at the hall running this office for the Third Party. [laughter] And I was down at the Maritime Bookshop, and there were a number of guys hanging around, and a call came to the Maritime Bookshop. I guess I had left my number.

*[laughter] What a wonderful place!*

Right. And Alex Treskin, who got the phone, he says, "You're a father! A bouncing baby boy!" And everybody cheered. Oh, and I was terrified. I felt awful I wasn't there. And I jumped in our flivver, and I headed across the Bay and got to Keizer Hospital. And Erik had been born, I don't know, an hour before that. I was furious. I said to those people, "You know, you told me it wasn't going to happen for another day or two. You also said you would call before it happened."

"Oh, isn't it better this way?" You know, "Everything went wonderfully," and all that. So I went in and saw this little glob of flesh which was there. [laughter]

And I felt absolutely elated. I felt just so wonderful. It just was great. I remember, still,

coming across the bay on the bridge—the bridge had been built by then, you know—in the little flivver. I almost felt like I was flying, you know. And Kathy was doing fine, though I think she was a little depressed because it had taken so long. But she was doing all right. So Erik was born, and I told him his father was told at the Maritime Bookshop in San Francisco, and it was announced and cheered. [laughter]

So anyway, September was terribly busy that way, and we got Erik home, and I stayed for a few days and all that. But I had to keep going back now and then, because I was chairman of this damn committee, and things were heating up.

*Was the election that November? Of 1948?*

Yes, the 1948 November elections, yes. And this was a period in which the CMU—Committee for Maritime Unity—was dissolved. In fact, at that time, toward the end of that year, Curran had done his job and we could see . . . or I could see the handwriting on the wall. Things were beginning to really look tough for the progressive unions and the progressives in the union. I remember the unions on the West Coast formed a committee to take the place of the CMU.

*But that was just the West Coast?*

No, I think it was a national thing where the CIO came out and helped organize a unity committee in a sense, really to replace the Committee for Maritime Unity, and Curran had effectively disrupted it.

And the SUP, the Sailors Union of the Pacific, the AFL was beginning really to push on the ships. And this was happening on the Union Oil ships. In fact, the SUP actually got the crew off the USS *Ruble*, one of the union oil ships. Fought their way aboard the ship, and took over with the company's approval.

*Really?*

Yes. So we had a split. This happened in late 1948. And then Lundeberg announced that the SUP was going to be taking over the Union Oil ships. I knew, and those of us that had worked on it knew, that this was the plan of the company too.

And so, after getting approval from the current hall in New York, we formed flying squads all up and down the coast. And also I think this was done in the Gulf too, because there were all kinds of moves at that time to take over NMU ships. You know, the union gets weak, this is just like a weak animal. I mean the vultures come in.

And so I had to drop some of the Third Party work and get back to sea.

## FLYING SQUADS

I GOT ONTO THE *Victor Kelly*, which was a “weak ship,” as we called it, because the left leadership had left, and it was getting to be under the control of the right-wing. So I went aboard, in fact, I was sent aboard by the people I knew . . . .

*Now this is still the Union Oil ships, though?*

Yes, it was. Yes.

*So they hadn't taken over all the Union Oil ships yet.*

No, it was just that one ship. And I forget whether they kept that ship, or whether it was back and forth, but it was a contested ship.

And the company was beginning to say that we were unable to service the ships properly. We couldn't get enough men aboard and all that sort of things. This was partly true, because jobs were not only scarce but ships were scarce, and seamen were going elsewhere for jobs.

And so I went aboard the *Kelly*, really, to get it back into shape, to shape it up for not

only the union, but for the Left. And I was very quickly elected delegate, because I was, again, somebody who could talk a little, [laughter] I was a “sea lawyer,” and there were still a few progressive guys aboard the ship who were happy to see me. And within a couple of weeks or so, we got most of those guys off the ship, the ones that were . . . you know, “What are you here for? Get off and get another ship. You guys are just going to lose this ship.” So anyway, we got it back as a staunch NMU ship.

Then I became part of the group that was developing flying squads, at least in the Bay Area. And this was happening in San Pedro, it was happening in Seattle, and elsewhere.

*Is that sort of like a vigilante . . . ? Tell me what that is.*

Flying squads, three or four guys would go out together to defend ships when we heard that SUP goons or company goons were going to try to take over a ship.

*Now are you talking physical confrontation, or . . . ?*

If necessary. Yes. We would stand guard. It's like a picket line, but we were ready to fight if necessary. In fact, we had to once.

*So the flying squads were basically guarding the . . . .*

Guarding, particularly when a ship would come in, the crew would leave to go ashore on leave.

*Oh, I see. Sure.*

And then, you know, there were usually stand-by people aboard, but it was undefended, and another crew could just come on and say, you know, "You guys leave. We're taking over." And that was what had happened to the *Ruble*. We were . . . .

*And of course that couldn't have happened without collusion from the company.*

Oh, the company was delighted! [laughter] Oh, they wanted it. They wanted Lundeberg's union, which was compliant and . . .

*Yes, but they were more expensive, because they were getting more money.*

No, no, no, because we had gotten more . . . the second strike got ours up . . .

*. . . achieved equity?*

. . . to be equal, got to parity. Yes. But, you know, they were prepared to do things like that, anything for any union but ours, because ours was, like the ILWU, a trouble making union. We demanded things, and we had blacks, and we had Hispanics, and we had meetings on board denouncing the

officers for racism and all that sort of uncomfortable business that they didn't like. It interfered with commerce, for Christ's sake. [laughter] The SUP never did things like that.

So anyway, one example involved the *St. Clair*. I had gotten off the *Victor Kelly* after things had straightened out. And so I came back ashore in San Francisco and then heard that the LP *St. Clair* out in Oleum outside of Berkeley, at the Union Oil docks, was sitting there with just a small skeleton crew, and there were rumors that the SUP was going to move on it. So I get a flying squad together, and about six or seven of us get in a car and zip out to Oleum late one night around eight or nine o'clock. And . . . have you ever seen that dock?

*No, no.*

It's a long, long dock, it's got to be a quarter of a mile, half mile from the company buildings and offices and tanks down a long, long ramp to a dock where the ship loads up. The oil lines go down this long dock, and you walk along this narrow dock out to the ship. It's a long way if you're carrying a sea bag. You get pretty tired by the time you get out there. But there's a dock office before you take this long ramp out to the ship. And that's where there was a company guard and all.

And so we took our guys, and we parked up at the company parking lot, and we walked down to this office, and there was nobody there! And we immediately smelled trouble. I mean, the company guard would be in there; maybe he was purposely not there to . . . We were conspiratorial as hell at that time. You know, it was all planned and all that.

And so we got in there, inside the little shed, and I remember we had bats and chains and all kinds of things with us. [laughter] We



had monkey wrenches and . . . oh, oh, oh, yes! I had a dangerous weapon. I had my cargo hook. I always had that around if I could. So we sat there for about an hour. You know, it was dark and quiet. And we couldn't send anybody out to check the ship, because, you know, a member or two of the crew might still be aboard, because—I don't know—it was against the law or something for us to get out there; we weren't cleared to get on the ship, but anyway, we could guard the entrance.

And while we were sitting there just talking, we heard clumping coming down the . . . “clunk, clunk, clunk, clunk,” and boy, we knew *now* is the time. And we could see in the shadow way up, we could see about a dozen people coming down. And, “Oh boy, we've got it now.”

And we got ourselves ready, you know, hiding in the shack. And this gang came down—“clomp, clomp, clomp, clomp”—these dark shadows. I'll never forget that night. And we were all ready standing by the door, and I remember holding my hook up, and this guy with a wrench. [laughter]

About four or five of us, and these guys got closer and closer, and finally they were right down upon us, and they stopped, and they looked around, and they sort of scattered to look around to check things, and then two or three guys came toward the door and pushed the door open and looked in. And I looked, and it was the most wonderful thing—Sharkey! [laughter] A guy I knew. Sharkey, the same guy who had held my wallet for me when I was dumped by the SUP!! He was now an oil worker and . . .

*My word!*

He was one of the oil workers on strike. And they had come down to check the ship

too, to see that nobody was taking over their jobs. And oh, what a moment, you know, we had a gang there and everything. And I had almost clobbered him, and he had a club . . . [laughter] It was just a moment, a second, and we would have clobbered each other.

*That's incredible! [laughter]*

It *was* incredible. And so we had this get-together on the dock. It's about almost midnight at this time. And so we left a group for the rest of the night, and apparently nothing did happen. So we saved the ship that night, and the crew came back in a day or two from leave, and the ship took off.

But we had squads like that going all over. And a couple of instances, they had real confrontations with scabs . . . finks that were coming aboard, and some nasty ones. I think our guys did some bad work too. I mean, it wasn't nice.

Well, when I think of what was happening to me there. I mean, I was ready to kill. You're scared to death. You're tense, you're worried, and you're defending your ship, you know. All kinds of things could happen. But I'll never forget that. Sharkey, whom I hadn't seen for—what—this was 1948—four years or something.

*That's incredible.*

And he's the guy, the only one who stuck with me down the stairway when I got beat up down below and took my wallet and gave it to me later. So that was wonderful, old Sharkey. He said, yes, he couldn't stay in that goddamn phony union. He was in the oil workers union.

Nineteen forty-eight was one of the fullest and most complicated years that I can remember during that period. Everything

seemed to have been going on. The incident about the flying squads and the Union Oil dock, out at Rodeo or Oleum, that was just the beginning. This was the beginning of the break-up of our control and contract with the Union Oil ships, which for the NMU on the West Coast was a serious matter. That seven ships was a lot of jobs, and the only other tanker company that came regularly, at least to southern California, was Keystone.

And it was quite apparent to us, at least the Left in the NMU, the seamen, that there was something going on nationally about the relation of the east and the West Coast. And we had every good indication in our view that what was happening was that Joseph Curran and the right-wing of the NMU in New York, at least . . . and then with their little informal organization called the Rank and File Caucus of the right-wing group in the union, that there was an understanding with Lundeberg that the NMU would relinquish the West Coast to him, and that then the NMU could consolidate its position in the East Coast and on the Gulf, getting rid of this very, very difficult, in their view, ram-bunctious group of progressives on the West Coast and disperse them. Because actually, with the ILWU's headquarters in San Francisco, the international longshoremen, this very strong maritime union and the two or three other unions that had formed the Committee for Maritime Unity during the 1936 strike, it was very clear, I think, to the right-wingers that if there was any segment of the maritime unions that needed to be contained and, if possible, disrupted, it was the West Coast maritime group. And all through, I would say, 1947 and then especially at the NMU convention in New York in 1947, it was quite clear that Curran and his group were determined in some way or another to limit the activities and the influence of the

West Coast unions in negotiations with the ship owners and in terms of the image of the NMU in the country. And Curran was being lauded and praised in the press for putting up a fight against the so-called commies. And certainly in the San Francisco papers this was a constant theme—the struggle in the NMU between the Left and the Right.

So in our view, we saw the Union Oil ships as a part of our bulwarks on the West Coast. These were a large number of jobs, steady, coast-wide ships. After the war, with diminished shipping of the U.S. Merchant Marine and the real crisis in unemployment among maritime workers, this was an extremely important thing. So from the end of 1947 on, this was very much on our minds, at least the seamen that I worked with in San Francisco. The defense of the contract between Union Oil the NMU was very important.

And it was very clear that the SUP and Lundeberg had their eyes on those ships. They felt that they rightly should have those ships, because they were an old West Coast union, and they felt they had certain priority on the West Coast. In some way or another, the right-wing of the NMU to a considerable degree must have agreed with this orientation, that Lundeberg would be given some of the shipping on the West Coast—Union Oil being one of them—and in return for that, there would be more cooperation.

Because Curran's group was constantly reiterating through this period in late 1947 and through 1948 that the Left in the union—and particularly the San Francisco or California and West Coast NMU hiring halls—were being too hard on Lundeberg, that we were refusing to cooperate; we didn't send letters to him when we had meetings. This was just not so. The NMU on the West

Coast would constantly try to get Lundeberg's group in with us on the CMU, on various kinds of other organizational policies or positions, and always would either get ignored or told that we were politicalizing a trade union matter. The idea was that the commies were politicalizing the issues on the West Coast and elsewhere in the union.

So this was a *very deep* split within the NMU and the beginning of a breakdown which had tragic consequences as far as I and many others were concerned. But all during 1948, there was this deep dissension within the union where every attempt was being made to get rid of some of the progressive patrolmen and officers in the halls on the West Coast. And the group called the Rank and File Caucus, the Curran group, was disrupting meetings whenever they could. There were even fights on ships in the ports between factions within the crews.

And that's why the role of some of us on the Union Oil ships was considered by us to be extremely important. We were, in a sense, holding those ships against takeover by the Sailors' Union of the Pacific, the AF of L union. And we had the support in this from the black seamen, the few that were existing at that time in our union, because there were so few jobs and they had been newcomers on the West Coast in the unions. And some of them would take off and join the ILWU or work as longshoremen because there were so few jobs at the end of the war. Nevertheless, those that were there were in full support of our position, because they knew that if those ships went over to the SUP, there would be no black seamen.

*Were there people in the CMU whose job it was to support you in any way, or was the CMU just comprised of members?*

The CMU was a coalition of maritime unions.

*So there wasn't leadership in the CMU that could have stepped in.*

Well, oh, it did. Oh, yes. I haven't really made that distinction, because at least the progressives in the NMU . . . or I would say the NMU, even officially, had been a member of the Committee for Maritime Unity so that we were in a sense closely allied with the other unions. We met with their leadership, we had constant meetings certainly during the strikes. In 1947 and then through 1948, there was a constant cooperation among these unions.

However, there were these infiltrations now with the rising of anti-left feeling fortified by AF of L propaganda and the break-up of unity within the NMU itself, with the Curran factions, et cetera. Curran actually engineered a pull-out from the Committee for Maritime Unity. I'd say the move of his people pretty well brought the CMU to an end later-on in 1948. But no, until then there was intense cooperation all during that period. And when I was a member of the NMU, we were working with the Committee for Maritime Unity.

*Were there specific meetings? Were there meetings of the Committee that met to discuss all of these . . . ?*

Oh, there were always meetings of delegates. Representatives of the various unions would meet and try to iron out common policy, positions on demands, and what kind of demands we were going to make—strike policy. As a chairman of the housing and food committee during the strike, I was always

going to CMU meetings to share information and to work out common policy with other unions that were on strike with us. Sure, that was a very close coordinated kind of effort that, by the way, really bothered the right-wing. It certainly bothered the Sailors' Union of the Pacific, at least the leadership. Then every attempt was made to break it down. Was that your question?

Yes.

Yes. Oh, no. I guess we considered ourselves during that period as much members of the Committee for Maritime Unity as our own unions. This was a very meaningful coalition.

*Was there a strong figure that emerged during this time to sort of counter Curran's . . . the rank and file position within the union?*

Yes, there were two or three—people like Blackie Myers, people like Ferdinand Smith who were left-wingers, called commies and all that sort of thing.

*And they were all West Coast people?*

This was the East Coast national consul . . . .

Oh, OK.

And on the West Coast? Yes, I will say my friend Pat Tobin in San Francisco was probably . . . . He and Walter Stack. There were a number of other important figures on the west, in San Francisco, for other unions: Bill Bailey and well, Walter Stack—Walter Stack was a member of the MFOW—yes. And members of the Marine Cooks and Stewards had some very strong figures at that

time. Hugh Bryson in Marine Cooks and Stewards.

But in our particular local, it was people like Alex Treskin and Pat Tobin, whom I considered . . . . Well, he was, in a sense, a kind of a mentor. He was about my age, but nevertheless he had had a lot of experience and had been a very active, very clear formulator of policy. So yes, there was . . . and in San Pedro, there were Tony Lucio and Neil Cronin and a number of others. Yes, there were some strong figures, but they're only as strong as they can be with other conditions being equal.

*As these politics were getting more polarized, were there people within the SUP that were sympathetic with a more liberal stance that might have . . . ?*

Oh, yes. Oh, I would say that during our strikes when Lundeberg . . . well, I always use Lundeberg as kind of the icon of the AF of L right-wing unions. Nevertheless, the rank and file of that union were often in sympathy with what we were doing and sometimes would recognize our picket lines. But they had a much tighter control in their union. I mean, I got dumped for asking a question, you know.

There were a lot of old timers in that union, and it was a union that I had respect for because there were so many old time seamen in it, but they were guys that just wanted to work. I mean, it was sort of an apolitical union. And here I had moved into an extremely politicalized union, which I found very congenial, because I felt that's what unions ought to be. And as I remember a little later in the Communist Party, certainly politicalization of one's demands, of one's actions was an important part of our policy.

And of course this was the target of the right-wing: “These commies, they politicalize everything.” To some extent, that’s true, that’s how communists look at trade union movements, as a working class movement in which trade unions are the spearhead of defense against employers and against the worst ills of capitalism and the eventual tools for the development of socialism and all that sort of thing. I feel it was a very legitimate political aspect of trade unionism. It still is, by the way, wherever it rears its “ugly head,” as far as the Right is concerned.

Well, look at now what’s going on in terms of whether unions can make direct contributions to political candidates. “Oh, no! They should not!” say the Right, because—it’s [laughter] as good a strategy as any—“each individual must have to sign approval. Here they’ve elected leadership, and they’ve elected PAC committees who make the decisions about this person or the that. Oh, no, they can’t do that.” Like corporations do with stockholders. Corporations give a great deal of money to campaigns without asking each and every stockholder what they’re going to do.

By the way, that seems to be one of the moods going on right now. There are people saying that if the trade unions are limited from making contributions directly to political campaigns, then we should demand that corporations have to get the approval of each and every stockholder. [laughter] I mean, the roots of this go way back to that period, you see.

So yes, the so-called non-politicalized unions like the SUP were very political up on top. Lundeberg made political deals and had political agendas all the time. But the membership was the old trade-union kind of membership that as long as the pork chop matters were taken care of—that is, as long

as the conditions on the ships were taken care of, and their unions seemed to be struggling for that and getting them good contracts—that was enough, because this was a sea-going career. And I respected that.

And I respected the old syndicalists when I was on the SUP ships, the old guys who were Wobblies and Luddites of the most advanced stripe. I respected those guys as elements of the American working class history, that were part of the development of any working class movement in this country. However, when it came to a confrontation at this particular point in history between a union made up of that kind of membership and with that kind of leadership—really dictatorial . . . . And they kept talking about how democratic they were as against unions like the NMU, which really *did* have a tremendous amount of input from the membership and constant, in national conventions and in local conventions, and in the discussions in their union halls. I remember discussions in the union halls in the NMU that could *never* have been possible in the SUP when there were highly regulated and controlled meetings. Nobody ever dreamed of standing up and saying anything, except stupid characters like me, you know, and then learning what that meant. [laughter]

So those were the issues, and of course, the SUP was a completely lily-white union, except where they had stewards departments inside some of their ships that were mostly black. That was a totally different matter.

*On an individual basis, were there cordial relations between individuals from the SUP and individuals from the NMU?*

Off and on, but during heated times like strikes where our policies were different, it was careful.

*Right. Were there specific hangouts and bars and places that you didn't go to?*

Yes. Well, yes. And then there were some where people overlapped, and you were quite wary. I remember going down to this little bar that was right on the front itself on Clay Street near the bookstore and the SUP hall where every now and then while . . . . I wish I could remember the name of this little tavern, it was for coffee and beer and sandwiches and things. And I remember going in there one time with a friend of mine from the NMU after I joined the NMU, and here was—I won't name him—but here was one of the leaders of the SUP local hall, sitting next to me having coffee. And we both looked at each other and didn't say . . . .

I just said, "Hello?" And didn't say a word about . . . .

In fact, I remember that he was rather friendly to me, and that he saw me as somebody who stood up and made a point, which a lot of the members felt. On the other hand, they let their leadership do what they wanted. But we didn't feel we could carry on a conversation, or I didn't feel that. I wanted to stay clear of those guys. [laughter]

*Well, yes. I mean, I can see from your most recent . . . .*

But I *knew* that there were a lot . . . I mean, like Sharkey, who I have talked about. There were a lot of guys like him who couldn't figure out why their union was doing what it was doing and who were sometimes misled by the position of the union and all that. And I understood that, but it was a different kind of union. It was essentially a craft union, an old time craft union, which I had nothing against excepting the

times of the development of real issues in which laborers and trade unions really have to organize and create coalitions of many unions to defend themselves, particularly at the end of the Second World War when there was a real effort on the part of capital in this country to move in every direction, internationally, to suppress any movements among labor for higher wages, to stop all that. And of course anti-communism—the commie issue—was one of the instruments. Very, very concerted and clever job on the part of the Right in this country to use the communists as a way to disrupt and to change the policy of unions.

*Well, it must have been a gift particularly, I think, to a lot of southern politicians on the whole civil integration issues.*

Oh. Oh, yes. Well our union [NMU] and other unions in the Gulf—New Orleans and in Texas—where there were segregated crews . . . . I mean, I think I mentioned before this fantastic business of there being black crews . . . was it the Munson line, would put on black crews. When ships were coming up, the white crews would be taken off and vice versa, whenever it was politically correct socially to do so. Black and white crews were kept separate—not equal but separate.

*This is after the war.*

After the war. During the war, I must say the Left sat on its hands a lot, because they were supporting the war and had a no-strike pledge during the war, all that, which even the Left felt we should be getting some recognition for, that we opposed any strike. There were a few, which we blamed on the

Trotskyites, of course, or just ignorant, unpatriotic loose cannons. [laughter] We took that position that it was unpatriotic to strike during the war, because it was a war against fascism, and I had no quarrel with that. I think that was a period during and right after the Browder period, the idea that American capitalism, the American bourgeoisie, was going to learn so much in this struggle that they were going to be *good* to us after the war. There was that feeling, I think, during the war. There was going to be a more cooperative kind of society.

*Well, you demonstrated during the war that you could cooperate, in fact.*

Yes, sure. Right. The Third Party had come out against strikes and had supported the war. And within the party—I wasn't in it at the time, but I certainly know what happened, as the people told me—the whole thrust of discussions in the party was how to win the war, how to help win the war. Still, there was the move for civil rights and all of that was going on, but it was diminished. No great issues were raised that would be seen as interfering with industry and getting the ships out and all that, so that a lot of these beefs were sort of kept under wraps.

So as soon as the war was over, we felt it was time now to demonstrate that the country was changing and that the Roosevelt policies were going to be carried on and developed and extended, and that we would have socialism without struggle. [laughter] That's a little exaggerated, not quite that. But I mean, that was the view, that there was a long, long, slow transition toward socialism.

*Well, wasn't there the view, too, that socialism was part of the natural order, that this period would enable that transition more quickly?*

That capitalism was going through a crisis, and it was transitional, and now was the time when there would be the slow evolution toward socialism. And of course, a lot of the discussions within the party at that time dealt with the idea of revisionism that some people were saying would happen naturally, and others were saying, "The struggle must continue." You know, there were various kinds of factions developing, even within the party itself. There were even some people left who felt that Browder had been right, and Browder was carrying on a campaign by going to Europe and talking to the progressive parties and Communist Parties in Europe trying to get support for him and the idea that his policy had been right. But they didn't agree with him, and then the Duclos letter came and blasted the American party out of the doldrums with the idea that socialism wasn't around the corner and that there was a hell of a lot of work to be done, and that we had let a lot of things go—not only the Americans, but all over Europe—and let a lot of things go in the interest of the war against fascism.

So all this was yeasting in 1946, 1947, and 1948 so much that I can't, in my mind, as I'm extemporizing here, put it all together. But it was there now. So the little Union Oil strike . . . I keep going back to the West Coast and where I was planted at the time and consider interesting to me. I mean, I can think of things like this was the year in which Gandhi was killed, and that had a deep impact on me. I had been a fan of Nehru and his writings, but Gandhi was, to me, a great figure. And things like that were going on. There were all sorts of things happening on all levels. The situation in China, and Indonesia and the Dutch; the beginnings of the anti-colonial movement were going on in India and China and Indonesia; Africa was

coming up in the next decade, all the anti-colonial movements. So this was all yeasting. It was an extremely vital time in that sense, but a little overwhelming. So nevertheless, I and a lot of people I knew were focused on the maritime workers on the West Coast, essentially, and what was happening to us in our jobs.

And those jobs had gone down. I can remember many weeks when twenty to thirty men were shipped out in a week, you know, as against hundreds before. And there just weren't the ships. And of course we were very angry about the fact that the ships were being turned over to foreign flags, the American Merchant Marine was being diminished, we thought, purposely, conspiratorially, to weaken the maritime unions, to weaken the position of American labor, and in favor of . . . .

*Because the traffic was still coming into the Bay, right?*

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. But not on our ships, not on American ships, or American-owned ships, but under a foreign flag.

*Right, with foreign seamen and . . . .*

Foreign seamen at one half the wages that we were getting and all that.

*Right. But now were American longshoremen still engaged in loading and unloading, or . . . ?*

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. On the West Coast, the ILWU was the union, on the East Coast it was ILA and a national . . . .

*Well, was that seen as because there were strong unions or because it just happened to be consis-*

*tent with the designs of the owners, to have American longshoremen.*

Due to strikes, due to struggles! [laughter]

*So it was a strong . . . ?*

The ILWU came into existence in 1935 or in 1938 . . . 1937 and 1938 with tremendous unity among maritime workers and the longshoremen to establish their own union independent of the AF of L, which they felt was doing nothing for them. And the CIO—the ILWU was a CIO union—developed as a strong left-wing fighting union on the West Coast and was a dominant feature in maritime on the West Coast, had clout. Harry Bridges, you know.

So we were very much tied to the ILWU at the time and what it was able to do by supporting its strikes so that it would support ours, and they did. I remember, my friend Pat Tobin and I, during this interim period when things are just falling apart in early 1948, we felt that the Curran faction of the union really wanted to allow those ships to go to the SUP, and we really saw it as a slap against us, “those damn left-wingers on the West Coast.” And there was a situation down at San Pedro that truly told us that.

I don't want to go into it now, but I guess October of . . . well, it was in fall, anyway, of 1948, when some scabs went aboard on two new tankers, and the national office, under Curran and his group, gave such conflicting instructions to the agent that it looked as though it was just planned to keep us from . . . . How was it? That whether our men should leave those ships or not leave those ships; and scabs [from the SUP] were ready to come aboard, and there was such confu-



sion that it took a fight to drive the scabs off and keep the SUP off those ships for a while. Well, that gave us a clear indication that that was one of the moves.

But during that period, we still had flying squads going out when it was necessary to defend, to watch the docks, to keep finks and scabs off. We saw finks and scabs being slipped on sometimes when our crew would refuse to work a ship for one reason or another. And we saw that the scabs that were sent on by the ship owners were just preliminary. Some of them were SUP members—trip-card members, we'd call them, allowed to get cards, union cards, just for the purpose of making a particular trip. And they weren't real regular members of the union. They were trip-card men. Often they were in the union, but they did not have the same position as full-time book members who had priority in shipping. And we felt that the SUP sent trip-card men out as scabs, you see. So we had flying squads.

*Now scabs are non-union people who will cross the picket line, and finks are people within the union?*

Well, use them interchangeably. No, fink is anybody that was . . . .

*Oh, OK. Just a fink.*

A fink is a fink is a fink. [laughter]

[laughter] *OK. Well, I thought maybe they were people within the unions that were . . . .*

No, scab was just another word for it. I mean, these are people who took jobs from other people when other people were striking or when they had been locked out or something of that kind.

And so there was every indication that the Union Oil company was going to lock us out of those ships. Well that came a little bit later, but right now we were concerned with saving the ships. And we had—not only we, but the CMU or what was now CIO Maritime Committee had taken the place of the CMU . . . .

*I'm sorry, I didn't catch the name.*

The CIO Maritime Committee was a committee that was set up by the CIO to carry out the same functions as the CMU on a national scale.

So anyway, it was in a period when the ILWU had just settled its contract, its June or July contract, and there had been this threat of strike in 1947 and 1948. Every June 15 and every September 15 was a strike-threatening period during this time, because that's when contracts are going out. But the ILWU, I think, had just settled its contract, and some of the other unions had gotten some things at that point. But here we had the Union Oil problem in the NMU.

So Pat Tobin, who knew Harry Bridges, said, "Let's go see Harry about this. See if we can get some help from these longshoremen out there. You know, we only have enough forces here to handle these . . . to watch these ships." And it was true. We just had a few . . . oh, a dozen guys to scatter around all the docks and then up and down the coast in Pedro and all the little oil docks along the coast and up into Seattle. So, he and I went up to see Harry Bridges. And I had seen him often, but I hadn't really talked to him.

He was a little guy, a little scrawny guy. He didn't weigh ninety pounds, but he was wiry, and he had a big head. And he sat behind his desk, and, "Hi guys," and all that, you know, "Sit down. What do you guys

want?" And so Pat laid out to him the problem we were having with Union Oil.

Most of these halls you know, IMCS, ILWU, NMU, MFOW, were within a few blocks of each other, so, you know, you could go back and forth and see people and have meetings and things of that kind.

So here we were talking to Harry, and Pat was very clearly laying out this problem with Union Oil, how we were going to be losing the Union Oil if we didn't really have enough forces to keep the finks off and to keep Lundeberg from slowly eroding our position on those ships. And we even had good information that he had sent people into our union to go onto these ships—people with double cards, trip-card people from one union who sometimes would go to another, or in one way or another get aboard the ships, as a dock worker or something. They would disrupt and try to mislead the crews and all that or wait for a vote or something.

*Did you actually see some of this and are you convinced that it was really going on, or did you just hear that this was going on?*

Oh, no, no, no. I know it was. You mean the last thing I said about . . . ?

*Yes, yes, about people double carded.*

Oh, yes. We knew guys now and then who were on our [NMU] crews who were working with the SUP. They had NMU cards or trip cards or whatever, but they had been in the . . . . In fact, I myself was often questioned by certain of my crewmates, you know. "Hey, you were in the SUP." But my record was fairly good. I mean, I didn't have much trouble with that. [laughter] But I mean, we looked for that.

And there were certain guys—people knew of them—who actually had direct connections with the SUP and were seeing SUP leadership and coming aboard ship. I don't know how many, but there were enough so that we were aware that this could happen. And that's a legitimate, reasonable kind of thing for a union to do. It's just competition, it's a dog-eat-dog and a kind of warfare. So we were very alert to that.

So we were telling Harry all this and saying, "Look, Harry, we hate to ask you, you know. Your union has got plenty on its plate, but could we have some guys to help us guard these ships? Not necessarily for picket lines, but just for flying squads out there to discourage anybody trying to get aboard who shouldn't get aboard." This was during periods when we were temporarily locked off a ship or there was some kind of negotiations going on in which our men wouldn't work or when a ship would come in and the crew would get off for regular shore leave. And then there would be the problem of others [from the SUP] getting on to take their place, which happened in two cases, one in San Pedro, pretty much with the company looking the other way. I mean, this was imminent and happening.

So Harry listened to us, and I remember he put his great big head on his hands, and he thought a moment. He says, "Look, you guys, let me tell you something." He says, "You know, you're coming to me with this goddamn little pissy ass problem here. We've got the whole goddamn West Coast and the Gulf and the Lakes' problems, you know, of contracts for this year, and our people are worn out. They've been on strike, but they're still ready for any kind of action that's legitimate and meaningful. But," he says, "how am I going to tell them that you NMU guys here

at this goddamn one port can't handle your own ships? You don't have enough guys to have surveillance on a ship? You're not coming here asking us for big help, you know, like a big picket line or something. We've already supported you guys, you guys have supported us. But now you're coming with this little thing, you know, and you have to go out and keep your eye on ships and all that sort." He says, "You can't do it yourself? You're coming to me? Let me tell you what John L. Lewis once told me." He was a great admirer of John L. Lewis. He says, "Let me tell you what John L. told me one time. I went to him with the same kind of question about something that was going on. You know what he said to me? He says, 'Look, buddy, don't bring out your cannons when a popgun'll do.'" [laughter]

He shamed us. I mean, we just felt awful, you know. He was right. We're coming to this guy who had really been, I would say, the architect of a tremendous amount of trade union development on the West Coast, supporter of all kinds of basic trade union issues throughout the country and internationally.

He was at that time still under the cloud of indictment for being a communist, which he was not; I'm quite sure he never was a communist, but he worked with anybody who he thought would help his union. Secondly, I think he was very left-wing in his thinking, anti-capitalist, and he'd gone through some

hard knocks. But here he was looking at us like, "You guys, you know, go get your popguns. Don't go pointing a cannon."

And so that was a great learning experience for us. We went back with our tail between our legs, trying to figure out how we were going to do it. And that's when the flying squads were still going on, but we just had a few guys; there weren't many guys in port. The guys that were in port out of work felt there was no use hanging around the hall, because there weren't any ships coming up on the board. So a lot of the guys were scattered looking for other jobs.

It was kind of a sad period for the union and an angry one for those of us who had been around for a while, because we could see the sign of the times. It was a feeling that we had sort of a last-ditch stand kind of situation.

*Well, I think you could see that there were larger stakes . . . it was a bigger issue.*

Yes, sure. When I went on the long dock there in the early part of 1948, you know, it was really to hold it, because the phonies were taking it over, and it was just getting ripe for an SUP takeover. And I helped to bring it back into shape, and we had a left-wing crew on it and all that sort of thing. But those are just temporary things, because the right-wing movement was on—slowly on.



## WORKING FOR WALLACE

SO ALL THIS TIME, of course, I had been elected as chairman of the Third Party Wallace Committee for Maritime Workers, and that was taking a lot of my time, and it was quite a problem. When Erik was born and I got the call there at the Maritime Bookshop, I mean, I was there for Third Party business, and we were turning out leaflets. And we turned out hundreds and hundreds of leaflets. [laughter] Oh, my god, were we leaflet-mad. And it was not on the beautiful new kind of equipment we have today. This was on old barrel . . . .

*Mimeograph?*

Yes, mimeograph.

*Purple ink?*

And the purple ink thing, both laying out on the table. And we turned out masses of literature during that time on the strike and on the Third Party.

Of course, ever since the NMU convention in 1947, just the year before, I had been

among those supporting the Third Party movement, which the union finally at that moment accepted. But the right-wing was slowly eroding support for the Third Party. And the Left . . . I guess in those days we called them left-sectarians, like the Trotskyites, in the sense they're creating left-wing sects, way far left. Anarchists would be a left-sectarian and the Trotskyites. They were saying, "We should be running labor candidates. The hell with those people like Wallace and all these social views."

Well, of course, our position was, "What kind of crazy talk is that?" If you've got a guy with a good program, he doesn't have to be a communist, for Christ's sake. He doesn't have to be a guy who walks around in dungarees. If he's got a good program, by god, as against Truman and Dewey, you know, it's clear we should be supporting him.

I think that was a strong movement. I mean, most laboring people that I knew were pro-Third Party, but not all of them were going to go for it, because some of them felt it was throwing a vote away.

*Well, you'd said earlier that you had anticipated getting like three million votes, and he actually got one million.*

I think it was around a million, which is a lot!

*Yes, it is.*

I mean, that's no small matter. If the Communist Party of that period was thought to be 300,000, and there were more votes than that . . . [laughter] But no, we thought there would be more.

But what was going on? Six members of the Communist National Council were indicted in 1948 right about this time. Well, the press then was immediately full of Wallace being a stooge of the communists, that the communist fronts were supporting Wallace. All this was going on as the election approached.

You know, it was so clear what was happening to us at that time. We just really felt we understood. It was one of the powers of a political movement, I think—a left-wing, at least, political movement—is you might not always be right, but you have a sense of the trend of the times. We had a feeling that we knew the kind of forces generally that were at work, and that we were on the spot. And I would say that a lot of the workers at that time didn't think that way, you know.

*Like the movement almost creates a lightning rod, so that you can see what the forces are that a lot of people are totally unaware of.*

Well, you have a preliminary agenda, and they don't care about that. What they care about, as we used to say, were pork chops and that's all, I mean, what your wages are, what's on your plate, and what kind of raise you got

or didn't get and day-to-day concerns. Perfectly legitimate and meaningful, but not enough, because if you don't see what's happening to you—I mean the big picture—you become the victim of that. Well, you might be the victim anyway, but at least you'd be a fighting victim.

*Right, a conscious victim.*

You'd be an aware . . . [laughter] a true conscious victim. And I still think that's basically true. I mean, I suppose it's better to go down knowing why you're going down than going just down.

*You might go down anyway, but they won't hoodwink you.*

[laughter] Well, you have the satisfaction of knowing what was going on. So we had that feeling that we knew that. And we didn't know every . . . of course, we didn't. And we made all kinds of mistakes, but we had this feeling that we were part of history, that we understood our role in history, which is a powerful feeling, by the way.

And I had a lot of criticisms not of what we did, but what the Communist Parties were doing. I had a lot of criticism of the American Communist Party, which began to jell later. Nevertheless, I would much rather have been *there* doing *that* and thinking what I was thinking *then* than what most people were thinking and doing. I'm grateful for that opportunity.

*And you think that it permanently affected how you viewed the world from then on.*

Oh, because I still pretty much think that. [laughter] I'm pretty well still in that groove, you know. Lots of changes, but nevertheless,

that, to me, among the things that were going on, was the most legitimate, clear, aware, meaningful kind of role that people could play.

*Well, it sounds like it was truly a forum for things that mattered.*

Sure. I mean, as I said before, all this was going on. We were having classes on the woman questions, supposedly on male chauvinism. And not that people were able to do all these things correctly, but we were talking about it. This is before anybody was talking about these things, there was a general program going on. During all this convulsion, we had classes or get-togethers on the Negro question, on the woman question (as we called them, those awful words), and male chauvinism in which we had to be self-critical about our own families and what we were doing and what steps we had taken to see to it that our wives had an opportunity either to get out in the work place or to be part of the things that were going on. To what extent do we share in care of children and things around the house? And this was hard for seamen to even dream of, you know. But they were *doing* it.

There was a lot of grousing and dirty jokes about this and all that, but the interesting thing was it was also a weapon. The more pious members of our group were always calling us on these things. "You can't use that word. What do you mean 'girl'? This is a *woman*." You know, "What are you doing about your wife being stuck in a house all day, for Christ's sake?" you know. We were getting that kind of . . . .

*Really! It was really that . . . ?*

Oh, *all the time!* We were very conscious of it. In fact, there was just as much grousing then, even within the Left, as there is today among men about the women's movement. "Oh, for godsakes, what's going on here?" You know, "This is too much." But it was pressed, it was pushed.

And on the so-called Negro question. My god, we had a lot of awakening kinds of discussions about that—not only Negro history, but black-white relations on the day-to-day level. "So-and-so said what? How did you handle it?" What do you do when you're with a black member of your crew or a black comrade, and somebody makes one of these goddamn remarks? What do you do? Just stand there? What do you do? And we didn't always know what to do, but we discussed it. How do you handle this?

And we had black people in our union who we'd meet with, and we'd talk about things. My god, these discussions were going on back there in the 1940s.

*Yes. Can you remember any of the conclusions or strategies that were suggested, or . . . ?*

You mean about these kinds of day-to-day issues?

Yes.

Yes, mainly it was the responsibility of the white member to take a position. You can't always expect the Negro guy who has been under this stuff for so long and learned to handle it by quiet or withdrawal, you know, you can't expect him to take the brunt of it, if it was serious. Sometimes you overlooked these things, but if it was serious, if it was something that was deeply embarrassing or a significant interaction, it was the white guy

who was supposed to make a comment, like, "What are you talking about? We don't use those terms. We don't talk that way. Where did you learn that?"

You know, sharpening your ability to pick it out and do something, and criticizing white members in our group or in the union who didn't do that, who sat back, who said things like, "Well, what can you do? This guy, you can't do anything about him. He's grown up this way." Or, "The black guy doesn't care. He's used to it." You know, these were all considered chauvinistic positions, and we would analyze and criticize them.

Black women—why is it that black women are in even a worse position than black males and what we did about it? For example, in hiring that would go on, if we'd have a black woman secretary, which sometimes we would push for, how was she treated?

Well, I remember there was a big flap about giving a woman like that, a black secretary, a raise in our local. She was overworked. And she wasn't the best secretary in the world, but my god she worked like hell. She was loyal, and so the question was raised of giving her a raise. And boy, was there opposition to this, even from some of the left-wingers. You know, "We can't afford it," and all that. And yet, a white woman who had been there before had received two raises before she left. [laughter]

So all this was brought out and discussed, not necessarily in open public union meetings, because sometimes that wasn't a way that you could get anywhere, but certainly in our seamen's club with either communists or their supporters down at the Maritime Bookshop, at section meetings, or San Francisco Communist Party meetings. In the literature that came out, these things were discussed. Incidents were brought up of things that had happened. There were party mem-

bers who were leaders in the area who were dismissed or removed from leadership and told that they had to go back to work in some industrial union and get clear on who they were, you know. [laughter]

*Well, did the party and the labor movement—I mean, the left-wing movement—also provide a venue for the black intellectuals who were writing theoretical or critiques of history and . . . ?*

Oh, in the union, I don't recall that. I'm not sure there were, but certainly nationally. I'd say the Communist Party had a number, not only in the party, but people connected with the party. Oh, yes. There were a lot of writers, writers of fiction and creative stuff, there was a lot of that going on—this was a highly creative period—but I'm thinking in terms of the Left. Oh, yes, there was a tremendous amount. Harry Haywood was one that I remember and certainly Pettis Perry, who wrote a great deal about black communist orientation, articles in *Political Affairs* and brochures that I always had with me, because I felt they were terribly sharp.

And during this time was the whole question of the Negro nation as against assimilation and things of that kind. I always say that the beginning of a hard-hitting civil rights movement was taking place there right after the war. And I still believe that the Communist Party, with all of its faults, with everything that was ratchety about some of its policies, was in the vanguard of this and doing what I consider to be a great job in thinking through the problem, although not always carrying it out very well.

But the loss of the black membership during the war to a considerable degree had to do with the fact the party was totally centralized on winning the war. And the party was blamed for that, because it was said we



did it only to protect the Soviet Union. [laughter] You couldn't win. "The left-wing unions were only saying they wouldn't strike and supporting the war effort, because they were supporting the Soviet Union." [laughter] I mean, it sounds wild when you think of it.

*Was there any political analyst or magazine—and I'm thinking of something like the Atlantic Monthly or Harpers—that you were reading or that you felt was at least representing the Left in the mainstream?*

In the mainstream. *The Nation*, I forget when it started, but *The Nation* was one. It was a pretty good left-wing publication. [Founded in 1865, *The Nation* "has stood for human rights, civil liberties, and economic justice, taking on monopolies, militarism, and Imperialism (www.nation archive.com 10/10/03)] Gosh, what were some of . . . ? Yes, there were some. Not many, though. This was a tough time for such views if they wanted to make money. But there were. At the moment, I can't think of them, but there was a lot of literature. The NAACP was very progressive at the time, and then there was the National Negro Consul, I guess it was called, which was pretty much *far* left, and they were putting out a lot of material. So it was a lively time, but also a churning time, one in which a lot of things were beginning to get "back-to-the-wall".

So it was during this that I was working on the Third Party, going all over town; little groups of guys, and we'd go up and visit families and bring them the Third Party literature, visit other unions and city-wide meetings where we would speak as representatives of the waterfront unions. And I think there were meetings at the university, you know, in Berkeley sometimes, not on the univer-

sity campus, but in Berkeley where the Students for Wallace were pretty well organized and doing a hell of a job. We were very busy moving around at this point.

Toward the end of November . . . Well, of course, November was terrible, because we were there fighting, making our last stand on the Union Oil ships, but it was one of those times when I was away from the office I had in the top of the NMU building . . .

There were three stories, I think, and way up at the top was a little attic office with two or three rooms, and I had one of those offices with a desk and a file cabinet, and I'd do my leaflets there and see people and do phone calls—I had a phone and all that. And the agent of the union was a really right-wing phony. They had been trying to get me out of that office for a long time. They saw it as a real setback for them that d'Azevedo, not only chairman of the Seamen for Wallace on the front but of the Maritime Committee for Wallace for the whole area, was using the NMU office for this and turning out commie letters.

And there were enough guys around the hall at that time who would agree with them as against the majority of our guys. I mean, I would say most seamen supported us locally for most of the time until they saw the handwriting on the wall and they began to think of us as just an anchor around their necks later on.

So I was away to one of these meetings—this was before the election—and when I came back, everything had been moved out of that room and had been taken down the stairs and moved out. And I couldn't find anybody who knew anything, because except for the guys that were with us, the hall was almost empty. Obviously some of these characters, under the leadership of this one guy, had done this. And I couldn't get anybody

to say where the hell this stuff was. Finally, I found where it was, but it was just too late. The election was about to happen. And I remember going to a union meeting and saying, "You know, what are we going to do about this? He's thrown the IPP, [Wallace's] Independent Progressive Party, out of the hall upstairs and ruined all of our literature and all that."

And a lot of guys got up and made speeches and got mad and said what they were going to do, you know, and there was just too much going on, and there was a resolution passed to denounce this guy and send it to the National Council and all that. But it was a little late, and by that time I didn't give a damn. I was just mad. I mean, there wasn't much more to do.

And then, of course, the election came. And you know, when I come to think of it, I don't think it was a great downer. It wasn't a great depressing event. It wasn't anything that was terribly unexpected. We had hoped for a few more votes, but just the idea that we had had the organization and that there had been the expression of a left Third Party in American politics, aside from the old socialists and all these little splinter parties that developed locally throughout the country. We'd had this national movement with a lot of important things said and with a lot of good literature out and a lot of support from not only working people, but middle class people. The fact that even a million decided to "waste their vote," in this case, was, I always thought, positive.

There were some gloomy feelings among some of the Left, you know, like, "My god. What can we expect here in this country? And what is ever going to happen to it when

people don't see?" But I think most of us realized, hell, it doesn't mean people were against it, but it's like any Third Party—you don't go and put your vote there unless you're really fired up. And, in fact, there were one million fired up people in the country. That seemed to me to be a damn good thing. And I don't think anybody expected that . . . Well, there were expectations the Third Party would continue, that there would be a continuing Third Party movement. But this was the period of great anti-communist, anti-left movement in the country, that pretty well undermined the development of any of these things.

So that was the Third Party of Henry Wallace. I found him . . . people, particularly a lot of the Right, would talk about him as an airhead and a dreamer. Well, hell, that was always an attraction to me. He was a terribly eloquent, clear guy, outspoken, courageous, taking positions in support of unions, not denouncing the communists, welcoming their help if they wanted to help but making it clear he was not. He had a very good post-Roosevelt position and a good foreign policy, which criticized the Marshall Plan, which I still feel was one of those great money-engineered programs to get control of world trade and to control the various small governments throughout the world. And he was critical about it, certainly critical on the Truman plan, the Truman doctrine. He was not supportive of the Soviet Union, but calling for rapprochement, calling for us *not* to develop a competitive hostile stand in the world (which ended up being what happened)—the Cold War, a competition, et cetera. So it was a lively period.

**N**OW ABOUT ideologies. So much of our programming at that time utilized the literature and concepts having to do with Stalin and Stalin's writings, which weren't, of course, all *his* writings, but committee writings as true of most leaders. And there was a defensive posture about Stalin. If there's anything that I think of where I wasn't alert enough . . . well, I was, but it wasn't the key thing. Out there on the San Francisco waterfront, I wasn't really concerned about whether Stalin was leader of the Soviet Union or what.

The Soviet Union, as a symbol of the development of a different system than capitalism, was, to me, important. This history was, to me, glorious and magnificent. So that the facts about what was going on in the Soviet Union as far as Stalin's role that later came out . . . and I can't say it shocked me, because I wasn't one of those hard-bitten left-wingers, of which I only knew a few. Most of them I knew were much more flexible and reasonable. I wasn't one of those who felt that everything later depended on whether Stalin

was a good guy or if the party of the Soviet Union succeeded. I saw it as an experiment, I saw it as an extremely important alternative. It was disappointing and discouraging to learn about what was wrong with the Soviet Union and the Soviet party, but I don't think it took away the gains that had been made, you know.

*And when did this start sort of coming into your conscience?*

I didn't begin thinking about this seriously until I was going to school, back to school, that I began to . . .

*Like in the early 1950s?*

In the early 1950s. But it didn't make me anti-Soviet, it didn't make me anti-communist. It made me reflective on what can happen to social movements. And you know, the idea of the day, that communism is dead from the point of view of our president, is ridiculous. That ideology is going to rever-

berate for many, many decades yet to come. It hasn't finished its course of action throughout the world.

Of course, never would I condone the things that we now know that took place there, the kinds of repressions that took place for some people, the kinds of secretive political corruption that was involved. This is what happens when power gets centralized and in no way is open for criticism—which by the way, if anything, made me more reflective about something called “democratic centralism” as it existed in the parties and in the American Communist Party.

Not that I'm opposed to it in any way, but I thought there were many things wrong with the way democratic centralism was understood and developed within the party. Often, later on as the party began to disintegrate, the so-called factions, considered to be “revisionist bourgeois factions,” were talking about the lack of democracy in the way democratic centralism developed within the party, or was used within the party. Many of their objections were to any kind of restriction upon criticism and I suppose they resisted the idea that you had to give way to the majority once the decision was made and carry out that majority view without discussion until the next discussion—which is democratic centralism to some extent. That's not all it is; it is a very complex kind of concept going all the way back to Bolsheviks and the revolution and Lenin's statement on centralism.

*But this was an ideology within the American Communist Party or more progressive . . . ?*

This was the structure of debate and discussion within the party where authority lay at each level of discussion. And centralism means that you centralize your position periodically.

*According to how the masses . . . .*

Well, not just the masses, the membership of the party who were part of the masses and connected with the masses.

One of our self-criticisms about the whole party toward the end of the 1940s was there were just too many non-working-class people who had come in during the war who were carrying with them all of their middle-class concepts and things of that kind, you see, I being probably one of them. But I don't think I was that unclear in terms of party politics. But I remember that I had the feeling that the way democratic centralism was actually applied within the party, because of the stresses on the party and all that, really turned out often to be decisions made at the top coming down, whereas democratic centralism was supposed to be developing the discussion below. The majority agrees at a certain level, then the new discussion's at the next level, then the majority agrees, and then finally at the top, the top represents the culmination of decisions made, at the discussions of the major annual national conventions.

*So at each level there's a consensus.*

Yes, sent up to the next level. And this is the ideal concept, and then when the central committees take an analytically defined position, that becomes the policy of the party, and you don't oppose that until next time; there isn't a continual period of criticism. The period of criticism is during the development of policy. Once policy has developed . . . it's like law; you know, it's like congress' law until you overturn it or change it. However, it was much more rigid than this, because you had a revolutionary fighting party, and therefore it often got distorted.

So I had some objections about this too. But some people were *very* opposed to it and left the party, and there were all the factions, things like that. All that was going on at the time, and it was a rough period.

I guess I've always felt human beings are fallible. I mean, they can take all kinds of programs and develop them either positively or distort them. And a lot of the criticism within the party about its own policies and structure were in terms of this understandable thing that people do—misunderstand policy and failing to see the goal and the long range purposes.

You have people on the one hand saying we should be able to criticize anything at anytime. Well, the answer to that is, well, this can take up hours and hours and days and days while we got big problems, you know, like a strike on the waterfront. So how are we going to come to any conclusions? We have to use the policy we have, and that is it until we have an orderly discussion at some other time. Well, sometimes those discussions would never come about.

And then there was the other group that said, "Whatever the party leadership says, that's it. That's our rule." And then there were even some who were accused of taking leadership from foreign Communist Parties or from the Soviet Union.

That was the basis of charges from the Right against the communist leaders, that they took their orders from the Soviet Union, which is nonsense, absolute nonsense. Certainly the Soviet Union's position on world events and on any matters having to do with a revolutionary movement were very important to the Communist Party of this country, as were the positions of other Communist Parties, very important, because we had a sort of internationalized view of the development of the parties.

But as for taking orders, not only do I doubt it, I mean, I never saw any evidence of it, because I don't think our leadership at times even knew how to interpret what was going on. [laughter] I mean, there were questions to what degree was there an astute Marxist orientation on the part of our leadership? Some were brilliant and some were stumbling along like people like me and a lot of others. I mean, we were not expert Marxists.

*So the American Communist Party had its own agenda and had its own character?*

Yes. However, it was certainly influenced by the agendas of other parties and anything we could learn from them; or we certainly didn't want to be at war with them. I mean, we would often accommodate our position, certainly in terms of labor conditions and strikes and things of that kind. We supported international trade unions and cooperation—certainly we did that. Our party had all kinds of connections with parties in South America and throughout Europe, and issues and materials in our newspapers and in our magazines outlining what was going on in the rest of the world in other parties, and what the agenda was of imperialists in the capitalist system with regard to these countries.

The fear that Americans, in particular the capitalist system of the United States, was prone to fascism, was very much in our minds. You know, we began to hear things, and being conspiratorialists at heart, like most of us are and I was certainly . . . [laughter] I mean, the idea that we were bringing in German scientists, regardless of what their political background had been, bringing them in and using them eventually for the atomic bomb and all that. In fact, we turned the other cheek at thousands of Germans going to

South America and coming here who had had terrible, terrible histories in Germany in terms of the Holocaust and all that. This worried us a great deal, and we saw this as a sign that American capitalism was interested in capital, not necessarily in the direction of . . . .

*So you do feel that many German immigrants that came in were imported into this country, so to speak, having questionable pasts?*

We know that. Oh, we know that now. I mean we get that in the newspapers from the last ten, twenty years. I mean, somebody's always being picked up somewhere.

*But at the time, you feel like you were aware of this?*

We just felt . . . . Oh, yes. We felt that it was quite clear what we were doing, and I think it turned out to be right. There were . . . .

*Do you think most of the American public was duped, or do you think they just went along with the . . . ?*

I don't think they paid attention.

*They paid no attention.*

I mean, some of the commentators would make comments about this. What are we doing? We're bringing in all these Germans whom we're not even investigating, though other Germans can't come in. Or American-Germans are under attack all the time, and yet we're bringing in these guys.

Not only that, but things like Germans that were in the camps that we had in this

country were eating better and having more freedom of action than blacks in the South around them, you know. I mean, they were treated like visiting dignitaries, partly because Americans looked upon them as white Anglo-Saxons and wasn't it a pity that we had to fight them kind of thing.

And so, you know, there was every basis for development of this kind of concern, I think, after the war. Well, for example, we felt that the Truman plan and then the Marshall Plan were aimed primarily at resuscitating Germany and Japan, who had been the centers of fascism and imperialism during the war, for purposes of utilizing their highly developed industry. For our purposes, we wanted to develop them faster than anybody else, and we were turning down all kinds of little countries who had problems because either they were not sufficiently developed or capitalist, or their orientation was more in terms of civil rights, revolutions, and changes. And it was a highly selective system. Those things made us feel that we were living in a time when all the promises of the war, all the promises of movements for change during that war, were being undercut by extremely powerful forces in the world, lead particularly by American and European corporations and capitalists.

And I still feel that. I mean, I feel that this is going on in the world today. One can see those same forces at work.

And if anything is dying, it's capitalism as it was. When I say capitalism, I'm not so simple-minded that I think there is a unitary monetary thing called capitalism. There are capitalist systems, and the system that's developed in the Western world has had its day. Marx wasn't all wrong, his timing was a little off, but it had its day. And all sorts of spin-offs on not only capitalism in its democratic

form, but in its fascist form, and all sorts of spin-offs from the class-conscious revolutions and revolutionary thought will be going on. But Western capitalism as we have known it is tiring, is wearing out. And I say good.

[laughter]

Now however, all of this that I've been talking about here over and over again, the same themes, I suppose, comes back to my own position. I was a trade unionist on the West Coast; I was intellectually a left-wing progressive, strongly influenced by what I knew, which was limited, of Marxist thought, quite loyal to the Communist Party's position, though I had many questions about it. But I felt it was a positive movement and that the things wrong were things that, as far as I was concerned, didn't interfere with its positive role and effect in the work that I was doing where I was. So there's where I was focused.

Secondly, the most important thing in my mind—and I've always tried to figure out how this came about, where it began in my life, but more and more when I think of it, my positive concerns about my party activities—was the role that the party had with American blacks, with African-Americans. That somehow or other, to me, was the litmus test. I mean, where people stood on the race question, where people stood about enfranchisement of American Negroes, either in our country or anywhere, or other minorities certainly, but this was the one that was the main one, in front of any American, was black Americans and the race problem. And I saw it as the single most important, most profound social problem in the United States.

*Because there was utterly no awareness of the fact that the American Indian had any political identity left at this time.*

Yes. Well, I had that in mind, I mean other minorities. Oh gosh, I worked with Hispanic groups on the Third Party campaign. My god, there was a . . . not Hispanics—I forget what they called themselves—oh, Latin Americans for Wallace. And there were Chinese for Wallace, there was a small group that was there, led by a very, very articulate and admirable Chinese guy who I think was in the Marine Cooks and Stewards—I forget his name. And you know, there were these various groups. I don't remember any American Indians being around at that time, except as individuals, not as any activist group.

*Right. As political identities, I don't think they . . .*

However, because of my own interest and background, I always felt that that was one of the great crimes of the development of the American body of politic. Not only the Civil War and its origins and consequences, and reconstruction and post-reconstruction, which I became very interested in later on, but the destruction, the decimation of the American Indians was something that always had been in my mind as one of the great negative events or processes in the development of the United States. But also I saw it as a consequence of unlimited, unfettered free enterprise and capitalism; I made *that* ideological connection during this period. I saw it as a consequence of unfettered, buccaneer capitalism, unfettered greed, open-ended competition with no controls. People got hurt—a lot of people, not just a few. And

people like Native Americans were easy marks. They were perceived as easy to get rid of as the buffalo, but fortunately there are enough around now to cause some trouble, and I'm all for them. Even the little Washoe area is doing fine. [laughter] Much better than some of the people in Africa that I knew and worked with. OK. So that was my focus, on trade unionism, seamen's issues and also at the same time, what I considered to be a major issue in American life—the position of the African-Americans.

*And it's of interest to you, I mean, you just said that you're not quite sure what the origin of this focus was . . . .*

Well, I could come up with something, yes.

*But nevertheless, it was a very strong one right at this time.*

Yes. All the way back even when I was sort of apolitical going to sea at the beginning, somehow or other, that was on my mind, you know, the SUP being all white and . . . .

*Well, you know, when I was asking you way back when we were talking about your early school days and before in Modesto, and you were sort of talking about the different people in your class, you said there was only one African-American.*

Right. And all my life I remembered her, Samantha Henderson. I wonder what ever happened to Samantha. Because I always thought what a courageous thing it was, and that she was so smart and had to work so hard to maintain dignity and maintain a position

there. Though nobody gave her a bad time, in a sense it was because she was isolated.

*Must have been very isolated.*

Yes. As I say, I don't know why [this became such an issue]. It must have something to do with the position of my grandparents on both sides, having somehow or other such an identification with working people or people who are minorities and all that sort of thing. I don't know. I have to think that through.

But anyway, so here was the end of 1948, really now the end. Of course, one of the main things that was happening from the point of view of the union was that we were losing the Union Oil ships. I'm not quite sure just what date this happened or under what circumstances except that the company locked us out somewhere in October or November, sometime at the end of the year. And I called . . . .

*So you think it was after the election?*

During and after. Everything was happening at once. I even called the agent of the NMU, a guy I don't know. He was an old guy and he'd been around a time, but he couldn't remember exactly when we lost Union Oil. But it was at the end of 1948 some time.

We were really not so much on strike as having guys out to the docks to try and defend our jobs, to keep the jobs. And while we were doing this, the SUP was getting guys on the ships by subterfuge, bringing them in by launches around the other side of the docks and all kinds of things, getting them on board and getting the ships out. Sometimes while we were watching waiting to stop finks from coming on, the ship would drop its lines, pull in the oil lines, and take off.



*Oh, that's terrible.*

And we knew we'd been had. And because there was no longer the real push and strength and unity within the union, it happened. So we lost that.

I understand we still have Keystone Oil, two or three ships or something like that. But there are hardly any union ships for seamen to go on from union halls, including I think the SUP—I'm quite sure of it because I visited the SUP hall in Seattle. The maritime life has pretty well come to an end on the West Coast. It's a sad thing. I mean, I feel very disconsolate about it.

Nevertheless, the end of 1948 was a period in which that happened, and so as I remember, I was thinking, "Now what's going to happen? What am I going to do?" Here was a period in which I hadn't shipped out for a couple of months since the *LP St. Clair*; that ship was gone. That was a tragedy, because I remember the guys that I had known had been locked out.

It was a very discouraging time, and we could see the handwriting on the wall with also a deep sense of anger and disappointment at what was going on within our union and throughout the country. The CIO was beginning to be anti-communist, conservative. Union leadership was just sort of selling out right and left because of the pressure that was coming on from the government and from corporations who really had, now, the upper hand. And the anti-communist movement was wiping out the progressive Left, and we could see it was going to happen in maritime, that there was going to be either loyalty oaths or screening or whatever. In fact, it came a year or two later; already had started with some companies that were refusing to hire seamen who had a record of left-wing behavior and sending them back home and

saying, "We can't take you," and then using the Taft-Hartley Bill as their cover, on and on.

This stuff was going on to such an extent nobody knew which way to turn, how to fight it. And there wasn't enough push within the union to do it. ILWU held fast for its own people—a remarkable union all the way through. I attribute that not only to Harry Bridges but to an extremely alert kind of leadership and internal structure they had.

OK. So I remember being on the beach, my friend Pat Tobin and I—we had gotten to know his wife and family very well—and we wondered, "What are we going to do?" So we thought, "Maybe we'll take an off-shore trip. We haven't got tankers anymore. Let's take an off-shore trip." Well, you know, Kathy and I were in deep discussions about it was really time for me to do something else besides maritime. And I had promised it for a couple of years, since the end of the war. And I was in a deep turmoil again about what I was going to do, yet I felt this great pull to sort of stick with it, not just give up.

So, you know, Kathy and I talked about it a lot, and I remember eventually—I think it was in the spring of 1949—I decided to make this one last trip with Pat. Kathy was very much against it, and so I left under a cloud. We had a lot of strong feeling about it on both sides, and I said, "Look, this is my last trip, but I feel I've got to cap it with an off-shore trip now and with a bunch of good guys." And they were. They were all a bunch of left-wingers that I had known who were going to get on this trip. And I just felt I needed . . . I wanted to be there. So I decided to do it.

And in the meantime, I had seen my brother and my parents. I'd see them frequently off and on. And I must say, looking back at some of the things that I've said about

my parents and all of that earlier in this discussion, I haven't given them credit for being extremely . . . not tolerant, because they didn't like what I was doing, but not giving me a bad time about it, not preaching to me about it. In fact, I don't think either of them knew how to preach to me about it. I mean, they were just mystified that they had a son that was out there doing all these, in their minds, crazy things.

They were both progressive people. They had voted Democratic, they were pro-Roosevelt, anti-Hoover and all that sort of thing, anti-war and all that, so that they had this middle-class, progressive social democratic orientation to things, but they weren't prepared to have to deal with a communist, you see.

Also, there was the religious aspect in my mother's mind and all that. But she was careful, and I have to give her credit; she was terribly careful not to try to give me a bad time about it.

My father was just his usual silent self making a few grunted remarks now and then. But nevertheless, he did help us now and then. He lent us money to put down on that house we had in Berkeley, and I was paying him back whenever I could get it, \$100 a month, which at that time was a lot. When I was working, but when I wasn't working, he let me hold it over. So you know, they were very kind.

I didn't learn until later how much this had bothered my mother. In fact, she had a friend who was *very* anti-communist who reported me to the FBI. And I don't think my mother knew this. I learned it when I got my freedom of information stuff. Poor old Elizabeth Deacon, I think her name was. And she felt she had to do something on behalf of my mother, which was to report her son to

the FBI. [laughter] And she wrote a letter, which I have seen, which is absolutely fantastic. You know, she accuses me of every nefarious thing in the world, including Kathy, because she just felt that I was giving my mother such a hard time.

But my mother didn't let *me* know how much it bothered her, which I respect. I think that's great.

When I look back on my folks, I have a lot of feelings about my father which are negative, but at the same time, he never really gave me a bad time, and, in fact, was helpful now and then. His problem was he just was remote. [laughter] He was under remote control.

And so anyway, that was going on. But mainly with Kathy, I felt very badly when I decided to take this trip. Was it in March? No, January of 1949.

I wanted to get away from this horrible . . . I think that this was true of Pat and two or three of the other guys, NMU guys we knew, wanted to get away from that morass on the front which had turned into the most depressing kind of thing. There really was a return to a kind of doldrums, pretty much under, not control, but the umbrella of the right-wing in the NMU. There was just no job situation to create a membership. It was small and it was right-wing and nasty—not all of them, but there were enough there to make it nasty. And you saw programs beginning to fall apart everywhere.

So we took that trip, around Panama to New York. And then I betrayed Kathy once more on this. Coming back from New York, I stayed on the ship and went to France. And that was a dirty trick. And I really felt that Kathy was kind of . . . going to just pull off, and she almost did; she was going to jump ship. [laughter]

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## RELIGION AND CLASS STRUGGLE

**I** WANTED TO ASK you one quick question about your feelings about the Communist Party stance on religion. Did you feel it was a political necessity to turn your back on religion, or did it not affect your personal . . . ?

I never turned my back on religion. I was always a religious as well as secular person. I am now. I have a lot of religious and spiritual feelings and ideas and somewhat mystical . . . .

*But it wasn't a relevant issue for you at the time?*

It was relevant in the sense that I saw the organized churches and the Catholic church and others as being very right-wing politically, that they seldom supported strikes. You know, I figured if they're Christians, for god's sakes, why aren't they out there on the picket line? Why aren't the churches organizing aid? By the way, some did, mostly black churches, you know, and some of the Hispanic . . . .

*Yes, and that's interesting.*

Again, I saw what I considered to be *real* working class solidarity coming from them. Women coming down with pies, black women on the picket line. And there weren't many of them, but they did that along with others. So, you know, my view was if they're Christians, let them show how Christian they are. Who are they for? What's their Christianity for?

You know, "Religion is the opiate of the people." I sort of accepted that notion. In a way, I still do. Certain ways in which religion is organized is opiate. It is the opiate. It's like gin and the Bible for the Native Americans. "Here's the Bible to keep your mind straight as you drink the gin to ease your pain."

In talking about the role of the organized religions, but particularly of the various Christian denominations in relation to class struggles, the church has always been very free with proselytizing and with the conquest of the great territory that's now the United States. I mean, a whole people were decimated, sometimes with representatives of the various missions right along with the troops,

carrying the Bible while others carried gin: “Here’s something to relieve your pain and to fill your mind while we take your land.” And this is something which many thinkers have commented on, the relation of the missionaries in colonialism to power, what their actual role was.

And I do have something to say about that. Later when I was doing fieldwork, I had a very negative opinion of missionaries even though I knew some individually and liked them as persons. I felt that they were misled, that they thought they were doing something that really didn’t result in what they expected, that they were telling people to put their minds to various matters of faith, to read the Bible, to pray. And while they were doing that, these people were being totally oppressed and sometimes killed by their leaders. And under colonialism, very much the same sort of process went about.

I have somewhat modified my view about the contributions made by the kind of missionary who is doing service work and medical work under trying conditions. Some of them had done noble things, magnificent things. At the same time, that doesn’t mean that the movements that they were part of were really positive, were really helping or awakening people to their actual conditions, giving them a consciousness of where they were at and why they were where they were. Not just “God’s will,” but the actions of others in their society or in other societies that were utilizing them, oppressing them. But I can’t say that I’m anti-religious just because I’m anti-church or that I’ve had negative attitudes about the whole process of missionizing, et cetera, in history.

At the same time, I have a lot of admiration for many people that I’ve known or read who are religious and were concerned with broader questions, philosophical questions,

the human condition, and I have felt very strongly about that. Certainly a guy like Mahatma Gandhi was deeply religious, and to me, in a very positive way. He had his spiritual orientation which led him to action, led him to risk himself for larger ideas and for those people in his society and the world’s society who had nothing else to, in a sense, empower them with ideas. And his passive resistance was not passive in the sense of saying, “Do nothing. Just await your fate,” but, “Do something about it.” That’s, to me, admirable. And later there was Martin Luther King Jr., an heroic figure in this regard.

I’ve never been *opposed* to religion, and all through my life when I was dealing with other people, if they were religious—even if they were fundamentally religious in a Christian sense—I could tolerate that. My god, my grandparents were that way on both sides of the family.

But my Swedish grandparents were *deeply* fundamentalist Christians. And I saw this as a very necessary part of their lives. They had nothing else, and they didn’t know how to get anything else. They had no idea that the conditions that they were in as immigrants in this country, coming as peasants from the old world . . . they had no idea how to fight that, what to do about it. There were no ways in which they could attach themselves to any social movements. They wouldn’t have understood them.

And also, the churches of their time were denouncing any kind of unionization or any kind of confederation of people for their own good. No, this was said to be the work of the devil, so put your faith in the Lord. I understood what their situation was, even when I was a little kid and my grandmother spoke in tongues when she was praying in the missions that they would take me to. I remember asking her once something like, “What is that

you're saying? What are you saying, Grandma?"

And she says, "That's the language of heaven. That's the language of God."

And later on, I was thinking, "Gee, there has to be, we have to think of some kind of a language for heaven and with the different hundreds and hundreds of languages of the world. What kind of a language is spoken in heaven?" And my grandmother had an answer. [laughter] And I always thought that it was kind of great that I had heard the language of heaven in my grandmother's speaking in tongues.

And whenever I've done any work with other peoples of other groups, I've always had a great feeling of respect for the ideologies, the faiths, the beliefs that they have that make their lives whole for them, give their lives some kind of structure and meaning. Hell, the people have to have that, and every society in the world has created these kinds of beliefs.

*Well, don't you think among immigrants in particular that maintenance of a religious ideal, even though it might change, would be part of maintaining an ethnic integrity?*

Well, more than that.

*When they've changed everything else?*

Well, they had come from extremely fundamentalist backgrounds, very fundamentalist, straight-laced Scandinavian- Lutheran traditions that came with them here, and that they sought out here in the various charismatic movements. However, it was more than an ethnic . . . . This was inter-ethnic. This allowed them to make connections in their missions and churches with other ethnic groups. My grandparents . . .

*So it was forging a new community.*

. . . my grandparents were able to make connections or have relations with their neighbors who were Jewish or Italian, in some cases even black, which in that time was rare and difficult. Also with Chinese . . . . The Chinese were more difficult, because not many of them were Christians, but anybody who was a Christian, Irish or whatever . . . . My grandfather, he changed his name to an Irish name to be able to go along with them and get jobs in the Irish-dominated lumber camps.

No, it created a multi-ethnic setting for them, which was absolutely essential in order to get along, to make a living, to have connections, to have a network. The mission was a network. And I guess the early trade-union movements would have been a network too, but there was a tremendous amount of propaganda against that, and they were immigrants, and they were going to do the right thing. And the church, they could at least argue that even though most of the people in upper levels of the society looked down on these holy-roller churches, there were a lot of people who belonged, and at least they had the fortification that this was God's will.

Well now, these were important kinds of instruments for survival, and so I've never been against religion unless it takes the form of fortifying the ignorance of people, fortifying their sense of dependence upon unseen forces that are created for them by tradition—except under the conditions where they have nothing else.

*Well, would you say at that time in 1949 and prior to that that you thought that the working-class and the labor unions, in order to achieve some social parity, that most of those ethnic prac-*

*tices and identities were going to have to fall by the wayside? I mean, did you have any idea at all about how people were maintaining their . . . ?*

Yes, I suppose, when I look back—it's very hard to reconstruct one's thinking way in the past.

Yes, but I think that under those conditions and the kinds of things that I was reading and the associations that I had, that I was at that time more strenuously anti-church and anti-religion than I might be now, though I'm still secular and I still hold those general views. I mean, there was a sense of a kind of a warfare with ignorance and traditions that were holding people back. That was very much a part of my thinking and the thinking of most of the people I knew. Not necessarily the people in the Communist Party, but generally progressive people looked with a little bit of wariness on any kind of religious movement that had this fundamentalist calling people to the faith without giving them any instruments to resolve their problems in society. Yes, I think I had a much stronger view of that kind than I had later, and for a good reason.

My god, though, I used to attend black churches in San Francisco. During the Third Party movement, I attended with some of my black friends the churches and would pass out leaflets and things of this kind. And it reminded me of my relations with my grandparents. I mean, it wasn't strange to me or weird or anything of that kind, and I was interested and I also respected the tremendous feeling that was involved there, the positive emotional feeling that people got.

And by the way, this is about the time that the book by Gunnar Myrdal came out, *The American Dilemma*. This is almost forgotten in American life. This was a tremendously powerful piece of work. An

*American Dilemma* or *The American Dilemma*—I don't know which. But it was a masterful, scholarly work that had taken him years to do under auspices of various granting groups in the country. Here was a Swede who had been asked if he would . . . a famous sociologist, asked to come to this country to do that. He took it very seriously, and the statistics, the data in that work was a mind-blower, and it had a tremendous impact on everybody I knew—Gunnar Myrdal's work. In fact, Herskovits had been one of the consultants for it and a number of other people I later was to know. They had been part of it. It was being denounced as a left-wing thing and all that by a few, you know, in the press.

*When you say, "have an impact on you and the people you knew," is this still around the Maritime Bookshop?*

Well, there, of course, because that's where I was. But no, many people in professional life that I knew and people at the universities and the people who were writing, columnists and others. This had a great impact, because it proved or gave a base for what people already felt, that things were *really* bad, that racism was deeply ingrained, was rampant in American society. And he had shown this in every domain of American life. And how he managed to gather that amount of material together with the staff he had, I mean, that in itself was an amazing thing.

*Where was he centered out of? Do you remember?*

Where did he work out of? I forget. Was it Chicago?

*I'm just curious.*

Minnesota? I'll have to check. I forget now. I haven't read this thing in so many years, but I remember that I *poured* through it, and everybody I know poured through it, because here was the proof of what we knew. And it's amazing that when I used to assign this in classes back in the 1970s and 1980s, nobody knew it.

*Yes, I know. I've never heard of it, which doesn't mean anything, but I mean . . . .*

Well, it says an awful lot about history, you know.

*Yes, it does.*

And yet I'm sure . . . I know that that material has moved into all aspects of American life. It's been utilized and it's been picked up by others, and sometimes not even credited, but it gave the impetus for tremendous amount of sociological . . . .

*And this, was it done in the 1940s? Was it done right after World War II, or . . . ?*

I think it came out in 1948 or 1949. You know, he had been working during the 1940s, maybe even earlier. But it had a great impact. Now how deep the impact was, I can't say. All I know is that in the world that I was in, it was . . . .

*But you also said that he was also denounced by the Right . . . .*

Well, the work was denounced as biased, and as this or that by a lot of the usual crazies. However, there was generally a tremendous admiration for the work and respect for it. And it was awfully hard to avoid the implications of it. I mean, it showed that there

was a deep, sharp division in American life, and it offered a good analysis of previous work about African-Americans in American society.

*Was it targeting the race question, or was it all aspects of class differentiation or . . . ?*

Well, it was that also. That was an important part of it. It showed class differences and ideology about these matters and behavior. Oh yes, it was a good sociological work. It was a masterpiece. And you know, sociologists, some of them may have been critical of certain of the methodologies in there, but nevertheless, the material itself was so compelling that I think it probably awakened a great deal of the thinking that went on during the civil rights movement later. It was constantly referred to during the 1960s.

In the 1960s, it was still important as a reference work—the figures for health and for jobs and highly detailed studies of attitudes on different levels of American society. You know, these were very useful things. You even heard it referred to in congress in the 1950s.

*Gosh, you'd think fifty years later it'd really be fascinating to go back and take the same . . . .*

And see . . . . Well, I think it's been done. I don't know enough about the literature now to be sure, but oh, I'm sure that there has been a lot of reflexive work about that. But maybe not enough, because I know students aren't aware of it.

*Not if a book like The Bell Curve can be on the best seller list for . . . .*

Well, that's true, except it got highly criticized too; but at the same time I do think

that works like Myrdal's may not be constantly in the public mind, though the material that's in them has influence.

*Just gets absorbed.*

And has influenced a great deal of other work and consciousness.

I remember when I first was reading it in the late 1940s, it was sort of *the* thing to read, at least among the people I knew, not just the party people or trade unionists, but everywhere. I mean, people were talking about it. It was just a subject of conversation. But I do think there are works like that that sort of disappear in themselves, but have generated an enormous amount of alertness and awareness. And I think there's no doubt about it, that it was integral to the development—at least from the point of view of information—of the civil rights movement. Here was something one could point to and say, "Look. Here are the facts," you see.

So anyway, that was going on. And by the way, you know, anybody wondering why even myself or anybody else was concerned about the so-called Negro problem at that time . . . my god, there were fifty lynchings a year going on in the South! There were beatings and small riots, and god, the Ku Klux Klan was active and highly voluble. I mean, leaders of the Ku Klux Klan and their ilk were able to make public statements that got national attention, parades of thousands of people, even in New York we'd have them, and in various large cities. They had status.

It was a major issue. And when Myrdal's work came out and other works like it and similar works or spin-offs or before—there had been previous very important black writers, DuBois and others—when it came out, it gave us an underpinning for what we

were saying, you know. "My god, it's not only going on here, it's going on all over." And the newspapers report these things, but here is why.

And *The American Dilemma*, that marvelous title, his view being this is *the* American dilemma, and I think it still is. It has not changed. So I'm glad I remembered that, brought that up. That was an important event. That was an important scholarly event, and it had a deep impress on me. In fact, it charged me to do more reading, to do more thinking about it, and I think affected what I did later on when I went back to school, what I was interested in.

So the question of why was I interested not only would have been the impact of earlier experiences on me in my early life that gave a kind of . . . I suppose paved the way in a sense, but it was what was going on. To anybody who was thinking at that time, they had to think of the race problem and the emergence of strong trade unions as two of the major things going on in American life.

Now I'm sure millions of Americans didn't see it that way or even think about it. Nevertheless, to people who were *doing* things in terms of social action, those were the issues. And one can go through two or three decades of issues of the Political Affairs, the major Communist Party discussion magazine, and find that *every* issue deals not only with trade union issues and with party philosophical theoretical issues or Marxist issues, but *always* there was some major discussion going on of the race issue and the development of Negro nationalism and consciousness and what this meant theoretically. And women's issues—not as much, but here and there—white male chauvinism and women's issues.

*No one* else was doing it. Of course there were others now and then, writers and



thinkers, who were commenting on it, but there was no movement that carried this along. So that's why I made such a point of that.



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## THE AMERICAN COMMUNIST PARTY

**N**OW WE WERE on the subject of the verges of the beginning of the disillusion of the Communist Party. We had talked about disillusion in the party when Browderism almost brought about the disruption of the party because of his revisionism and social democratic orientation and things of that kind. But that was nothing like the *real* disillusion that was going on at the end of the 1940s with the attacks upon not only communists, but everybody who was doing anything progressive was tagged as a red.

From a political point of view, it was quite clear at the time—and we were very aware of it—that this had to do with post-war attempt on the part of corporations and capitalism as we saw it, those big capitalized words that require a lot more identity than I can give them here.

Nevertheless, there was that post-war drive to control markets, to control trade, to extend it throughout the devastated world; to put American interests foremost under the guise of all kinds of aid programs and health programs, the Marshall Plan and this and that

and the other; along side of the Taft-Hartley Bill in the United States that was *clearly* meant to weaken trade union organization, and to weaken hiring halls as far as we were concerned in our union. All these things together and the arrest of the leaders of the Communist Party, the indictment of them, at least, at that point, all of these things pointed to a massive move against the Left. And not just the far Left, not the Communist Party. That was the tag. It was against all progressive parties and all progressive movements, particularly within trade unions. And then all of the so-called front organizations that were “toadies of the Communist Party” and all that crap was going on.

Henry Wallace was tagged with the red label, that he was a dupe of the Communist Party. All of this happening within a space of two years. It was massive, and it had its effect. The party began to, I would say, disintegrate. Dissension was in the party, and it awakened all the factionalism that had been lying there that had been put aside, particularly during the period when we thought the CIO was really moving toward very progres-

sive goals and that there was a chance for success, that there was going to be change, social change and all that because of it, more power for working people in the unions.

And then we began to see the shadows coming, this warfare was really one-sided, and they were . . . the Right was able to split unions.

*Well, the CIO actually started expelling unions that were communist . . . .*

Yes, in 1948, 1949, 1950, our union, Joseph Curran and his group had successfully at last been able to raise the flag of anti-communism, the specter of communism within the union. Curran hadn't dared do that before, because he was an opportunist. The party was helping him and had kept him in power, and then when he had the chance, he moved. And the chance came when the CIO began to have factionalism within it about the Left and then the Taft-Hartley Bill explicitly called upon unions to get rid of their trouble-makers and all that sort of thing, and undermining the hiring halls so that employers could actually begin to affect the hiring and things of that kind. All of this was happening, and it was doing its job.

So that by 1949, we had lost the Union Oil ships, and to me, that was direct. That was my immediate interest. I had been at the hall, and I was a trade unionist on the West Coast and maritime worker, and here after all these struggles, our own national leadership under Curran was undermining our attempts to hold those ships and making deals with the SUP on the coast and actually saying so.

Curran, at one point in that period, said something like, "There's no reason why *we* should be sailing there. That's SUP territory,"

et cetera. And then he would deny that he had said it. It was terrible, because he created such confusion among the membership. They didn't know half the time which way we were going. Our meetings were shouting matches between one group or another, between those accusing others of revisionism and petty bourgeois attitudes, social democratic revisionism as against left sectarian people way on the other side who were anarchists and Luddites. And name-calling began to happen within the party, and little factions pulled off and began to write their own literature and leaflets and send out all kinds of calls for special meetings, undermining the authority of local communist leadership and denouncing individuals. Oh, it was a *terrible* time.

I don't think I'm exaggerating, and I think anybody who was there at that time . . . . I wasn't one of the more informed and aware characters, but some of those that I admired—needn't name their names—leading communist figures in the maritime union, even they were deeply troubled. They didn't know quite how to handle it except to call for discipline, organization. And the more the party called for discipline, democratic centralism, the more these looser factions on the outside began to say, "This is undemocratic. This is not the way."

And I remember there was a pamphlet put out by the San Francisco leadership of the Communist Party on democratic centralism—or maybe it was the leadership of the central California party. Nevertheless, it sort of laid out the basic party views based on Leninism of what democratic centralism was: how it worked, how the structure of discussion worked; starting at the bottom going up to the top through various levels, through discussions, taking positions. Once positions

were taken, that was your position till it got up to the top, and then the top also then entered its views. And the final view at the national convention, annually or every two years, at that, when the position was taken, that was it. If you disagreed, you waited till the next round of those discussions. Otherwise, you were a disrupter, you were “an enemy of the people.”

I never really liked these kinds of terms, these kinds of attitudes, but at the same time, I could see how important they were. There had to be some kind of disciplined center of action. And when you saw what happened when there wasn't, you realized, “We're going nowhere. We're going to be swamped.” And we were. [laughter] We were swamped.

You know, there was the idea of a party as a vanguard of the working class, those old sort of time-worn terms that we were using at that time, and they had sense. I mean, to me, it was sensible. Even though I didn't feel that I personally could really be a leader under those conditions, that I was not constitutionally capable of working indefinitely under that kind of direction and personal discipline, nevertheless I respected the need for it and could see that under certain conditions, by god, that was the only way to work, or you had nothing. Not that I was of two minds about it, but I just accepted the fact that I had limitations in the degree to which I could accommodate this kind of centralizing organization, because basically I struggled for my own intellectual and personal independence. But I was willing to give it up at periods of time when I felt that it made sense. It's like war. I mean, you know, during the war, we didn't strike. We called for cooperation, in industry and . . . .

*And you made a personal accommodation to your . . . .*

Yes, and the personal accommodation was that when there's a task that involves the struggles of people who you agree with and you feel strongly about, then by god, this is the time to relinquish some of your personal predilections and feelings and enter in full-heartedly.

So I understood intellectually, I think, the concept of democratic centralism, and it made a kind of a sense to me, *if it worked*, you know. And of course, what was happening was that many of the factions within the local party groups that I knew about were saying, “It's not working. It's not democratic. It's centralism without democracy.” Well, part of that was really true, because what was happening is that the party and similar organizations were under such pressure. You know, we were sure that at every meeting we had, there were FBI agents. Oh, in fact we learned later it was *true*—that people we thought we trusted were working for the FBI, making reports to it, just as informers had done this during trade union struggles in the past.

And so, on the one hand, there were the people saying, “There is no democracy now, because everything is being done from the top downwards. Where are our disagreements and interests being expressed in meetings here? What's happening to them? They don't even move up. Nobody cares. We're getting it from top down.”

Of course, this left some of the far Right within the party moving into a much more respected level, because leadership must all be coming from the Soviet Union, that we were following their dictates. You know, crap like that was going on, that every move had to be sanctioned by the Soviet Union. And to *some degree*, the coordination of parties throughout Europe and the Soviet Union did have an influence on national leadership

views, but that's not what was happening down below.

However, it *was* pretty much a matter of us, in a sense, getting directives about what our position should be, and then pretty much having to rubber stamp it. That was beginning to happen, and therefore, a lot of factionalism developed around that. At the same time for a while, even though I even agreed with some of the factional views that were going on, I felt this was a lousy time for us to be raising these issues.

And, of course, the answer to that was, "That's why the working class isn't behind you," instead of saying, "They're not behind you because billion dollar presses are at work propagandizing against the Left," you know.

It was always the fault of the group, the party, or the union. You can't galvanize the working class when they are given directives, it has to come from them.

Well, to a considerable extent, our positions locally *were* from the people we were working with, so I didn't feel . . . I wasn't a factionalist. I felt, "While I'm in the party, I am going to work with the basic legitimate structure, and when I can see a reason for doing so, or else we've lost everything." Well, we were losing everything anyway. The party was breaking up.

When I say the party was breaking up, that's a little premature, because there were a lot of strong cords throughout the country of support for the leadership when they were indicted. There was still a lot of action going on. But where I was, within the maritime unions, I could see it all beginning to crumble, and I think people that I knew felt that.

But we weren't prepared to oppose the party or denounce it. That happened later, later for good reason. A number of people that I knew took issue with what was left of

the party, but not at this point in 1948 and 1949.

And so my feeling of solidarity—not only class solidarity, but with the party—was maintained. Even as uncomfortable as that was at times and as disheartening to see what was happening, I felt the only chance we had was to maintain this sort of so-called democratic centralized development of policy, even though *I* began to feel that anything that we thought down below was not affecting anything up above.

But I can't even now bring myself to blame the party for that happening. There was every reason for it to be disrupted and for the processes that had been working earlier not being able to work under these conditions. There were a lot of serious mistakes on the part of people that we had put into leadership. It was a . . . what would be the word for it? Not only confusion, but a kind of a desperate scramble to hang on to what had been there, and it wasn't working.

So that isn't why we lost the ships, because of the Communist Party. We lost the ships because of the finagling going on in the whole trade union movement. And the anti-communist aspect of it was purely an instrument of the Right within the trade unions. And like the McCarthy period that was looming right up ahead—two or three years ahead—the most convenient weapon of the Right, and even of sometimes well-meaning moderates, was the legendary commies, the reds. They were the cause . . .

*Do you remember when Russia exploded the atomic bomb?*

Yes, was that 1949?

*I believe it was. Yes, that must have fueled . . .*

Well, that made a big difference. Oh, you bet. [laughter]

*And it was also 1949, wasn't it, that Mao . . . ?*

And also, yes, the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

*I mean, what a year!*

Yes, that was just while I was on this other ship. [laughter] We'll get to that. So anyway, I guess I made that point about why I did not leave the party at that time. Because I felt there's still something here to work with, and there's nothing else. There's nothing else. Democratic, Republican Party, all these other little splinter parties, various kinds of small groups around—there was nothing else that had a structure to be a vanguard for working-class thinking.

But the party was losing that edge. It was losing the reputation, the confidence that people had had in it. It was being looked upon as a loser.

*Was there an intellectual leader of the party that you were . . . ? Was there any particular person who was writing in . . . ?*

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Well, not any particular person. I would say people like William Z. Foster was a pretty effective Marxist working-class scholar who was the chairman of the Communist Party. There were lots of local writers like Herb Tank who had been a seaman and all, writing pamphlets. Who were some of them? Pettis Perry, a black figure within the party. I had a tremendous amount of respect for him.

*I guess the point of my question was to ask you if part of the reason you also did not leave the party*

*at the time is that there was still a tremendous . . . . I know you said it was the only platform for addressing social issues available at the time, but also, there still must have been an intellectual appeal to you. I mean, I'm asking if there was an intellectual appeal.*

Within the party?

Yes.

Well, the intellectual appeal was Marxist. And what little . . . not that I consider myself now or certainly not then any kind of a well-read Marxist thinker, what I had read, what I was aware of, and what had filtered to me through the general literature, et cetera, made sense. I saw it as a powerful idea and still do. I mean, there's no doubt about it. But I saw it really through the lens of trade union work and the lens of the world I was working in pretty much and as it came through to us. But I also had an independent . . . . I read some of the works of Lenin. I was very interested in the Bolshevik Revolution, how it had taken place, what the details of it were, how it managed to succeed. I was interested in other aspects of left movements throughout the world, the development of the IWW, the earlier Luddite movements, which were the early anarchist movements that helped me understand what had happened earlier when I was at sea with a lot of anarchist seamen, and what their views were—how it had come down the SUP, in a sense, as a repository of the remnants of the old Wobbly movement of the old seamen and how the Trotskyists made full use of this because they were, in our terms then, left-sectarians way out on the left. They were a movement, but certainly not a labor movement. They made use of these kinds of views. So yes, I was interested in that intellectually.

And people like . . . . See, a lot of my reading had to do with the race problem—DuBois was very important to me, as I said earlier, and Herskovits' work. And people like Harry Haywood, as I have mentioned already, and Pettis Perry in the party. There were a number of such people that I would read. But I can't really say that this was highly intellectual reading. I wasn't reading the European philosophical communists, you know. Later on, I began to read some of the, I suppose, more advanced Marxist thinking, particularly in sociology and anthropology later on. But at this point, it was pretty hit and miss. I was grabbing at ideas and straws and what made sense to me.

What held me intellectually while I was in the party was essentially its policy, its action, the things that it did that I thought were meaningful, that made sense, and things that I could involve myself in that made sense. And where party policy gave us a perspective about what we were doing that made it more than a day-to-day combat or struggle, but had long-range perspectives—socialism as the goal, I never really had . . . . I think I've said this, I never really thought a socialist revolution was around the corner like some of the guys that I ran around with. You know, "When is the revolution coming? We're ready." But I never felt that.

I felt that I would always be a socialist of some kind or other, that so-called free enterprise, you know, free-for-who capitalism would have its day. It couldn't go on. In fact, that's very clear today, that it crumbles. As Marx has said, it has the roots of its own destruction.

And the destruction and the eating away aren't overnight. I mean, this can be decades. It can mean a century or more. While the world experiments, finds out new ways to organize itself, there are great dangers because

it can go in many directions, it can become horrible. The worst kind of oppressive societies can develop, as well as experiments and directions that are new and accommodate more of basic human needs and requirements on all levels.

Oh, I guess later, not then, I was reading some of the idealists, the socialist thinkers in the eighteenth, nineteenth century, San Simon and others, but that was a little later. Nevertheless, I still felt that the communist organization as it had developed out of the Bolshevik Revolution was a very important weapon and tool. You had to have some kind of vanguard that developed strategy and developed it in terms of as much democracy as possible.

And what had happened in the Soviet Union, it was very depressing. It bothered me, but I wasn't surprised, because I think that experiments like this are going to come and go as human political and social life have in the past, and will continue to do so. And what is happening in various sections of the world show that these ideas aren't dead, certainly not communism or socialism as goals, whatever that means to various people. I mean, it means completely different things to different people, but there are certain principles you're going to draw out of it and say, "This is what it means generally."

But, you know, questions of how you distinguish it from what we've called fascism and all that . . . . We've had a lot of weird thinkers in this country, saying that communism and fascism link together, that they're the tail in the mouth of the snake and all that—such bullshit would go on, you know, in order to *really* undermine and cloud the issue. They are two distinct systems of government. They can *become* like each other, though, but by internal change and corruption and influences from the outside. You know, to what



degree did the Soviet Union develop the way it did with the ability to create the deeply corrupt inner core that it had? A response to the conditions of the Cold War. How much was this the pressure to militarize to maintain in some way or another warfare against the aggression of the so-called capitalist world? We could go into that on and on and on.

I wasn't then and I'm not now depressed by it or surprised. Is China going to be communist? Is it socialist? Is it what? Is it doing what a large mass of people want to do to find their way through to something better?

*A lot of that discussion is reminiscent to me of the whole discussion on whether the Kalahari bushmen are hunter-gatherers or not.*

Precisely.

*Well, whatever they are, they're still going about their business. [laughter]*

Yes, with a lot of things in their way. But the point, to me, is that, like the Republic of China, it may have within it the roots of some terrible things. It may turn out to be a horribly repressive and evil regime or social experiment. On the other hand, it may not. Maybe it's evolving in another direction and all that. We all have to see, just as we had to see with the Soviet Union. We'll have to see about Cuba, our great enemy, our "enormous" enemy right beyond our border that is about to destroy us.

And you know, we'll see where it's going. We'll see what's happening in the various struggling democratic experiments and movements throughout the world, partly that we have helped to engender and then immediately clamped down on them when they

they're no longer good trading parties. [laughter]

*When they start exhibiting some free enterprise. [laughter]*

Well, when they're not supplying us what we want as free enterprise. And we'll have to see where these various movements go. But the idea that the impetus of these earlier revolutions is dead, is ridiculous. It's there. Is it Marxist? To some extent, it is, but it's many other things; that just happened to be one of the most singularly powerful ideologies that came out of the end of the nineteenth century.

*Were you aware at this time, and were people writing about at this time, the developments in colonial Africa in terms of the communist—democratic . . . ?*

Oh, yes, yes. There were things in the literature, as I remember, a little later when I became more aware of these things, denouncing the Soviet Union for infiltrating and arousing African nations to anti-colonial movements; and then the reverse side, that the left-wing communist-inspired movements were the basis for renewing these societies. On and on. Oh yes, there was a lot of this *beginning* to take place, but I would say it was in the 1950s that it was really took place as . . . Well, when did India get independence—1949, 1950, something like that?

*I thought it was in the early 1950s.*

Well, Indian independence sort of sparked it. And Indonesia was an example of knocking off the colonial yoke. And it did begin to reverberate throughout the world.

There were other reasons for it spreading, but that was a great symbol. Here as a large population . . . .

Yes. *Well, the jewel in the crown.*

And a little later, when the French were driven out of Vietnam and all that, and we got our little licks in there. Got licked.

*Because we didn't understand history. [laughter]*

Well, we don't. We don't.

So anyway, that was all that was going on, Penny, a lot. And how much of it I was struggling with at one time, I can't tell way back then, except I remember that this kind of thing was constantly coming across to us, all these various kinds of problems and issues.

## ONE LAST TRIP

SO I'M BACK in San Francisco at the end of this long NMU lockout, when Union Oil Company finally locked us out for good and was able then to turn the ships over to the SUP. And I must say I felt that I'd lost my own home, my own life. I had given a lot of time to the Union Oil ships. And a lot of the guys I knew, a lot of the seamen I knew, they just left. They just left San Francisco and went to other ports looking for jobs or took jobs ashore. At least for the progressive Union Oil seamen that I knew, it was a terribly disappointing and ugly period.

And I just felt terrible. You know, you feel that somehow you're responsible, that we hadn't really put up a good fight to save those ships. But the ship owners . . . Union Oil was determined to get rid of us. So maybe we were the cause because we were so nasty they wanted to get rid of us. No, they didn't like our constant demands for increased conditions, wages, and they didn't like the fact that we were a very feisty and proud group of workers.

We did our job. I mean, I remember this. On most of those ships, our ship committees worked on this, getting the crews to be good seamen. We even had training for ordinary seamen on ships, on two of the ships that I sailed on, and I heard that the others did. So we got the job done, but when the company wasn't living up to its part of the agreement we raised hell, you see. We'd do something about it. Get the patrolman down, go up to see the ship owners if necessary at their offices. And this wasn't nice, and they didn't like that.

The SUP seamen were more passive. They could get pretty mad and throw stuff overboard and wreck things and have wild events now and then, but in general, they would comply. And everything was worked up through the offices of the union to make the deals and work things over and decide which beefs were worthy and which weren't, rather than coming from the seamen.

So that's gone. That was gone. And it was happening throughout . . .

*Did the National Maritime Union actually dissolve?*

No, no, not the National Maritime Union. It's still there. [laughter] There's hardly anything left of it except on the East Coast.

*Yes, I was a little unclear about that.*

Oh, no, no, our union agents and halls are still . . . at least a few of them, not all of the halls, but they have hardly any seamen and hardly any ships. I mean, it's a depression on the West Coast, at least. On the East Coast, not so good either even though they've got the major shipping out there for the NMU. No, it's a bad time. I was talking to a couple of guys in the NMU, and you know, they're lucky to send out twenty to thirty jobs in a month, and not even that much sometimes.

*Wow. It's almost like a token.*

Yes. I mean, there are just a few guys sitting around the hall waiting for their cards to come up. And also that affects the race situation of the union, because, you know, in the South, whites come first. Even though we fought that, now there's nobody struggling against it.

And blacks just left. There are a number of blacks in the ILWU and in the Marine Cooks and Stewards, but the maritime ain't the place to get jobs for them. They're out getting jobs elsewhere.

So all right, so here in the end of 1948 with all this going on, myself and a few other guys, including Pat Tobin, my good friend, we decided to take an off-shore ship, get away from this coast-wise frenzy, take a ship, and get back to sea and feel like something. Well,

as I said, this was somewhat critical with Kathy and myself, because Kathy felt it was time for me to come ashore, get a job, see the family more, and do what I had always planned to do—get back to school, or whatever, but I just couldn't go on year after year doing this. And now there weren't even jobs.

And by the way, this was just before . . . a year later, 1951 or so, then came the program of screening all left-wingers off the ships; you couldn't get a job anyway if you had been left. And nobody else was getting many jobs, but you were just told you couldn't sail.

So it was just before this that we got on a ship, the *Pine Bluff Victory*. I don't even remember what company that was, U.S. Lines or Luchenbach. And of course it took a while for the shipping agents to put other companies down except War Shipping Administration, because during the war, almost all the ships were under War Shipping Administration. But I think it was a Luchenbach ship. Well, anyway, at least when we left.

So four or five of us managed at the right time to be there and take jobs on *Pine Bluff Victory* that was heading around the canal to New York. And so we piled on that ship.

And this is after I had long conversations with Kathy promising her that this was my last trip, that I just *had* to have a kind of an end trip, at least an off-shore trip, because I felt that all this coast-wise and all this problem within the last year or two has made me feel that I was no longer really going to sea, and I had to go to sea. So she agreed to that, that I'd get off in New York.

And so we took off. And it was kind of very nostalgic. It was kind of a sad trip, because we used to sit around, four or five of us and the other members of the gang, talking about the things that were happening to the

union and the glory days of the past and all that sort of thing. And it was just like—oh, what would you call it?—a feeling that something had come to the end, and we didn't know where it was going.

And, of course, internationally, all kinds of things were happening. This was on the eve of Mao Zedong's declaration of the People's Republic of China. Oh, I think Alger Hiss was indicted in this period. And the party leaders had been indicted, and so much was going on. I think it was the year that Gandhi died; Gandhi died in either 1948 or 1949, I don't know which. All these things were affective, even to the guys that I knew. Gandhi was something of a strange but heroic kind of figure.

So anyway, we went down the coast—nice trip, as I remember, good weather—and we went through the Panama Canal, in this old scow, this Luchenbach *Pine Bluff Victory*, and I don't even remember what cargo we had. But we went through the canal—that's always a beautiful trip anyway—and through the Caribbean. And I remember, you know, how I had been taken off in Curaçao and put in chains, way back, and we were exchanging all kinds of stories of this kind about our experiences, our wartime experiences, until we got to New York.

*Did you have any ports of call there?*

I don't think so. I think we stopped briefly at Panama. I don't recall stopping. No, the ship was heading toward Europe, and this was just an interim. It was two trips, because there was pay-off in New York, and then you had to re-sign or say you were going to stay on.

And so on the way up, I was thinking, "What am I going to do?" I didn't want to go ashore yet, and I felt terribly guilty . . . aw-

fully guilty about my kids, about Kathy. But I had formed certain kinds of alliances during the trip, and they were going to go on to Europe, and I just had this awful feeling that I could not leave now. I wasn't ready. I needed this last trip, and I felt wonderful being out, off-shore, out to sea. And also, then, terribly guilty about being away from home. I was a pretty miserable cat.

So I got to New York, and I think I'd made a decision I was going on, but my problem was, how was I going to spill it. And while I was there, I wanted to do something positive, so I went out and renewed my A.B. Out at Sheep's Head Bay there is a maritime center out there, and I got my new green A.B. ticket. I had had a wartime sort of ticket, and I wanted to have a regular able seaman ticket, and I got it. And I was very proud of myself. I passed the exam, and it wasn't a great one.

And so then I remember . . . I don't think I called them. I telegraphed, because people didn't telephone across country in those days. I sent a telegram saying, "The ship is going to Le Havre."

It was a long telegram, an expensive one, in which I was explaining why I felt I had to make this end of the trip and that I would be coming back to the East Coast and would then come directly home, and then we would talk about where things were going. And I realize, now, here was Kathy, who had stuck with me, tolerated my actions and my wishes for a number of years, and who, although she wasn't fully in agreement with all my political views—though she was very left, very progressive—and she didn't always approve of how I was going about it, she nevertheless stuck it out and was supportive during all that time and did her part well. She did much more than her share of working and worrying about the family and taking care of things.

And here I was, always coming and going, though I did spend quite a bit of time ashore with the family and doing various things. Nevertheless, it was a rocky life. It was not conducive to a long-term relationship lasting. When I look back, I wonder how it did, but it did.

And anyway, so I sent this telegram trying to explain and making all kinds of new promises and realizing as I did it that I was a liar, that I had already compromised myself. Nevertheless, then I waited. And I don't remember how I got the word. I guess it was another telegram, something that was very brief. "Do what you have to do. If you feel you have to do it, do it." Well, that's the worst kind of thing you can get, you know.

And I had no idea what she really meant and all that, but my feeling was that she was saying, "This guy has turned out to be a real ass." [laughter] And I felt very badly. But those years . . . .

Then I remember writing her and saying, "I am leaving. Thank you for your telegram. And I will be going, and you will hear from me as soon as I get back or from France." It was a long letter, and I sent it off. That's what single-minded nuts of the kind that many of us are did. I was going to do what I was going to do, damn it.

On the other hand, I couldn't imagine leaving [the ship] then. I just felt I was in such poor shape personally about what I was going to do, that I was a no-good, and that I would feel worse unless I carried something through with these guys that I was with and everything. Poor reasoning, but nevertheless, if I had left at that time, I think I would have gotten back as a blubbing mess on the West Coast, feeling guilty about not carrying something to some kind of conclusion, doing it gracefully, I mean, not just quitting and say-

ing, "Oh, I'm going home now," you know. I just couldn't do that. And at the same time, I was about to lose a relationship if I wasn't very careful, and I wasn't being careful. It was a bad time. It worked out, but lord knows how.

So anyway, off we go across the Atlantic, and this crew was . . . we had a very left-wing crew except for two or three guys who were real phonies. I mean, they were the phoniest of phonies. [laughter] They were not only right-wing in their thinking, in their politics. They didn't have any politics, they were just against everything that we were doing. They were suspicious, and they were spying on us, and one guy was keeping a journal about our activities and what we were saying, which he later turned in to the FBI when we got back. But I figured it was worth it. We had a feeling of being left-wing seamen doing our job. We were good seamen, all of us, and this ship was run well. I don't remember us having any trouble with the officers.

*Were you a delegate on this ship?*

I don't remember whether I was delegate or whether Pat was delegate. I forget. One of us. Oh, no! I was delegate, but there were I would say, seven or eight delegates. [laughter] We all were people who had been leaders on the front, on ships, and we had a feeling of camaraderie that was very good. The other members of the crew were respectful of us and liked us, and you know, they had been through the Curran and anti-Curran struggles and were sort of hip politically, except for these two or three guys.

I think one was in the engine room and one was even on deck. And they were foul guys. They really were. They were drunken bastards with evil intent. [laughter] I don't

think I need to soften that at all. They were scroungy characters. They were enemies of the working class. [laughter]

But anyway, so we made the trip over. We went to Southampton and unloaded and loaded some cargo there and went across to Le Havre and just were there a day, I guess, and then moved down to Dunkirk. Imagine! We had the feeling, "Here we are at Dunkirk," you know, the Battle of Dunkirk from the beginning of the war. Dunkirk was in all the news and was kind of an icon—you know, where the British had lost all those men, and we had done so too—the beaches of Dunkirk.

So here we're tied up at Dunkirk, and we hadn't been tied up for an hour before a delegation from the local trade unions swarmed to the dockside handing out leaflets . . . [laughter] . . . in French, you know, calling for action opposing the Marshall Plan. "Join us, you American seamen," and all that. And so as delegate, I just went down, and I told them, you know, through a translator—I used to speak a little French in those days; not much—but I just said, "Well, we're with you. We agree with you. I'd say most of this crew would agree with you."

"Oh!" there were great cheers. [laughter]

There were a number of women there. They all had signs, and they had these leaflets I still have. And they were so excited.

In fact, this was the beginning of our problem with the phonies who were watching. [laughter] Oh, boy! And I'd say the officers were getting very leery. They were afraid that there was going to be some kind of demonstration holding us up or something like that. And I remember Pat and I went up and assured them, "No, this is just trade union business. We're being greeted by French trade unions." [laughter] And it was really a won-

derful moment. I mean, you know, there must have been . . . .

*It must have been wonderful after kind of the depressing dissolution you just had left . . .*

Yes, right.

. . . to see this . . . .

And then they heard, you know, we were CIO. "Oh! CIO! National Maritime! Oh, yes, we know. You people have done such good work." And they were terribly happy about our being there and kind of telling us how wonderful we were. And here they had come to proselytize, and we were right there.

So then they said, "Well, we're going to have a big meeting. We want you to come. We want you to come."

So they put out this leaflet about our attendance that I have here now: "A Meeting For Peace." Starts out, "The capitalist Americans are preparing the Third World War, *but* we will have a grand reunion for peace." And this was mid February. I'd forgotten that. "Rue de Callais a Dunkerque. And come, because we're having delegations of Americans who are going to speak to us," and all that. [laughter] All of this happened almost overnight. We hadn't even agreed to anything.

*Yes. Because they've already got a leaflet.*

They've already got a leaflet saying that we're going to be part, because we had partly said, "Yes, we'll come," you know. But they had us now as speakers and honored guests; we were going to be honored guests.

Well, it was quite wonderful, I must say. It was crazy, but it was wonderful. And so they

wanted somebody . . . one of us to be a speaker, so, you know, the crew said, “Well, hell, d’Azevedo, you’re a delegate, *you speak*.” So we went to this big gathering.

God, here we were in Dunkirk. I had this strange feeling. Now here I am where a major event of the war had taken place, and here I am on an American ship and a member of the American trade union, opposed to American policy in Europe—the post-war period Marshall Plan—pretty much thinking in defense of the Soviet-Union against the Cold War moves, the Truman doctrine, and so on. And I was thinking, you know, a strange peculiar position to be in.

And yet, I felt strongly about it, that this was what I should do, what we should do. And these guys were all on the verge of a strike of their own. Not only French dock workers, but seamen and a number of other unions were involved in it.

*And they were opposing the Marshall Plan.*

That was just one of the things. They were mainly denouncing what they called the American moves toward a Third World War—I guess the Cold War. They were denouncing American policy. And here we were, you know, being invited to be part of it.

So I remember this big meeting. There must have been two or three thousand people just massed into this little Rue de Callais area. And they were giving speeches in French, which we couldn’t follow, and passing out leaflets and waving banners and singing songs. And they were singing “The International,” so I knew there was a good sizable group of French Communist Party people involved. [laughter] It was an extremely delightful and high spirited kind of a meeting.

And then they said, “And now we’re going to have a delegate from the CIO,” you know, “from America, from the *Pine Bluff Victoire!*” [laughter]

I had a few ideas of what to say, so I gave a short little speech of solidarity supporting their strike and the French working-class, and we understood the kind of struggles they were in, because we were in the same kind of struggles, and we too felt that the Marshall Plan was really a plan that was going to help big business and capitalists and not really aimed at the people of ravaged Europe or elsewhere in the world that needed help. And it was something that we opposed too. It was about five minutes, less than ten minutes, and oh god, there was cheers, and we were carried on people’s . . . people picked us up and carried us around, and I don’t know, slapped all kinds of badges on us. [laughter]

And I hadn’t really been in anything like that since the waterfront in its heyday; you know, on May Day parades and things. And here, it was a big one.

There were parties afterwards. And I was invited to some guy’s house. He had a house out on a farm, but he was a worker in some plant. He wanted to have me at his home, wanted me to meet his wife and his kids. It was this very simple sort of peasant-like house, and that’s where I had my first real French-fried potatoes. [laughter] You know, little whole potatoes that had been deep-fried, and I forget, some kind of stew. And it was wonderful. Lots of wine, and I guess I got drunk, and everybody was singing. And I went weaving back to my ship, with some new friends accompanying me. It was quite wonderful. I must say that I liked it; I liked that kind of thing. It felt good. Also I felt with all of the gloom that we had been through this was worth it. We needed it, and



it was good. And the other guys in the crew were being wined and dined at different places.

I went back to the ship, and on the way, I was asked by one of the people in the group did I want to go to a big strike that was going to take place in Lille, center of the textile industry in northern France. There was going to be a big strike, and there was going to be a great big gathering in Lille. Did I want to go? It was only an hour or two hour trip. And I had time off from the ship, so, "OK, I'll go."

So next day, we headed off to Lille, and here was an enormous demonstration. There must have been 10,000 people. They just filled the streets. And speakers from the left-wing members of the government, from Paris, were there giving speeches and denouncing everything, and, you know, calling for working-class solidarity. And then at one point—what's her name?—Germaine something-or-other (she was a communist leader) turned and says, "And we have an American from the *Pine Bluff Victoire*."

I wasn't asked to speak, but, you know, they were pointing me out, and so I had a little coterie who was showing me around and introducing me around.

And then we marched. It was an enormous march, singing all these patriotic songs, French patriotic songs and "The International" through the streets of Lille, and it lasted two or three hours. Then we had to get back in this little broken-down car that this guy had, and we all piled back to Dunkirk.

I had one thing that I wanted to do while I was in France, and that was to get into Paris, which was I forget how many hours by train—not far—and see some friends of mine, Earl Kim and Nora, who had been friends of ours in Berkeley way back, a composer. And he

was in Paris, and a couple of other people that I knew, and I wanted to see them. And so I still had a day or two of shore leave, and I got on a train by myself and went to Paris and met Earl and Nora.

And when I got there, they said, "I don't know if we should be talking to you!" [laughter]

And they waved in front of me an edition of a newspaper *Lumet Etet?* with headlines, "American delegate denounces Marshall Plan," and I'd say a whole page of the speech that I had given in five minutes, that had now been amplified by many editors into the complete position of the French Communist Party, I'm sure, on the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine.

I was a little taken aback by this. This was the kind of thing that I felt didn't sit well. I thought, "This wasn't the thing to do. This puts me on the spot, it puts my crew on the spot," and . . . Oh, and when I read it and worked it out with my poor French and the help of others, you know, it isn't that I would disagree with what was said, it was the tone. I was making great denunciations and calling for, you know, action and all that sort of thing. So, although it was kind of funny, I didn't feel good about that. But I had a wonderful day with Earl and Nora and others tooling around Paris.

*Now what was their last name?*

Kim was his name, Earl Kim. And Nora Phillipsborn, whom had married.

So a wonderful day. And when I got back to the ship, of course, the word had gotten there. And these guys that I knew were saying, "You know, Warren, this is going a little far. Jesus, we're going to have a little trouble with this," and I felt that too. On the other hand, they were in agreement, but they just

felt it was a little bit of grand-standing on my part. In a sense, it might have been, but I really didn't intend it to be that way—hadn't started out being that way.

So here I was a delegate of a crew who had just given a major supposedly complete speech, advertised in Paris, denouncing American policy and all that. So then these two or three phonies aboard ship and I'd say some of the officers were getting very leery, a little aloof, you know.

Oh, while I was in Paris and in Dunkirk, because that's what I do, I picked up dozens of pamphlets from various bookstores and union halls. I was picking up all the things on the youth movement in Czechoslovakia and the Yugoslavian problem in French and in English and all. And I must have had a box full of pamphlets, which I intended to bring back. I was and had always been a collector of books and pamphlets, and when I didn't need them, I would turn them over to the Maritime Bookshop, you know, something like that. And so these were in my fo'c's'le.

And we had a good trip back, but as we approached Norfolk, Virginia—Newport News, I guess, which is near Norfolk . . . Newport News was where we were heading, and as we came up, we were beginning to get reverberations from these phonies, you know. "We're gonna get you guys," and, "We're going to see to it that you get yours." And of course, we didn't pay too much attention to them. We expected that kind of talk. But I was beginning to . . . there was a feeling with some of these junior officers where they were saying things like, "Ah, you guys," you know, "What the hell?" So we got to Newport News, and sure enough, the first thing that happened was a group of—I guess they were FBI or naval intelligence, coast guard intelligence, I don't know what—came aboard.

Well, one was in uniform, so it was probably naval intelligence. And they searched the ship, mainly my fo'c's'le and the fo'c's'le of the guys that I knew. And they went through everything, and they got all my pamphlets together and piled them on my bunk. And they were going through, jotting down what they were. And they didn't even talk to me. They just did this, you know. They didn't ask anything about them, except one guy says, "Now are these yours?"

I said, "Yes, I picked them up in Paris and Dunkirk."

And all the while, these two or three guys who had been our enemies aboard ship were standing around leering and really enjoying every damn bit of it, because they had reported us. They had probably reported us through the skipper, you know.

And it was a very unnerving thing. And we thought there would be something worse, but all they did was do that. And then they left.

We paid off the ship. And then, I tell you, it was, all in the package. It was a bum time, a bum time. So we left, about seven of us, three or four whites and three black guys went off the ship with our sea bags and headed for the entrance to the dock, looking for a taxi. We were with three or four of the black guys that we knew on the ship, one being the young guy that I had been giving left-wing lectures to who told me to, you know, "Shut up and leave me alone." [laughter] "Leave me alone. Go talk to those other guys. I'm tired of hearing that stuff. Just *leave me* alone." In which I learned not only to leave him alone, I learned to leave a lot of people alone from that. But yes, he liked me and was very friendly, but he just didn't want me to talk about politics, had said, "Keep out of my life. I don't want to hear about that stuff," you know, "It's not my . . . I'm not

going to think about it. Go talk to those guys.”

Anyway, as we stood there—this must have been seven or eight at night and it was getting dark—taxis would go by and look at us and just go zipping on, one after another. We yelled at them, and one of us stood in the street and all that. And finally, I’d say about after an hour of waiting for a taxi and taxis going by and not stopping, finally, a broken-down little ratty taxi came chugging up, stopped, and a black driver looked out, and he says, “You boys know what you’re doing?” [laughter] He said, “Do you know what you’re doing? Do you think you’re going to get into town all at once, *all* of you like that?” meaning the whole group of seven guys. “You know,” he says, “You don’t know where you are, do you?” Now the black guys knew exactly where we were. They were sort of hanging back, but they didn’t know quite how to approach this thing with us. And he said, “Now, if you’re waiting for one of those other cabs, you have to go in two cabs. You guys,” he said, “you know better than this.” He was saying, “You know better. You have to go in one cab, and these other [white] guys can go in another cab. You’re not going to get into town this way.”

It suddenly dawned on us, you know, how stupid we were. And we just felt so stupid. We didn’t understand where we were—not that we felt that we should take it, tolerate this, but that it was a surprise.

And the black guys with us had not said much. They weren’t from that area. I guess most of them were from the North or the West, but they knew that something was going to happen.

So we said, “We don’t know what we’re going to do.”

And then this cab driver said, “I’ll take you, though. You can all get in my cab.” [laughter] It was wonderful.

*That is wonderful.*

I will never forget that evening, as we all piled in on top of each other in this little old cab. In fact, I think we practically ran the springs down to the pavement with our weight. And he went chugging along, and oh, I don’t know how long it was to get from Newport into Norfolk, but we had to get to Norfolk to get transportation out. And on the way in, he was saying, “You know, this is a quite different kind of place than you guys are used to.”

And we said we knew, “We understand that,” but somehow it had not occurred to us. We thought maybe Norfolk was north. “Hey man, north is where you don’t find that kind of thing,” you know . . . [laughter]

But anyway, he said, “I’m glad I saw you guys, because you could have gotten into trouble. You could have found yourself in a kind of a bad situation there, or you might be there till midnight.”

So I don’t know what it meant for *him* to have a mixed bunch aboard, but he didn’t seem to mind. He took us into town—it was about a twenty minute drive, I think. And it was dark—it was night—and the town was kind of empty, Norfolk. And he drove us up to a district with stores, and there was one little store, a shoe shop, that was dark, and he says, “Just a minute. We’ll go here.”

And he went and knocked on the door. And an old white man came to the door, and it turned out to be an old Jewish man part of sort of an underground railroad. And this cab driver says, “I got some boys here who don’t know where they’re at. They just don’t under-

stand what's going on. They ought to, but they don't. Would you straighten them out and tell them how to get around down here? Because I've got to go about and make some money."

And so we thanked him and paid him off and went inside, and this old man—very strong Jewish accent, sounded like a New York accent—and he turned on the lights in the shop and pulled down the blinds in the front of his shop.

*My word. Yes.*

Well, it was a strange time, this was just 1949. And when I look back, I'm thinking of how ignorant I was. I mean, I knew that awful things were going on in the South and was loaded with that kind of . . . . But I had never experienced it. I'd never seen it; I'd never been there. And it was a different kind of thing altogether when you're there. It was *real!* You began to feel the pressure, you know.

And these African-Americans that were with us, they would come joking, "Well, you're seeing the South now. We're seeing the South." But I think they were irritated, because they'd gotten themselves into this goddamn thing. They all wanted to get home, but they were being nice about it. And they felt a certain connection with us, because we had been together this whole trip.

*Now that one guy was really not going to listen to you. [laughter]*

Oh, no. He was the best. He was saying, "Hey Whitey, you see what you're getting me into? Look what your kind of talk gets me into!" you know.

I mean, he was laughing. He was just great. He and I got to know each other. He was joking with me, giving me a bad time.

He says, "I can't hang around with guys like you. Look what you do," you know.

So we sat there while this old man lectured us on what we had to do to get out of town. He said, "Now you're not gonna go to the bus station and get on the bus together. I hate to tell you this, but it's not going to happen." He says, "If you take one of the cross-country buses, not even these guys," meaning the African-Americans, "are going to get on the same bus, because whites come first, and if it's a full bus, then not even the back of the bus would be available." He says, "If you're going to go together or at the same time—not on, you know, the same bus—you gotta wait for a local bus that will take you a little way down the road. And after a few buses, you might get to some place where everybody can get on the same bus." But he said, "You don't want to go through all that." [laughter] "You don't want to go through all that."

And I think that by this time, the black guys were laughing at us. Because they were ready to leave. They were on their way. But they were being polite waiting for us to get . . .

*Get a clue. [laughter]*

. . . get cleared. [laughter] And so this old guy gave us coffee, and he had some toast or something. He was a very nice guy. But you know, it also reverberated in my mind later with the number of Jewish and other Europeans who were positive figures, locally like this, in the Civil Rights movement. They were the ones that stuck their necks out sometimes, got into real trouble, lost business, sometimes got beat up. And this old guy was like that. His store was open for just what he was doing. It was . . . well, as my friend said, an underground railroad you're running here. [laughter]

*Just because you were trying to get in . . . go somewhere as a group.*

Yes. Right. Oh, yes. You just didn't do it. And he said, "Look, if you had insisted and if you had gone and done that, you'd have been taken to jail for questioning, you know. So he said, "You can't do that, unless you want to get beaten up by somebody. You know, you can't do it here. It's just not done."

So we said, "Well, how do we get out of here?"

He said, "Well, you're not going to get out together. You're gonna go to a certain part of the big bus station, and the black guys are going there, and you're going to go there. You're going to take different buses unless you happen to be in a bus where they can sit in the back, but it's not likely. They're going to have to go their way."

And so I remember one of the black guys that was with us—a very sharp guy—he says, "Look, you guys don't need us. You guys work out your problem. You get on a bus, and you go."

He said, "I'm not even taking a bus. I've got a friend who's got a car, and we'll get in the car. If these guys want to go, I'll take them. We're going to get in the car, and we're going to drive the underground railroad cross-country." [laughter] I mean, there were places you could stop in various towns and cities.

Later when I moved to Reno, Nevada was called the Mississippi of the West, and there was a certain hotel down on Lake Street that was part of the underground railroad, where blacks and others would come for advice and help. Certain people we knew would come for . . .

*To just learn how to get around?*

And colleagues, black colleagues from the East that, you know, had to make this run. There were towns they couldn't stop in.

*I just don't think most of us can comprehend that.*

No. Well, I didn't until I saw it. I heard about it, but I didn't comprehend it. Here it was. And it affected what we were doing.

So we went to the bus station, and I asked one of the black guys if they wanted us to go with them, and he said, "No way. We don't need you, man." [laughter] He said, "You're just trouble!"

And, you know, my willingness to go with them, just out a feeling of friendship and solidarity was no friendship or solidarity at all. They wouldn't be able to get out of town. [laughter] So it was a very warm thing. We said good-bye to each other and said that we'd meet.

One was going to Chicago, one was going somewhere in the Midwest, another way out to the coast, who says, "I'm not going to get on a bus with a bunch of whiteys." He says, "We'll find a way to get out there. I'll never have any trouble. I'll go. I'll go. I'll get there."

And here one of us had to go to the john, and suddenly there we were—"colored" and "white." And it was so demeaning and so horrible. I remember feeling so angry. I mean, I felt like I wanted to knock something down, you know. And you felt helpless. There was nothing you could do. Well, there was, but you couldn't do it there. And they were enjoying . . . these black guys were enjoying watching us, you know, "Hey, you want to take a piss, you go, and you do it in the right way!" [laughter]

Oh, god. And the drinking fountains, you know, signs. Oh, that was a nightmare. I felt

so awful leaving these guys. We liked them, Pat and I and others who were saying good-bye to them. And while we were talking, people were looking at us and walking by and staring. You just felt trapped. We felt we were in a truly alien world.

So anyway, I got on the bus. And how was that? Pat was going somewhere . . . well, I was the only one that ended up going all the way to the West Coast, because these other guys had places they were stopping at. I don't remember. And I think I was the only one of us on the bus all the way to San Francisco.

So here I start three days or something across country, and I had a lot of time to think. A lot of time to think. The closer we got to the West Coast, the more I felt I had done myself a whole lot of jeopardy, and what was I going to do and how was I going to make it ashore and what was I going to do about seagoing and all that?

So I got back, and Kathy was very nice about it, and said, "I'm glad you're back," but she was also angry.

But I was so relieved, because she at least was, you know, "So long as you're here, let's get cracking."

So when I had to start looking for a job, I went over to San Francisco a number of times, and I retired my book in the NMU. I had to do that, because you leave it too long without paying dues or shipping, you lose it.

*So that's an explicit step you had to take, saying you're not going back to sea.*

Well, I could renew it, but the thing is I had to retire it so that . . . I mean, it was being held but that I didn't have to keep it current. And so I did that. I didn't like that.

And then I went down to the Maritime Bookshop. I went down there, you know, to

talk to one of the guys who was running it. And there was a group of guys who had been in the seamen's section of the Communist Party, about ten guys. And they were waiting for me. And it was great.

They gave me a book, *Port Arthur*, a novel by a Soviet writer. [laughter] And it had an inscription in it. I have to read it, because I feel very proud of it: "To Warren for outstanding work on behalf of the working class." These are very moving lines—not to you, but to me: "Your devotion, sincerity, and confidence in the working class and the Communist Party has helped to enrich our work on the waterfront. Your contribution, no matter how big or small it may have been to you, has helped to pave the way for a better life for all the people, the world of socialism. We shall miss you. You will be remembered by all. On behalf of the executive board, Waterfront Section, SFCPUA, for the board, Alex Treskin," my old friend.

*Oh, how wonderful!*

Well, I'm very proud of that, because it wasn't the idea that I was leaving the party. You see I was leaving the waterfront, and I was going back to school, which I'd always said I was going to do. And so it was a very friendly, helpful thing. I wasn't being called a sell-out or anything like that. And a lot of guys were leaving anyway. Others were leaving and going. But I'm very proud of that, because I felt it was closure of a good kind and that I'd had what I considered to be an extremely gratifying and enriching relationship with people on the front and in the party. I felt very strongly that I would never really relinquish the principles that had gotten me into it.

*And you never really have.*

No. I got to the point where I disagreed with what the party was doing but that's different; I mean, that's purely a matter of tactics and structure and all that. But in terms of the principles, hell, I'm for them, and they just went sour, that's all.

But anyway, that, to me, was a great moment. I got a send-off from Alex Treskin, who had recruited me years before after I was dumped out of the SUP. And here is Alex with a group of guys giving me a book, something they pulled off the shelf . . . [laughter] and inscribing it and letting me leave feeling that I was part of it.

So, Penny, it's now late, and I have brought you to the point where I have left the waterfront. I didn't leave it entirely, because I still had connections and saw people, but now you will be in the East Bay and on the Oakland and Berkeley side and all the problems that being ashore entail. And that is the beginning of a new life or another one.

*Well, we'll start the land-lubber section.*

Yes, the lubber period. Yes, the stump-jumper. [laughter]





## PART THREE

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## RETURN TO REALITY

I KNEW NOW that I really had to find a way to make it ashore and that there was no way out and that I had to make an accommodation with a new venue. And in a way it was also quite wonderful. Anya was now four or five years old, a beautiful little girl and extremely vivacious and bright. And Erik was I'd say a little over a year old, and he was a feisty kid, wonderful little kid. Prone to tantrums and wanting his own way, and maybe he didn't get it as much as he should have, because things weren't that flexible at that time.

But nevertheless, I really enjoyed being there, and Kathy was working at the nursery school. And fortunately, she was bringing in a little—not very much. Nobody got much in those days. And I have the problem now of finding work, finding *a job*.

And for years, my job had been pretty well laid out for me by going to the hall and getting in line and waiting for a ship. And I pretty well knew that in time I would get one. If I had been shipping at this time, that wasn't too clear; jobs were scarce, and I had been

waiting for weeks for a job, but at least knowing that there might be one turning up.

But now I had to think in terms of entirely new kinds of jobs, and also, what about school? I got back, I guess, in the summer of 1949, so I had a few weeks there to think about school, and I felt I better go. And Kathy encouraged me to do this. And when I come to think of it, it was quite noble of her with everything that was going on to think that I should do that, because that's what I had wanted to do.

When I was thinking about how I was going to go back to school, in a way I felt very diffident about it. There was something about having—let's see, oh my god—eight, nine years since I had last been to school and gotten my B.A. and all that distance between that time and the world of academia. And I guess I had a lot of feeling of having gotten older and that there would be all these kids running around. And here I would be a twenty-eight-year-old old man.

And not only that, but somehow or other, I began to realize I wasn't sure if I could crack

it, if I was able to do it, which as I look back at now, is utterly silly. There were lots of people older than me going back to school, guys that had been in the army and the navy and who had had their lives disrupted by the war. But I was mainly concerned about how was I going to be able to adjust to it and all that. Nevertheless, I felt I had to do it. But I also needed a job.

*Were there any of your cohorts from the front that you knew that were going back to school also?*

Well, there were, but not right there because two or three of the guys that I knew came from Los Angeles or the Midwest, and they were going back home, the ones that I knew from the front.

Quite a few were leaving the front at that time because jobs were scarce; you just couldn't work, and there was the growing anti-left policy that was screening seamen off. Later on—1951, 1952—this became really a rigorous program of screening off anybody with a left-wing background. But in 1949, 1950, it was beginning, and we could feel the pinch.

That isn't why I left; I left because of a long-term, delayed promise to my wife that I was going to do this and saying that I wanted to do it. But I kept procrastinating and putting it off, because I felt all involved in what was going on on the front and did maintain that feeling that it had been the most vigorous and exciting and productive period that I knew.

So I had all that stuff swarming around in my head, but the first thing is I *had* to get a job. And job hunting was, to me, weird. I had no idea where to start, except looking in newspapers, you know.

I think the first job I got was in response to a little squib in the paper, something about the fire department in Berkeley was hiring fire alarm operators. I had no idea what a fire alarm operator was and all that, but nevertheless, it was nearby—almost walking distance from my house near the courthouse in Berkeley. And so, you know, that sounded pretty good, and I thought, well, I'll take a try at it.

I was so stupid. I had no idea what I was doing or getting into except that I needed a job. And there were other jobs, but this one sort of stuck out at me. So I went over there and applied, wrote out the papers and went home, and then a few days later I got a notice saying, "Would you turn up for an interview?"

So I did, and I turned up, and there was a nice old guy—I wish I could remember his name—in his fifties or sixties and near retirement, and he said, "Have you ever worked for a fire department before?"

I says, "No."

He said, "Well, maybe that's good." [laughter]

And he was a very affable guy, and he asked me all kinds of questions about what I had done at sea. "Well, then you must know something about rigs and electricity." And I didn't tell him I was only on deck, you know, but he had some idea that I must have been in the engine room or something like that. And I was so ignorant about the whole process, I didn't know what to say—or not—in my favor, and so I just talked. And I think he took a liking to me, and I liked him, and I got the job.

Well, it turned out he trained me. He was a very nice guy. When I come to think of it, he must have just wanted to give me a job.

I told him I wanted to go to school too, that I wanted a job where I could work nights so I could go to school during the day. Oh, that was one of the things, you know, “What kind of job did you have?”

I said, “Well, do you know about watches—4:00 to 8:00 and 8:00 to 12:00?”

“Well,” he said, “we’re on the watch system here. You know, we work all day and all night.”

And I thought, “Gee, that sounds good. I could get a night job.” And so he put me on the graveyard shift, 12:00 to 4:00, which was weird, you know, but nevertheless, to me it sounded like I might be able to work this out.

And he worked with me and had me come in before I actually started working to watch. The fire alarm in those days was a very strange apparatus in this large room, with all kinds of buttons and levers and gauges and little phone lines. I don’t even remember clearly what it all was about, but you wore earphones, and when an alarm rang, a sort of ticker-tape arrangement told you what area of the town the fire was in, and then you dot-dashed the code off to the right fire department to get out there.

So, you know, it was a kind of a crucial job, and this guy seemed to trust me to do something about it. [laughter] And I must say, as I was working with him, I was thinking, “I’ll never be able to do this alone.” And little by little, I got the hang of it, and then he put me on with another guy. I guess my first one was 8:00 to 12:00, but I was going to be on the graveyard shift regularly. And so I worked with this other guy and finally got the hang of it.

There were long hours sometimes when nothing happened, so I had a chance to read. And I thought, “Oh boy,” you know. “This is great.”

Then when the alarm would go off, you’d have to rush around and send these little messages to the right fire department. And you got pretty familiar with the various departments in the area.

So I got the job. And I felt so good about that. It wasn’t much money, but I remember it wasn’t bad. I mean, it was no worse than what I was getting at sea. And I felt really, “Oh, wow! I’m going to make it.” [laughter] And so that encouraged me, then, to go up to the university and check in.

I was very, very reluctant to go directly to the anthropology department. Because I had graduated from it all these years before, I just didn’t want to confront those people—not that they’d ever remember me or give a damn, but it was that feeling, “I’m not ready.” But I wanted to take anthro.

So what I did instead, because I found out that I was deficient in certain things that now I should do—certain English and economics course and all that—I signed up for a couple of courses in English and one in economics just to get going. Well, they turned out to be wonderful. I mean, I’ll never forget that. In fact, I stayed another semester with these same guys.

There was Mark Shorer, who was a writer and a critic, a well-known guy. I had a course from him in English literature which got me all fired up about seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century English literature. He was a brilliant guy, and I think I still have some of my notes from his course.

And oh, gosh, I was reading *Moll Flanders* and *Tristram Shandy*. When I read that, it was like an eye-opener, and I thought, “This is a world I understand,” you know—this wild, satirical guy, Laurence Sterne. There was something about that period of satirical and realist English writers that I dug. I just loved

it. And, you know, I felt there was a continuity with what I had been doing, the kind of people and world.

And then a picture of the changes and growth of literature, Shorer was wonderful at relating it to social conditions, the social scene historically—you know, a real picture of the development of ideas. That was a wonderful course, as I remember.

And then there was a guy named John Carter in English, and he was in American literature. And he was also marvelous, and because of him, I got to reading all sorts of stuff that had been on my mind anyway—slave narratives and a whole period of pre- and post-Civil War literature about and by African-Americans, and the various kinds of figures that had been involved in the abolition movement. Post-Civil War, Thomas Wentworth Higginson was one, and Wendell Phillips and a number of the abolitionist, from my point of view, left-wing writers.

It was just an eye-opener that these guys even existed. You know, after Tom Paine, who had always been a sort of heroic figure to me, here were these guys who were putting up this struggle in the pre-Civil War, the Civil War, and the post-Civil War periods, being very aware of developments in the labor movement. People like Wendell Phillips, who was really an early intellectual supporter of labor and various kinds of socialist movements that were going on, and then people like Thomas Wentworth Higginson, this guy that I'd never heard of and was still not very well-known historically. These remarkable minds and figures who were putting up this fight, spurred by the Civil War and the place of the American blacks in American life.

So I got *really* involved in this literature and I was reading avidly. And I remember I was going to the library and looking up these obscure sources, and it linked to people like

Philip Foner and others who I had read when I was reading Marxist literature, and there was a continuity with DuBois and all these others, and certainly Herskovits, but a deeper one: I was getting into the social life of the United States as it developed during the post-Civil War period, at least.

Somehow, this was very congenial. I felt that it was just what I was looking for, for this sense of ignorance that I had, that I didn't know what my own society had been and what it was going through and what had happened. And so I remember writing, oh god, many papers for both Shorer and particularly for John Carter, kind of romantic pieces of revelation, you know, about how all this wonderful stuff was going on while Whitman and a number of other well-known people were writing. Here were these other guys doing this other kind of work. And I was really fired up by that.

And I was able to take these courses and work nights. It was a rough schedule, you know. I was working, getting home, you know, at 8:30 or nine o'clock, and then going to sleep and then getting up and trying to get my course work in. I was just taking these few courses; nevertheless, I had to study for them and read for them.

And I was doing some of my reading during the job, which was partly my undoing, because I would get reading, and the bell would go off and I'd be in cloud nine. And once or twice I sent engines to the wrong site or called the wrong place, and there was a big ruckus about it. Nevertheless, that passed over. [laughter]

[laughter] *It just burned up.*

[laughter] Well, no, it wasn't terribly serious, but these guys in the various fire stations, they'd get pretty mad.

I mean, you wake them up, and they're all set to go, and they find out it's the wrong place. They don't like that. So there were one or two places where I got a bad name.

And this old guy covered for me. He was wonderful. He would fix it up and make excuses. And I wish I could remember his name. He was a wonderful old guy, and he was expert. He knew the whole system but tolerated this character that I was, and he knew I was busy reading. He just told me, "Warren, you *gotta* keep your mind on this, because this is a matter of property and life and death."

And then I'd be, "Yes, I know." I felt awful and all that. But here I am, these wonderful books in front of me. [laughter] My first job; my return to reality.

So there was another course that was equally stimulating that a Robert Brady, an economist, taught. He was something of a Marxist. I shouldn't try to characterize him, because it's too far back, and I don't remember enough about him excepting his course on economics dealt with—well, really the part I remember—the development of American capitalism.

And it was just loaded with rich insights into how large corporations develop and their influence upon the market and, you know, upon the distribution of wealth. And although it wasn't a revolutionary kind of a course, it would creep through, things that I recognized to be Marxist concepts and ideas.

And those were the days in which guys who were Marxist or quasi-Marxist were very careful about . . . . In fact, this was true later I realized in anthropology, all the damned anthropologists writing on social change and economics and material culture. You know, Marxist ideas crept in under the rug.

Julian Steward and all these people would deny they were Marxist, and probably weren't

from their point of view, but they were obviously influenced by these ideas. In fact, they would have been outraged if you were to say, "Well, that's a Marxist approach."

"Oh, what are you talking about!" Well, this went on all through my graduate years. I remember that, being aware of how influential was Marxist thought and how difficult it was for American left thinkers to admit any connection with Marxism.

And this was going on in this course in economics. I just felt, "My god! This guy is saying things that I've read and heard elsewhere, and yet he's putting it in a larger, more neutral frame and being very careful about how he said them." But it was a powerful course and *loaded* with information about distribution of wealth . . . .

*Is it the kind of thing that if the politics had been different, that people would have felt free to just discuss the fact that these ideas had been presented and discussed by someone named Marx?*

Yes, I'm sure there were those who did. But I think one has to remember this was a very touchy time, and it's admirable that so many . . . . I mean, it's *true* that academia was the place where these so-called goddamn quasi-lefties and communists were. That's where they were, a lot of them. And yet they weren't necessarily militant left-wingers and not necessarily consciously Marxist, but they were widely read, and they were influenced by thought.

And there was so much intervening literature that had already processed these thoughts, you know, in various ways, that I just felt so much of it was congenial. I felt, "My god! These guys are giving me now the stuff that I need to back up the generalized kind of . . . ."

*Well, it's almost like the intellectual and rational framework for understanding the social processes you'd actually witnessed.*

Well, and things that I'd read. I had read a lot of Marxist literature. I wasn't very adept at it. I had really little understanding of so much of it, because certainly Marx himself and Engels and Lenin are really complicated writers, and I didn't have enough background, really, to understand a lot of it. But what I could understand, I absorbed very fully; I mean, it was *meaningful* to me. And so what I was getting in some of these courses was, as you say, the kind of background material that fortified what I had merely felt and known in a more generalized way.

And yet, these guys were not open or even conscious left . . . I think Brady knew himself to be a left-wing thinker. He had around him a number of graduate students, and some of them I got to know very well. I won't name their names, but very bright young economic graduate students. And I had a very good relationship with three or four of them, and we used to get together and talk over the materials of the course. And they were avowed Marxists, you know, so it just sort of rubbed off on old man Brady. Whether he deserved it or not, I don't know, excepting he stimulated this kind of thinking.

Now when I say they were avowed Marxists—there are all kinds of Marxists—these guys were, in a sense, intellectual Marxists, and they disagreed among themselves. They had different kinds of orientations about what it all meant, and that kind of *fervent* disagreement, I felt I needed; I needed to hear all the various approaches and the fact that there were all kinds of Marxists throughout Europe, and that they were all disagreeing about something. They disagreed about the basic principles and about what Marx had really

said and whether Marx was right or wrong. You know, I had never run across that kind of foment, that kind of intellectual foment.

It was a wonderful, wonderful period. Those guys, I remember them well, and they went on to teach or to write or went into politics of various kinds. One was a black scholar, very bright guy. He went on and did very well in sort of a left political way.

So there I was, staying up half the night being blurry-eyed, sometimes because I wouldn't get enough sleep during the day. I can remember a couple of friends of mine saying, "Well, we better keep our eyes open. d'Azevedo is handling the fire trucks. Berkeley is burning, and he wouldn't know it." [laughter] "Berkeley is on fire, and he wouldn't know it, but all of us would be getting in our cars and running to the hills."

But anyway, those courses, I was very fortunate to run into them to begin with, because they really stimulated me to do a hell of a lot of reading. I felt positive about going to school. I was getting good grades, and I was doing very well, as against my very ratchety undergraduate work. I had A's and B's and, you know, I was lucky to come out with an average of C's as an undergraduate, because I only did well in courses that I liked, that I was interested in. And the ones I liked, I always got very good grades in.

So I was doing very well there and also writing papers, which I enjoyed doing, and I felt that I had a handle on it. This was in 1949 through 1950, actually, these kinds of courses.

Oh, also in 1950, I took a sociology course, because I needed certain background courses. I was sort of avoiding going directly into anthropology, though I had visited the department and reopened an acquaintance with Theodore McCown [1908-1969; McCown was Associate Professor of anthro-



pology in 1946 and became Full Professor in 1951], and Lowie I said hello to, and Kroeber, just letting them know that I was thinking of returning. Not that they were happy about that. [laughter]

They didn't remember me, really. I think Kroeber may have, because I had taken his art course and had a lot of arguments with him. He acted as though he remembered me, but that may have just been politeness.

Nevertheless, I began to feel I could get back in there, but I hadn't really taken a course yet. In fact, I was recorded as an English major, and I wanted to shift over to anthro as soon as possible, but I did have to get the department's approval, so that was being held in abeyance.

But in the meantime, I took a course from a Wolfram Eberhard, a sociologist. And his course was essentially about social change. Not minorities so much, as the movements of peoples and their impact upon nations. I don't remember the title.

*You mean by movement like migration?*

Yes, you know, the impact of migrations and movements of population and minorities developing within large nations, and what this meant not only for the highly developed nations, but for the underdeveloped nations of the world. It was a very broad-ranging and extremely informative course. I wish I had notes on that course, because I learned a lot.

We had to have a term paper. And I remember in taking the course I had come across, because of my work with Carter et cetera on the slave narratives and slave periods, the whole matter of the relocation of American blacks, the back to Africa movements. Even the most enlightened American abolitionists felt that . . . in fact Lincoln had

felt that whites and blacks could not live together in the same society, and therefore, even he supported movements relocating particularly freed blacks, because they were a problem.

And so all that interested me. And in the process, I had run across the American colonization movement and Liberia. And it was while I was working with Eberhard that I did two or three papers on the American Colonization Society and the social conditions, the context, in which that had developed—the pre-Civil War period and the abolitionist movement, the post-Civil War movement, the role of the American Colonization Society as, really, an instrument of former slave owners, and even some slave owners, and liberal politicians to find a way to get rid of the African-American. And this fascinated me, how this movement could have developed. And then I kept running across Liberia as one of the early experiments. England had Sierra Leone—had sent a lot of the Nova Scotian blacks to get rid of them to Sierra Leone, which was almost like, you know, sending all their convicts to Australia.

And this was a revelation to me, that these movements had taken place and that even people like Lincoln and George Washington's brother, Henry Clay—these various figures had been struggling to find a place to send blacks. The Caribbean, Texas was even thought about, you know, [laughter] and South America, Panama. All this scramble to find a way to resolve in the minds of both liberal and right-wing American whites a way to get the blacks *out* of the way.

The "go back to Africa" movement was an important aspect that at least a few African-Americans supported, although it wasn't popular. People like Frederick Douglas were opposed to it and put up a big struggle against the colonization movement. Never-

theless, there was this coterie of American blacks who at least in an idealistic and romantic way supported the idea of returning to Africa.

Well, the Liberian experiment came out of that in the early 1820s, and that fascinated me, and I wrote two or three papers. I even wrote a paper for Eberhard on the American press' reaction to Liberia, how they talked about Liberia, what was the general attitude, the mode of discussion of not only Liberia, but West Africa in general. And little by little, I began to get a really strong feeling about this as something I was deeply interested in.

And so let's see. All this, when I come to think of it, was while I was with the fire department . . . [laughter] the fire alarm operator. What little money we had was from Kathy's job and mine as the fire alarm operator.

Well, the fire alarm operator gig lasted for I guess almost a year, and then there were some changes in the structure of the place. Not that anybody felt that I was someone

they wanted to keep around, but I don't think I was let go. But maybe it was an indirect crunch, the idea that they wanted to put their key persons on the night shifts, and they upped the wages for those guys. And that left me out, because I was a junior, I was an apprentice. And it wasn't because of me, but the idea was that I would be working in the daytime with very experienced guys. [laughter] I'm not sure what . . . I was doing all right, but I made a couple of mistakes that probably gave me a name around there.

But anyway, that made it impossible for me to go to school, because I think the only shift open was either morning or afternoon, and with the courses I needed to take, I couldn't do it. And it was a very serious problem. They were unable to keep me and two or three others on at night, because there was this change in policy.

Maybe they'd had too many mistakes. [laughter] I don't know, too many unreported fires. I don't recall, but little by little I realized I was going to have to get another job, that this wasn't going to last.

## CAKES, NOTIONS, AND WINE

I LOOKED AROUND, and jobs weren't very available. And I didn't know even how to get jobs. I didn't know how to go finding the kind of job that I should have, particularly because I didn't know what my qualifications were for anything, you know, other than I had by this wonderful chance gotten into the fire department. [laughter]

So I'm hearing about or reading about truck drivers that were needed by some outfit called Edie's Confections or something like that in Berkeley. And I needed a job in Berkeley, because it had to be near where I lived. So I went and checked it out, and I could get this job. It was fairly well paying, as I remember. You had to drive one of these little trucks around carrying cakes and candies and pies.

*But you couldn't read while you were driving.*  
[laughter]

No, no, no, I couldn't. [laughter] But at least it was a well-confined day job, you know, where I could work out my hours. I forget what it was, but I could work it out so I could

work in the afternoons or whatever it was. And so I got the job, but the question was was I going to join the teamster's union?

And I think at that time, they didn't have a closed shop at Edie's, but I was approached by somebody in the teamsters, and I said, "Hell, yes. I'm going to join the union." So I got my teamster's card. What a wonderful outfit: "International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Warehousemen, and Helpers." And so now I had another union card.

And as I remember, the company didn't particularly care about this, and some people were union and some weren't. It was a transitional period. But at least I felt I had to be in the union.

*Now was this an AFL or a CIO union, the teamsters?*

The teamsters were CIO, I'm quite sure. I'll have to check that out. Well, jeez, I think I can find out in a minute here now that you've raised this crazy question.

No. It was an AFL union, probably still is. But actually I guess I was confused, because they had been very helpful and cooperative with the ILWU and some of the West Coast maritime unions during our strikes. So here I was now back in an AF of L union and very happy to pay my dues, and I felt I was at least doing the right thing.

Well, anyway, that was a wonderfully weird job. The Edie's company—still there in Berkeley—had a restaurant, and it made very elaborate cakes and pies and candies, and Edie's candies were very well known throughout the area. My job would be to arrive in the morning—in fact, I started in the morning and worked until noon. I had a job that was split that way. I went on again in the evening to do something else.

But anyway, my job was to turn up there in a white suit as the driver of this strange, funny little truck, and the workers would pile it full of pies and cakes and candies, and I had a whole list of places where I was to deliver these things. Well, I didn't like that kind of . . . I hated being in that position. I was very snobbish about this from having been a seaman.

There was something about wearing a uniform. I remember, that was like wearing a coat and tie, which I had to learn to do all over again when I went back to school. See, in those days, you wore a coat and tie to go to seminars, and you know, you dressed properly on campus.

But the whole thing bothered me, but it was good pay. And so I turned up, and I had to learn to make this route and drop these things off. And dropped a lot of them. [laughter]

One time I remember it was like missing the right code for the fire department. I remember I had to stop quickly at a corner,

and a dozen pies and cakes fell on the . . . [laughter] However, that happened so often, the company was quite used to that. But, you know, I got reprimanded and told it shouldn't happen. But on the other hand, it wasn't my fault.

One thing I remember about that job was there were a lot of Portuguese young ladies working in the candy part of the factory that I'd have to walk through in the morning. And I had to walk in this long line where there are these candy-dippers dipping cherries into chocolates and things of that kind. And they saw my name, they got to know my name, and they called to me, "Oh, here's that Portuguese boy." [laughter] And I had this wonderful relationship with . . . god, there must have been twenty. Most of them were Portuguese I think or a few maybe Hispanics, but there were enough Portuguese so I thought of them all as Portuguese.

It got so every morning when I'd go through, they'd be holding up these chocolate covered cherries and sticking them in my mouth as I went down the line. [laughter] I felt really that I was being treated like royalty every morning, you know, this greeting with songs and kidding.

And these women worked like hell. They must have worked sixteen hours a day on shifts. And yet they were always chattering and laughing and telling jokes. And I was a diversion, you know. I'd come, and there would be a kind of a celebration and mouthfuls of fresh chocolate-covered cherries. [laughter] I got sick on them in the morning.

So then I would go to my truck, and it would be all loaded, and I'd get my list, and I'd take off and make the rounds. And I remember a couple of times when my route took me through Berkeley near our house, I'd stop in front of our house, and all the kids

in the neighborhood coming by, and I always had a box of chocolate-covered cherries. [laughter] I'd get out and talk to the kids.

And it was kind of wonderful when I come to think of it. I don't think it was a very happy period, generally, but these things stick out as being a lot of fun.

So I had that job for, oh gosh, a few months while I was going to school. I was taking those same courses, so this must have been early 1950. And something happened where that job came to the end. Something happened at the company where they had to let drivers go, and I felt badly about it, because I was doing pretty good. I was a good driver and did my job. But they had to downsize for some reason. I forget what it was. They made a shift in what they were sending out, in how many trucks. I didn't have seniority, and the older drivers stayed on. So that was only a few months I had that job. And after that, oh, god, then one of the worst jobs I've ever had in my life came up.

Because I was driving, I had my union ticket, and I heard about a place called Handy Spot Company that had trucks that would drive around, make deliveries. Well, that was a horrible place. It was one of these little fly-by-night, sleazy outfits that had everything. I don't know if you have them today, but in the stores, they would have racks with all kinds of notions, everything from toothpaste to combs and medicines and just junk, just masses of junk. And Handy Spot would have this merchandise on these trays on shelves in the stores all through the city.

And so the drivers had to pick up full trays in the morning loaded with junk, load the trucks with trays, and carry them into various places to replace stuff that had been sold or take out stuff that was old or broken or something, and then check with the owner of the store and get signed up and find out if

there was any problem or anything that they needed they didn't have.

And I hated it. I just hated this, mainly because the products were so sleazy. Just awful. You know, I felt like I was bringing poison into the system.

But it paid even better than the previous job. But you worked your tail off. And as I remember, it interfered with going to school. I would just be worn out. I had to go all over the city. I remember I would have to stop at dozens of places during the day and carry in this crap and take out the old stuff and then come back and load my truck and clean it up and all that.

And then the unkindest cut of all, the greatest insult of all, was this owner had morning pep sessions. The drivers had to come early, like 6:30 or something like that, and for a half hour, he would harangue us about business policy and growth and productivity, and that we must improve day by day. He thought he was applying business psychology of some kind, you know, getting us all revved up.

And I used to look around, and there were three or four of these guys out of a dozen that were revved up. They loved it. It gave them energy.

And I looked at them with contempt. Like, "OK, boys. We're ready to go! We're ready to go!"

My feeling was, "I'd like to blow this place up," you know.

And there were fortunately two or three guys that I could level with about this. We all hated it.

The one I drove with, a nice guy, was a little older than me, and he had been doing this for a long time. Sort of a heavy set guy, and he drank heavily. He and I were friends because he wanted to stop for a drink every now and then, and I didn't mind. In fact,

sometimes I'd have a drink with him, and he'd tell me all the stories of his life and all that. Then he'd also tell about how he felt about the goddamn company. He had a wonderful time running the company down.

But this boss, this guy, was such a sleaze bag, I couldn't believe it. I think he believed what he was saying.

You know, it was soul searching on the business level. "The more you sow, the better person you are," kind of thing. "You're growing along with the company," and on and on. And he'd get very excited, and his eyes would sparkle as he was talking. And I would get sicker and sicker, and by the time it was time to get out to work, I wanted to throw everything into the street, you know.

But I needed the job, so I did it. I remember one time in this truck I looked at myself and thought, "You're a snob, goddamn it, because, you know, a lot of guys got to do this. Get in there and do it," you know. But I felt demeaned by that kind of job.

In the fire department job, I felt good. I felt I was doing something important. But this, I felt I was as sleazy as the company.

I remember once I was driving to Oakland, and I stopped at a stop light, and across the street coming in a beautiful dress was this gorgeous young woman with a baby carriage. And I looked at her, and remembered she was a girlfriend of mine in high school in Modesto. I had had a crush on her, a really deep one. And she hadn't given me much of a chance to pursue it, but she knew who I was. And she says, "Warren!" [laughter]

And I remember, I stopped in the middle of the street, I got out of the truck, I embraced her, and we talked about her little baby.

I remember looking at her and thinking how beautifully middle-class she was. She was dressed in, you know, these long skirts that they wore in the 1940s, and her shoes and

her hat with this little veil. And this beautiful girl had turned into this middle-class frau. She was very, very contained and dignified with her little baby. But she knew that she and I had some connection.

So here I was, cars honking, you know. [laughter] But anyway, I remember that. One remembers things like that. So I got back in my truck and said good-bye to her. And I was . . . I think her name was Stephanie. She was beautiful. Even under those conditions, she was beautiful, though I had this awful feeling that she had descended, you know. She probably felt that about me . . . that I had descended into a very dismal life, but she was beautiful anyway.

So that went on for a while, and then something happened at Handy Spot. Well, it was a fly-in-by-night agency. I think it just broke up. I think it went bankrupt or something. That lasted two or three months.

*But in the meantime, you're taking classes.*

Well, during this time, I held off going back into anthropology, because I didn't have enough time, and I was worried about doing it right. Yes, I was taking these other courses, and somehow or other, I managed to go—I was only taking two courses at a time.

*But to go to class, you would have to get dressed in a coat and tie?*

Well, not necessarily to class. You could wear a nice shirt, but you had to dress properly. But no, to go to a seminar or to go to a meeting with your professors, you wore a shirt and tie or coat and shirt and tie.

*And on that topic, I wanted to ask if in general the professors, these men that you've mentioned that you admired and that were stimulating, I*

*mean, were they pretty accessible? Could you talk to them?*

Oh, yes.

*Did you have a relationship with them?*

Oh, yes. With John Carter, I had a good relationship with him, and I used to see him, talk to him all the time. And Mark Shorer was a little more distant. He was a very busy scholar. But you know, you could go to their offices and see them, sure.

Had long discussions with Eberhard. He kind of enjoyed yakking with students. You had small classes, an easy going atmosphere around departments. Oh, it was so different than what ten, fifteen years later.

*Is this after, you think, the first rush of G.I.'s?*

Yes, yes. There were a lot of G.I.'s, ex-G.I.'s on campus, people on the G.I. Bill. Oh, yes.

*Well, when you were saying that the classes were small, I was just wondering if the classes you were taking . . .*

Well, I think the classes I was taking were not necessarily the kind of classes that most of them were taking, you know. A lot of them were coming back and really doing their undergraduate work, you see. Yes, I was in a quasi-graduate student position at this point; I was in an interim period.

*So would you say that these were at a minimum, upper-division classes, or were they graduate level classes?*

I didn't take any . . . Did I take a seminar? No, these were upper-division classes.

*But you had accessibility.*

Oh, yes. Well, and then earlier back in the 1930s when I was an undergraduate, my god, I can remember, you know, we'd stop and chat with Kroeber as we were going back and forth to classes, and Lowie, seeing them on the campus, and Lowie would sit down on the bench with you and chat. Everything was very relaxed. [laughter]

*Yes. Well, it was part of the educational experience of that time.*

Oh, yes. It was such a different atmosphere. And then, you know, later on when I taught at Cal, in the late 1950s, I mean the place was a maelstrom, you know. Comparatively it was just total chaos, and inaccessibility to your mentors unless you had a very special project with them.

Anyway, so I was managing to hold my own with a couple of classes during that year with different jobs. Handy Spot, I wasn't at all unhappy when that thing folded. And Edie's, I think they had just changed the kinds of things they were sending out or the way they were delivering, and maybe they cut down on their delivery service. I don't know. But in each case, it was because something had happened in the structure of the job. As I remember, I was a pretty good driver, and I did my work. I don't think I was ever fired. I don't remember being fired anywhere, though sometimes I deserved it. [laughter]

But Handy Spot, when it folded . . . I think it went bankrupt; they were just fly-by-night. They just picked up, pretty much went to another town and did the same damn thing probably. I was elated. I wanted an excuse not to go there.

This must have been in mid-1950, and I wanted to get back in anthropology, so I

searched around for jobs that were more congenial, convenient. And I finally ran across—I don't know how I did; I think it was some friends who told me about it—a little liquor store way out on Solano Avenue named Bear's Liquors. And I went out there and saw this old owner who had been a former sea captain, Old Rogers, old Captain Rogers. And I got talking to him, and we hit it off.

Later he got two people, but he needed somebody to handle sort of upper . . . This was in the upper part of Berkeley where in those days kind of well-to-do people lived, up in the hills. Right at the bottom of the hills on Solano Avenue, he had this little kind of grubby store called Bear's Liquors, and he needed somebody to help him service the place.

I didn't know *anything* about it. I didn't know anything about liquors or wines or anything, but he didn't care. So I got a job there where I would go and, you know, sell wines, service the store, clean it up at night, and put new wines and liquor on the shelves and check the stock in back. Oh, he was very happy, because he hadn't known how he was going to handle all the liquor and wines in the back of the store, because he had them all stacked up in boxes, that he'd have to go through. Well, I got carload after carload of apple boxes that we set up in rows so you could pass through the little rows. I set up these rows of apple boxes, and put the wines and liquor in them. He was absolutely delighted. I could do no wrong from then on. I solved the problem for him. I even put tags up, you know, such and such a wine, this and that and the other thing.

And one thing about that job, I learned a little bit about wines. (Maybe that's why

my son is so interested in wines these days.) But these wine salesmen would come in every day with wine for us to taste. And we'd go in the back and taste wine. Well, Christ, by the end of the day, I was whacked out. [laughter] I wasn't used to that kind of thing. [laughter] But I did learn the kinds of wines I liked, and there was a zinfandel I was absolutely crazy about. What was the name of it? This no longer exists, but the land still exists—Nicolini wines. And it was jug wine, zinfandel, big jugs, something like a dollar and a half, two dollars a jug, you know. Delicious! Real wonderful California zinfandel. So I'd take that home. We didn't drink much in those days, but we liked it now and then.

So anyway, I got so that I was able to handle the store. It took me a couple of months or something like that to work out my hours so I knew I could go to school and all that. We'd be open from, I don't know, 8:00, 8:30 to 10:00 at night, and I could work out my hours between him and myself and later, another guy. So that turned out to be almost an ideal job—ideal in many ways. [laughter]

Also, I was up there on Solano where a lot of people that we had known, certain professional people and academic people, were living, and they would start coming into the store, and there was a real feeling of connection. You know, friends of Kathy's from the nursery school started coming to the store because I was there. So I brought in a little business, and Old Rogers and I . . . Well, he wasn't always around. He was a heavy drinker, so there were times when he didn't know what had gone out or in the store. But I couldn't worry about that. [laughter] I was too busy worrying about myself at the time.



## BACK TO ANTHROPOLOGY

THAT MUST HAVE been the fall of 1951 where I finally went up to the anthro department and I think I talked to McCown. Was Heizer around? I forget, but whoever the two or three people I talked to, I said, “Do you think I can get back into anthropology after all this time? You know, my courses I took are way back.” And you know, the usual graduate student’s questions about this.

And they were very supportive. They said, “Sure.” In those days, things were a lot looser than they are today. “Sure,” you know. “For god’s sakes, just sign up. It depends on how you do, you know. Sure. Take a seminar if you want to, come in.”

I was elated. I made that transition.

*At this point, are you also very focused on the . . . ?*

Oh, yes, very much. The same subjects, yes. I went into anthro carrying this wonderful baggage from these other courses, and, of course, my background. And I found that the

graduate students in anthro were very . . . . See, when I say “left-wing,” in those days I mean they were very progressive. They were intellectually very concerned about new ideas, change, and they were political dissidents of all stripes. And it was a lively bunch of characters. Well, I don’t remember their names now, but a number of people whom I later knew and got to know as colleagues were hanging around at the time.

And so I started taking courses. They wanted me to redo my general anthropology, so I took anthropological theory, I think, from Lowie. And I remember an earlier time, I had taken a course from Lowie which we used to call “cross-cousin marriage around the world”, see, because that’s what we did. But this one was a more general course, and it was basically on the kind of material that was in his book, *Theory In Anthropology*, whatever it was [*History of Ethnological Theory*, 1937]. And it was a good sort of general introductory course, and I always liked him.

Oh, he was getting all kinds of trouble later on from students who were denouncing

him for coming from Europe under a cloud. I won't go into that, but there was all kinds of gossip about poor old Lowie.

He was a wonderful man. He was a man of great dignity, great erudition, very polite and kind to students, very helpful. I liked him a lot, and I think I got quite a bit from courses I took from him, though it's hard for me to remember any details, you know.<sup>1</sup>

And then I think I took a physical anthropology course from Sherwood Washburn. I believe it was Washburn who was around at that time. I only could take a course or two at a time, but I took that 105A and B, I think it was, and then at some point, I had a course from Washburn and another from McCown. And those were very important to me.

But boy, I tell you I had one course—I can't remember who it was, the name of the guy—on race, in which I think every shibboleth about race that I ever heard, he uttered. He was a minor member of the department, but he was almost an embarrassment. We had to make fun of him, because he was so backward in his thinking, in his knowledge, and he was a racist.

I'll always remember it because in those days—even in Kroeber's book, *Anthropology*, his text book—race was so important. Half the book is about race and you know, these *innumerable* dozens of races and sub-races and heights and cephalic indexes and arm-length and leg-length and pelvis. And skin color and hair form was taken quite seriously.

This approach was beginning to break up at that time with the shift into people like Boyd. What was it? Boyd's *Genetics in Human Evolution*? Anyway, Boyd had made a great impact in blood-group studies and things of that kind. There was beginning to be an erosion of the older view and distress at the race

classification view. But it was going on. Everybody was doing it at that time.

I remember the first courses I taught later, I would go over this just because it was so fascinating, you know, how we had been absorbed in race classification and how in graduate school, it was one of the first things that I got, you know. And yet, I was deeply interested in pre-history and human development and the emergence of primates and all that. And anthropologists at that time spent a lot of time with this. It's what you taught along with cultural anthropology.

I wish I could remember that guy's name. One thing we used to enjoy about him was that he would lose track of his lecture as he was walking or pacing back and forth when he'd come to a woman with her knees crossed. And he would sort of get absorbed and would be talking and gazing totally oblivious of the fact that he was in full view or that anybody saw what he was doing. [laughter] And he would sort of lose track and lose the thread of his lecture and then have to shake his head and begin all over again, you know. Oh, we thought that this was the perfect wedding of the two images of the guy who was absorbed in race classification and a guy who was totally dumped on by women. [laughter] Well, it lightened this boring class enormously to watch this aspect of his personality.

*Now were you fulfilling certain requirements?*

In a way, yes. I was sort of getting courses that they had advised me to take and this general course of Lowie's, which was extremely useful, very good. I didn't take any Kroeber at that time, I don't think.

*Well, when you just touched on the fact . . . you said Washburn and McCown's courses were very*

*important, could you maybe say why or just talk about that a little bit?*

Well, I'm about to, yes. I just got side-tracked by this guy on race.

*Oh, by the knees. [laughter]*

Washburn's course, which I don't remember in any detail, I remember as a very good course on fossil primates and human evolution and various important sites and various fossil types that appeared in the evolutionary fossil record. But one thing I *do* recall—and I don't want to be unfair by misstating this—but that was a time when Dart's material, Raymond Dart and his Taung skulls, the early australopithecines, that he was writing about, were very much in doubt.

A lot of physical anthropologists didn't really believe that the evidence necessarily showed that this particular primate had been a hunter, as Dart was saying, who had killed baboons. You know, they argued that all the baboon skulls found with the left side of their heads bashed in and all that, that other animals could have done this. There was a lot of arguing about it, and really, Dart was sort of looked upon as something of a performer in a way, overstating his case.

And I remember Washburn being sort of cynical about the australopithecines: "Well, we'll have to wait and see." It was a period, too, when Piltdown was still very important, you know. And I must say that people like Washburn put it on the questionable list, but it was, "a *legitimate* claim," kind of thing.

So Sir Arthur Keith's disclaimers notwithstanding, people needed it. They needed Piltdown. It filled the niche, and it was before Africa was recognized as really central. But Dart's stuff in south Africa, for god sakes,

was well before Leakey and all the Olduvai stuff.<sup>2</sup>

When I come to think of it, how wonderfully naive we all were at that time. Speculation was rampant, and all kinds of conclusions were being drawn from very little, you know. I remember . . . Oh.

*Well, didn't Dart not have a traditional academic pedigree?*

Yes. I forget what it was, but he had had a rather unusual development and background, not necessarily highly professionalized from the point . . . And his associate, Broom, was really something of an adventurer type and all that. Yes, so that came over with it, you see.

It was *ten years* after that course in 1950 before the matter was taken seriously. It took Leakey's material really to impress it on the . . . [anthropological community]. I remember just when I started teaching in the late 1950s, early 1960s, that it was being taken seriously, see. There were still doubts and all that, but . . . oh, and then the Neanderthal problem was being talked about just as it is today.

It's amazing how long the Neanderthal problem has been around, you know. Were they or were they not progenitors, or were they a separate species, and did they make tools?

Oh, and that brings up McCown. I had this magnificent course from McCown on Levantine Mediterranean archeology and pre-history, and McCown was, to me, the last word in scholar. The man was so careful and so prepared in his lectures and so full of information and personal experience.

He had worked Palestine in the Levantine. Who were his side-kicks? There

would be the woman archeologist and somebody else. It'll occur to me. Anyway, he had worked on those finds where neanderthaloid and homosapienoid forms, twenty, thirty thousand years ago, had been found together, and where the question arose about separate species or were the Neanderthals really, you know, totally separate from *Homo sapiens*? had they had any relations at all, and all that was being bandied about.

In fact, it still is. It's amazing. This is still going on in the literature on a different level, fortunately, and with more data.

But nevertheless, McCown's position was, and along with those he worked with, that as far as they were concerned, Neanderthal and so-called *sapiens* were all just varieties that, you know, were capable of sexual interaction, reproduction, and that in places in the world they had mingled. And also, the other thing was that quite possibly many populations showed these variations of type within them at the time. Well, this was highly advanced to us, to students there, a highly advanced point of view.

I wish I could remember who it was that he had worked with. Oh, dear me, I would like to remember. He had worked very closely with a well-known European archeologist.

So anyway, his course dealt with all of what was known then of the distributions of human types in the Late Paleolithic and the Neolithic, all through the Mediterranean area and north Africa. And he got me very interested in the whole aspect of African development. His view was at a time when Asia was still the cradle of mankind. [laughter]

I have here a Communist Party pamphlet I discovered on chauvinism or racism in which there is a section—a lot of this was from 1949, 1950—talking about the origins

of humankind and race. And it was very good on race, you know, quoting Boas and the most recent thinking of the time about the fact that we had to get away from the old classifications. And all that was just beginning to happen, so they were advanced there, but then saying, "And mankind originated in Asia." So, you know, this is the background I came to the class with, and then I found that that was pretty much the prevailing view.

So there *was* this great resistance to accepting Africa as the source and for all the reasons that have been written about ad nauseam since, you know. Certainly an aspect of European orientation was that it couldn't be out of Africa. It had to be from noble Asia, where the Garden of Eden was or from the River Thames—Piltdown. [laughter]

But McCown's class was a magnificent survey of all the various cultural emergences over the period from the Late Paleolithic through the Neolithic, into the Iron Age, et cetera, and very open to the idea of influences from Africa south of the Sahara. And he was always very cynical about the Egyptologists and Egypto-centric views. He talked about the trade relations and constant interaction of Egypt with East and South and West Africa.

You know, at this time when this was happening, very few others were talking like this or had this kind of orientation. It was a very liberating course in that sense for me, because it gave me also the connection between my interest in Africa and race relations. It gave me this Mediterranean-African background, in those days when pre-history, human evolution were very much a part of cultural anthropology as well. That's why later on, when I taught introductory anthropology, half the course was this kind of material.

*Well, it just seems that because of the nature-nurture . . . I won't say controversy, but dialogue or focus on the influence of environment versus genes has always been a central topic in anthropology, but that there used to be more dialogue between the fields on that. [laughter]*

Well, in anthropology at the time, anthropologists in a sense, saw themselves as repositories of all of human development, not just contemporary peoples and the understanding of the range of human cultural expressions, but also of human history. That was just taken for granted. As an anthropologist, you accommodated this breadth of knowledge in your field.

Well, there's no doubt that it's gotten too big for anybody to do that today, or damn few. But in those days, people like Kroeber—and if you read his book, it's just marvelous—if you've ever looked in his text book, I mean, it's wild. He covers everything. I mean *everything*, the whole universe, you know, because anthropologists then felt they could do that. That amount of data and amount of speculation that they had about the development of human beings impinged upon their notions of contemporary culture. Human evolution was cultural evolution.

And I took that with me when I was teaching, all through my teaching. I never would yield to the idea of separating introductory anthropology into three or four different courses. It's finally happened, because it's had to. But when I came and started developing this department here in the University Nevada, I was *determined* that it was going to be a four-field department. No anthropologists should come out with an M.A. or Ph.D. in anthropology without having touched every damn corner of anthropology and related fields.

Well, that's become a little bit old fashioned, I suppose, although the argument goes on and will go on. It's getting so one wonders how it can be done. It's just that people who are involved in the sub-fields of anthropology feel they've got to go and leave anthropology and join related departments that are closer to their interests. It's just too damn big.

Anyway—Washburn's course and my recollection of how Dart's material was taking so long to get into the picture.

*So it struck you then at the time that there was a sort of an inexplicable resistance?*

At the time I don't recall what my attitude about that was or where my position was. I guess it was pretty much the position of my professors. Except I remember that it was a stimulating idea: What *about* South Africa? What *if* that were true? Because any good professor—and I think Washburn did—would raise the question about what this would mean. It would alter our whole view of the development of the various types from the Far East, you know. It later became accepted that the so-called *Pithecanthropus erectus* and *Homo erectus* types were really out of Africa. At that time, nobody really took that kind of view seriously.

*Now had Washburn done his baboon work yet?*

I don't think so. He might have been in the middle of it. And you know, his student who did the work on the Bushmen. Oh, I'm forgetting these names.

*Lee?*

No, not Lee, the other one. Lee and DeVore. Yes, DeVore. I met DeVore when I

came back to Cal in the late 1950s. He was then a student of Washburn's. So no, I don't think Washburn was doing the baboon work that early, but he may have, I don't recall.

*Yes. I just wondered how that was . . . .*

I don't remember. I don't know enough about Washburn's development and background. But anyway, the McCown course was, to me, a high point, just like the course from John Carter in English.

*I was thinking how interesting your exposure to the sociologists teaching about the impact of the movement of people on nations . . .*

Yes, yes. Migration.

*. . . and how that would resonate with concepts in deep-time, you know, populations moving and . . . .*

Sure. All those things. You know, at that stage in your life, these things come together as illuminations. "Oh, wow." And I was just full of wows at that time. Yes, "Oh wow! Oh, wow!" Have I mentioned Kenneth Stamp in history?

*No, you have not.*

Well, Kenneth Stamp was another great influence during that time. I think I only took one semester from him, but god, I have his notes still. And I have in the past gone back and looked at them. This was on the Civil War and Reconstruction.

And I tell you, this man was remarkable in the detail, the insight, the knowledge of economic change and development, the understanding of the political and economic forces of the pre-Civil War and Civil War.

His lectures on slave-owning and on slavery and the slave-owning class in which he was showing how reasonable and logical it all was were brilliant.

This is how it worked, and that's why it was so hard for the South to give it up. Although it was already falling apart by the time of the Civil War economically, the South was not going to be able to give it up. Slavery was no longer the great bonanza it had been. Nevertheless, intellectually and culturally, it was deeply ingrained as a system that made sense. And he'd always talk about the irony of how something so terrible, so inhuman could make sense to so many human beings, you know.

I mean, he was wonderful with bringing out these ironies of the human condition. And yet, he didn't make a lot of that. He would just say, you know, "Here we have thousands and thousands of people whose livelihood and whose way of life and whose emotional connection with the world and whose intellects depended upon this system and were forged by this system and accepted it as nature."

*And the impossibility of any middle ground. You were either for it or against. I mean, there was no way to accommodate . . . .*

Well, not if you were going to change the system. That was dangerous. That was crisis. I mean, it was like blowing up the world: "What's going to happen now?" Which happened during and after the Civil War.

He was able to paint this poignant picture of the decay of the South and what happened with people and their ideas, their emotions. And then the horrors of reconstruction and what the new capitalist bourgeois North was doing in advancing on the gravy, eating up all the gravy, you know,

of the South. It was a highly destructive period.

And yet, he was very sympathetic, you know, to the Northern cause. Nevertheless, he had this ability to point out the poignancy of social change. And no one could just take a position and say, "You know, this is wrong and this is bad." But you understood all the forces at work and what it meant to the lives of human beings, good or bad. Things were happening which were deeply *powerfully*, traumatic to the whole society.

And his view was it is not going to end; it's going on. I think I took that from him, the idea that race relations and racism is the profoundest underlying theme in American life and will be for a long time to come. He never said it that way, but it always came back to that, that this was something we would never soon resolve. It's going on and on and on. I had a greatly positive view of that man and his course.

*Well, so you probably took the class because of the subject that he was teaching.*

I'm not sure. I had a lot of friends who were taking it. I probably had heard about

him or knew about him. He was a well-known scholar of the Civil War. But I undoubtedly talked to people, and I probably was taking courses that were part of the track of a lot of my congenial friends, you know, along the way. And this one was certainly the jackpot.

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#### Notes

1. Anthropology 207A-B was Lowie's most famous graduate seminar and dealt with the history and theory of anthropology. He continued to teach this seminar until 1957 each spring. "A significant part of the theoretical position of most anthropologists who took their Ph.D.'s at Berkeley stems from this course." <http://dynaweb.oac.cdlib.org:8088/dynaweb/uchis/public/inmemoriam1959...> 10/23/2003

2. The Piltdown skull, discovered in Britain in 1912, wasn't exposed as a fraud until 1953. Raymond Dart's discovery of the first australopithecine was in 1925. He described it as an upright, small brained ancestor of *Homo sapiens*. Louis and Mary Leakey's discoveries of additional australopithecine fossils began in 1959.





## PICKET LINES

**W**HILE I WAS going to school, this last part of 1951, and for the last year since I had left the waterfront, I had transferred over to the party organization in the East Bay, and I was in a trade union section of the East Bay Communist Party. I was there, obviously, because I had come out of the waterfront.

And most of our discussions and problems and activities had to do with various kinds of labor issues on the East Bay. There was a tremendous amount of activity among the waterfront workers on the coast and the teamsters and the various groups that were working in the warehousemen's union. A number of strikes and confrontations were taking place, and one of them that I found myself involved in was the strike of the nurses and nurses' aides in Herrick Hospital.

The nurses aides, who were mostly black women, though there were some men among them, were appealing for help through the trade unions and whatever party members were among them for aid in their strike. So I was assigned to work with them, and that was, to me, a very interesting period because it

was an entirely different kind of work experience than I'd had.

I was working here with people who were hospital workers, most of them were women, and most of them were black women. So it was an entirely different look at the labor front as against what I experienced in maritime. And I ended up writing leaflets, of course.

I wrote a number of leaflets for them in which I outlined the problems that they had. The problems were that the wages of black workers were lower than white workers, number one. Number two, nurses' aides were doing an enormous amount of work because there was such a shortage of nurses. They had asked for higher wages and relief in terms of their hours and were totally ignored by the hospital administration.

*Were they unionized?*

Well, they were *just* unionized. I fortunately remember that, United Public Workers Orderlies', Nurses' Union, local 722. And they had just been organized, and they

were looking for help. So I got involved in that for a number of weeks while I was going to school and while I was working at the liquor store.

When I look back, I must have had an enormous amount of energy, because I seemed to be able to do it, but it was getting to me and I was spread too thin. I had too many different concerns all the way from the stuff that I was working on and reading in school and getting very excited about it and trying to keep up there and at the same time working almost a full-time job. It was a good job because I could take time off or arrange my schedule to fit other things—party work and meetings.

Then the strike came up which I was involved in. So I spent a lot of time down there on the picket line with the hospital workers and trying to understand the full basis of their beefs and demands, and writing leaflets. And the leaflets were pretty good. They were widely distributed.

I had this experience before, a kind of déjà vu. Somehow or other in a weird sort of way, I would think of my grandfather writing his little religious tracts warning of the end of the world and the coming of the Lord, et cetera. And sometime when I was, I don't know, twelve, thirteen years old, I was helping him put them into readable English and helping him distribute them on the streets of Oakland. Not being religiously involved, but doing it for him because he was very insistent, because he needed help, and I was the only one in the family that would pay any attention to him.

And so here I was writing and passing out leaflets at Herrick Hospital in the same general region as myself and my grandfather had many, many years earlier. And it was a kind of an irony which I enjoyed, as I remember. Nevertheless, it was a very rough strike, a long

one, and it was a good example of, again, communist influence in these unions. One of the major educational tasks within the union itself was chauvinism, helping the white nurses understand and get along with the black nurses' aides who were really a very interesting and committed bunch of people.

Their jobs were on the line. They were also very scared and worried about their jobs. And they had some problems in getting along with the white nurses, particularly the white male nurses, who sometimes felt that they were superior to everybody else.

And there were a lot of these inner conflicts which, again, the two or three party members that were in that union, I admired the kind of work that they did. They were able to help these people in little sessions getting together and talking about their problems of attitude toward one another, how it was going to interfere with them winning the strike.

And you know, I felt very good about being involved on that score. I didn't do much of that kind of work, because I wasn't in the union. But I worked, really, as a kind of helper.

*Was your role as a helper primarily as a union member—not a member of that union, but I mean as a member of a union?*

As a trade unionist, yes.

*But not overtly because you were a member of the Communist Party there?*

Well, except I think in those days it had not gotten to the point where people like myself felt we had to hide it if somebody brought it up to us. We didn't go around proclaiming it, but if somebody said, "Are you a communist?" I would have said and I guess I

said a number of times to different people, "Yes, I'm a member of the Communist Party." It didn't come up that often, so it wasn't something that you had to deal with all the time.

But, you know, there was a lot of savvy among working people. They knew that there were lefties in their union, and they either admired them or hated them, I mean depending on what kind of job they had done. But also, in a time of strike and labor difficulties, you know, any old port in the storm.

I mean, if anybody's going to help, fine. And I was out on the picket line every day, and I was helping to make picket signs with these people. And we'd get together and do this.

There were a lot of good, highly open and convivial discussions. People were enjoying this kind of community feeling and at the same time were very worried. A lot of these women had families and they had kids.

Sometimes they had to bring their kids with them on the picket line, and sometimes, you know, 100 or 150 nurses, nurses' aides and all the trade union people coming in to help and take turns on the picket line, those were the times when there were some very good kinds of experiences of that sort.

And so I felt very obligated to be involved, and I did a good job with leaflets. I did two or three major leaflets, which were passed out which I was proud of. And I even went to the extent of paying out of my own pocket the printing of some of them, which didn't cost much in those days at some little printing outfit.

And again it reminded me, *déjà-vu*, my grandfather having his own tracts printed at some little place down in Oakland. And this was one of those silly kind of connections.

Nevertheless, that went on for a number of weeks, and it was getting very tight and

people were getting tired. And there is that feeling at some point during a strike when they don't know if they're going to win or even prevail as they were.

And the hospital was doing everything it could to disrupt the strike by sending in trucks. And I can remember going out and waiting, with my teamsters card, because I was a member of the teamsters at the time. I had my book with me, and I remember going up as these drivers were going in and saying, "Are you a teamster, for god sakes?" And I'd hold up my book and say, "Why are you going through our picket line?" And a number of guys would turn around and leave, some would go through.

That's when the hospital called the police saying that we were interfering with the supplies coming into it. Because actually it was fairly successful. Most of the drivers would not go through.

Oh, there were always some small-time guys coming through in little trucks, and they'd say, "The hell with you guys," and go pushing through. And I remember a number of the women would get so mad that they would stand in front of the trucks or jump on the hoods of the truck and hang on. And it was getting kind of nasty toward the end.

I felt very badly for these women, because they'd gotten into this situation, and they didn't know how to get out of it. So they really relied upon some of the leaders of the union to negotiate. And I think they did negotiate something of an improved contract, but it wasn't anything near what they should have gotten. And there were repercussions against them once they got back to work later on. I *heard* that these things happened. I'm not sure of that.

But nevertheless, one day I was out there on the line, and this great big truck came in, and there was a guy in there that I had rec-

ognized, and he was a truck driver—I didn't know him, but he was in the union. I says, "You're not going to go through there, are you?"

He says, "I've got to. I've got a job to do, damn it. What are you . . . ?" You know, "Get out of my way, for god sakes."

And I said, "Look, you can't go through," and I was beginning to get mad, because he should know better. And so I stood in front of his truck, and he kept moving, inching in on me, and I finally got up on the truck. Well, then the cops came. They were just waiting for something like this, particularly me and some of the people that they considered the outsiders, the provocateurs, you see.

And I don't know, about four or five cops came and grabbed me and put handcuffs on me, and they took two or three others too. I think they took one of the women and a couple of other guys. Anyway, four or five of us were taken somewhere in Berkeley to one of the police stations. And they lined us up and held us there for two or three hours. And as I remember, I sat there with handcuffs on, and the press was in there, and somehow that bothered me the most. Here I was in school and all that sort of thing.

However, you know, that's the way the cookie crumbles. So then they interrogated each one. They were letting each of the others go, and then they finally got to me, and they said, "Are you so and so?" They had some kind of record on me—I don't know what. They had my name down in some way, and they kept pressing me about why was I there, what was I doing, where did I come from, did I even live in this area, didn't I come from Los Angeles and all that.

You know, I could tell they were as mixed up as anybody. Nevertheless, they had some idea they were going to do something special with me. And I just denied all that and just

said, "No, I'm here to support the strike, and I have every right to do it," whatever it was. And finally, just after giving me a lot of hassle in this way, they let me out.

In the meantime, it got into the press, and the next day in the . . . oh, in all the local papers, there was this short little squib about, "Altercation on the picket line and Warren d'Azevedo was arrested for interfering with supplies going into the hospital which were much in need. Patients were in need, and these people are preventing the patients from getting proper care," and all the usual stuff. Well, that was all right, excepting I know by the way people talked to me on campus, a few that I knew, some who would disapprove of what I was doing, that they had read it. And I won't name names, but one or two of my professors, you know, said that, "How do you have time to do so much activity?" Things of that kind. [laughter] So I had the feeling that I had done something.

But mainly what I was concerned with were my poor parents. It had gotten into the Modesto papers as well. And I felt terribly, because of my father, who had been helpful. I began to get a new look at my parents. You know, the struggle that I had gone through to get *away* from my family and to dissociate my whole life from them and to forge, in a sense, a new direction, that caused me to see them as, in a sense, obstructionists, and that they had created a lot of my problems and things of that kind.

A lot of this, I think, all adolescents or pre-adolescents go through this, and you exaggerate the difficulties that you had with them and you caricature them, in a sense. And so I knew that I had done that.

I was getting a little wiser as I got older, but then I wouldn't take back much that I earlier said about my father and his remote-

ness. And yet he had never done anything really unkind—well, up to that point—to me but had just not been a father for whatever reasons, which I have some idea about but are irrelevant here.

But anyway, I got a call from him saying, “I have been reading the paper. And don’t you think that this is hard on your mother?”

And by the way, at this point, my mother was ill. She was ill from what was suspected as cancer. She was getting chemotherapy and things, but she was progressively being affected by whatever it was. In fact, she lasted another two years, actually. But we didn’t realize how serious it was at the time.

Nevertheless, he says “Don’t you realize what this does to your mother? She was very upset by this.”

And then I talked to her, and she says, you know, “Can you imagine what this means to Joe. His friends are coming to him and saying, ‘Is that your son who has done this?’”

And I realized what a perfect picture of conflict between generations, number one, and number two, between class orientations, you see. I was still feeling a little cynical about them and their class position and their attitudes even though they were probably more progressive and more open politically than most of the parents of that generation of people that I knew. Nevertheless, I saw them, you know, as in that class structure where anything like this they could not possibly be positive about but only see it as churlish on my part and as unthinking and all this sort of thing. And then a *communist* on top of that.

*Oh, I was going to ask you if they knew you were . . .*

Oh, they knew. I told them. In fact, I suppose one of my ways of defining myself to them so that they would know what I felt

and where I was in the world, was to tell *them*, knowing all the time that it would be hurtful. But I guess I rationalized it was better to tell them and have them know than learn it from others.

But again, they were very careful about that, and they would express their feelings about it now and then, but they never gave me a bad time about it, never withdrew or said, you know, “Don’t bark at my doorstep” kind of thing at all.

So I had never given them really credit for that, though now I do. I mean, I see that as against a lot of people that I knew, for god sakes, they took a lot of flack, and they did well with it. Although I had every right to feel the way I felt about the kind of upbringing I had and the kind of conflicts in the family.

But nevertheless, so here my mother is telling me, “You know how all of his friends and patients are saying, ‘Is that your son? Is he doing that?’” What I admired, *he* never told me that, but she told me that.

Anyway, that was where that was. So I felt badly about that. On the other hand, I felt, “This is my life. I have to do this. This is what I’m going to do.”

And so anyway, there was the Herrick strike, and . . .

*Were there any other students involved in that strike as supporters?*

Not in the strike, no. Oh, there were two . . . yes, there were two or three students on the picket line, people I didn’t know but got to know. A couple of them were members of the student section of the party, but I hadn’t known them personally. I got to know them on the picket line, but not well. You know, everybody had different jobs and different things to do.

On campus, the people that I knew, fellow students, the few that I knew thought that it was great that I had done this. There was a lot of strong left-wing sentiment on campus at that time. And on campus, there are always a few crazies like myself and others around. And most of the friends that we had in the arts and in professions and on campus that we had known for years, they were very friendly and positive about this kind of thing. They expected me . . . or they would have done it if they could, if they had time or thought about it, they would have done it. Going down and taking part in picket lines was the thing most good people did in those days. [laughter] I mean, it was a thing you did. And you never crossed one, for god sakes, ever, you know. I still have that feeling today, even if I know it's a phony picket line, like a few years ago, these damned AF of L picket lines, and they get out three old guys that they hire a couple of bucks an hour to go out and picket back and forth. I'm thinking, you know, "This is a phony picket line. It's not worth a goddamn," and yet I won't go through it.

There was a picket line in front of a barbershop at one time, oh, many years ago here in Reno. And many of the barbershops had these poor old guys from off the streets picketing. You know, the real members of the union wouldn't dirty themselves by going down on the picket line. [laughter]

And that always makes me very angry. You have a feeling it's for the birds. But I won't go through a picket line like that. I don't think I ever have. I may have inadvertently a couple of times in my life, but I never have purposely gone through a picket line.

So anyway, in those days, that was taken for granted among our set of people, of people that we knew. You just didn't do it. And by the way, when I come to think of it, my folks

also didn't, because they just had this romantic connection with their parents and others who were down-trodden people.

They had to feel that it was legitimate, or they would just go right through and make nasty comments. But nevertheless, they were aware. They'd come from immigrant backgrounds, my mother from a working class background. She was aware that there was something there, something important going on, but she didn't understand it very well, and it bothered her and was too complicated. And then, of course, with her son messing around with this stuff, it was even more complicated.

At the same time, my mother, I think in a very begrudging and buried way, admired one doing something like that, and I felt that. I knew that. At the same time, it was painful, because there was a life she was living, the kind of world she was living in. So I was feeling much more benign about my parents. This bothered me, but I couldn't do anything about it. That was that.

And then, of course, at home, Kathy wasn't against me doing these things, but it reverberated on her. Not in the highly refined nursery school situation she was in where most of the people would have been friendly about this, but there were others who reacted.

The kids, now they didn't really have to face much of this then, because it didn't get around that much. It wasn't that big a deal. Nevertheless, Kathy legitimately worried about that in terms of the kids, and I remember she and I discussing it with the kids. But they were very little, and we had to do it in a very special kind of a way, a careful way.

And oh, at the same time, we had rented out a little shack in the back of our house. It was a little funny two story house in back, a kind of a little shack with two rooms—two

rooms with plumbing and all that—that had been rented out in the past before we moved in there. We needed money, so we heard that there was a couple that wanted it. Well, they were a mixed couple. Their name were the Goodwins, I think. And he was a student, a very fine guy, very bright, very smart and his wife who was Jewish, a white Jewish woman. And they had a kid or two. So we rented it to them.

Well, the kids got their taste of racism, because some people across the street, the neighbors, had lodgers—there was a lodging house across the street. Erik used to play with some of the kids in the backyard. And it was a strange lady who ran it. She was almost like a madame who ran this house, and we got a big kick out of her. She was quite a lady. But when we rented our place, she got very cold with us, and one or two days in a row we found eggs smashed against our door.

*Well, now was the man black?*

Yes, he was black, Jim Goodwin. I thought I said it was a mixed couple.

Yes, and in those days that was unusual. However, in Berkeley it wasn't too bad, but in that neighborhood, obviously, it was. So there was across the street a kind of change in attitude, and the kids felt that. The kids were aware that something had changed. And I wish I could remember that woman's name. They had liked her. She was very bountiful with the kids, but then she would make comments, and then we would find this stuff on our front door and all that.

So that was about the same time all these things were happening, and I thought a lot about that, you know. It's not like bringing your kids into the revolution with you.

I mean, they're living in another world, and you have to help them accommodate to

what you are. And it can't be a direct thing, because they're not living that life. I would talk to them a lot. They would know the kind of ideas I had and what I was doing, but it was a different world from them. They were going to school, they knew kids from families who were mostly professionals or doing other things.

And on the other hand, I don't remember them being too disturbed by it, but I was disturbed, and Kathy. We were worried about what it meant to them. So that was another strand of things going on.

I just felt I had to be . . . I was driven at that time. I was feeling, I suppose, strangely torn from the waterfront and from the unions. There and a kind of nostalgia and a little guilt for not being there. Things were happening over there.

The screening process had gotten very severe, a lot of my friends weren't able to get jobs. The job situation was terrible and also the anti-left feeling activity had developed to the point where if you had any kind of record, you were screened, and there was nothing you could do about it. Taft-Hartley and the Smith Act and all that were being brought to bear. It was the beginning of the McCarthy period.

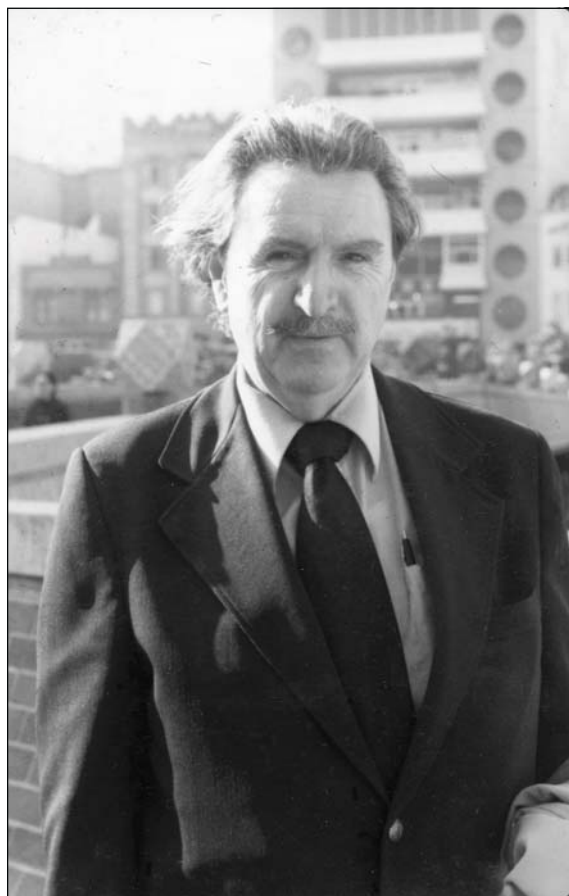
Oh, it started, again in the unions; our union was turning right, reactionary, and a lot of the Left were being drummed out with the help of a guy like Curran and the help of the ship owners, seeing this as an opportunity. And certainly the government and the Truman administration weren't helpful on this. In fact, just the opposite. It was getting very tough for anybody to get jobs, much less a left-winger.

A lot of my friends had gone to the East Coast, the ones who wanted to stay at sea and were going to stay at sea were trying to ship out of New York because there was more

shipping. And a number of people that I had known on the front went out of the NMU and went into the ILWU which was a safe haven—a union that was accepting of the Left especially those who had been longshoremen, or had been longshoremen part-time and now went in full-time. Pat Tobin, a very good friend of mine, went into the ILWU.

So all that was churning and going on over there. It was a dismal scene, and I felt badly about it.

*Did you stay in contact with that world?*



*“Pat Tobin, a very good friend of mine, went into the ILWU.” Tobin, the Washington representative of the ILWU, in San Francisco in 1976.*

To the extent that I’d go over now and then and see these guys I knew. But I wasn’t involved directly in the union itself. I mean, I had withdrawn from the union. There’s nothing worse than opening up your big yap when you don’t pay out book and all that. Then you *would be* the outside commie coming in to cause trouble, you know.

Nevertheless, I was involved at the labor school and various events that were taking place. Went over at the May Day marches and things of that kind and saw friends of mine frequently. And a lot of them came over and visited us frequently in Berkeley.

And so I kept in touch with the seamen. In fact, I have discovered that I kept a number of letters that I got from guys that I used to ship with who were now either in New York or had taken jobs throughout the country. I won’t name names, because I don’t know what these guys are doing now, but I had very close connections with them. There was a guy who I had shipped with, in fact even on the last trip that I had made, and two or three who had been with me on Union Oil ships and who were now trying to maintain a kind of left activity in the midst of all this ruin going on.

Some had gone down to the Gulf. One guy had gone down to the Gulf to help organize, primarily to bolster up the anti-Curran caucus forces. The Curran forces were extremely reactionary and basically racist. Some of them were for getting rid of the foreign seamen, getting rid of the Puerto Rican seamen by going along with the Smith Act idea, and any left-wing black was out of luck. I mean, jobs first to white seamen and all that. So some of these guys were down there organizing in various ports trying to bolster the left position in the union.



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## A GROWING FIRE STORM

**F**OR A NUMBER of years, one or two that I had recruited into the party or had been partly responsible for it, saw me as a kind of an intellectual guide, which I really wasn't, but saw me as somebody who was solid in their views about the Left and working class struggles and the like. And so they would write me talking about their troubles, the difficulties they were having about the party, about trade unions, about jobs, about their personal lives. I have a number of such letters, and when I look at them now, it's heart-rending, because I was in no position to advise guys like this. And when I look back, they were admirable. Some of these guys with the worst goddamn backgrounds that you can think of in this world, the trade union movement and their role in the Left and in some cases the party had, in a sense, given them a sense of identity and of empowerment and of personal worth and value. They saw this as evidence to themselves that they could do something.

*Right, and engage in their society in meaningful ways.*

Right, and that they could understand what was going on around them at least in the working world. And this was terribly important to these guys, so their letters were really a litany of their doubts, and they would apologize and say, "Oh, you're probably going to say I'm a revisionist or a phony, but hell, look what happened at the meeting that day, and I don't think our guys," (meaning the party guys,) "really understood what was happening. And they're losing the membership," and on and on.

And this critique of the Left was going on within the Left not only by those in the trade unions, it was going on all through the Left in the country, because it was under siege. And when that happens, things begin to fall apart and people begin to look at what they're doing with new eyes.

And I remember what now in a way I'm a little embarrassed about. I found myself writing letters jacking them up and telling them, you know, "There's still the struggle. We've got to do this, and we've got to do that." And I wasn't sure myself at that point whether I could handle anything. I mean, I

was in the midst of all this other stuff going on. And yet I felt very tied to these guys. So that went on all through this early 1950s period.

*Well, you used the word driven, but, I mean, you were also still very committed to the causes that the Left . . .*

Oh, yes. I felt and still do that the Communist Party at that time with all its problems was the major spokesman for a conscientious political orientation on the part of any thinking people, and certainly of working people.

*But it seems among your school colleagues, anyway, that you translated that more than others into direct action. Is that fair to say?*

Well, I don't know about more . . .

*Than your other colleagues?*

Oh, I don't know if that's so. That would be an over-simplification. I mean, I knew a lot of people, and many of them were activists as I was, in different ways. I knew some who were activists in professional fields—lawyers, artists—who were active in their fields. But it's an entirely different world. I mean, that kind of activism is important, it's educational, and it's part of a political struggle. At the same time, it's not the same as a working-class struggle.

But no, everybody I knew was in one way or another an activist or a potential activist. And then I knew a lot of people who were just liberal social democratic people whose heart was in the right place and who were supportive of left-wing policies and all that, but with limitations in their own minds about what they could do.

*I'm just trying to get a picture of how you identified still with the working-class and how that did or did not integrate for you as a student and a potential . . .*

No, I felt . . . Oh, I see what you mean. I've had problems with that. I felt that I was now again immersed in what was then thought of as the bourgeois world, you see. And I had a lot of feelings about that. As I said, wearing a shirt and tie to class or a jacket, you know, to seminars and things of that kind was embarrassing to me. I felt these are insignia of another class. And when I look back, that's terribly naive and almost embarrassingly so. Nevertheless, it had meaning and reality at that time.

I can remember when some of my old shipmates would come over and visit in Berkeley, and they'd see me getting ready to go to school with my briefcase, you know, and laughing at me. "Hey Whitey! Hey Whitey! Hey Whitey, where are you heading? You're gonna go up there among all those phonies now," and all this kind of thing. It was all well-meant and all that.

Nevertheless, the kind of hard-hat Marxist I had been meant that when you move into a new economic situation in your life and your goals change then your identities change, and one has to watch that, you know. Where is this taking me? Oh, I was going through a lot of this at that time. I still am, but *then* it was crucial.

These were crucial concerns. People talked about them. We had discussions about them back in the party sections in the meetings, because there were a lot of the people of the middle-class in the party in the East Bay, along with trade union people. Even in the trade union sections, questions of class-identity came up all the time in discussions—

how one watched for the effect of one's work and one's level of work on one's thinking and all that sort of thing and the identity with the working-class as against the identity with whatever other class you're connected with.

All of which I think are very real and important kinds of thought and concepts even today. I mean, they're diagnostic concepts. They're concepts of how you understand where you're at. At the same time, they can be restrictive and they can be over-burdening; they can be wrong too.

But as I remember back then, this was a vigorous, positive kind of ferment that was going on. But things were changing. The Left was under real siege. There was a real attack going on all over. You could see it. I could see it on the waterfront, they could too. There were no jobs, the Left was being attacked in the press, being attacked politically and legally everywhere.

*Did you see it intellectually, I mean on campus in content of classes?*

I think on campus . . . I can't really analyze that. I think . . . well, yes, loyalty oaths were going on for academics, and a fight against loyalty oaths. On campus, however, there was enough of a left orientation, a progressive orientation, where you never felt lost, because there were always people who supported either a resistance against any attack on freedom of speech and . . .

Well, in fact, here is a leaflet that was passed around widely by the Emergency Committee of Artists, Scientists and Educators. And a good many of the people I knew were sponsors. I would have been on it had I been around to sign it, but [reading] even Mark Shorer was on the list, Giacomo Patri, the artist. Let me see, Holland Roberts, who was from Stanford University and had be-

come the head of the labor school in San Francisco, Robert Machesny, a painter we knew, Gina Phillipsborn, the old therapist who was the mother of all those marvelous daughters, Leonard Ralston, the composer that I had known a long time, Robert Brady, the economist, and oh, god, Paul Radin was on the list. [laughter]

*And what year is this?*

This was 1951 or 1952. It was not dated, but I know that's the period. And Orville Wells. I see a number of members of the Communist Party, but I also see a great number of just progressive people, left-oriented people.

*Was this specifically against the loyalty . . . ?*

Mimi Kagan, the dancer, [laughter] Earl Kim, the composer. What's that?

*Was this specifically protesting the loyalty oaths or . . . ?*

No, these were protesting the raids on bookstores for so-called salacious literature, which included not only what was considered . . .

*Who was doing the raids?*

The police. That's what we were protesting and the Hearst papers coming out calling for it. The Hearst press had succeeded in rallying the support of various questionable groups and individuals throughout the nation to close down bookstores for material which is "degenerate and obscene," as well as left-wing literature. And a clerk in a San Francisco bookstore was arrested for the sale of a widely circulated book, et cetera, et cetera. I mean, a lot of this was going on at

the time. So at least in the circles that I worked and lived in, in Berkeley in the academic circles, you had a friendly atmosphere. There weren't many people who were reactionary right-wing who spoke up in those days. But they were there.

*They were silent. [laughter]*

Yes, the silent majority . . . the silent majority. That's why, you know, universities were considered to be the hot beds of radicalism and communism, et cetera.

To some extent, that was partly true. I mean, they *were* bastions of liberal thoughts, more so than they are today, I would say. But nevertheless, universities tend to be that way. My god, people *thinking!* [laughter] I mean, their job is to think!

*You're even paid to think.*

They have time to think. They have time, and they have to worry about not getting into ivory towers.

*Did you think in terms of overtly educating your children about these ideas, or was it just supposed to happen because of the environment they were growing up in?*

We never pressed our kids on this. I mean, we never sat them down and lectured to them or anything. However, when they raised questions, they would get our kinds of answers. And, of course, the kind of people that always came into our house, they heard the conversations, they heard the way they thought, the way they felt.

Sometimes they would ask questions, but I don't ever remember them being disturbed by it. This came later when the FBI came to our house—this was much later when I was

at Evanston. And then my daughter, who was older—they were just little kids at this time, you see—later on when she was, you know, eleven or twelve, thirteen and heard things and was interested, that bothered her a lot. She felt fearful about those things, and for good reason.

And then, of course, we talked at length about it, and she certainly knew my views about things and Kathy's views. But no, we never did anything, as I remember, in any organized way. Actually, the world they lived in, the people they knew all had these values for the most part. Those that didn't stuck out like sore thumbs, and they'd see that, like that issue with the attitude toward the couple in the back of our house. They were irritated and angry about that and also wondering and hurt, because they had had good relations with these people. That was an experience where they learned something, they learned how deep these things can be.

So anyway, these relations with old buddies of mine went on, and they were very important to me, but also in a sense disruptive and agonizing, because I felt I wanted to be part of that, and I wasn't. And I guess it partly drove me to do more activity, more activist work despite the fact I was so tied up and wanting to spend more time at school and I had these jobs. But I felt it extremely important that I do it.

It wasn't enough to be involved in group activities. For instance I heard about Jack London Square. That was when the first commercial intrusions to Jack London Square in Oakland were pending, announced in the paper, by a group of Oakland citizens. The city was going to commemorate Jack London. They were going to create a square with shops and restaurants and all that sort of thing in the old area around the waterfront in Oakland where that First and Last Chance

Bar was that London supposedly had hung out in. And they were going to collect the money to remodel that whole area.

Well I remember reading that they were going to call it Jack London Square, but there was not one word in the press about Jack London himself. I was still writing—I was writing poetry and trying to write a novel. In fact, I think at that time on top of everything else, I had this back-burner novel that I was working on, and I had published two or three short stories in small mags. So it was still a burning issue. And suddenly here is Jack London being ignored and treated like a commodity, you know.

Well, all my Marxist genes began to get excited about this. [laughter] So this was in April of 1951, in fact. Yes, before some of these other things happened. And I talked it up among some of my friends and said, “We ought to do something about this, particularly the writers group of the arts, sciences, and professions.”

And oh, they were very interested and all that, but it wasn’t to them an urgent matter. They had other things they were doing that seemed more important. But this seemed terribly important to me. [laughter]

Jack London had been one of my heroic figures when I was a kid. Just as some of my feelings about problems in the class structure of the country came out of Upton Sinclair, my feelings for certain kinds of rugged individualism and seagoing and all that came from Jack London. He had been a socialist, a left-wing guy. Unfortunately, his daughter and Harry Lundeberg seem to have gotten together and become Trotskyites. [laughter]

That was the story, anyway. So I decided I had to do something, that I wasn’t going to bother other people. And so I wrote a long leaflet entitled, “Statement Presented to the Sponsoring Committee of Jack London

Square Dedication Ceremonies on May First.” This was my May Day activity.

In this leaflet, I pointed out Jack London’s actual history, what an important guy he had been, how he’d been this active socialist, how he’d supported all of the highly progressive programs not only in this country, but he was internationally known as a progressive, as a socialist. He had been a worker living under the worst conditions in Oakland, California, and had written about this and talked about the corrupt and terrible conditions in which workers had to live. All of this is what this guy stood for, and this certainly should be part of this commemoration, a recognition of *who he was*, not just using his name, but *who he was*.

And I remember there were all these old Oakland matrons and old guys in their ties and their business suits. And there must have been around fifty people all out for kind of a spring outing. There was a little wooden platform, and the mayor was speaking and all that.

And I had got up and said, “I would like to say a few words.”

“Well, we don’t have your name; you’re not on the agenda. We don’t have time.”

I said, “Just a few words.” And I pushed my way in and to the mike, and they weren’t used to this kind of thing, and I was. [laughter] And I just said, “I have here a statement on behalf of Jack London, a man who I have great admiration for. Who was a writer and a socialist and a worker in this area. And I am going to be passing this out to anybody who is interested, and I would thank you to give it some attention and to try to give Jack London his *due*, especially if you’re going to commercialize him,” you know.

And I felt so good. These are the kind of things that kept me from being really in the

dumps in this period. And I went on and handed out . . . .

*Particularly being on May 1.*

On May 1, because there was the May Day march going on in San Francisco that I couldn't get to, so I did this instead.

I must have had 200 copies of this, and everybody wanted one. I gave it to all these . . . there must have been, oh, fifty to one hundred onlookers, and they had set up chairs, and all. They mostly were upper middle-class Oakland people. Some of them very brusquely took it, you know, and others threw them on the ground. [laughter] You know, that kind of thing . . . the usual sort of thing.

And I stayed there for about an hour while these ceremonies were going on, passing it out to passers-by, just like, again, déjà vu, my grandfather. [laughter] And I passed out about 200 altogether, to people as they were going by.

Well, this got into the press, and I was very proud of that. I put the name of the organization, but I didn't put my name, because I didn't want to be a grandstander. That wasn't acceptable—the Left, you shared things. And then the *People's World* printed the whole thing the next day.

So I felt, well, even one person can do something, as part of the views that we had. Sometimes it only takes one, you know. Just do it. And I felt I had done something for Jack London and my own principles. [laughter] So that was going on on top of everything else.

And this is the same period Robeson had been beaten . . . not been beaten up but having a hell of a time getting in and out of Peekskill . . . the Peekskill festival and riot. Do you remember that? Outside of New York?

No.

Oh, a big gathering. This was a sort of a pre . . . . What was the late 1960s event? The rock and roll . . . .

*Oh, Woodstock.*

Woodstock. This was pre-Woodstock. This was Peekskill, where there had been a concert you know, left-wing labor songs. There were masses of people. On the East Coast, they could really get masses of people on. And Robeson had been invited. Robeson by this time had begun to be vilified by the press as a guy who had gone to Russia and was a communist.

And by the way, he was not. He was friendly to . . . he even had a close friend who was one of the leaders of the party, Benjamin Davis, and he was very friendly with many people who were communists, but he himself was not. He was very friendly about the Soviet Union, he was angry about a lot of things going on in this country, and boy, did he get negative press.

In fact, I would say, from the period of the late 1950s, Robeson had been so effectively vilified by the Right in this country that you could never hear his voice on the radio. You never heard Robeson's songs. Before that in the 1930s and 1940s, you would hear Robeson, his little records were around.

He was blacklisted. He was one of the earliest performers to be blacklisted. And it's only recently, just in the last couple of years or so, you begin to hear Robeson's stuff coming back, and evaluations of his work. Every now and then you'd hear something about it in the last twenty years or so, on KPFA in Berkeley, these small left-wing kinds of stations. But never, on a major broadcast, did

you hear Robeson's music that I can remember. So that was going on. And here was Robeson, a guy that I had tremendous admiration for. I had seen him, as I had mentioned earlier, on the waterfront, and he sang to the groups and . . .

*Was the Korean War . . . ? Is this brewing?*

Korean War was just beginning to brew. I don't know the dates now. Yes, it was about to happen. Gulf of Tonkin and . . . I don't know. I have to check.

All this was going on. Penny, isn't this enough? [laughter] I mean, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg had been indicted.

*Yes. Oh, that's right.*

And I forget when they were killed; they were sentenced to death. And of course a lot of us . . . most progressives, not just party members, were terribly concerned about that. It looked like a set-up deal. Regardless of what was really going on, the kinds of evidence and the kinds of . . . oh gosh, of lynching attitudes that there was at this time, I mean, there was a real lynching mentality. The press almost unanimously had them convicted even before there was any kind of trial or anything of the sort. And, of course, the Left took their side.

I have no idea to this day—I think there is some literature available—but I have no idea what their role was and what they were really . . . They were accused, of course, of selling secrets, taking or giving military secrets to the Soviet Union.

But it was like the Hiss case. There has been so much controversy, I don't know what their real role was. They denied it, of course, and there seemed to have been good reason to defend them on this basis. But anyway,

they were whisked off and killed, and this was a great shock.

All these things were coming on at once, and it was very depressing and very deeply unsettling to, I think, anybody with a progressive orientation. It looked like fascism.

*And you had just gone through the war.*

And by the way, the accusations, the charges of fascism that were going on seemed very real to me and many others. I mean, this was like fascism. And, of course, as McCarthy began to be a major spokesman for the Right, I think some of us were convinced that this was a real expression of a deep fascist orientation in American life. And by the way, there is a very good reason to see real fascists involved in this, but I think we might have overstated it ourselves in our own mind. Nevertheless, when I look back, there was every reason to feel this way. We'd just come out of a war against fascism, and then we have this kind of activity in this country.

*Well, you made the point before that so much of our overseas aid money was going to fascists.*

*Japan and Germany and to . . .*

*Well, Greece.*

. . . right-wing dictatorships and really reactionary governments. We were trying to get their support, and we felt we could have a liaison with them, because it was . . . oh, it was just terrible. All this was a reality.

At the same time, what was happening to a lot of us was an attack upon our patriotism and the charge that we were members of organizations that were out to overthrow the United States government by force and violence. Loyalty oaths were being applied

to make us confirm yes or no on these things. We were said to be anti-American and pro-Soviet, which was infuriating, because that isn't the way it was. There may have been members of the Communist Party or other parties in this country that felt that way, but I didn't know any of them. The people I knew were Americans and felt like Americans. As for the question of force and violence, that emerged from early Bolshevik literature, Lenin and others, about how it was necessary at certain stages in human development for there to be a forceful overthrow of existing governments and all that. Well even Lincoln had said that, you know. [laughter] But we didn't see that as happening in the United States. We saw a slow and consistent development and press towards socialism, towards more socialist oriented economy and government, which I still believe in.

Whatever socialism means in the thousands of interpretations one can give to it, there are certain fundamental underlying principles that I am for and have to do with the restriction on unrestricted gain, greed, and accumulation, and a more equitable distribution of wealth. My god, if that's socialist or communist I'm for it, and I still am and probably will always be.

Then the idea of struggle in the party, that there must be a constant struggle for class interests. It's the class aspect that got the negative reaction, of course, exploiting class differences. The party was accused also of exacerbating and creating racial disagreements. It was the party that was responsible for the way blacks felt about whites. The party created that. And you see, the Left was accused of causing the very things the system had produced.

Yes, the growing fire storm in the early 1950s that I see as the heating up of what became the McCarthy period in the next few

years. The charges made against the Left and particularly the Communist Party were deeply disturbing and made me and a lot of people I knew very angry. It was insulting that we were out to wage a war against the American government and to overthrow it by force and violence.

That metaphor of "force and violence" kept reemerging over and over again and became the rallying cry of the far Right and the Hearst press. Every indication that there were members of the Communist Party active in unions or in various organizations or in literature was linked to the notion of overthrow of the government. And it was an effective thing. You know, American people aren't particularly interested in or certainly not ready to accept the possibility of forceful overthrow of their government.

And that was *not* the way communists that I knew thought about change, or what was termed the "struggle for socialism." In the American scene our view was that by the active work of an intellectual vanguard and the working-class within the entire social system, that little by little there would be the emergence of a movement that would be sufficient to have an answer to the capitalist control of all the instruments of society as it then and now exists. And it was seen as a slow, lengthy, and arduous process.

I guess in the minds of some, as I've already said, there was the idea that there must be a revolution in the classical sense. I never held that. Nobody that I knew was so naive as to think in those terms. It was the idea of slow and arduous pressure toward the goal of socialization.

The idea of communism was a long-range, idealistic view coming out of the seventeenth and eighteenth century socialist thought. It was an idealistic goal and had little to do with the day-to-day struggles to



alter, to improve conditions, to move toward more equitable concepts and values in American life. That was the thing that we were working for if we thought at all in those kinds of big terms. Mostly it was day-to-day wages, conditions, improving the relations between blacks and whites and other minorities, education, creating a new set of values that would bring about social change. And this constant harassing propaganda that came from the Right about overthrow of the government by force and violence was actually concretized in the kind of attacks that were being made directly on left-wingers.

There was a senate investigating committee on education in the California legislature in 1951 that held a series of highly touted hearings. People from all walks of life: people like Holland Roberts, out of Stanford who was heading up the California Labor School; any number of teachers, professors, labor leaders, ordinary working people considered to be left-wing were called before this committee. The committee's main thrust was to find out why there was opposition—not only find out why, but to suppress opposition to the coming loyalty oaths.

The loyalty oaths were already being put in effect in various industries; certainly on the waterfront with the screening procedures. At universities there was the beginning of a real organized resistance to the loyalty oaths. But wherever there was resistance to the loyalty oaths, there were these hearings and these attacks.

And behind it all were the constant statements, "Do you believe in the forceful overthrow of the government of the United States?" If you said *no*, and then were found to be connected in some remote way or directly with the Communist Party, you were then liable of the charge of perjury, because

everybody *knew* the Communist Party was seeking the overthrow of the government by force and violence. It was a catch-22 situation, and people were deeply disturbed, people that I knew. Well, many Americans were, of course. So that was going on in 1951.

The proceedings of that committee were published in 1952. The names of literally hundreds of people that were active in trade unions, in professional organizations, universities, and various schools throughout California were on the list. The effect was, these were people with dangerous thoughts.

*So this was a published list?*

Oh, yes, yes. It was published in 1952. [reading] "The proceedings of the Extraordinary Sessions of the California Legislature in 1951," while Goodwin Knight was president of the senate, and Harold Powers . . . .

It was inquisition. And when one reads this today, you can hardly believe it. The questions that were asked and the harassment and the threatening of witnesses was very much what came to be the main image that we have of the McCarthy hearings later in 1953, 1954, and 1955.

So it was a heady time. And aside from all the other things that I and others were doing, this was the constant concern.

I don't think I, personally, was confronted with the problem of loyalty oaths at that time. I had always refused to sign them; lost a couple of jobs and positions because of that. But I'm trying to think whether at the university we as graduate students or whether our professors were forced to face that decision at that time. I'm not sure. I know there was a great deal of resistance, a great deal of concern around the university and a deep anger about it.

*One of the things that you had raised before that we didn't explore was the issue of how that polarization, how that identity forced on the Left, kind of denied that left-wing people were patriots; that defined patriotism explicitly in right . . . .*

Oh, yes. Patriotism was under that propaganda umbrella. Patriotism was a total agreement with and subservience to any of the positions taken by the American government, anywhere in the world, under any conditions. If you were a critic, you had to be extremely careful and state your case within the boundaries by constantly saying that on the other hand, our country and our nation is superior throughout the world and that we have a right to do what we are doing. Any suggestion that there was any other country that has some element in its system that we should be looking at—for example, even Sweden or [laughter] the Scandinavian countries, certainly any of the countries that were going through social change in Latin America or elsewhere—to suggest that any of those movements or any of those ideas might be positive and should be accepted within the United States was unpatriotic. It's very hard to explain how overpowering this was. The press was constantly pushing it, so that the Left felt under siege, felt there was danger.

Now, that was the point at which there was the movement going on within the far Left, within the party, to go underground. After all, six or seven of its leaders had been indicted, some had gone into hiding, and there was the feeling among some people, a kind of paranoid panic that the moment had come for entrenchment, that now is the time to hold what we have and go underground.

Well, I opposed this; a number of other people I knew opposed it. There were lots of

discussions within party circles about it—“Should we or shouldn't we?” or “How are we going to do it? What's going to be the procedure?” But it went on, and on nevertheless. It became . . . .

Here is where I began to doubt the effectiveness of what the party was proclaiming as democratic centralism. It really became something from the top. The concerns going on in the top party leadership—and rightly so, because they were under attack and being arrested—were being transmitted down the line, as the necessity for the local leadership to begin to go underground. Well, this I guess was in 1951 or 1952. I began to have deep doubts about the organization at that time—not about principles, but about organizational planning and *who* was deciding these things and how it was going to happen.

I don't want to name names, but I was working with three or four what I considered to be very able trade union people who were now in the Communist Party section in the East Bay. And one of them I had great admiration for was a Portuguese guy who had been a fisherman and was now a local party functionary, and very clear, very sharp, very direct, day-to-day activity, and a good organizer. And I remember discussions with him about how he was going to go underground and what did this mean?

We had numbers of discussions about this. And there was a period in which people started doing it, because it was considered to be an order from the central committee and all that sort of thing. And I can remember for about a year I tried very hard to go along with this. I wasn't somebody who had to go underground, excepting I had to work with people who were underground. And there were three or four party functionaries who

were important section leaders or people who were involved in larger organizations for the counties and states.

And the cloak-and-dagger stuff that began to come up—I mean, the planning was . . . in my view it was ridiculous. I was among those who felt people in the party had to say that they were, had to speak openly, had to take positions, so that people could see what our stand was. And if they were arrested, well, then that's it! It wasn't going to wound the party to such a degree that it couldn't function, because it wasn't functioning anyway. I mean, already a job had been done on it. *Now* is the time to proclaim, to state what you thought, and to be open.

And that position didn't prevail, really. I mean, I think most of the people I knew felt this. Certainly the people who had been on the waterfront felt very strongly that, they should be open communists, and if they're going to go down, they're going to go down saying what they believed openly, and being what they were.

I have never denied that I was a communist anywhere. If I'd been confronted with a loyalty oath that I had to sign, I would have put it on it, "Yes, I have been [a communist] and I am, but I sign this under protest I disagree with it." I never did that, but I was prepared to do that if I was confronted with it. A few I refused to sign and took the consequences.

And so I can remember a period of time in which I felt more and more dismayed in a sense. Here I was studying, going to school, involved in two or three labor activities; I had a family, and I had a number friends on different levels. And when I come to think of it, I don't know how one does it. I wasn't alone. I knew people who had much more difficult times than I did and were much more

involved and much more effective, much more meaningful.

And I was small fry. I was never more than an active trade unionist party member. Nevertheless, I found myself being dragged into this business of having to take forty minutes to get to somebody's house, to go around in circles in my car to see that I wasn't followed, to stop someplace.

It was so ridiculous. I mean, I felt that we were being screwy, that it was nutty. And then there were two or three people that I met; one of them I thought was a real clod. I thought, "What is this guy underground for?" [laughter] "He's totally useless."

I mean, he was sitting in a little room and getting fat, and people were bringing him food and all that sort of thing. He seemed to have lost contact with almost everything that was going on. And I had to bring him messages, and then he sent messages out. And my view was that, "If this is the way we're functioning, and this is supposed to be something that goes on in the future, we're crazy. This is not going to work." And, of course, it didn't. And so much of it was a caricature of an historic moment.

I *understand* what happens to people under those conditions, that there was a view within the party, and lord knows where it came from originally. I don't think it was a directive from the Soviet Union, [laughter] and I don't think it came from any of the European parties, but maybe because of the attacks upon the leadership of party, it was thought this was the time to entrench. Well, in my view that was a wrong course. It was a silly thing to do. And that few months when I was involved in it, and I was going here and there on top of everything else, trying to be a really dedicated person, doing the things according to directives and making sure that

I wasn't followed . . . my view now is, I'll bet that there were informers within the party system, within the leadership even, that knew *everything* that was going on. [laughter] And here we were playing this cloak-and-dagger game. I felt silly and embarrassed about that. That was an embarrassing development.

It was demeaning. Now, when I say that, I'm quite aware that there were people who were within the party then and who may be now looking back, who would look upon my view here as revisionist, as bourgeois, and all that sort of thing. I don't care, because I think the people that I knew—and I'm not talking about people in the professions or in the middle class, I'm talking about working people I knew—they were *really* embarrassed by this. It went against the grain; it was not our view of how an American dissident behaved; within our system you behaved differently.

And this view wasn't so different from the way the Left had behaved in other countries, in European countries, facing head-on what happened. In fact, some of those people were heroic figures in our left-wing tradition. Not hiding out.

There are conditions, some situations, where that might be meaningful, but I don't think that that was the time in American life to do it. It was a wrong course. It was going to the trenches before the war had started. People weren't being killed; a few were being jailed, but they were able to do more from jail [laughter] and to say more and to be more effective than had they been underground.

*So you feel, also, there really wasn't the opportunity anymore within the party for grassroot party members on the local level to structure the conduct of their own business? They were tak-*

*ing orders from the top, and people were going underground, even though there was a local . . .*

I think there was an element of that. There was a lot of talk about democratic centralism and decisions being made from the bottom, but it wasn't happening in the area where I was working. It wasn't *happening* that way. The excuse would be, if one brought it up, that this was a crucial time, that certain kinds of things had to be short-circuited. It was a crisis. We had to do it. But I and others . . .

*So there wasn't the leadership representing this "Let's stay above ground"?*

There was a leadership, but it was underground, at least the effective leadership. And I thought that at least on the local level it was ridiculous, because not only that leadership, but those cadres, the clubs on the local level, had to be released to talk freely and to act out program. By 1953 the whole party was in a shambles of argument, of charges and countercharges, and factionalism of all sorts. People were forming their own groups.

And it was an unnecessary thing. The organization could have been kept much more solid had things been open and people had something very direct to support and to point to. Anyway, this friend, this one guy I had a lot of admiration for who had been a local functionary for some time, there was a kind of understanding between us. He was very clear on all of this. He said, "You know, this is not going to get us anywhere. This shows that this phase is coming to an end. We are reaching a point where something entirely new has to emerge."

I felt that too, dialectically speaking, the party as we knew it had had its day. Now,

when I say this, I want to clarify that I still think that it had done an enormously positive job, and it was a tragedy to see the breakup of this far-left kind of leadership and thinking. And I felt very pessimistic, everyone that I knew did. It was a period of pessimism.

Because there was *so* much to be done, and there was so much positive work that could *still* be done, we found ourselves falling apart into little groups. The leadership was in essence gone. There was an East Coast leadership that was still making proclamations, and the organs of the party were still coming out. But it had become empty. The base was crumbling, wasn't there.

And it was *hard* to be pessimistic. It was hard to look upon it in this way. Even talking about it now, I find it hard, because when I say it need not have been that way, that's also stupid, because things are what they are, and things take place because of forces that are much too complicated for any of us to deal with or to cope with. Nevertheless, it was a sad thing.

And so while that was going on, I worked out some of my feelings about it. I wrote a couple of articles. I wrote one for the *People's World*. I was trying to find ways to be positive, and I wrote an article on Samuel Green, who was a minister in the 1850s. He was part of the underground railroad in Massachusetts, and his home had been a place where people stopped over on their way to Canada, and he had a son in Canada. It was about the era of Harriet Tubman and all those great black abolitionist persons who were involved in the underground railroad.

By the way, the police had a campaign of raiding bookstores in San Francisco, taking out texts that were thought to be left-wing, dangerous texts. They had been arresting bookstore clerks and sometimes closing book-

stores. Along with that, pornography. I mean, pornography and left-wing literature and communism were all in a basket. [laughter] They were all equally anti-American; they were all dangerous.

And so I wrote this article, while this was going on, thinking, you know, here is an example back in the 1850s of the same thing happening. Samuel Green's house was raided, and what did they find? They found a map of Canada, where unfortunately he had marked the routes, and a copy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. And that became part of the trial against him. He had a copy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and he had a map of Canada. And this was *truly* dangerous.

This was in Cambridge, Massachusetts, of all places, in the mid-1850s. And in the first trial he was acquitted. A good, liberal Massachusetts jury, I guess, must have done it. I don't remember how the jury was actually composed, but he was finally acquitted, though it was said that he did have this scurrilous literature there. But, after all, he did have a right, and they couldn't *prove* the underground railroad aspect. It looked suspicious, but this was not enough evidence to try him or to sentence him. So he was acquitted.

Immediately, he was slapped with another charge. A case was made against him for salacious literature, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*! He had no right to have that, and so he was indeed a person who had helped slaves get through, the property of slave owners in the South, et cetera. He was convicted and sentenced to ten years. He went to jail and wasn't released until the Union forces came through and released him. I forget where he was in jail in the South, but he was finally released.

But to me that was a powerful story. In fact, I think I even wrote a preliminary paper for Carter's course in English on this, but I

changed it and developed it for the *People's World*, making the connection with raids on bookstores and with the conditions that we were in.

That made me feel better, doing that. And also this Committee for Artists, Scientists, and Professionals put out petitions and leaflets opposing these raids. You know, everybody was trying to do their own thing. It was . . . .

*Now, is this committee a committee of the party or a committee of the school?*

No, although this would have been called a front organization, you see. There were communists in it, and yet there were a lot of

people who weren't. I mean, there was a long list. As I mentioned, Paul Radin was on it, and who else? Holland Roberts, and a number of people who certainly weren't communists, but they were progressives. And they weren't anti-communist; they just weren't communists. So, it was what the Right would call a communist-front organization.

And that's ridiculous because that isn't what it was. It was an organization for people who were progressives and who didn't necessarily ever think of becoming communists or wanting to be—might even be opposed. But they did have certain values and principles in common. So that organization put out many leaflets and petitions.

## MAKING THE GRADE

**W**HAT A YEAR! At the same time—I guess I was trying to define my own way of thinking—I was doing an enormous amount of reading in anthropology. I was devouring it like a hungry man. I felt, “This is what I’ve been looking for.” So I was doing a great deal of reading in addition to working my job. I was deeply involved in that, and yet all these other things were going on.

A friend of mine, a composer, had had a concert in San Francisco, along with a number of colleagues who were composers at the university. Their music at that time was very avant-garde, sort of Schoenbergian twelve-tone material.<sup>1</sup> I thought they were just great and represented an experimental, new kind of music. They gave this concert under the auspices of some progressive organizations. I forget who actually sponsored it.

But the next day it was denounced in the *People’s World*. That was our paper. It was denounced as “bourgeois idealism,” a “cacophony of sound.” To me this article by the review editor of the paper was so outrageous I could hardly believe it. By the way, my

friend went on to be a very sound composer at a large university in the East and spent most of his life doing that, wrote innumerable songs; a very creative guy, and very progressive in his thinking, very much a part of the left-wing political scene. Yet his music was referred to by this editor, as I remember, as “formalistic decadence,” “a menace of cacophony, barbaric noises,” and on and on and on, without once describing the music as music or giving any kind of background about it or anything—merely denouncing it. At the same concert there was some standard music, nineteenth-century music, which he referred to as “richly endowed with art, with earful melody, considerable warmth and a somewhat tragic cast, and powerful, many-hued,” and on and on.

I felt this was the most sickening kind of thing that I had read locally, especially with regard to somebody whom I admired personally and who I felt deserved at least some consideration. So I sat down and wrote a long diatribe to the editor, saying, you know, “What kind of critique is this? What kind of a Marxist are you? Are you at all aware of

changes going on in the literary and the musical world? You may not like it; you may even think that it's decadent music, but you should talk a little bit more intelligently about it. You could have more to say about it. You could talk about music!" I said, "You don't know anything about music—at least, it would seem that way." And then I said, "Then you fall back on the 'greats,' who if anything, were really bourgeois and were nineteenth century romantics," and all that.

I happen to like that music myself, but to compare that in the language that he used with a young, modern, experimental, struggling composer, I said, "is, I would say, un-Marxist, anti-progress. You have to be more intelligent and accountable than that." And then I made the statement that, "I would doubt that even some Soviet composers and critics could possibly agree with your kind of . . ." [laughter] ". . . criticisms. They would at least do it more cleverly and with more knowledge," you know. And I sent the thing in and got then a series of letters from this guy, questioning my . . .

*Well, they didn't print it?*

Oh, they did.

*Oh, they did?*

Oh, and a series of letters. I fought it through, and my response was finally printed. So I felt, you know, well, at least I've done *that*. I've distinguished myself and my own identity with regard to what was becoming of the party line.

In fact, I was prepared then at that time, because one or two of the articles in the *People's World* had been equivocal about the kind of literature that was being removed

from bookstores, "*Though* we do not agree about pornography, and though we do not agree about what it is, we disapprove of the raids."

And I was getting ready to write another article saying, "What do you *mean* pornography? Is Henry Miller pornography? Is Lawrence Durrell and all these avant-garde writers—are they pornographic? What are you talking about? You may have other good reasons for not liking their work and denouncing it, but not on the basis that it fits the diatribe that's been made against it by the Hearst press and others." And I said, "But at least you're taking a view that the bookstore should not have been raided," you know. [laughter]

So I had started an article like that. I don't think I ever sent that one in. But anyway, I felt it was time to start showing disagreement.

*But you said that the initial letter that you wrote in response to the critique of the music that you'd gotten a series of letters questioning your . . .*

My letter was held back. They . . . no not "they," this particular guy was telling me that I had totally misunderstood him and that I was making all kinds of charges against him and all that sort thing. I wrote back and said, "Just read again what you wrote," you know. [laughter] "You are in print. You got in print, and thousands of people in this area have read *you*, and you're wrong. And you should admit it and say . . ."

And he finally came around and said, "You may have a point, and we should have a good, sensible discussion about this." He meant privately and quietly or within party circles.

Then I said, "No, I want my article out." Finally it just appeared.



So I felt good about that. I thought, "Gee, there are *wedges* here. One has some degree of freedom if you exert it."

But this was the kind of thing that was fermenting at the time and fermenting in me. And also, I was back in the literary world, and back in the academic world, and I was questioning myself, "Is that what's making me take these positions?" And yet at the same time I knew that it was right to do this.

There was something wrong with this rigid kind of ignorant approach that had been taken for granted too long even within the party, you know, that there are better ways for them . . . . It took more intelligence and more knowledge than what some of these characters had.

*I'm just curious if you addressed the point that, "How can the working-class possibly understand this?" being patronizing of what the working-class . . . . You know, the characterization of the working class being only able to understand very . . . .*

Oh, yes. I said, "There were probably a great number of trade unionists who could listen to that music more intelligently than *you*. They may not like it, but they would be more intelligently inquisitive, concerned, and interested in what it means and why," and all that. I told him, "Personally, myself, I don't get this kind of music necessarily, but goddamn it, these are young progressive guys." The same guy two or three years later dedicated one of his works to the Rosenbergs. I said, "These are people who have courage. They take on issues, and they're experimenting, and they should be given a hearing and an intelligent assessment." Yes, that kept me from feeling totally depressed.

At the same time for Carter, I wrote a paper for him on Melville's *Benito Cereno*. I

thought it was a good job. This was about the slave ship *Amistad*. The *Amistad* story, you know, is in the press today, and people are talking about all that. Well, hell, back there I was reading Herman Melville who had read about the *Amistad*, the real documents in the trial and a number of other slave ship narratives, and wrote the story, *Benito Cereno*, based on a fictional account of a slave ship revolt.

And this really fascinated me. I was taken by it. Again, Carter's class led us to this literature. It was part of the material; there were many other things that were dealt with, but that part of the material I grabbed. It was important to me.

So I did this analysis of *Benito Cereno*, showing that really the two or three other earlier criticisms of it that appeared in early part of this century, missed the point altogether. They saw it as a dramatic monologue taking place on the part of the white slave ship captain, an emotional and psychological revelation that changed his life.

You know, bull. It wasn't that. It was a slave ship revolt! It had to do with slavery. It had to do with Melville's view of the *power* of these black slaves, caught in an absolutely terrible situation, finding a way to fight their way out. And they not only did that but appeared before the tribunals of the white society that had condoned this kind of behavior, and they put up this remarkable defense of what they had done and were eventually released.

So I was coming to Melville's defense, that he was more aware of the real meaning of slavery and the meaning of those revolts than the critics that had dealt with him. So I wrote this paper, felt rather good about it, and Carter said he thought it was pretty good.

And I sent it off to a number of magazines, mainly left magazines, like *Masses* and

*Mainstream*<sup>2</sup> and three or four others. It was usually accepted and approved of, but these magazines were fly-by-night magazines. [laughter] They'd come and go, and so they would accept the piece, and then I'd get a letter saying, "I'm sorry, our next issue is not coming out," and all that sort of thing.

So that was in 1952, and it wasn't until 1955 or 1956 that I sent it out again, slightly revised, to *Phylon* which was a well-known sort of African-American-oriented magazine. In fact, *Phylon*<sup>3</sup> still exists, a good set of articles in every issue. And they accepted it and printed it.

I've mentioned this elsewhere, and I'll talk about it later, but after it came out, I got a letter and a reprint from some guy in England who had written an almost identical kind of article. I still wonder whether or not, in that network that goes on in academia, if my paper had gotten out to him, and that he had done a much more standard bit of classical English criticism. It was a much more *expert* kind of a job. It rang with authority, whereas mine had been a little bit more of a polemic.

And I was crushed. I was in Africa when I got this. I corresponded with him. Oh, I was *deeply* concerned, and I wrote a long letter to the editor of *Phylon*, explaining the situation. I wrote to Carter and asked, "Do you remember the paper that I wrote in 1952? This guy's article came out at the end of 1952 or early 1953. When I wrote mine, it was early 1952?"

And Carter wrote me and says, "Yes, I remember your paper. Yes, and I still have a copy of the original."

So I wrote to this other author and said, "Look, I wrote my article that came out in early 1952, so it couldn't have been that I had read yours when I wrote it."

And he wrote back and said, "Oh, let's forget the whole thing. It's really not very important."

And I've always wondered about him. And it's very unfair of me to wonder, but it threw me for a loop for a while.

But anyway, so I wrote that paper during this period. Somehow or other all this stuff was churning out. I was gobbling up everything in my courses. And the course from McCown, as I've already said, was absolutely one of the greatest courses I've had on pre-history, North Africa and the Levantine.

And that same semester I was taking a course from David Mandelbaum—a preceptorial, I guess they were called—in readings in anthropology.<sup>4</sup> It was, I guess, a seminar that I had been allowed to get into. And it was a workout! I see that course as being the one that told me, "Maybe I could be an anthropologist," because he put us through such a grueling set of readings and papers. We had four papers we had to do, based on the International Symposium on Anthropology that had been carried on in Europe and became the basis for *Anthropology Today*. Well, Mandelbaum had been one of the people who was tagged as a reviewer of the various essays that were to go into it. That was in June of 1952. So the class must have been in the fall, within that few weeks or couple of months Mandelbaum had all these papers.

And those papers were the subject of our reading and the basis of our own papers during the seminar. It was heavy stuff! When I look back on it now, when I think of the kind of things that were being discussed, I don't think most anthropologists today [laughter] even know or care about what was being talked about at that time: culture and personality, acculturation, anthropology and

history, and everything from new views of human evolution to national character, everything that was beginning to appear, the beginnings of English functionalist thought, I guess. A lot of new things were beginning to appear. Oh, and anthropology and psychology. All of these articles were touching on what was then considered to be not only a résumé of the past, but new developments.

Well, here I was, back into anthropology after many years absence and a long way from my undergraduate work, with some very bright, young students, eager, and all of them five to ten years younger than me, because my time in between had been at sea. [laughter] I felt this difference. And yet I had made some wonderful friends there—people that I had a lot of respect for.

And so I remember being assigned four different topics. I remember one was on culture change, and one was on the relationship between anthropology and psychology. I don't remember the others. And you had to critique them, and they had to be discussed in class.

It was heavy, and these were hard-hitting youngsters. And Mandelbaum was a driver. He was vicious! [laughter] He was ruthless!

*About how big was his class? How many students?*

I would say there were about ten or eleven of us. I think there were that many. Some dropped out. In fact, I almost did, because I thought, "This is too much for me." But I decided if I didn't stick to it, I'd be in the hole. And Mandelbaum was very important at that time to me, because he knew Herskovits, whom I had a great admiration for, and he'd come from a kind of humanist background. He'd done some great work in India and all that, but his pedagogical style

was one of ruthlessness. [laughter] And yet you knew that he was very helpful and that he would . . .

*Was Freed in . . . ?*

I'm trying to remember. Stan and Ruth may have been part of that seminar. I am not sure. It's quite possible, because I got to know them at that time. And I think they probably were.<sup>5</sup> There were a number of people whom I can certainly remember by their faces, but I don't remember their names. But I know that most of them went on, became working anthropologists.

The first topic that I did—I can't remember which—may have been the one on culture change. I don't know. Nevertheless, I remember he'd read them and then pass them back in class, and then we'd go on, and he would collect the next set. So he had passed back our papers for that week, and I remember him saying things to different people, you know, like, "Not bad," or, "Yes, well, you'll read my comments, and you'll see," or "Yes, there are some things you could have done on that." Then he came to mine, and he picked up my paper between his thumb and forefinger and held it out and dropped it in front of me. It was the cruelest hand gesture one could imagine.

I was crushed! I just felt the end of the world had come. And this was in front of the class.

*Yes. No, this is terrible.*

I'll never forget that. I forgave him later for good reason. But, I mean, at that moment I felt, "He's killed me; he's finished me off."

And a lot of other things were going on, too. I think that was while the strike was going on, the merchant marine strike! And I

recall thinking seriously whether I should, like some others, leave the class. You know, just wait till another time. And I think I went home and talked it over with Kathy. We decided whatever happened, "No, I'm going to stick it out."

Then I had the next paper to write. I worked my tail off! I spent days on it. And I read everything that was available on the subject. I tell you, there wasn't much in those days, but what there was you had to read, and I wrote this paper. I wish I could remember what sequence they came in; it might have been the one on psychology and anthropology. It had pages of footnotes, and I thought I had read just about everything. And I turned that one in.

I hadn't discussed the earlier one in class because certain ones were chosen to be class discussion, and mine certainly had not been one. But the second paper came back with an "A" on it and a comment: "Excellent. Well done." And for whatever reason, he and I got along famously from then on. I wrote two or three other papers for him. I used to visit him in his office . . . .

*Did he ever reference . . . did either one . . . ?*

Neither of us ever referred to the first time that I can remember. [laughter]

*That's kind of wonderful.*

No, he would just say things like, "Well, you know, you've come a long way," and all that, but it turned out he was a very nice guy. And I had to learn about it through the needle's eye. He became somebody that I knew for the next few years. He wrote me letters of recommendation and was extremely helpful. And I've always had a warm spot in my heart for him, along with a dagger, you

know. [laughter] He had hurt me as much as anybody can be hurt under those conditions.

And I'm so glad I stuck it out, that I did it. In fact, it was a turning point. That was a turning point in my academic life. Had I succumbed at that point, I think it would have affected whether or not I felt able to go on, certainly in anthropology, which I wanted to do very much.

*Was part of it also the prospect of the fieldwork and actually going . . . ?*

Oh, yes, because you knew that . . . .

*I mean, that was a given in those days, right?*

Oh, yes. Oh a given, sure. I mean, you just knew that you were preparing yourself for working with people, for investigating, for exploring. And you were reading all sorts of . . . .

*And in those years by definition it was going to be something that we would consider now kind of exotic, wouldn't it? I mean, the "other" . . . ?*

Everything was exotic! [laughter] I mean, there wasn't that much work being done. There was work being done all over the world, but there wasn't the deluge as it became ten or fifteen years later, where there was hardly a corner of the earth that hasn't been touched upon, leaving their thumbprint somewhere.

*[laughter] So the anthropologists began studying the anthropologists!*

Well, there was a feeling of this great, open, unexplored, and primitive world to be observed.

And, of course, right at that time, Kroeber and Heizer and others were doing the California Indian surveys and were already involved in the California Indians Claims Case. So Kroeber was very busy with that, and I was deeply interested in reading about it and what they were doing. (Wait a minute. 1951. Yes, 1948 the case was started, in 1951, yes, it was just underway. That's right.) So all that was happening.

Had I not been able to confront and deal with that particular seminar . . . . It's funny to say things like this, but there are these moments in your life that are crucial. My relief was so great—I mean, I really thought I was walking on air.

*Do you remember exactly making the decision that, by gosh, you were going to stick it out, or do you just . . . ?*

Well, no, it just happened. I thought seriously about leaving because I was so hurt, and I felt really demeaned. I felt I had been made a fool of.

*In subsequent years, after you became a teacher yourself, were you ever aware of doing a similar thing to a student? I don't mean hurting a student; I'm not asking that question. I'm asking if you ever . . . I mean, if you think that technique . . . ?*

No, I never used it as a technique. No, that wasn't my personality. And that's why it was so hard to take it from Mandelbaum. And it really wasn't his, because he really was very good-hearted guy. It could be that that was some accidental thing he did or a mood or a passing . . . or something.

*Or it was a really bad paper! [laughter]*

Oh, yes. Or something in that paper that struck him as so stupid and bad that he wondered who in the hell I was, anyway? I was a new student, and I was an older student. Maybe he had this feeling like, "Who is this guy coming in here, and who does he think he is?" I will never know. But all those things I have thought of, you know.

*So you've never . . . you don't particularly think that shaming someone to . . . ?*

I have done it inadvertently. I have found that I did that to somebody, and I didn't realize it. One example would be just recently with a student. I regret it terribly. I thought I was being professorial and helpful by talking about her delivery during a paper, and I made a comment, kind of light-heartedly, you know, like, "For gosh sakes, you have to learn to speak out and all that." And then I realized later that this was an extremely sensitive person, an extremely defensive person, in front of a group of people and students. Yes, I had done it and regretted it terribly, you know. But not at all intentionally as a . . . . [laughter]

*You never intentionally pushed somebody just to see them push back.*

Have I done that? If I have, I can't think of it that way. I mean, I don't recall. I have argued, and I have criticized and pushed people or something. But it's hard . . . no, I don't remember . . . .

*The reason I'm asking is because I think frequently people in academia and probably . . . certainly in any profession, have these kind of moments in their lives where something that could have been an ending turns out to inspire someone to perform.*

Oh, I've had that happen. Oh, not only has it happened to me personally, but I have been the deliverer. I mean I have sometimes come to a kind of a closure with somebody, some student, you know, just said, "You shouldn't be dealing with me on this, because I just don't see it your way. I can't agree. I don't know how to handle your . . ."

Oh, back in the 1960s and 1970s, that happened frequently, because there were some students with some *really* peculiar goals and weird orientations to anthropology and fieldwork, transcendentalism and the study of drugs, and altered states and all that. And I would get impatient sometimes with some of these students and say, "You know, for Christ's sakes, you can't start there. If you're interested in this kind of thing, you got to start, you know, foot-slogging through the underbrush until you get to a clearing, if that's what you really want to do." And I'd get very irritated every now and then with a student, and sometimes just say, "Go see somebody else."

And in one or two cases that was positive, you know. But that's a different thing than being really mauled.

*Humiliated! [laughter]*

Humiliated. I think that experience kept me from ever doing it to anybody. I mean, because that hurt deeply. That's why I can remember that student, that moment, because when I thought of it later, I thought this comes close to being that. I didn't intend it, but it may have had that impact on somebody, and I felt badly about that.

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#### Notes

1. Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) was renowned for complex tonal structures in his compositions.

2. Herbert Aptheker, editor, 1948-1953.

3. *Phylon* was published by Atlanta University, beginning in 1940. d'Azevedo's article, "Revolt on the San Dominick," was published in *Phylon* 17 (1956): 129-140.

4. Mandelbaum (1911-1987) and McCown joined the Anthropology Department at Berkeley in 1946. Mandelbaum's principle work was in India and together, both men expanded the department's breadth beyond an almost exclusive focus on American Indian cultures.

5. Stanley and Ruth Freed were also Ph.D. students and would later do work with the Washoe Indians. Both went to India for post-doctoral research.

## INTROSPECTION

SO WHAT ELSE was happening about that time among all these other things? Oh, I was becoming deeply depressed and angry, not only about the situation politically and the atmosphere that was going on locally and in the country, but I was just depressed about myself. I felt that I was sort of rattling around and not really clear on what I was going to do and how.

Was I going to go on for a Ph.D.? Was I going to go into academic life, into research? Was I going to be an anthropologist? Something I wanted to do, but could I? Not only was I not equipped for it, but was my home situation—two kids, a family and broke most of the time, and all that—was I able to? If I went on in anthropology, what was going to be my focus? What were going to be my interests in cultural anthropology?

I had had courses and done a lot of reading in California Indian and Native American studies, and that interested me a great deal. Then I also had this other interest in the history of not only the labor movement, but of race relations in the

United States, and particularly the black experience, what was then referred to as Afro-American studies and interests.

Where was I heading? What was I going to do? That was bothering me. I became very depressed and probably scared, deeply scared about my future and what I was doing. I was in conflict about my political views in relation to the party, in relation to the Left, because I felt loyal to that. And I also felt I was an American and loyal to the United States and that there was no conflict there, except that the reactionary right-wing press made it a conflict—I mean the conflict of whether or not you could have these views and at the same time be a loyal patriotic American.

But that was no problem for me. I knew where I stood. But all this was going on, and the pressures were enormous. I mean, I felt I was helpless to fight properly. I didn't have the tools to fight. I wanted to do something. I wanted to be effective in some way, and effectiveness was being withheld from the Left.

*It seems that actually the party and the activity with the labor unions had provided an outlet for many years for that urge to be engaged in something effective socially.*

Yes. Right. And here we were in a period when finding an effective role, route was . . . . Some people did, but I wasn't able to find it. Could I do it in writing? I was going through a transition there about what kind of a writer I would be and how I would write. I didn't feel confident about myself in a number of ways. I was also very concerned about my personal life, my family life, that I wasn't being an adequate father and husband, that I was too involved, I was too abstracted.

*This is a little bit of an aside, but at the time, was it feasible for you to focus on becoming an anthropologist and take your family into the field, or was that something that was once again going to pull you away? I know you took your family, but I mean . . . .*

No, because I don't think I felt or Kathy felt that anything I would do along those lines would be something that she would refuse to do. She was waiting for me to decide what I was . . . who I was, what I was. And that was a big order, who and what I was.

At this time, she had a good job. She was working at the Children's Hospital, and that saw us through. She was always capably at work at something in this way.

We used to have a lot of differences, deep differences, but didn't have to do with any long-range goals. It had to do with the lack of them. You know, how was I actually going to get my clinches in on anything instead of being scattered around, at all these various poles.

Well, this put me in a real state of depression. So with her advice, I began to think of

having some therapy. You know, getting a little psychoanalysis, something that would help me get some view of myself, some hold on what was happening to me, what I was going to do. Well, this, on top of everything else was . . . . I mean, I tell you, when I come to think of it, how many things can somebody juggle? I finally decided I had better do it. I wanted to do it. I had to have some way of . . . I suppose space to think about me, where I was. And this seemed like one way, or the only way I knew of doing it. The other way would be to approach some of the party functionaries who were underground and tell them I wanted to talk about myself. And then I'd be accused of, you know, real bourgeois subjective-idealism.

"Get to work, get out there and do a job."

And I'm being funny, because it wasn't quite like that. But I didn't know any other place to turn. I wasn't religious, so I couldn't go to a priest, I couldn't go to a minister. So I decided to do it.

So I went to this young guy who was known. I mean, some of my friends knew of him. Very nice young guy, but as I started working with him . . . and I got a good rate, and he charged me [laughter] rock-bottom for my sessions, because those days, people had sliding scales that were really meaningful. And I think he was intrigued about what was . . . [laughter] what was going on with this character. And he knew people who knew me and all that.

So I started out with him, and he was a Freudian. This was early Freudian psychoanalysis, and I had some idea of what that entailed, so I wasn't ignorant when I did it. But it was extreme. I would come into his office, and he would sit with his notepad in front of him and wait, look. Well, I could handle that, because I figured this is the way you do it and start talking. Well, I, in those



days, had even less trouble than today with starting to talk. [laughter] And I had an awful lot to spiel about. I mean, I would even sometimes take notes and bring little notes to remind myself of the things that during the week I had thought of.

And it was pretty much going back into the past, the usual thing, you know. What are the things that you remember that are important? And what are the things that were problematic? What were the turning points in your early life and all that? Well, this was good. I did it. I did it with great verve, and I did it in an organized way. And then I began to realize that he had hardly in two or three sessions said a word and just sat there. [laughter] And I thought, "Well, this is the process. This is what you do."

And once or twice, he would say, "Well, what were you *really* thinking?" or something like that. I was aware of the procedures and realized that's what he was supposed to do.

But when I look at it now, I really needed much more confrontational, direct communication. And this guy was playing by the book. And he was a young guy, probably very . . . well, new, inexperienced. And I think Kathy's right. He didn't know quite what to do with me, because I was coming from so many different directions. All these various strands were being laid out, and how was this poor guy to find any of them that, you know, could see us through?

And I don't know. I went at this for a number of weeks, maybe a few months. I don't remember. And I must say as much as I could criticize that process, it was useful to me, because I needed in a way to ventilate. I needed time where I was focusing on myself as a person and trying to understand what the hell was motivating me and where was I going.

Now, I didn't solve all that or resolve it, but it opened that up as a . . . as a way of thinking, as a way of . . .

*Was there any stigma attached among . . . ?*

Hold on. That comes. [laughter] So I was not enjoying this, but I was seeing it as useful. At the same time, I was feeling very wry about this young guy, you know. He's getting paid, not much by me, but does he sit there like that with everybody, you know, this icon at the desk not even looking at you, but looking off at the wall and terribly young looking—he looked younger than me. And I thought, "What the hell is he . . . ? What's his role. I could do this with a statue or fence post."

Nevertheless, I stuck with it for a while, because there was a secondary gain. I was gaining something from doing it, and it was, in a sense, calming for a lot of my conflicts about myself and what I was doing, a feeling that I had time. I could work it out, and it was something I just had to keep after.

So I did a lot of writing at that time, just note-taking on myself, taking notes on what was going on in my head, what I was going to do. I even thought of doing a novel based on this. I think I still have the notes of a weird, screwy novel about somebody like me going through this.

But anyway, that was going on. Then, of course, I was usually open about things, and I told some of my friends that I was doing this. Well, some of them who weren't necessarily in the party, but were very much attached to what was then considered Marxist left thought, said, "Well, how can you do this? The party is very critical of psychoanalysis," and all that sort of thing.

I remember feeling a little upset and strange about this, but damn it, I was going to do it my way. Well, this was while I was doing something else on top of all this. We'd have weekly—or every two or three weeks—little seminars that I agreed to lead at our house or at other people's houses, and we'd get together, oh, five, ten of us at the most, mostly people who knew each other, and were mostly academic and professional people and a couple of others that . . . .

*Were any from your classes in anthropology or . . . ?*

No. No, not directly. Not directly. These weren't students. These were people more of our peers, on our level, that we had met. A lot of them came as Kathy's friends. Well, they were mine too. People in literature and in music and the arts and one was a physicist and, you know, that sort of thing.

So I was leading these classes and feeling very good about it. I was teaching. And what was it? It was labor history and Afro-American history. I was using DuBois and Phillip Foner, as I remember, as text and lots of other materials.

And so I would just hold forth weekly or every couple of weeks, and I found this very good. I enjoyed it, because I learned a lot doing it, and the stuff was new to the people I was talking to. I remember one time where one of the people in our little soiree said, "Warren, I don't know whether we should really be here," you know, "I don't know whether you should be doing this, because . . ."

Oh, by the way, also, I would be dealing with the party's orientation and directives and what was coming from the party. Nothing secret, but, you know, the literature, *Political Affairs*, and things of that kind. So it had

something of the quality of being a left-wing Marxist communist approach to these things.

So he said, "Warren, I don't know if we should be here doing this with you. After all, you are in therapy, and there is some difference of opinion about whether one who is in the party, as you are, should be doing this."

Well, I really didn't know how to answer that, and I was feeling, again, very . . . you know, "What the hell's going on?"

I remember just saying, "Look, well, I'm going to do it because I believe in it. And by the way, the party hasn't made a rule on it excepting that there is a lot of talk about that anybody who's in therapy is vulnerable to revealing secrets and things of that kind. Well, I don't have any secrets, so it makes no difference."

And then, of course, I began to do a lot of reading in what was going on in Soviet psychology and psychiatry, and ran across this book by Wortis [Joseph] and found, you know, that there were differences of opinion in the Soviet Union and differences of opinion among communists elsewhere in the world, and that although Freudian psychoanalysis was under attack, it was not necessarily banned, and . . . .

*So did you research it explicitly because you were . . . ?*

Because I was very concerned about what I was doing, and I had read some of the party literature on this. A lot of it, I thought, was very shallow and inconclusive, and yet at the same time, I understood good reasons why certain aspects of Freudian psychoanalysis might be considered to be a problem, or negative. You know, psychologically, whether or not this is the way to approach people's problems through a review of their early history and the origins of their life and all that sort

of thing, and the idea of suppression and the unconscious and all that being a little bit beyond the scope of political theory, you know. [laughter] And a lot of the suspicion with . . . .

*Well, also, maybe, a deflection of social action.*

Yes, exactly. I mean, the subjective approach rather than the objective approach. But also the fact that a lot of psychoanalysts had been brought into some of the trials as witnesses and things of that kind. You know, the idea of confidentiality and whether or not one could be really left-progressive and in psychoanalysis. That was all going on, but as I remember, nothing conclusive, nothing that laid down the law.

*Well, first of all, were you aware that Kroeber . . . ? At this time, were you aware that Kroeber had . . . ?*

No, not at that time.

*Probably nobody was.*

No. Well, they may have been, some in these circles where they . . . .

*Yes. So that, in itself, wasn't an issue.*

No, no. Later on, I thought that was very amusing.

*Now, was it an issue at all, though, that from some of the studying you had been doing from an anthropological perspective, did that provide you with any rationale, that this was an OK and good thing to do, or . . . ?*

Not necessarily, though I had done a lot of reading in so-called culture and personal-

ity studies, Kardiner's<sup>1</sup> work. And there was a lot of literature that was not necessarily oriented to Freud's analysis. There were a number of other strands of analysis in anthropology at the time. No, I don't remember that that had an immediate impact.

It was the idea of Freudianism and the idea of psychoanalysis as such. And so in my reading, I found out, you know, the early work of Pavlov and the behaviorist orientation in the early period of the Soviet Union, and then their sort of involvement into a situation-oriented psychology in terms of treatment and clinical work. That's why I was thinking of the other day about . . . . What was that field [of anthropology] that we were talking about?

*Cognitive . . . ?*

Well, cognitive behavior and cognitive therapy, which is very much like some of the work that was coming in the 1940s and 1950s out of the Soviet Union.

However, I also realized that in the 1940s and after there had been this great reaction against Freudian psychoanalysis, not because of Pavlov, because Pavlov was really kind of friendly to psychoanalysis. But then the Cold War created a real division between psychoanalytic theory in Europe and the United States and in Russia. So it was really a political decision to look upon Freudianism as bourgeois and as the answer of the United States and the European capitalist countries to divert attention from the real struggles that go on in the real world, into the inner life of man, et cetera, et cetera, and keep one struggling within. And so it helped me to read this and see the sort of cycle of development that had taken place.

And so I just decided that I was going to do it if I wanted to do it, as long as it was

helpful to me, and that I didn't feel that I was buried in my inner life and losing track of what had to be done because I was very busy and very active doing a lot of things. But it was a relief. It was rewarding to think more about what had made me the kind of person that I was up to that time, what were the forces at work, what little I was able to get a handle on.

At the same time, to see under that specific situation, the shortcomings of that kind of psychoanalysis; that a much more confrontational, active relationship with the patient, very much like the kind of work that was going on early in the Soviet Union, I felt was very attractive to me. The idea that people were dealt with in terms of the problems they had right now, their families, their jobs, how they were going to resolve day-to-day problems, and given support and comfort about themselves and things of that kind. So maybe that's what I needed, but there was no way to get that except to create it for yourself.

*Maybe not directly in terms of therapy, but it sounds like at least there had been at times for you within the party forums . . . . I mean, you spoke earlier of the party addressing very specific and practical issues that members were dealing with in terms of relations with their wives . . . .*

Oh, yes. Oh, yes, there had been programs of education and self-criticism during that early period, during the trade union period of my relation with the Communist Party. Yes, very positive stuff. I don't think it was highly organized, but it was good. People talked to each other and were called in sometimes by their fellows to discuss a problem they had with their family—if their wives had complained about something that they had done or something they had said, or their fellow workers on the job had complained about

their attitude or something, and were brought in, and it was discussed in terms of their work, in terms of why did they do this when really this wasn't a very fruitful or positive way of coping with the world.

Yes. And I always thought that was very positive. Of course, that's not professional therapy, but it was good. It was useful for some of the people that I knew, a sense of being recognized as being a capable person and all that, but with flaws that needed to be worked out and thought about, dealt with in actual situations. And recognized, and accepted not only as *your* problem but that everybody, or a lot of people, had similar problems.

Well, you know, people don't get much of that, and there they got it. They got it within this estranged group, you know, called the Communist Party. There was a recognition that this kind of camaraderie, this kind of help, this kind of criticism and self-criticism was a useful tool.

Well, that's a far cry from professional clinical work. Nevertheless, a similar kind of thing had developed earlier in the Soviet Union that got way-laid by the Cold War mentality that took over them and a good part of the Western world. So I saw it and began to see it in perspective. And anybody who wanted to criticize me could, and I would take them on and ask them what they knew and how much they had read and all that sort of thing.

And so that was a brief period. I later on in my life did two or three short periods of therapy with much better people, with much more effective people, and had respect for that as a tool. But for an ordinary therapeutic answer to ordinary people moving along in the world, doing the work that they have to do, there should be other instruments as well. And I guess today there are so many instruments that nobody knows what to do

with them. I mean, it's a bag of tricks. Nevertheless, I felt positive about that. It was good.

Now, while this was going on, I was struggling with my . . . . I keep talking about "I." And I know, Penny, what this is supposed to be, but I get embarrassed, because there were a lot of other people in the world involved at the time doing [laughter] . . . much better than I was and much more effectively and much more put together. But I am talking about me, and I was not that well put together, and I was flailing a lot.

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#### Note

1. Abram Kardiner (1891-1981). An example of his work would be *The Psychological Frontiers of Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945).



AT THE SAME TIME, I was still involved with certain people in the literary circles I had been in, some poets and writers—not many, but I knew a few. This is all pre-Beat. This is 1951, 1952. I don't think the so-called Beat Generation occurred until the late 1950s and the 1960s, and I was gone out of the Bay Area by that time. But this is sort of the early avant-garde, bohemian kind of orientation of the time, and some very good people were doing interesting work.

And *Circle* magazine, George Leite's magazine, this old friend of mine, had a major impact on avant-garde art circles in the country, and even partly internationally. It went on for a number of issues during the 1940s, during the war, and after the war—I don't know when the last issue came out. But I published some stories in *Circle* and in three or four other small magazines. It was the time of small magazines coming and going, but *Circle* had, I think, real impact, was a highly creative piece of work that I give George a lot of credit for.

And so that was going on, and I knew some of those people and had some connection with them, but it was somewhat distant. Because I was so busy with other things, with academic life, with party work, and trade union interests and family, that somehow my connection with these people that I had known was more attenuated.

And I remember whenever there was some reason to come to the support of any of those people, I did, like with the committee denouncing bookstores closing, or so-called pornography charges and all that sort of thing. But a lot of the work that would be done by this group that I happened to be connected with, I felt more and more dissociated from.

I felt it was precious, it was . . . . I didn't object to the subjectivity, because subjectivity was very much a part of the work that I did. But I don't know. I felt that there was a kind of superficiality and preciousness and quaintness about a lot of what was being done. However, there were some awfully good people doing work, and . . . .

*But maybe just not relevant to what you were . . . ?*

Wasn't relevant to what I was thinking and doing. That doesn't mean that it wasn't good. Some of it, though, was just silly, precious material. But *Circle* magazine did a good job of pulling out some of the best stuff that was being done locally and throughout the country.

So I remember somewhere in 1951 or 1952, I would see George frequently. We had similar interests, and I was interested in what he was doing with not only the magazine, but other things that he was involved in. He was involved with a smaller group of people who were into hallucinogens. This was pre-1960s. This was before, you know, the thing became . . . they were very interested in marijuana and peyote and things of that kind. There was a cult atmosphere about this smaller group, and really I found very little in common with them about that, but George was very much into it. In fact, he was something of a charismatic figure among them.

I remember one time I went with him down to Oakland. He drove down to Oakland. He says, "Look, I gotta get something. You want to go with me?" And we went down to Oakland, and I was amazed at his knowledge of the streets down there in west Oakland. And he would find his way. I knew the general area, but he knew where certain places were, and how to . . . And he went to a corner, and there was a guy standing there—a black guy—and they made some sign, and the guy looked around and came over and gave George some reefer. And George thanked him, passed him some money. This was the first time I'd been involved in any kind of exchange of this sort.

So I says, you know, "What the hell are you doing?"

He says, "Oh, I come down here all the time and pick this stuff up. And you got to know where to go and who to see and all that."

And I says, "Yes, but Jesus, man, we're going to get . . ." [laughter]

But anyway, we drove on and he gave me one. And I felt kind of brave and curious. And I, unlike Clinton, I inhaled. I inhaled deeply. [laughter] And I tried very hard to smoke this damn reefer and do it the right way and all that. George was instructing me.

George was an interesting guy. I guess if he believed in anything, it was excess. He believed in doing everything that was out of the ordinary and doing it in excess. And it was, I think, eventually his undoing.

But anyway, so he kept saying, "How do you feel? How do you feel?"

And I was saying, "Nothing but sick." [laughter]

And I did. It just made me deathly ill, I mean, nauseous. And it wasn't doing anything good to my head except making me feel that I wanted not to be that way. And he was disgusted with me. And we went back to Berkeley.

I only mentioned that, because it's preliminary to the next step, which was one time he was telling me how he had been up to Nevada, he'd been up and he'd met some Indians up there who chewed peyote. He knew about them through a group he was with who would get green peyote buds and dry peyote buds through the mail. And then they would go up to the Indians and give them the peyote and go to their meetings. You know, they were allowed into their meetings.

When I look back on it now, it is so bizarre. George was saying, "You know, gee, those people, they know something. They really understand," he said, "and you know,



if you take this stuff, you can really see what they're seeing, what they're knowing."

Now I'm making George sound kind of nutty. He was nutty, but he was also brilliant. [laughter] He was a guy who could do many things. When he wrote, he wrote rather well, he was a good organizer along with Verne Porter of that magazine. He had all sorts of connections with all kinds of literary figures throughout the country and correspondents. He was interested in new music and new art work and things of that kind and knew a lot about it.

I think it's important for me to make these comments about my relationship with George Leite, because it was a long-standing one. It had gone all the way back to our adolescent years, early years at University of California. In fact, he and I were roommates for that second semester I was there. We managed to develop a very close adolescent competitive, intense relationship during that period. And part of it had to do with him being Portuguese.

His father was a Portuguese scholar, an old man, rather ill at the time, who taught Portuguese in schools in San Leandro and who had been something of a figure in local Portuguese officialdom. He'd been a representative of the Portuguese government, I believe, at one time in that part of California. And he was a very reclusive guy. He had a little shack out in the backyard of their house in San Leandro that was his study, and it was loaded with books on Portugal and Portuguese literature. Yet, he didn't have much to say with us. He was very much a withdrawn kind of a person, and I didn't gather that he and George had much of a relationship.

And George's mother was a teacher. She wasn't Portuguese. I think she was a New

England lady. She was a teacher in local schools and a very fine, sensible, clear-headed lady who was very permissive with George, I thought, and she didn't know quite how to handle him.

Apparently his father didn't put much of a rein on him, so he was a wild kid. He knew a lot about the street culture of San Leandro and Oakland, as I have already indicated, and ran around pretty much as he pleased.

I got to know him because it was his first semester at Cal and my first year there. We met and got talking, and obviously we had very similar interests. I was attracted by his extreme imagination, his ambition. He desired all kinds of things, just like all of us did in those days. He wanted to write, he wanted to travel, he wanted to do something great. And all of his ideas were grandiose.

That was something that attracted me. Also, he dared all kinds of things that I had never even conceived of. He had lived this kind of wild side that I found very intriguing, and yet at the same time, I not only had not experienced it, I didn't want to. But I was fascinated by anybody who did.

So he had that kind of a role. In fact, later on, when I look back, well, I had been reading Ruth Benedict [*Patterns of Culture*, 1934], and so I saw him as the Dionysian and myself as the Apollonian. [laughter]

*Oh, that's wonderful! [laughter]*

And in a very real sense, that was true. I just resisted going as far as he wanted to go. For example, his drug use—marijuana and other things. Later, I lost track of what he was doing in that regard, but it must have been continuous and rather extensive experimenting in all sorts of ways. And he was involved with groups that I would sometimes

be part of, but would withdraw from, that were into this kind of thing.

At the same time, he and I had many things in common, particularly our Portuguese background, which we would joke about and talk about my father's people and his father's people. And there was that kind of link that we had in that way, but also our interests were similar. They overlapped in many ways: not only his enthusiasm and grandiosity, but my continual search for experience in that period in my life. And my writing that I was doing. I was writing about a world which was new to me and opening up whole new vistas of life.

It was an adolescent period, I think, of great import—just the kind of period in one's life when all these things have great import. They last the whole of your life in terms of the kind of impressions you get and the kind of charge that you get from life. Everything is new and wonderful and magnificent. And so he and I were two guys quite different in many ways, and yet we were involved in experiencing.

*Were your parents friends? Did they know each other?*

No. No, they didn't, but my father knew of his father and vice versa. His father knew my grandfather rather well, who was the Portuguese doctor in Oakland. And there were Portuguese lodges that they belonged to and certain Portuguese events where they had gotten to know each other. And my father knew the name but didn't know him. But anyway, there was a mutual recognition.

And so my relationship with George went way back. And see, we're talking now about the early 1950s; it goes back to the late 1930s and early 1940s, and ten years in those days at that time of your life is a long time.

*Yes. Well, it is. It is.*

Yes, right. So anyway, at this point that we're talking about, George and I were still friends and seeing each other, and we still had that sort of competitive relationship where each of us was trying to outdo the other in some way or another. And he was great at one-upmanship. He would always go one better than me in some experience that he'd had—a way-out experience, things that would be beyond my ken, that I would not be able to involve myself in. Yet I admired his ability to do it and still be alive, you know. [laughter]

In fact, a little earlier, he had even taken a trip to sea. I mean, this was the thing that people did in those days if they could. And while I was yearning to go to sea, George made one trip down the coast on a freighter and around to New York and wrote me post cards.

And I was deeply envious. He had *done* it. But his trip was, of course, as he reported it, utterly wild and I mean, beyond any trip that anybody had ever made in this world.

And I, on the other hand, was working on materials at school and things like that that he envied. I knew something about English and American literature, and I did some painting, and I wrote poetry—I don't think it was very good, but I wrote it.

And I had been involved in this earlier magazine that we did at the university, *New Rejections*. After the regents of the university had closed down the magazine called *Grizzly* because it was "inappropriate" or something of that kind, myself and Doris Woodhouse started *New Rejections*, which was a take-off on *New Directions Press*; also meaning things that would have been accepted by the old *Grizzly*.

That had been going on very early, even before I knew him, so that he saw this as a challenge. And I always thought that *Circle* magazine (ca. 1944) came out of that experience of challenging me. He did a beautiful job, I mean that was one of the great avant-garde magazines of the period. He and a number of others managed to put out a truly avant-garde magazine during the 1940s.

It was a landmark in Bay Area literature, and you seldom hear about it now. But the people who were involved you hear about, they went on, and some did some very important work.

So this is the kind of relationship we had. That marijuana reefer experience came to me as one of those adolescent competitions. I mean, he was showing me what he knew about the streets. I knew nothing about it. I was a kid from a doctor's family, and I was living a rather standard life. But he was a true bohemian, you know, and all that.

In a way, I accepted that. He was a little on the dangerous side. He had very few boundaries. There was almost nothing that he would not do or try, particularly if he felt challenged. That was, to me, somewhat admirable at that period in my life.

And on the other hand, I suppose his attraction to me was that I was much steadier, I got certain things done, I was more thoughtful, more centered in a way. Though I wasn't really, comparatively I was. It's an interesting chemistry. It's hard to know what happens, but it was a very strong friendship.

And it somewhat faded during the 1940s, during the war, because I was doing something quite different. And the more I became involved in trade union activities and Marxist thought, the more, on the other hand, he withdrew into a . . . not withdrew, but went into a whole other phase of a sort

of extreme ideology. I suppose if you were at all political, one had a tag for it, it would be anarchism, nihilism.

He was a nihilist. Not seriously, but that was his bent. His basic idea was to pursue anything that would cause you to go beyond yourself, other forms of consciousness—that is, altered states of consciousness long before that term was generally used—but you know, the goal was to search out yourself to risk experiencing in every possible way.

*Do you happen to remember if The Doors of Perception had been written yet?*

I don't really know.

*Aldous Huxley.*

I'm not sure. I'm familiar with it, and I've read it, but I don't recall whether that had already been out or was later. But certainly, that would be part of the scene.

*It's so reminiscent of this.*

I think that came a little later in the 1950s. I'm not sure. It's hard for me to remember all the things that were going on and what was being read and talked about at the time. I think *The Kinsey Report* had just come out, that was one of the things that everybody was reading.<sup>1</sup>

But my world was mostly left-wing thought, trade unionism and my involvement on the waterfront. And in a way, this created a barrier between us, because he was involved in this other world, which I found . . . I suppose the thing that constantly was occurring to me, was that it was exploitive; it was experiencing for experiencing sake, utilizing it to present oneself in a special way, to outdo

everybody else in having explored sensation, explored the inner world.

And also, in my own ideological sense, it was a middle-class rebellion phenomena. Middle-class kids, young people, rebelling, really, against their families. Now, that's true of all kids in a way, but I felt that this was a special kind, the rebellion of lost souls; people searching for a way out.

And I respect that. I still do. I mean, I see the whole 1950s and 1960s, and adolescent rebellion before and since, as being a very important part of people's lives and of the life of a society, excepting that particular element that I was not connected with but that I saw and dealt with, as I've said before, as having an element of preciousness about it and exploitiveness, which was part of the feeling I had when I went up to Nevada with George to see the [Washoe] peyotists.

I had a lot of reluctance in going with him because of the way he talked about it. It had to do with experiencing the peyote hallucinations with them, getting some sort of extraordinary wisdom from them. And even at that time, I remember having a feeling of this being not only exploitive but extremely naive, that there was a primitivism about it, the enjoyment of an imagined primitive world.

I had done some reading at the time which had awakened a lot of critical thinking, readings in anthropology. I think it was Radin and certain others who alerted me to the business about the outsider thinking that they understand and know and yet completely distort the reality of what people think and feel in another culture. I was getting this cross-cultural kind of reaction to this and feeling a little contemptuous of that world and how it was *playing* with these ideas and *playing* with the elements of what were serious matters to other people.

And so I had some reluctance when George was saying, "Let's go." But it was my opportunity to go.

Also at this time, there were many problems going on. One of them was that my mother was very ill. She had cancer, and I was making trips up to Modesto to see her. My brother and I would go up there, and Kathy would go with me sometimes, and we would visit with her. It was obvious that she was having a very serious time, and so that was bothering me.

Then another kind of problem altogether: Harry Bridges was being brought up for trial again, and they were trying to deport him. This was about the fourth time that Harry Bridges had been brought to court, and here it was going on again in 1953. He finally beat it, but the amount of time and money and energy that that union and then the Left throughout the country had to go through to defend him was enormous.

He was accused of being a communist. Now here was a case where he was denying being a communist, and communists were denying that he had been a communist.

It was a very complicated time, nevertheless a very real one. Though he had not been one, he was very friendly to the communists. There were a lot of communists around him, but he had also a lot of other people whom he listened to and dealt with. He was a very complicated man and had a long history of labor struggles in which he had utilized every instrument that was necessary.

He was a left-progressive in his thinking. He had to be for the kind of background he had. He was a real working class heroic figure in my mind, one of the . . . well, there are a great many in American history that most of us don't even know about, but there were great ones. And he was one of them. So that was going on, and I was partly involved

in that, going around and making talks and taking part in meetings in his defense.

Then this thing comes up with George saying, "Let's go up to Washoe." And here I was in classes where I had been reading about American Indians. I remember going to the library and picking up . . . I think I had gotten Kroeber's early sketch on the Washoe in the *Handbook of the Indians of California* [1925]. It was very superficial, but that was all there was. And I read Lowie's work [Ethnographic Notes on the Washo (1939)], Barrett [*The Washo Indians* (1917)], and Omer Stewart on the peyotists [1944]. Stewart was very enlightening, because it gave me some background on what had been happening up there recently. And yet it was all unreal to me, because I had not actually seen these people. But I felt that I should.

And George was telling me all the time, "Don't read that crap!" [laughter] "You just do it. You go and you see these people. Don't have any preconceptions."

Of course, that was very meaningful to me too, because that's the other side of it—that the trouble with all of us people interested in other cultures is that we over-formalize our perceptions of people.

However I didn't know so much, so it didn't make much difference. I mean, this stuff didn't all get digested in my mind, but at least I knew where they were and who they are. And then the idea that was always pressed on me I think by Kroeber and later Heizer was that there weren't . . . the Washoe were almost extinct, hardly there anymore. So I was curious. Who are these mysterious people who aren't there? [laughter]

*Do you remember—and we might have discussed it—but do you remember if you'd met the Freedts at this point, or if the Freedts had gone?*

I knew them; to what extent I did, I don't remember. I think he was in that Mandelbaum class. I'm not sure. But I did have some connection. I knew that they had been up there, but we didn't have any extensive discussions about it, except that Stan was saying, "There *are* Washoe people *there*, you know, they are there." And he was doing work on kinship at the time as I remember, he and Ruth. But I don't recall there being a lot of information exchanged between us.

So anyway, I did this little preparation, but it was very inadequate. There was enough to get an idea that there were people there that had been written about and that people knew about them.

And so off George and I went up to the Sierra Nevada, and I think we went up the old road down through Verdi and Reno on the old Highway 40, and then down from Reno to Carson Valley. I believe we did that. And other times that I went, I would go up over Kingsbury Grade on 50, because it was closer to Carson Valley. But I think that first trip we made that way.

And all the way up, George was preparing himself for the great experience by pulling out a bag of peyote buttons, fresh ones, and chewing them. [laughter]

*As he was driving?*

As he was driving. And I wasn't aware at the time what a problem that could be. I mean, it just seemed to me a little silly that he was doing this. And he was beginning to sort of . . .

*So it was just the two of you.*

Just the two of us, yes. And it was on a weekend or something.

It was on a weekend. Kathy was working and didn't want to go or something. And Nancy, George's wife, a very fine young woman who put up with a great deal and yet was extremely accommodating and supportive to George . . . oh, that's another story in itself.

That's another world, too. But anyway, off we were on this sort of weekend toot, and George kept urging the peyote on me, and I said, "I don't *want* it! I just don't want to take it. I'll wait. I want to see and meet these people."

And this is, again, is that Dionysian-Apollonian thing.

*Yes, it's wonderful.*

And, "No, I don't want it, George. Just . . ." You know, he was driving. And I guess I was a little concerned about that but not enough to stop him or take the wheel or anything. And it was his car, so I was a passenger. And on the way up, he was telling me stories about all the things that happened to him, how the medicine had helped him,



*Left to right: Warren and Kathy d'Azevedo with Nancy, George, and Lani Leite, c. 1944.*

the herb—that's what the peyotists were calling it in those days—had helped him, cleared his mind, helped him see things, and he was now convinced that flying saucers *really* were from . . . . This is the early flying saucer period, you see. [laughter] And the first reports were coming, I think in the 1940s, you know.

To people living in that realm that he was in, these are just what you're looking for. I mean, ye gods, what could be better than flying saucers and emissaries from other planets, other worlds! The flying saucer business was very much a part of a small segment of the avant-garde in the Bay Area at that time, and I'm sure elsewhere, because, you know, what else can you hang onto that's better than that. I mean, "We're being visited!"

By the way, I think this is about the time when . . . or I don't know when Carl Jung had written his little book on the flying saucer phenomenon. [*Flying Saucers: a Modern Myth*, 1958] But I somehow felt that I had read something like that, you know, which gave me some feeling of distance from it, that this is something going on all over the world, particularly in Western countries where if you have no other explanations, flying saucers are it.

In fact, my own grandmother had heard about flying saucers and accepted them as the Lord sending some kind of message to us. How these things come together! I remember her when I was a youngster saying something about, "Oh, that's probably the Lord sending some word to us." And my view about my marvelous old Swedish grandmother was that if a flying saucer had landed in her backyard and little green men came out, she would not turn a hair. To her, it would be that the Lord was sending a message. Unless it was the Devil, but she'd figure that out pretty quick.

To her it was just one of those things that happens. There was nothing unusual about flying saucers to her or many other things of that kind. [laughter]

So here was my friend George telling me about how he had had some visions about flying saucers. One had come to him from Mars. In that flying saucer was somebody who knew this Washoe man, Barton, and he was going up to tell Barton that this man had come to him in a vision, that he knew Bart, and did Bart know the guy or this creature or whatever it was in this flying saucer? George was loaded with this stuff and would tell me all of his dreams and visions. And I was interested and listened.

As I say, I thank my old grandmother. I mean, I was probably prepared for George by her. [laughter] I mean, she could sit on the lap of Jesus, and he would take his heart out and put his palpitating heart in her hand, and she would put it back in. Who could top that? [laughter] So this went on for the four or five hours it took us to get up there.

I remember the feeling of remoteness I had. What came to my mind as I was going over the Sierras, were all those impressions from earlier experience, a feeling of really being in a foreign country.

I hadn't gone over often, but I remembered going with my parents when I was a little kid. We had driven not only up to Tahoe but gone over the old Highway 40 that winds down from Castle Peak, a very torturous road that used to be there. It was really quite a frightening road, and it took quite a while to get down the winding hairpin curves down to Donner Lake.

I think George and I went that route this time. No, maybe the new road was in. Maybe the new 40 was in, the new Highway 80. I can't recall that.

But I remember having this impression again, of being in strange foreign country. After growing up in California, it had a mysterious, eerie sense to it, Reno, which was then just a little tiny postage stamp of a town with neon lights downtown. I don't even remember that we went through it. But we must have, we had to go through it on Fourth Street.

But that didn't make an impression. We didn't stop there. We were on our way to this big experience down in Carson Valley and Woodfords.

All the way down, George was revving himself up in the way that he did with these marvelous fantasies. And he was good at it, I must say.

*Yes, a good storyteller.*

More than a storyteller. He was an expert at fantasy, and he had them. [laughter] He lived them and was quite eloquent about it and very insistent that I get involved. And I remember sometimes I just said I was going to take the peyote just to keep him quiet, and then would say, "No. I'm not going to. I'm going down to see these people, and I'll see what they do," you know. I was maintaining my personal identity.

And that angered him. He was very angry. I remember I drove for a while one time because he wanted to sleep. But he couldn't sleep because he was hallucinating. [laughter]

It was quite a trip. We had a real trip, before the word "trip" had the meaning it would acquire in the hip era.

By the way, a year later is when the so-called "Beat Generation" really emerged in San Francisco. Ferlinghetti had come to San Francisco by this time. I didn't know of him. George may have. And the *City Lights* book-

store didn't open till the following year—he started it. And people like Ginsberg didn't come in until the mid-1950s.

I was gone by that time. I was in Africa, you know. But this was *before* all that. And this was part of the climate that existed. Again, there was also a lot of very serious writers, poets and writers, and musicians around the Bay Area. This was one segment of it that was rather important, because they were writing and thinking, and there was involvement with other groups.

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#### Note

1. *The Doors of Perception*, Aldous Huxley's firsthand account of experimentation with mescaline, was published in Great Britain in 1954 (London: Chatto and Windus) and in the United States in 1956 (New York: Harper and Row). "The Kinsey Report" refers to two separate studies of human sexuality published as *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in 1948 (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Co.) and as *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* in 1953 (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Co.).



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## HEADING UP TOWARD THE WASHOE

**B**UT ANYWAY, here we were. I would say that this was sort of the end of the bohemian period, and we were heading up toward the Washoe on the eve of the Beat Generation. [laughter] And we had no idea what was to come or anything.

So we drove down, and we decided we were very tired. It was getting late in the afternoon, and we decided we would go directly up to Woodfords to find his friends. So we went directly to Woodfords, and I was absolutely overwhelmed with what I thought was the beauty of the area in those days. I mean, the desert and that beautiful Carson Valley. There was hardly a car on the road in those days.

And we were passing houses, and George would say, "There's an Indian house." I remember when I was a kid, people would point at an Indian house, and it was always a shack that had old cars decaying around it; that was always an Indian house, you know. And George was pointing them out. "Indians live there." I remember he said "Indians." The word "Washoe" wasn't really so important to him. To me, it was "Washoe," as I had a little background on this.

So we went up this beautiful drive through . . . gosh, in those days what would we have done? It would have been up along the mountains, the old Genoa road, through Genoa, Fredericksburg, and all those old towns. Oh, you had a feeling of going into the remote past, that you were really in the early period of the American intrusion into that area—the ranches. And we got up into Woodfords, like it was before the big fires that destroyed so much of it a few years ago, a beautiful verdant, heavily wooded area.

It was that very beautiful area around Woodfords: Diamond Valley, Markleeville. Now all those places are so full of tourist cabins and tourism that you can hardly find a Washoe anymore. But in those days, the Washoe had little cabins or camped—very modest little shacks that they lived in right near the general store and also down along the river, and some down around Diamond Valley at the time.

And so we went to the general store and met Stewart Merrill, and George asked him, "Where's Barton? Where's Ramsey?"

Young Stewart Merrill who I later got to know, his father had opened this little gen-

eral store. It had some Washoe baskets. Oh, when I think of those baskets, had I only gotten some of them. But in those days, I was very reluctant to buy; I had this feeling that I didn't want artifacts that I bought. I don't know where I got that reluctance. Maybe it was partly my relationship with people in the anthropology department or something. I'm not sure, but it was the idea that these things weren't for me to buy and that I would wait and talk to people first. I didn't want to have these kinds of things around that were sold to tourists. I didn't want to be a tourist. I didn't have any money to be a tourist, anyway.

But they were so inexpensive at that time. A basket for fifteen dollars then would now be \$1000. A lot of Lena Dick's stuff and some of Maisie James' and a number of other old people who have since died off, their baskets were there.

Anyway, so George in a kind of a haze, [laughter] he and I stumbled out of there and went up to what turned out to be Ramsey Walker's place, a man I got to know very well later, but had no idea who he was at the time. George said, "Oh, he's a big man here. He runs the meetings," and all that. I guess he *was* a Road Chief at the time.

But George didn't seem to know much about the formal organization of the peyote meetings or the Native American Church. In fact, I didn't know anything at that time except the little I'd read in Stewart. And so here we went off to find this little encampment down the road, and Ramsey *was* there. And he was very quiet, withdrawn.

I remember the feeling I had, that, "I am meeting people really from another world." I never had met any Indians, except way back when I was a kid in Yosemite with my old friend Chief Lemhi—but he was a tourist



"[We] went up to what turned out to be Ramsey Walker's place." Ramsey Walker.

Indian, and he knew how to deal with the outside and all that.

But here was Ramsey, who I think was a little taken aback having these two white guys driving up inside his little camp there of three or four shacks. And he was a very reserved man anyway. Later I developed tremendous admiration for him, a very wonderful guy, very wise old guy and very good-natured and warm in his feelings about people.

But here he was, you know, dealing with these two guys, and he says, "Well, you're here." [laughter]

And George was being very eloquent and talking and talking, and Ramsey was just

standing there listening, and I was thinking, “Why doesn’t George shut up?” And, “I want to hear this man talk,” you know.

And George was talking about how he’d had these visions and how he’d had a dream down in Berkeley and it had really gone against him. And Ramsey was saying, “Well, you don’t mix the two. You can’t mix the medicine with the other stuff. That stuff is no good.” But he was, you know, being thoughtful and careful with George, but obviously not knowing just how to handle this situation.

*Had George at this point presented him with any of the peyote as a gift?*

No, because that wasn’t what it was for. It was for another person whom he’d heard about but nobody knew where he was. He was at another place, and George wasn’t clear just exactly where these camps were.

So anyway, we had a talk with Ramsey, a very nice exchange, and George was asking, “When is the meeting?” This must have been a Saturday that we came down, because he said, “Is there a meeting tonight?” And I see in my notes that we had asked Ramsey the question, and Saturday night was usually the night for peyote meetings.

And Ramsey was very, very vague on this. “Oh, I don’t know. It depends on who’s around.” Of course, they knew exactly where it was going to happen. [laughter]

I found out later everybody knows. But, you know, you don’t just invite anybody to the damn meetings, and George was being very pushy about it. “Well, I want to . . . I need to come to a meeting.”

And Ramsey was saying, “Well, we’ll see what we can do for you, but you just have to be quiet, take it easy.” I think Ramsey by that

time realized that he was dealing with somebody who’d had a little bit more . . . was more ambitious than any white kid ought to be about this kind of medicine. [laughter]

And so then we left there—a lot of things happened, and I can’t remember them all. My notes are loaded with these few days. We went looking for Barton John, who was this young guy, this crippled guy that George had been telling me about who was this brilliant genius who obviously had some connections with Mars or the flying saucers and was really a philosopher.

Oh, by the way, the philosopher business. I don’t know if George had read it, but he knew about it; I had been reading Paul Radin’s *Primitive Man as Philosopher*, and I was very intrigued by it. There was something



Barton John.

about Radin's approach that appealed to me. Something about his involvement, and yet maintaining a certain distance as an observer and anthropologist, but with a sympathetic and an intense involvement in the *way* others speak of themselves and speak of their thoughts and ideas. I always had this state of wonder in those first years about how he was able to do this and how so few others that I knew of were able to somehow *feel* the way the person they're talking to feels, and accept and understand the world that they're talking about.

Of course, it takes a lot more than just listening to them. It's knowing something about the culture too, which Radin did with the Winnebago, these people that he worked with.

But I remember thinking at the time what George was talking about was really a philosopher, I mean, this guy Barton as a profoundly brilliant and intelligent philosopher, loaded with mysterious and wonderful thoughts and powers, and all that sort of thing. I never did then, and I can't now abide that kind of talk. But I was interested in the fact that he had made that impression on my friend George. It was important to me, and I was very curious about it.

So we finally found Barton. We went to this little camp down on the river that was called Miller's Place at the time, right down from the general store and then down along a path. As you went down, you saw this old grinding stone, a big boulder with a number of pits where people would grind pine nuts and acorn. And it had a tent over it for the women to work out of the wind and sun. I was fascinated by it as we went by. I mean, "God, they still do this! They *use* this!"

I would say I was blown away by this, but by this time I was not only tired, I was tired of George. [laughter] I wanted to sleep, and

yet we had to go on. But he was driven by this great need to see his . . . his guardian, Barton.

So we went, and it was getting pretty dark. It was twilight, as I remember. We went down to the river and there were these little shacks along the river, and some people, as we came by, went into their houses and closed the door.

We went by the Christensen's place—later I got to know the two Christensen brothers out of there. The wives were outside talking, and they scooted into the house and said, "Close the door!" as we came down. [laughter] And I didn't know who they were at the time. I learned this later.

And we went down, and we stopped at the one house where a woman had just gone in, and we knocked on the door, and finally the woman opened the door, and George said, "Where is Barton? I'm here to see Barton."

And she looked a long time, and she says, "He's over there," and she pointed over right across the way where there was this little lean-to shack.

And we went over, and there was Barton sitting. He was very delighted to see George. So he says, "I knew you were coming."

And George had told me all the way up, "He'll know we're coming. I didn't have to write to him. He knows. He'll know."

And sure enough, Barton said, "I knew you were coming." George immediately interpreted that as great revelation, "You see?" Well, of course I learned later that Barton and others say that to everybody. [laughter]

"I knew you were coming."

But anyway, I was deeply respectful of this. And here was this guy, I'd say he was in his thirties, early forties, very crippled. He could hardly walk. One side of him seemed to be totally paralyzed, and his back seemed to be stiffened. He had to sit at an angle in

his chair because he couldn't bend his body. He had this jovial face, as though he thought everything was funny. And George had told me how he was really the embodiment of the trickster.

You know, when I look back on this, what was being implied here by George, and in a sense I saw it too, was the idea of the genius philosopher—primitive person as a trickster in a sense. Something like the Zen Buddhist concept of, you know, you tell riddles, and you put people through their traces.

And this was pre-Castaneda, pre-Don Genero [*The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*, by Carlos Castaneda 1969] and all that. And in a sense, this is what George was experiencing with Barton, the guy who would trick him, who would play games with him. And of course, being the kind of guy George was, you interpret every word that came out of such a person's mouth as being some kind of mysterious and brilliant message.

*Well, Barton must have really enjoyed this. [laughter]*

Well, I don't think Barton realized what he was dealing with. No, he was just being himself, and he was truly a very remarkable guy—being a cripple, having no formal education, living in this kind of isolated world and life, having lived a rather rambunctious youth. When he got crippled is not clear. He either had some disease or an accident. It wasn't clear. He may have had polio. I don't know. Nobody would ever . . . *knew* precisely.

But as a result of his illnesses early in life, he had been very attracted to the peyotist church—I learned all this later—because it was a place where he could be somebody. He was somebody there. He was a good singer,

he was a good drummer, and he had a mysterious air about him, you know.

*In another context, do you think that that kind of life-history was also a set-up to become a doctor in another context?*

Oh yes, I think so. I think always in the back of his mind, he was resisting the idea that he ever could have been a doctor, because peyotists were opposed to the shamans. Nevertheless, power—the power to heal, the power to do good through the medicine—he felt he was ready for that. In fact, since certain relatives had been shamans, he had the propensity to use this power, but in the *good way*—the good medicine, not the bad medicines that those guys (doctors) often used. I didn't learn that then. This was much later I learned this.

Nevertheless, here was Barton sitting there in this little shack with a little stove over in the corner, and it was terribly hot, but terribly cold outside. And he had all kinds of things on the wall. There were pictures cut out of magazines, there was one of Jesus Christ, there was one of Marilyn Monroe. You know, the place was a kind of a little gallery that he had, and . . .

*Who took care of him with fire wood and stuff?*

The people across the way. Relatives. The Christensens. I didn't know that then, but he was cared for by people in the community.

And there were feathers hanging from the ceiling and animal skins and things like that. There were a couple of rattles. And so, you know, I had a feeling, "By god, this is really . . . I'm in a Washoe Indian house." I mean, you know, "Here is a Washoe person, the people who are supposed to be extinct, but here they are."

Yes. *This must have been . . . .*

Oh, yes. It had a powerful effect on *me*, but I was very annoyed by George, because he was just talking all the time. "Barton, you hear what happened to me? I saw this. I saw that. And then I had this dream where this spaceship came down, and in it there was a guy. And I don't remember what he looked like, and he said he knew you. And do you know anything about this?"

And I remember Barton saying, "Well, there was a guy down in the valley who saw a flying saucer up there on Job's Peak. It was coming down on Job's Peak." He says, "There are some kind of people moving around up there. [laughter] There's some kind of thing's going on there." But he says, "I ain't seen anything like that myself, but something's happening out there." He said, "No, I don't know that guy," he says, "but I'm glad he knows me."

I mean, it was a weird *wonderful* conversation. And George was in another world dealing with it only as he saw it. Every word that Barton said had this tremendous meaning to him.

Again, this business of Don Genero [Juan], Castaneda's fictional figure of the shaman, the trickster, one could imagine in George's mind that this was the way Barton was: Barton could at any moment do something magical and mysterious and was doing it every moment he spoke to George. I mean, everything he said had this magical quality to it, and George would look at me and go, "See?" you know, And I would see all right.

I thought I saw what was going on. But it was very wonderful, it was mysterious. I had this feeling of . . . elation. I was elated by this get-together, this meeting.

*Well, it sounds like nothing you had read . . . .*

Prepared me for that. No, no. Not at all. I mean, this was the real person, the real people. This is the kind of people that Stewart had worked with, that Lowie had worked with, and others. I mean, you'd get a lot of information that was useful and important, but you wouldn't get the feeling of this *person . . .* this person you were talking to, the kind of individual he was, what he had to say, how he said it, how he dealt with you, how he *accommodated* you, you know, and how he was wondering what you thought of him and all that sort of thing.

And I must say, I think Barton was a bit puzzled, and he . . . . Did you ever read Hesse's *Steppenwolf*?

Yes. *Oh, yes.*

Remember Mozart in there? The ghost of Mozart who would leap up and down and turn somersaults in the air, the trickster figure? Well, that, like Don [Juan] Genero . . . in fact, I'm sure that Castaneda got some of his feelings about it from Hesse. Hesse I had read by this time, but, of course, Castaneda hadn't done his stuff yet. [*The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* was published in 1969]

But I was thinking, "Here's the trickster. Here's the guy who gives the impression to others that he has this enormous power. And in a sense he [Barton] does." He had this sort of charismatic power in his quietness, in his jovial face and in his way of fending . . . fielding questions that he didn't understand . . . what was being asked, but fielding them right, in a way that sounded as though he really knew *exactly* what you were talking about.

And all this was part of this little pantomime that was going on in that room. I was in a state of wonder about it, watching him. And he was always looking over at me to see

what I was thinking, what kind of guy am I over there, because I'm quiet, I'm not saying much.

And by the way, Washoe people I know are always interested in the quiet one, you know; they want to know, and they'll start needling you to find out what kind of person you are. What are you going to say? What are you going to do? And I remember Barton said—I forget what he called me and how I was introduced, as George's friend?—"What do you think of Indians here? What do you think of all these Indians?"

And I said, "Well, I think it's wonderful. I think it's wonderful you people can live out here in this beautiful country," and all that.

"Yes, it's pretty good country. It's pretty good country."

But he was, you know, fishing around for what was going on.

And I remember him telling George, "You're moving too fast. You're going too fast. I think you need to slow down in life. You've got to slow down in life. You're trying to know too much. You know, you white people . . . —that wonderful line, what was it?—"you white people, you know a lot, but you forget a lot. We Indians, we don't know much, but we remember everything."

*[laughter]* Oh, that's wonderful.

Oh, it was wonderful. He was advising George, I mean, just as sort of a father thing, you know. And, "You shouldn't take that medicine unless you're with somebody. That's for the meeting. I told you you should not just go and eat that stuff all the time. It's to be given to you to be done in a certain way. And you know, you're going too fast. You're trying to do too much."

It's like what he told me months later when I knew Barton better and we were talk-

ing about this earlier time, when he said, "Tell that friend of yours not to go so fast. It's not good. It isn't good. And he shouldn't be taking this medicine the way he does it. You don't just do it all the time unless you've got somebody to guide you, somebody to show you how, what to do."

Anyway, George brought out his peyote buttons and gave them to him, and Barton was very pleased. He thought that was a nice gift, because they had to either send somebody down in their old cars to Arizona and Texas to go to the peyote gardens, as they called them, to pick peyote. Maybe once or twice a year, a group would go down, and they'd come back with sacks of green buds.

But, you know, that was a long trip, and sometimes they'd have to send for them in the mail. Of course, that was against the law, I believe, in Nevada at that time, but they did it. So getting the buttons from somebody like George who had sent for them through the mail was a boon. Of course, George and his friends had all the herb that they wanted plus other things.

And so Barton was pleased. And so George asked, "When is the meeting? Is there going to be a meeting tonight?"

And Barton said, "I don't rightly know," you know, *[laughter]* "I'm not so sure. I don't know. Sometimes they come, sometimes they don't come. I don't know where it's going to be. We haven't decided yet."

Now this was late, the meetings start by nine or ten—I didn't know that then, but anyway, we were clearly being discouraged from hanging around. And, of course, I later learned from people that I knew, talked to, that there were not many, but some of these young Berkeley kids were coming up there trying to get into the meetings. And the Washoe called them "wannabes." You know, "These kids, they want to be with the Indians

and learn about the herb and all that. Well, that's fine. It's good if they do that, but there are some funny ones that come up here. They do funny things. And the *law*, the sheriff will come in on us if we . . . if anything strange happens."

And one time one of them went off and drove and had an accident and said where he had been, and they were all interrogated. So they were worried about this.

At the same time, they were intrigued by the attention their little group was getting up there, you know, and the fact that there were some white people who might really want to be in the church, be in the Native American Church. I didn't know any of this at the time. I was just watching this unfold.

*Now at this time—you said you had some notes, but you weren't taking any notes while you were actually meeting Barton for the first time or . . .*

No. Well, usually notes that I took in those days, except when I was doing formal interviews, I would immediately . . . I had a wonderful memory then. I wish I had it now. I could go out, you know, and sit in the car and write up stuff that had happened for the last hour or two in great detail and very accurately. It had such an impression on me, I wrote up this first meeting with Barton (I had three or four), I think in the motel that night, you know, and in great detail, the questions and answers and what people said.

*But actually, during formal fieldwork in those years and even now . . . but then it was necessary to do that, I mean, to retain what's happening and then go someplace else and write this down.*

Oh, yes. Yes. Oh, there are some times when you can't, you shouldn't take notes or

you don't take notes during . . . if something very important is happening and people feel they don't want you to take notes about that, then you must remember that. Oh, yes. I got very good at that.

My early notes are better than my later ones in life, when I got sloppier or I was just looking for certain things, and things were more sporadic. And I would select out what I wanted as against the whole mood of the situation, what was happening and how I felt and my impressions of people. Things of that kind were very much alive at that time.

So I was just loaded when we left there. And George was very disappointed because he was sure there was going to be a meeting. And there was. [laughter] And we weren't invited. But anyway, we stayed around there a day or two. The next day . . . oh, the next day we went around.

*Where did you sleep?*

Oh, I don't know whether that night we slept in the car or a motel. I don't recall. We might have slept in the car. We were quite broke, but motels were cheap then, too. But I don't remember, we may have slept in the car.

No, the *next* night we slept in the car. The first night, we went and got a motel room because we were really worn out. And I told George I didn't want to drive with him anymore unless I was driving, because I felt that he'd had it.

And so the next morning early, we get up, and we visited around. And of course there has been a meeting. [laughter]

Somewhere. I think the meeting was . . . Where was the meeting? The meeting wasn't where we went that morning anyway. And they were having peyote breakfast, which if we'd have come in on, they probably would



have invited us to eat and all that. But nobody invited us.

And we went around and saw the various people. And I have detailed in my notes who we saw. We saw Ramsey, we saw Franklin Mack, we saw Barton again, and the Christensens and all these people that later I was to know very well. I got a glimpse of and a feel for what was going on, a little glimpse of what was going on in their lives.

And it was very interesting in that the peyotists' relations with George was dealing with him as a foundering neophyte, as somebody who needed help and advice. And I was very interested in that. The idea was that they felt responsibility for him, because he . . . I never was sure whether he had actually gone



Franklin Mack.

to a meeting, but he had taken part in events once or twice—he hadn't gone up there very much. Once or twice, he had been at events where the peyotists were singing or sharing peyote. But it was never clear to me what he'd actually done, whether he had gone to a meeting or not. But they treated him as though he was a potential convert.

And he gave them every reason to believe that, and that he *needed* help. And he did. [laughter] There was no doubt about it.

And I was intrigued, because it opened them up in a way that I personally would not have been able to do being a total stranger. And they were talking with him and advising him and being very kind to him and also just telling him he was doing the wrong thing and that you can't just play with the medicine. You have to be serious. You've got to come to meetings. And he said, "Oh, well, I wanted to come to one of them yesterday."

And they said, "Well, yes, but we didn't decide on it till very late." You know, they had all these excuses. I think they felt that . . . maybe I was part of the problem as somebody they didn't know.

They had every reason to be suspicious. You know, "Who was this extra guy?" And George was acting a little strangely, and they weren't sure of him. And, you know, more of these characters were coming over the hills. [laughter]

And so anyway, that next day, we went down looking for Franklin, because for some reason we wanted to see Franklin Mack about something. And we were told he was in Carson City.

And in those days, Carson City . . . the old railroad station, which is now gone, came right into town, and there was a great open meadow, a field, with a lot of undergrowth. And a little stream went through there; I

think that stream that comes down from the hills went through Carson City and through that little . . . it was about three or four acres.

And we got in town, and we saw a Washoe on the street, and we stopped him, you know, and said, "You know where Franklin Mack is?" or something. [laughter]

And he went, "Over there," you know, gesturing with his lips.

And that was, of course, this railroad yard. And so we went in there, walking around, and I was in a state of *total absorption*. There were Washoe men, men mostly, everywhere, sitting in little groups gambling, playing stick games and cards, all sitting on the ground or on blankets, all over the place. Something that, you know, twenty years later was gone.

And we kept asking for Franklin, and finally they said, "He's over there." And there

was a little cabin, a little shack, over on one side of the yard where a family had lived, and there was Franklin.

And I don't know, George had some business with Franklin. We wanted to find out something about what was going on. And we had a chat with Franklin, and Franklin was very friendly, a very jovial kind of a guy. And he and I got along great. And so that was Carson City.

When I come to think of it, in two or three days, we did a lot. When you're young, you do so much. My god.

Yes. *You don't sleep much.* [laughter]

Well, you might sleep, but when you're awake, you really move. [laughter]

**W**E WENT back to Woodfords . . . that's right, looking for Roy James, whom I didn't know at the time. As it turned out, Roy James was a very central figure in ethnography. Freed had worked with him, Jacobsen later worked with him, and I worked with him extensively.

And so we went to Roy's house, and he had a kind of a nice place, a nice shack.

*Yes. Now this was in Woodfords again.*

In Woodfords, a beautiful little town. And his wife Maisie was there, and he had two or three kids running around, all of whom I later got to know well.

Roy was a guy who was looked upon as an important early Road Chief. After listening to George, Roy really got going, and he was telling us about waterbabies up at Tahoe. In fact, I find in my notes that he even mentions Cave Rock and how he won't go near there. I didn't know where Cave Rock was—I mean, I think I knew what it was, but I didn't know much about it. And he mentioned waterbabies and how . . . the kids hear

them all the time up the stream. And he was very open and free. And also, Roy, as I got to know, was a very sharp guy, and he knew what these guys [anthropologists] were looking for. [laughter]

And I don't think he was saying anything wrong or anything, but he was just playing the game and titillating us. And he was good at it. He knew how to bring up these things, and then he also, like so many Washoe guys I knew, would watch you with great care while they're talking. They may not seem to be looking at you, but they are very aware of your expressions and what you're reacting to, particularly whites.

*And were you aware of this at the time?*

I became aware. Yes, because I was feeling so insecure, I was very aware of what . . . I was watching with great care how people were acting, how they were talking. And while George was talking to them, I had a chance to watch the interaction, and I remember at times I was cringing, "George, don't talk like that. Don't do that." [laughter]

"You know, just talk ordinary," you know, because these guys were very flat-footed and straightforward and quiet.

But Roy was a more articulate and open kind of a guy, and I remember at one point saying, "Gee, I would like to come up here and talk to you some more." Of course, I was beginning to think how I was going to, now that I had an entrée, actually come up and do some ethnography. And I said, "You know, I'd like to work on a history of the people and how things were in the past when you were young and what changes have gone on."

And he said, "Yes, I like to talk about that. I could talk about that." And he said, "You know, there have been some other guys up here talking about that kind of thing." [laughter] "Yes, yes, I'd like to talk about that." Of course, you know, Roy had talked to Siskin, he had talked to Freed, later on dozens of others worked with Roy.

I later began to realize how competitive some of these major figures were among the Washoe groups in Woodfords and in Dresslerville and in the Carson Valley. It was very important to them that people would come to *them* for information. And Roy wanted very much to be the one that people came to for the definitive explanation of Washoe things. And Barton was very competitive about Roy, because Barton wanted to be our host, the one that George and I and others would come to see about the church, about the Native American Church and peyotism. And down in the valley later on when I began to work with people in Dresslerville, some like Hank Pete and others, they were very miffed that I was working with people up in Woodfords, particularly because those guys were "those peyote eaters, the crazy peyote eaters."

There was this sense of a prerogative, that certain people should be the ones that be

talked to and asked about something and not others. And they were always downgrading the other guy. I mean, "Well, he acts like he knows a lot, but he don't know so much. I mean, he was a young guy when all that happened." You know, that kind of thing.

And all kinds of certain derogatory snide remarks were made about others. And one had to be very careful how you went around talking to people, making sure that you covered your bases. If you were with one group, you also worked with the other, even if you didn't particularly have any reason to—that you made a point of visiting and talking with others, because then you wouldn't be pegged as that person's friend, that particular person owned you.

*And didn't you have to maintain a real innocence about understanding the motivation behind some of the derogatory remarks? I mean, did you maintain a distance from . . . ?*

Oh, you mean when those remarks were made?

Yes.

I think naturally I just . . . . I don't know if I did it from any sense of a formal technique. I mean, I would just sort of ignore that as though that was not relevant and that they didn't mean it the way they said it, that sort of thing. Or, if I could, I would say something positive, you know, like, "Well, he seems like a good guy."

"Yep, he *seems* like a good guy." [laughter]

But you have to be very careful and not get involved in discussing others, because the word would get around so quickly. I mean, you'd say something one evening, and the next morning dozens of people miles away

had heard it, you know, or heard versions of it.

Because after all, in those days people like myself and George and others were rare events. We were part of the show from outside, you know, and people did pay a lot of attention to what we were doing. They didn't seem to, but they were watching us and were spreading the word about what we said and how we acted.

Oh, they knew where we were staying in town, they knew the night we slept in the car. They knew we slept in the car down the road—somebody had seen us. And you know, “Hey, that must have been a hard night.” And, “These guys sleep in the . . .” You know, everybody knows everything.

And I very early got that picture. You have to be very, very careful about what you did and very open about how you talked about it or clever about *not* talking, similar to the way they did, by changing the subject or looking in the other direction or making some innuendo, you know. [laughter] And so, yes. All those things, I think I very early began to pick that up.

But anyway, with Roy James, I was able to establish the possibility of continuity with him. And he was very happy about it. “Oh, yes. Come up, and Maisie will fix you some food. We'll . . . yes, we'll eat. Bring your wife up, bring your kids up. Oh, yes. You guys are welcome. You guys can come up here anytime,” you know.

Later, he told me that he wasn't so sure that he wanted George hanging around that much. He says, “That man's a little funny. He's a little funny.” He says, “I don't know what's going on with him.”

Of course, he was right. George was going through a pretty funny stage at that time. He was on the verge here of the next two or

three years of having some real difficulties. That period when he was doing the wonderful, brilliant work was over, and something had happened to him—I don't know what. He'd had some problems with the Big Sur group, something about [Henry] Miller. Miller had made him feel badly about something.

Oh, gosh, there are so many things. Robert Brady, the economics professor that I had had and that I admired, he had this group of very bright young people around him—students. He attempted suicide at just about this time. For the life of me, I can't remember whether he had died at that point or not. But the papers were loaded with “Robert Brady tried to commit suicide.”

And his wife, Mildred Brady, a couple of years before had written an article, I think, for one of the, oh, like *Harper's* magazine and it was reported in the Hearst press and all that, called “Sex and Anarchy in Berkeley” [laughter] or something like that in which she had denounced the whole scene as a cult scene, mostly the avant-garde. Henry Miller, the whole works—sex and orgies and dope, and all that sort of thing. It was a stupid article.

It was just stupid. And I remember it was embarrassing to Brady. Not that that's why he committed suicide.

He had many reasons . . . other reasons. But nevertheless, George had used that with me saying, “Look at the kind of people you've been consorting with up there at the university. Look at this crazy stuff that she's writing.”

And in *Circle*, there was this wonderful editorial about, you know, who all these people were, and the Hearst Press, what they were doing, and Mildred Brady, who, “Looking for sex and anarchy, has taken a trip to London.” [laughter] “She can't find enough

of it here." I mean, there were all these exchanges going on within this world.

I was really taken aback by that. I mean, what a stupid woman she must be. Because even though I had withdrawn from that world, I supported that whole avant-garde movement as being an important contribution. There were elements of it that were utterly ridiculous, but that's true of any movement.

And so anyway, part of my . . . I suppose my caution about all this was not to get into the realm of down-mouthing somebody like George and what he was doing. You know, he had his own trip, he had his own trajectory in life, and he was doing what he had to do, and he was a brilliant guy and an old friend, and maybe it wasn't all that bad.

Except I was feeling very badly about what seemed to be a real deep depression he was in which he was trying to handle by this kind of bizarre behavior and use of drugs. I didn't realize how much he was into drugs, until later I found out that he had been into it for a long time.

*But it sounds like you had some sense that this was a different level of not just rebellion or representing the avant-garde or being creative, but that he'd lost some . . .*

This was much more a personal problem. But also, it was exacerbated by his relationships with certain people like that who were into it on an extreme level and I think sort of goaded him on. And he, being the competitive character he was, I'm sure he wanted to outdo them, you know.

But it was getting to him. Something was happening to him. He wasn't . . . it bothered me. Nevertheless, I never admonished him. We'd known each other in a way that that wasn't what you do. That was his way.

And very much like the Washoe, who would say, "You'd better watch out."

Because I remember Franklin and Barton telling him, "You've got to go slow. You can't play with this."

And he sort of passed that off, you know. But they were telling him what they had to tell him, which was, "If you want to use the herb, you come to the meetings, and you do it the right way, and we show you how, and we tell you what you're experiencing and what it means." And that's all part of shaping the consciousness, you know, that goes on at these meetings.

So anyway, we were floating around in that area. And I would think I was in a state of euphoria, because I just felt this was a world I wanted to know more about. It was so beautiful, and I liked these people.

*And it sounded like an intact world, that, I mean, what you saw was . . . was . . .*

What do you mean?

*. . . integrated. Well, I'm just saying it wasn't just the remnants of these raggle-taggle people sort of hanging on for dear life, but there . . .*

Well, there was that too.

*. . . but there was an integral system.*

There was a community. It was a very fractured community. There was a lot of factionalism and all that, and still is, and it's always . . . today and probably was before in days gone by. But nevertheless, with all that, it was a community. It was an enforced community, in a sense, because there was nothing else they could do. They were stuck in this world. There were boundaries.

In those days, discrimination was enormous. Even when we first went there, we saw that. Indians couldn't go into Gardnerville or Minden after dark—they got out of there; they weren't allowed in certain places, there were only certain shops they could go into traditionally and shop. If they were on the streets after five or six o'clock, the sheriff would come by and shoo them home or put them in jail if they had been drinking or anything like that. They couldn't go to the theater. If they did, they sat upstairs in the gallery—we learned that later when we were living there.

In any of these towns in Nevada, there were "sundowner" understandings where you just didn't hang around after sundown. Indians weren't allowed in certain places. So there was a boundary around there.

That's why a lot of the young people, if they could, if they got any education at all and they could make it, just got out. Those are the days of relocation, getting away from the reservation. Now there's a movement back in, but then, it was rare to find a young educated person, except coming home to visit. They were trying to work elsewhere or pass as Mexicans or pass as anything besides an "Injun," you know.

So yes, in a sense, they were a community, but it was a depressed community. I mean, the housing was absolutely atrocious. When you look at Indian housing today, you know, with the rebuilding period that has gone on in the last twenty years or thirty years, you wouldn't believe what it was like then. I mean, these were shacks with the wind blowing through them, boards, canvas, refuse from the dumps used for housing. And the water was a pump, you know, that everybody had to use sometimes a half mile away. And it didn't work half the time. Very little electricity for anybody. A little church . . . I

think run by the Baptists, and it was somehow a place where they would get handouts now and then. They were living on government pensions, the older people.

And you know, it was a depressed area, *but* when you were in it, you realized these people made a life for themselves anyway, and that impressed me. I mean, the sense of community, the sense that here was a world that other people like me didn't know about and that even the people in Nevada around them didn't know; there was a barrier between them and the Indians.

They had their way of talking about Indians. It always started, "Oh, yes, those Indians. Oh, you'll find the guy you're looking for. He's always laying around. He doesn't do a damn thing," you know. And you could see all of these attitudes, the prejudice about Indians, and the lack of information. They just didn't know, and they had their own mythology about the Indians, so that it was a world apart within our world. And, of course, that was just the kind of thing made-to-order to pique my curiosity and my own deep feelings of alienation, you know.

So yes. Then I think the other that was important that we did—George had come out of that haze in the second day or so, slept it off. And I think he was a little mollified by the kind of advice he was getting, where people were not praising him for what happened, not, you know, saying, "Oh, how wonderful, what you're doing!" but criticizing him in a careful way. I think that got to him in a way.

And he became very depressed on that trip. I think he was having trouble at home and lord knows what else, and he was having trouble with his life, what he was going to do. And when I look back, I wish I knew more about it. I just know that he was having a lot of difficulty.

And so . . . oh, we'd heard about Gray Horse, who had a peyotist group down in Antelope Valley. Gray Horse, that's what he was called locally. What was his other name? Yes, Ben Lancaster.

Ben Lancaster had been probably next to . . . oh, there were a couple of people who had brought the peyotist ideas into the area back in the early part of the century, but Ben Lancaster, old Gray Horse, had come in in the 1930s as a kind of proselytizer. In fact, he's the guy that Omer Stewart wrote about at some point in his monograph on the peyotists, Washoe peyotists.

And Lancaster was still around, and he had a group down in Antelope Valley. The Dick family, Streeter Dick and a number of members of that family, had their own peyotist meetings along with Ben Lancaster's on the other end of Antelope Valley.

And the people in Woodfords and the Lancaster group didn't get along very well. They were sort of competitors and rivals. They did things in a different way. The people in Woodfords would say things like, "They're different down there. Those guys are different."

Down there, they would say, "Oh, we don't know too much about what those [Woodfords] guys do up there."

But it was very deep. And then later on I did a lot of work on that, the difference of the two groups, but I didn't know it then.

But anyway, we said, "Gee, we'd like to see Ben Lancaster." And people were very quiet in Woodfords about that.

"Yes, he's there. Yes, I guess he's still there. I guess he . . ." They knew he was there. [laughter] "I guess he's around somewhere, yes. He sticks around here pretty much. He doesn't travel much anymore."

And OK, so we decided to go see Ben Lancaster. Of course, this . . .

*This is the same trip.*

Same trip.

*Jeez.*

Well, it's all in three days actually. We just zipped around. I have more notes for that three days than I have for two or three months of other projects.

But it was all extremely important to me. I felt that I was doing or was involved with what I wanted to be involved with. I was deeply curious. I wanted to know about these people.

And I also had this *great* sense of reservation, that I didn't want to be an exploiter, I didn't want to be a tourist, I didn't want to be a one-time guy coming through and piquing people's curiosity and getting them interested. I didn't want to do any of that. I wanted to figure out, did I really want to do this?

So I was very quiet in those days, which was unusual for me. I kept my mouth shut a lot and just watched and listened and apparently made a very good impression, because later on some of my friends told me, "Hey, you know, you're a quiet guy. You're a quiet guy, and we like that." [laughter]

Well, I didn't do it for that reason. I was just very careful, and George was doing all the talking anyway, and I didn't want to be too much associated with what he was saying, because I felt strange enough.

*You mentioned earlier you weren't as aware of it then, but there was this whole issue of competitiveness and whose prerogative it was to be the gatekeeper, so to speak, did you at that time—well, probably not then—but at any future time, how much of an issue was the fact that there could be income from being a paid informant?*



Oh. Well, I don't think that was the main thing, though it was certainly there, because these people were poor. I remember those first fees that I gave when I was doing formal interviewing with Roy James was a dollar an hour, which he was very pleased about. And I did it merely because I felt I should offer it, you know. And he was happy to take it. And there was never any complaint. Nobody ever complained about not getting enough unless they heard that somebody else got more from you, you know.

Maybe somebody else could give them more, but not anybody you worked with. But I never remember there being an issue over that, excepting it was a courtesy that I started very early. Did I . . . ? I may have gotten some advice from Freed about that, about the amount.

And I remember I just very cautiously said, "Roy, I know . . . "

Roy said, "You don't have to give me nothing," you know, that kind of thing.

I said, "Yes, I am just paying because I'm taking your time, and I'm asking you to sit here for an hour or two. But, you know, you should get something for it." And I said, "How about a dollar an hour."

"Oh, that's fine, that's fine," and there was never any question about it.

And there was only a few people that I ever did that with, because in those days, there was a feeling you didn't want to start this, because then everybody would be competing with everybody else. So my rule was, if I have a formal interview where I ask you . . . I'm coming at a certain time to sit down with you and I've got either a tape recorder or I'm taking notes, that is work. That is a different thing than if I'm just visiting and chatting with you. And that, by the way, worked very well. People understood that, and some people wanted you to turn on your

tape recorder or start writing so that they could say, you know, "Well, you know, I've done an hour's work."

But I got so I could handle that. Oh, well I was broke half the time myself, I had to be very careful about what I gave out. But then when I look back on it, a dollar an hour was considered quite OK, you know. But I didn't have to do that very much, and I was very conscious of it, very conscious of "Should I or shouldn't I?" at any given time.

*Right. I think it's still a topic.*

Oh, always. Always, anywhere where you work. Anywhere. And then, of course, if you had a fee for one person, then the word gets around, then everybody wanted it. And I had to be and others did, too—very clear to people. You know, "I'm coming to interview you, and I'm asking you, you know, you've got two hours to give me, and this will be the fee." That seemed to work, because it was clear.

But you go visiting people and chat and talk and then later take notes, maybe people felt they wanted it or should get it, but they didn't bring it up, because they could see the difference. It was inhospitable to ask for it. The Washoe people then were very . . . had a real protocol about this sort of thing.

*That's an important word.*

Nobody ever made you embarrassed about it. They might later change their opinion of you if things didn't go the way they wanted, but they wouldn't talk to you about it. [laughter] They talked to others.

But I never felt that I had a problem over that, because I think I started out right when I began working with Roy. I just spread the word around, you know. When I'm working

with somebody and set up a meeting, that's a different thing than if I'm just visiting. And nobody questioned that. Otherwise, it would have been a terrible thing, you know, awfully confusing.

*Oh, I think it's one of those areas that is hard in establishing those relationships.*

Even today when I'm doing fieldwork on a project or something, and there's pay available, I will just say, "Can I have an interview with you, for an hour or two? And there is a fee involved." And if they ask, I tell them how much it is.

And again, sometimes people will not want to talk to you for fear they're not going to get paid, and you get so you can feel that. You can feel that somebody feels they ought to be getting it for what is happening. And then you either decide they're worth it, or you just let it go.

I've gone through that a lot. I mean, you feel that somebody is just pressing you for something that is much more informal. You don't give in to it, because it can lead to a worse problem than if you don't; you don't do it.

So I always think about it, but I don't think I've had any problems about it.

*But do you think . . . ? I mean, among your peers at the time, do you think that there was a clearly established tradition for paying informants, as they were called at that time?*

Yes, because most anthropologists were doing work in a formal way, and they would establish a pay rate. I think most of the guys that had come through, even Lowie, gave gifts or money or something. And they probably had the same problem that we had. That is, when do you do it, and when don't you do

it? And it's hit or miss, and you just get a feel for it. And I remember . . . I think Stan [Freed] was the one who had a fee rate. I think I got the dollar an hour idea from him. I'm not sure, but it had to be somebody like that.

And later on, people were asking me what to do. And I remember Bill Jacobsen came up, and he had some money—he had had a grant, and I was a little miffed with him, because he was paying more than I was paying. I remember talking to him about it. He was giving two dollars an hour or something, I forget what it was, and there was the beginning of that kind of thing among anthropologists, you know, "For god's sake, can't you inquire before you do this, you know?" And I remember there was a little thing about that with Roy. I said, "Hey, that guy's got a lot of money." [laughter]

But I don't remember it being a serious problem. Well, it was at times, later on. There were so many people coming through that it got to be chaotic. And I think even the Washoe people began to feel a little confused by it all and would ask for \$100 for god's sakes! [laughter]

So where was I now? Antelope Valley. So we decided before we went home, we ought to see Ben Lancaster, who was well known, who I knew about through the literature. I said, "We ought to see that guy." And George had heard about it, because Lancaster was something of a historical figure in the peyotist movement.

But, of course, then we learned people were reticent in Woodfords about us going there, they didn't want us to work with those guys. In the first place, either there was a rivalry, or they didn't want those guys to tell us what they thought about them—you know, a very typical sort of situation. But mainly, it was that if I was going to go down there, and I was going to work with Ben

Lancaster, he was a very eloquent figure and he might snow me, you know, and all that sort of thing.

Yes, I remember . . . I guess it was Roy saying, "He's a good talker." And when you say someone's a good talker, you're putting them down. "He's a real good talker. He's a real good talker," meaning, "Watch out for that guy."

Anyway, so we went down there. And we had a hard time finding it. We go down [Route] 395 and into the Antelope Valley, which was itself an experience; that was quite a place in those days. Oh, all that country down that way over the little hills between Carson Valley and Antelope Valley, and through Double Springs Flat where all—I didn't know then—the old kind of ceremonies used to be held and all that. But it was beautiful country.

We went down there, and then finding Gray Horse's camp: We went down the road, and there's all these little roads going off to the east toward the Pine Nut Hills, and there must be a dozen such roads. You don't know which one to take. And I remember stopping a couple of times at little stores or houses and saying, you know, "How do we get to Ben Lancaster?"

Whites, would say, "Who?" you know. [laughter]

Then, "Oh, you mean the peyote eater? Oh, you mean the guy who smokes peyote? Oh, that guy. Well, you go down here, and then you go over."

So we finally got *way* out to the east end of the valley and found Lancaster's place, a little camp with three or four shacks and a large round one that was his famous octagonal meeting house. And it was still there when we were there. It's down now—I've gone out there. As a matter of fact, I went

out a few years later, and it was gone after his death.

And there was Gray Horse. And a nice looking old guy, kind of stout with long, gray hair tied in braids on each side, looking very much the "Injun," because he had come from the east and been in Oklahoma, and he was being a real Indian.

Spoke very well, very good English. He was obviously a real medicine man. I mean, this guy had been around. I enjoyed talking to him and watching him, because he had sold medicines. You know, he had been a traveling salesman with carts selling all kinds of home remedies and . . . [laughter]

He'd been a cowboy, he'd done all sorts of things. Had quite a life, been a preacher, and he had done everything. And so he was a very savvy guy.

He was very nice, cordial with us. And we said we just wanted to meet him, because . . . I was talking now, we wanted to meet him because we had read about him in Omer Stewart.

"Oh, yes. I know Omer. Yes, I know Omer, yes."

And I said, "You know, I just started going to school down there, and I read about you, and I happened to be up here. We wanted to meet you."

"Well, you're welcome boys, you know, come on in." And he took us into his big octagonal house.

It had wooden beams and this sort of octagonal ceiling—a large, open space, and in the middle was a sandy area, and that's obviously where he held meetings. And now I would know exactly what would have taken place there, but then I was looking at this round, sandy area. In the center was the evidence of ashes and fire, and he pointed to it and says, "This is a very important place. This

is a holy place.” Of course, we were very respectful.

And then all around the edges of it were bins. There were kind of like shelves and bins, and inside were little peyote plants growing, little green peyotes in sand. I don't know if they were in cups or just the sand was on the shelves, but hundreds and hundreds of peyote plants at different stages of growth. Here was an enterprising guy.

He didn't go down making the peyote trip two or three times a year or sending by the mail. He got a sack full or whatever it was, and he was growing them. And then he would sell them. Well, I don't know. I take that back. I don't know. He used them obviously for his services and meetings, but people made donations.

That was one of the things that the Woodfords people were opposed to. He got donations, money. “Poor people coming into a meeting, and he takes money from them for the peyote,” and all that. So in a sense, he was selling it. It was a commodity. But I don't know the details of that.

And so it was an impressive place. I mean, we were in the seat of the origins of the peyote movement in Nevada. George didn't care about that, and I had just a glimmer of it, but I didn't really know how important it was.

But I'm so glad I saw it, because a few years later, it was demolished and he was dead. But there was where Lancaster had his first major meetings.

Of course, he had had meetings all over that area. He had traveled around holding meetings in Woodfords and Dresslerville, even out in Paiute country and down at the Dick's place in Antelope Valley.

And the Dicks were . . . people would refer to them as a family that he was related to, and they were his closest associates, the big Dick family in that area.

And so he had built this meeting place I think, back in the late 1930s, early 1940s. I'm not sure when he had gone down there and built it. And it became the center; it was a kind of a center of the peyotist movement in that region for ten years or so until the Washoe, Roy James and a number of other Washoe peyotists, took a trip up to Ft. Hall and met a peyotist leader up there. What was his name? I forget. Tommy Short or something like that, who told them that Lancaster wasn't doing it the right way. Up here was the right way. And here was the factionalism. They came back with the true Tepee Way, the real Tepee Way. And that's what they did up there at Woodfords.

It was a different or relaxed kind of thing whereas Lancaster had brought the Sioux way—a hard, war-like way. And by the way, later I saw the difference in these meetings. And in fact, the first meeting I went to, I was in the middle of the spiritual warfare.

That was later. But anyway, I was so glad that . . . I didn't know then, but I was seeing the seat of the western peyotist movement, where it had gone and been distributed from. So we went there.

And Jesus, we met somebody coming out of there who was telling us about coyote and . . . Oh, I know now. We met a guy who had seen us with Lancaster saying, “You know, there are a lot of coyotes around here. You've got to watch out for coyotes.” Well, you know, we were being given the business. I didn't realize it. [laughter] We were the coyotes.

Good old Washoe joking, you know, and ribbing. “Yes, a lot of the coyotes. We got to watch out for coyotes around here all the time. They just come around this place, and you never know what they're going to do,” and all that. And later, I found out that kind of ribbing is for whites and strangers. “We

don't have coyotes around here very often, but sometimes they come all at once," you know. [laughter]

[laughter] *They come in pairs.*

In pairs. [laughter] So then we left there. And I forget how we got home. I think we went over 50, Kingsbury Grade.

But to me, that was three days, two and a half days of enormous experience. And I had this feeling that I was doing what I wanted to do, that I was seeing what I wanted to see and learn about. And it was a new world entirely and a glorious one.

I guess I'm romanticizing, but at the same time, I was realistic. I realized the conditions of these people, and I understood where the Washoe were as a minority group and as a dispossessed Indian group. All that, I was very aware of. At the same time, to me it was a glorious thing to have been among them, to have actually seen them and talked to them and related to them.

So I had a lot to think about, and I don't think George and I did much talking on the way home. I don't recall. I think George was off his trip, you know, as I remember. And I don't even remember whether he had any peyote.

Oh, I forgot! When we left, Barton had given me four peyote buttons, fresh peyote buttons as a gift. And he said, "You take

these." And he said, "Sometime, you take them. You cut them up, and you chew them. But you stay by yourself. I'll be sending you a message. You'll be getting a message. And that message will be not to trouble anybody, not to do anything but to look at yourself." You know, this is wonderful stuff.

This is what George had been told. Of course, George couldn't follow those rules. And he says, "Even if you can get it, take no more. Four. That's the good number. That's a good number for you."

Of course, that's the sign of men; that's the masculine sign. (Is it in Washoe? Or am I mixing it up with Gola? [Liberian group d'Azevedo also studied] Four. Number four is a very important ritual number, and three . . . I guess, isn't for women—four for anybody, I guess.) So anyway, "Four," he says, "that's a good number. Take no more," but he says, "you be careful, and you keep your head on the medicine, and you think about that, and that's all. Don't do anything else."

I said, "Well, if I do it, Barton," and I was being very straight with him, I said, "I don't even know if I'll do it, but if I do it, Barton, I'll tell you exactly what happens, and I'll follow your advice."

So I had these four buttons in my pocket. George wanted them. [laughter]

I didn't let him have them. I said, "No, they're mine. They're mine, and I'll just keep them around."



## INTO THE MYSTIC

SO WE GOT back home, and my mother was worse off, and Harry Bridges . . . [laughter] Harry Bridges was having an awful time in the courts. And oh, what else was happening? Oh, I had a job. I had to get back to my job.

*So you're working at the liquor store at this time?*

I think at this time I was still working at the liquor store. The kids were going to school and all that, I was writing papers for courses, and it was a busy time.

When I got back, my brother Don called and said my mother was much worse, and that we should start going down there more often. The semester was still going on; this was late spring. And I thought, "Well, we've got to start going down to Modesto." At the end of the semester, I had said I was going to go down there and just take a leave from my job and stay down for a week or two or more.

And my father was very upset about it. He was a doctor and was taking care of her. One of the things about my father was he thought he could do everything. And here,

he felt he had to be my mother's doctor and nurse and take care . . . do it all, and he was worn out and harassed.

It's just the way he wanted it, because he would do everything; he was responsible for everything. Also, I think he felt he was responsible for my mother's illness because in those days they didn't know much about cancer, particularly uterine cancer, and he felt if it had been properly diagnosed earlier, they might have been able to give her more x-ray treatments and chemotherapy, which they were giving her now—or x-ray, at least. I don't know if she had chemotherapy. And he did all this himself, and so I think he was doubting himself. Who did he think he was trying to play God? And I guess we were asking that question too.

But anyway, so it was about a week later when I got back, and I was finishing up a paper one night in my study about eleven o'clock at night, and I saw these four peyote buttons—they were up in a little glass jar that I had up on a shelf. And right next to it, I had a framed picture out of *Life* magazine, I think, of Michelangelo's statue. You know,

the head of Michelangelo? Black and white and I had a number of other things up on the shelf.

And I was working at my typewriter, and I said, "I'm gonna do it. I've got to see what this is all about." And I cut them up, and I chewed them one at a time, four little peyote buttons. I chewed them and you know, they made me a little nauseous, because they are very sour and very stringent. And now I thought, "Well, we'll see. The worse that can happen, I'll get a stomach ache."

And I was sitting there working, I went back to work at my typewriter, and I'll never forget it. I have some notes on this, but I'll never forget that moment. I looked up . . . I looked up at that picture of Michelangelo, and it was alive. [laughter] *Completely* three-dimensional, alive, head moving, talking, eyes opening and closing and looking at me with this look of wonder, like, "Who are you?" or, "What are you doing down there?"

And it was overwhelming. I mean, I just thought, "What the hell is happening here?" And I looked around the room, and everything had an extra dimension. It was as though the walls had moved out or were moving in and out. And yet I felt quite normal. I felt I was just sitting there. I looked back at the picture, there it was, this marvelous black head, you know, with bright eyes and looking rather accusingly at me. And then I thought of Barton's admonition, you know, "I'm going to send you a message." I thought, "Is this my message?" [laughter] "Am I getting my message? I hope the damn thing doesn't talk, you know." [laughter]

[laughter] *That would have been it.*

That would have been too much. [laughter] And that finally quieted down. And I

couldn't work anymore. I was typing, but somehow or other, I wasn't typing very clearly, and I thought, "I can't do any more tonight, I better go out and get some fresh air." And you know, I looked back, and the picture was back to where it was supposed to be, and I went out in the street.

And I looked up, and there were thousands of street lights, you know, eidetic imagery. I was getting all these street lights, and the telephone wires were all waving and moving, were alive, you know, like living creatures, tentacles. And I walked down the street, and I was trying to clear my head, you know, and the more I walked, the more everything got absolutely wild around me. And yet, at the same time, I felt very calm. I felt very clear, you know. "What is happening? What's going on here?"

I think I knew, you know, that this was the effect of the damn . . . . But I didn't want to admit it, you know, like, "It can't be," you know, but it *was*. And I just turned around and went back, and I went up to bed and laid down quietly next to Kathy. And the bed was moving up and down and turning around, [laughter] and the room was blowing in and out. And I didn't sleep that whole night.

Oh, I had these wonderful visions. I had one vision of being in the Valley of Mexico—that's what I recall was the tag line, the Valley of Mexico—absolutely beautiful. Everything was in brilliant colors. All the colors were more than color, they were luminous and bright. And there was this desert, the edges were forests, and there was a pyramid and all that sort of thing. And then in the middle was this great cactus, this great peyote cactus—enormous! And I knew that that was the great . . . that was the main one; that was the chief of all cactuses. And I just knew that I was in the center of things, that that's



where everything was. It was very beautiful, scary but beautiful.

And then the next thing was this sort of panel of light kind of vision, where I saw the whole of the human race develop and evolve before my eyes from the simplest one-celled creature on a panel, like a fresco, as though it had been molded by some artist. And all these interwoven creatures, slowly moving from early pro-simian types, early primates, up through the Zinjanthropus and on, but we didn't know those names at that time—anyway, the early ape forms, up through Neanderthal, Cro-Magnon, to modern man, all rising and, you know, moving in a kind of a choreographed dance along this panel.

That went on for I don't know how long, but it went on and on and on. And it was very impressive, and I was deeply moved by it. I thought I was being shown the meaning of life, whatever that was. I was being shown it.

And I had another one. I forget the other vision, but I had another vision that was equally intense. And that went on through the night. And in the morning, Kathy said, "You were very restless last night."

And I said, "You bet I was." [laughter] I sure was.

And I later told Barton these dreams when I had the opportunity, finally. And he says, "Well, I told you I was going to send you a message." You know, this is the old Washoe . . . .

I said, "Well, you sure did Barton. That was a corker."

There was one more vision, I'll call it. The third one was "the Great Pineapple," an enormous pineapple. It was ripe and brilliant, gorgeous colors, oozing juice. And it sent out tentacles, fibrils like blossoms out of the top of it. It was big. It filled the whole valley, you know, and it smelled marvelous. There was

this marvelous smell of ripe, luscious pineapple in this valley. And then it would send off little sparks and bubbles like glass blowers form, wobbly bubbles of brilliant, scintillating glass.

And what came to mind was like the National Museum in Mexico City, in which they had some early Aztec forms that looked similar to pineapples and there were lots of lights on them. And I thought, that's what was in the museum. When I was a kid, I saw this in a museum. And all this was going through my head.

And I woke up, and I told Kathy, you know, I had quite a night and told her about it. And she says, "Mm-hm." [laughter] And I'm glad she didn't ask any more questions. [laughter]

And then, of course, I had to go to school and all that. Then I learned a lot about what one should not do, because when I got in the car and went down the street, I saw hundreds of telephone poles where there were only three or four, I saw waving lines of telephone wires, I saw houses changing color, I saw intersections in which there were more than one road. It wasn't that my vision was blurred, I saw these things. Eidetic imagery, you actually saw them. And so I stopped a couple of times and waited until this subsided and cautiously went on in my car.

And it lasted for three or four days. Not as intensively, but it slowly faded away where I had to be very careful, because I would get this repeated imagery. I'd look at something for a while, and then I'd look somewhere else, and I'd see that. It's eidetic. It's . . . .

*Eidetic?*

Eidetic imagery, which is when you have an image imprinted on your retina, and then you see it for a while. And some people, this

can actually be a disease where, you know, you keep seeing it; it keeps occurring because it's still there, imprinted.

*So is that one of the direct effects of peyote? I mean, is that a known . . . ?*

Well, I mean obviously it was. And to me, it explains a lot of what people tell me happens to them. They keep having visions afterwards. They have this hallucinatory experience of seeing something they saw earlier, you know. It comes before them. It's like a ghost, a ghostly apparition. Well, that's exactly what was happening. I was seeing these fading imageries of things that I had already looked at. Oh, I kept seeing Michelangelo's face over and over again. Kept coming, just emerging, because that had made such an indelible imprint on me.

So it kept coming back, and it took a week or two for them to fade. Even later, now and then, it would happen, or in sleep, these images would return.

They were very moving experiences. I mean, they were related to emotional . . . the feeling that went along with them. So that was quite a . . . I'm glad I did it, because I learned a lot. And I was able to tell Barton that I was very careful and I had done things right, all that sort of thing.

This was about the end of that semester, and my mother was getting very, very ill, and it looked as though she was going to die. So I picked up the family, I got a leave from work, and went down to Modesto and stayed in their guest room.

That was a bad summer. That was a hard time.

Anyway, I'll go over to that, but right now I'm just thinking that while this peyote experience was going on, later, I kept thinking of my grandparents and their visions.

And by the way, you know, that, to me, was a very important effect on me, that I was at that time giving myself *distance* from those things, seeing them as mere phenomena. And even myself . . .

*Even when you were experiencing them?*

Sometimes. No, there were parts of that time when I was thinking, "My god, this is a strange dream, a strange vision." No, I don't mean that. I mean during that period. I was seeing this not mystically, as my friend George and some of the people would do as a reality, or *wanting* to see it that way. But I was feeling that I was standing apart from it, that it happened and it was very real, but it was a phenomena, a phenomena to be understood and investigated and looked at. And I remember that very clearly, finding that, you know, I had this distance from it, and that it was like the distance I had from my grandmother when she was telling me her visions. I loved her, I believed her, I believed that she had seen these things.

You know, if I had told somebody these dreams of mine and they had said, "Oh . . ." If I said I felt like I was there, I know I was there, I was standing in the Valley of Mexico, say I had put it in that way, which is the way it felt, and they would say, "Oh, come on now. You . . . it didn't happen that way." I would never tell my grandmother that as I got older, because she did see it, she did feel it, she was in the lap of Jesus, she did go to heaven. She and my grandfather did look into the depths of hell, and all that; they *did* do it. And don't tell somebody it's not true, not unless you know them very well and you understand where they're at.

Now if somebody had told me, "That didn't happen to you. You weren't in Mexico." And say I was like Barton, I knew I

was there. I had been transported there. I had been put there. I could feel myself standing on the ground and looking at these marvelous things. I knew I was there.

So what is the difference between the kind of way of looking at things that tells you you weren't there, this was happening in your mind, as against this is something that I was actually doing, actually feeling? What makes that difference, is a kind of materialism, I suppose, or now that terrible word "positivism," you know. It tells you you weren't there, you were here, dreaming. You know, you were here, imagining in a most marvelous way.

So that period was extremely important to me in—what is it?—explicating to myself what the difference was between believing and not believing, or being involved actually and only being involved in the mind, which I've always in a sense felt, but it articulated it for me. I myself had experienced what people who I knew took to be reality; I had experienced that reality and realized it wasn't anything but an internal reality. And I suppose that makes the difference between a true mystic or a transcendentalist and one who is not. I've had, you know, transcendentalistic experiences, but I always felt that I understood that they came from within myself.

*Well, it sounds like you've always managed to keep one foot reality-based, or on the pier, so to speak, almost. And you've been grounded.*

Yes. It must have come from somewhere within my family despite their madness about these things. My mother saw ghosts. But somehow or other, I always felt that she knew that they weren't real, but she always acted as though they were, you know. [laughter]

I mean, there was something . . . I just knew it wasn't so, when I was a little tiny

kid, hearing about ghosts standing at the top of the stairway, and my mother saying it was a feeling. And then she was able at times to say, "Well, it's hard to know whether you saw it or imagined it." So I always had that in my mind.

However, when you say "one foot on the ground," or something, a person of the other ilk would say, "One foot in a trap or one foot in the mud," or, "You're stuck. You're stuck in a . . .," you know.

But that kind of thing, that kind of philosophical question bothered me a lot when I was younger. Who are we to say what's real? But somehow, these experiences gave me a sort of inner confidence that I could cope with that kind of experience and not become part of it, not *be* it, but see it as an experience and as a phenomena. Yes.

*That's the whole, I think, crux in a lot of experiential work—well, participant observation—where you're drawing those lines and never quite losing . . .*

Yes. And yet being able to feel deeply what's happening and what's going on with the other person. You know, in Africa, I sat with a man who was considered to have great power, a DaZo, telling me how he could bring the rain and stop the rain. I listened to this man, and I knew he knew he could do it. And I saw him once or twice do some things, and the rain came, except it didn't happen again and again and again. Yet, I, even in my own mind, I didn't say, "Oh, come now," you know. I just thought this man has a wonderful sense of himself as having that power. And in some way or other, other people . . . he has the charisma so that other people feel that he has it, and that's what makes this little world go around. [laughter] Isn't it too bad I don't have that feeling.

*Well, that expression, the willing suspension of disbelief . . . that usually when you read fiction is the only time you're allowed . . .*

That's a good line, yes. The willing suspension of disbelief. And not even suspending it, just there's no relevance to disbelief in that situation. What's relevant is what that person says and feels and is telling you about.

*Actually, as an anthropologist, it seems that it's the privilege of being a witness when your opinion at the moment it is taking place is irrelevant. I mean, and your belief is irrelevant.*

Yes. It's not relevant.

*But your respect for the phenomena is relevant to later description.*

What's relevant is your accuracy of observation and your empathy with what is going on; that's what's relevant. Later on, maybe, other things become relevant like, "Why does it happen that way? Who does it? What are the various parameters of this kind of belief?" and, you know, "How many people feel the same way?" All those things are relevant in another context of thinking and analysis. But they're irrelevant when you're dealing with the person. What's relevant is what that person is saying.

*Or the event.*

Yes. And what is being communicated here? What is being told?

I can remember sitting with Barton, telling me he had seen the waterbabies and waterbaby tracks. And he said, "I can't describe them because they're so strange, and it's not good to talk about them, but I saw

these little . . . like a baby with light hair making these little tracks. Sometimes they were high-heeled tracks." He saw with his own eyes. And he did. He *did*. I mean, I know he did.

And he told a rancher he was going to bring rain. I was sitting next to him one day when a rancher was kidding him, saying, "Barton, you're a great witch doctor sitting up there. You're not doing anything today, and we haven't had rain for three days. When are you going to bring rain, Barton?"

And Barton looked at me, and he winked, and he said to the guy, "Well, last time," he says, "I brought it all over the place, and you only wanted it on your place. And, you know, I thought I didn't want to do that again. But I can bring it all over."

And the guy said, "Well, you better get cooking." The next day, there was this big storm. [laughter] There was a flash flood that wiped out half this guy's acreage down the river. [laughter]

*Oh, that's wonderful.*

And the next time Barton saw this guy, he said, "Was that enough?"

The guy said, "That's plenty."

Barton said, "Well, I'll hold back for now." This joking goes on between whites and Indians a lot in that old Western way, you know. "Hey Barton, that's enough. Turn off the spigot now. It's enough now."

And Barton was saying, "Well, I did what I could. That's the best I could do." [laughter]

So here was Barton bringing rain. I saw him do it. But there you are. Events like that stay with you, mainly because it has in it all of the elements of the relation between individuals within cultures and cross-cultural problems of communication. And in that joking relationship between that rancher and

Barton, to me there was something so significant. That is, these two guys did understand each other, [laughter] and they had found a *modus operandi*; they had found a way to communicate. And it was on the rancher's part on a kind of patronizing level, and on Barton's part a kind of acceptance of the theatrical role that he had been given by the other side. And he understood this, and he played that game.

And this business of knowing how to play out a role seems to me to be so much a part of what one eventually begins to sense in fieldwork. That is, that there is such complexity in relationships, and that a statement of what was said or what was done, needs to have within it an indication of the context; that is, how people are reacting to a situation that they're put into, sometimes playing with it, sometimes resisting it, sometimes remodeling it, turning it into something else.

Those things are such wonderful revelations, and I felt at that moment watching Barton that I got a whole new view of him. I began to respect him even more as a person. I saw his depth, his humor, his ability to accommodate, and accommodate on a friendly level. But underneath there was a hostile aspect, you know. [laughter]

If he could have brought another flash flood that day, he would have done it just to show this guy. But he brought one, you know, that wonderful coincidence of the damned flash flood that played right into his hands. And I know if he could have pulled it off again he would have been walking on air for years on that story, you see.

But he wouldn't have talked about it, you know. The Washoe that I knew would not brag about that. To brag about it makes one something like a shaman. You're being competitive, you're challenging the world.

And he was *playing* the shaman with this white guy, with this rancher. He was playing out the role of the shaman, that is, bragging about what he could do and threatening to do it again, which is what the old shamans did. But that was a dangerous path, and among the peyotists, and particularly a guy like Barton, he wouldn't do that among the Washoe that he knew, because that would characterize him in a way that he wouldn't want to be characterized by his own people. But he could *play* that game with this white guy.

He hadn't done it with me before this, and I saw this side of him in that relationship. And from then on, I was always aware of the depths of irony and sarcasm and things of that kind that were very subtly shown among the people that I worked with. Like, you know, Pat Eagle, whom later I'll talk about, in which after my first peyotist meeting was over, he—and he was Shoshone, I think—came up to me, and he says, "Well," he says, "what do you think of all these down-trodden Indians?" And I got the ribbing I learned to expect.

There's all this hostility underneath, and yet it's very important not to show it unless you're ready to compete. And you have to be rather withdrawn, and Barton was most of the time withdrawn, easy-going, careful. But he could, with this white guy, come out of that, play the game in a kind of a humorous way. I loved it. I thought it was great.

And also, you know, I always relate this kind of event in my mind to one with the Gola in Liberia where I went with this DaZo on his trip of "turning the bush over" in various Gola villages, where he performed this ceremony each time of transferring the women's secret society, the Sande, the power of it, over to the men, turning it over to the

Poros society of the men. And in every village, the general ceremony was about the same, the women sitting on one side and the men on the other side in the central square of the village, and the DaZo would dance and give a sermon, lecture the people about the proper deportment of women and men and that now the men were going to take over, and the women had to accept it, on and on, the usual harangue that he gave.

But in this case, it was very cloudy, and it had been raining on the road as we came. And he was worried, because he was not supposed to perform this thing if it was raining. And as he was talking, a few drops of rain fell on this first village. What village was that? I believe it was Gonzipo, I think, southwest of Kle currently, "Klay." And about a six-hour walk from the first village that I lived in.

And the crowd was making some recognition of these drops of rain, and the rain clouds were coming up over the forest; you could see them moving through the tops of the trees in the rain forest. And he stopped, and he held his wand and did that [gesture], and he said, "You cannot, you women," blaming the women, "you women cannot do this to me. You have medicines. I know you have strong medicines, but you cannot do this to me!" And as he was waving his wand, he says, "My power is greater than yours," and he held up his wand and pointed it at the sky and stood there. And then within a moment, the clouds parted, and a ray of sunshine came down into the square.

It was just like that. I'm reporting exactly what I saw, OK. And there were great sounds of appreciation in the group, "Oh!"

And the old MaZo, this little old lady whom he'd been berating and calling her all kinds of dirty names in Gola, "You old vagina," and all this sort of thing . . . [laughter] Which is his right to do. Ritually, he

could berate this sacred old lady. Nobody else could talk to her that way, because he was, in a sense, her older brother. He had control over both societies.

And he said, "See, MaZo? You can't do that to me." And she stood there, and she sort of nodded. Now, I know the old MaZo didn't have any notion of bringing the rain, but she played this role. And she sort of looked humble and lowered her gaze and nodded, and he was berating her.

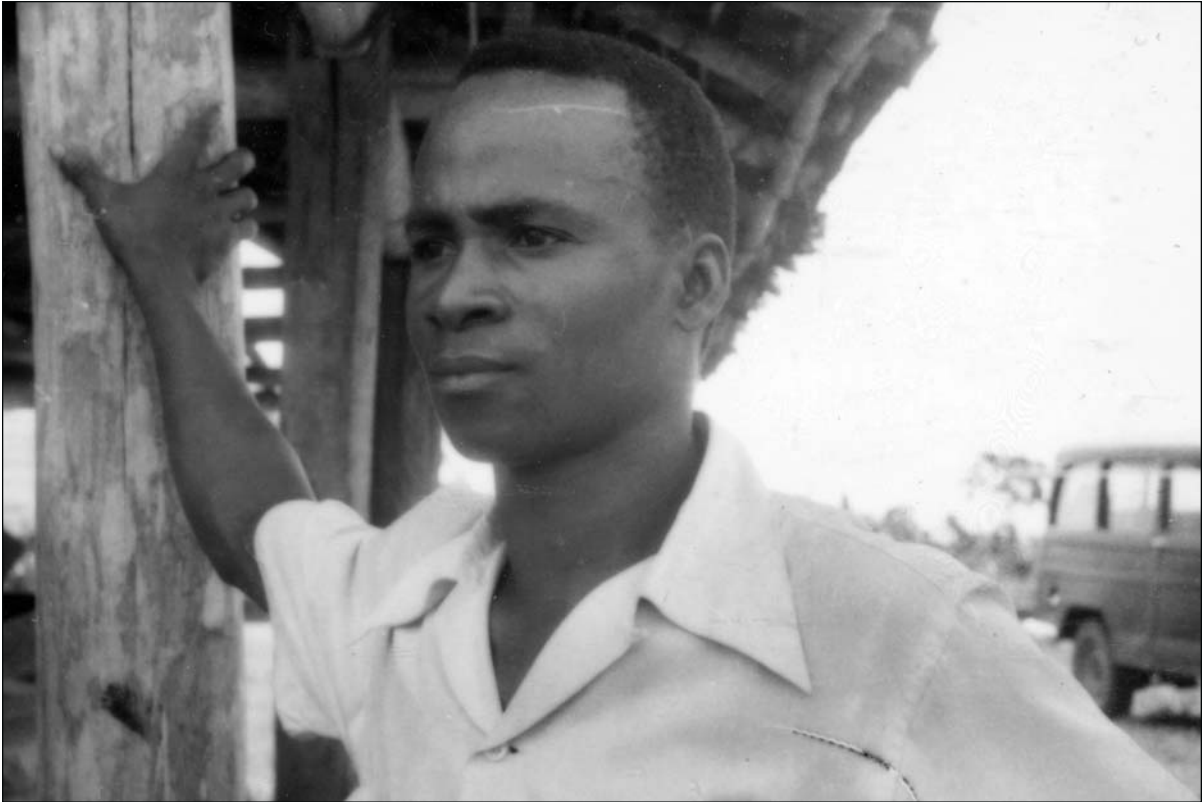
And, of course, this was the role that everybody was playing. And everybody was appreciating the fact he stopped the rain. And for about the ten or fifteen minutes while he completed his dance and his harangue, the clouds had not gathered so darkly.

So that was held up to me among my friends who had gone with me, my carriers and my interpreter, Isaac Karnley, as evidence, saying, "Oh, you see now? You see the power the man has."

Isaac and I had often argued about reality and argued about science. And he would talk, saying, "Well, we have *African* signs, too." And he would mean "signs," not "science." And it took him a while to realize that I was using another kind of word, "science," and he was using "signs." And we had wonderful discussions over that. "Well signs are the same thing. Signs are like your science; signs do the same thing," he'd say. And we had these wonderful discussions.

He says, "You know, when we see signs, that tells us what's real, what is really happening, if something's happening in the world." And so we'd argue.

So we went on to the next village, and I said, "Well, Isaac, you know, we'll see what he can do in the next village." Well, it rained all the way, but it never rained on us.



*“Isaac and I had often argued about reality and argued about science.”* Isaac Karnley, Warren’s interpreter.

And he kept turning to me and saying, “See?” We’d go through puddles and the paths through the forest were wet and slushy, but the rain was always ahead of us or behind us. He says, “You see? You see?”

And I said, “Well, I see.” [laughter]

*Well, were you part of the entourage with the DaZo?*

Yes. We were following the DaZo. The DaZo would move from one village to the next. Oh, I was about three days on this tour of all the villages.

*Was this an annual thing?*

No, every four or six years depending on the “turning over period of the bush.” The

men would have it for four years, the women for three years. But there would be time in between where it might be as long as five or six years between turning over from one . . . . Turning over the bush means turning over the right to use the sacred forest for the purpose of initiation.

And then the men would rule for four years, and then there would be a hiatus period until the DaZo decided when they could do it again, because it cost a lot and it was a tremendous amount of drain on the local communities to have these performances.

*Because they had to host it, right?*

And they had to host it . . .

*The food and . . . .*

. . . and everything. So it was whenever the villages announced that they were ready—and that might take a year or two. But it was a cycle of anywhere from seven to ten years to make the full circle.

And they had to hit about eight, nine villages in that section of Gola. I didn't get to do the whole trip because it would have taken a week, two weeks. And also it was exhausting.

*That's rather amazing that you were there for that event.*

Oh, he was a good friend of mine, DaZo Titi.

Anyway, the point I'm making here is that we went on to three other villages, and although it didn't rain any time, he played the same game. And people with me and the people around saw this, having heard what happened in the first village.

Now, when he would raise his wand, "MaZo, don't you try any tricks on me! I know what you women will do, and I know what the powers you have, but you can't play them on me." And then he'd shake his wand at the sky, and it didn't rain, and of course that meant he had stopped the rain.

I remember when I had to go back to my village, and I had some carriers, and I had to leave and say goodbye to the DaZo, and there was a sort of ceremonial goodbye at one of the villages. And he said as we left, he says, "The rain will not touch you. Back to your home, there will be no rain on you," and he waved his wand. And Isaac thanked him profusely and told me how wonderful this man was, such power he has. Isaac was wonderful, because he would just get elated, in a state of enthusiasm about this.

And so we headed off, back. Now I must say, *all* the way back, although it was rainy season and we could see the rain . . . sometimes we'd come to open places, we could see rain coming down in other sections of the forest, and Isaac would say, "Don't worry! We're not going to have any trouble." And it was true. We were dry.

So we argued all the way back about what this meant. And he was saying, "What kind of science you got? You told me that science means that a number of people have to have seen something and agree on something, and it has to happen time and time again over, you know, a number of times to make sure that it's so." He says, "That's what you've *seen*! You see now, and you don't believe it. You don't think it's important. What kind of science is that?" He says, "Oh, African science. We know what we see." [laughter] "We can *see* what we see; you can't see what you see." You know, all the wonderful arguments.

Well, that kind of game-playing that was going on between Isaac and myself, and the DaZo with the people of the village was, to me, one of the more intriguing parts of all this, just like with Barton and Barton's joking with the rancher. You know, this wonderful understanding of how to play games and understanding the game that both people . . . . Everybody's playing the game and playing it straight.

There were a lot of people there or who heard about this later, Isaac was telling me, they got back to their villages and talked about this DaZo. A lot of people weren't impressed. Not that they didn't *believe* it, it's just not important. That's what DaZos do; that's how they talk; [laughter] that's the kind of tricks they're paid to do.



But at the same time, it made him marvelous. The story made him marvelous, whether anybody believed it or not.

So I got a feel for that. And Barton was one of the people who introduced me to this kind of sensitivity.

*Well, also, the willing participation of the woman, too, that you were describing, the woman in the . . .*

Oh, the old MaZo. A nice old lady.

*And she understood too what . . .*

Well, it's just that you do that. I mean, who knows? Maybe it's so. You don't argue with the tradition. And the DaZo was playing the game, was insulting her and calling her every . . .

*Was the power being transferred from the women to the men that year? Is that why he was berating the women for . . . ?*

Well, men always berate women ritually. I mean, it's the ritual right of the DaZo to treat older women, these sacred women, this way. It shows part of his status. He's the only one who can talk in a familiar way to the two or three sacred old women in each village of the sacred enclosure of the women. Everybody else treats them like grandmothers with great respect and would not talk rough to them or familiarly to them, or treat them like a mother-in-law, in other words, with distance and deference. But the DaZo doesn't have to. And the more he can play this role of denouncing them and insulting them, the more it shows his power. For another person they might be struck dead by the ancestors. I mean, he can do it with impunity. So she

knew that she hadn't done anything to bring the rain. [laughter]

She wasn't trying to do this guy in. In fact, she was glad to have him there for the ceremony. But she sat there humbly accepting this. Later in the ceremony, I heard that she had called him some names and sent the word over by one of her attendants and called him some kind of a rotten penis, or something like that, and that he laughed. It was funny, a joking kind of thing. You know, she had called him something really terrible and sent somebody in the right way, not telling him directly, but sending it through an emissary [laughter]—not publicly.

I think every anthropologist knows this. But those things were, to me, enlightening. They gave me a sense of the complexity and the depth of human contact. And you don't just go by what you see or what you hear once. You have to sort of get with it. You have to try and understand what's really happening.

And I must say I had an interpreter, a friend, an associate—Isaac—who was so wonderful, who knew what I was looking for, and he knew my dilemmas, and he would tell me, "Well, she *really* means this, you know. He's *really* saying this. And it's all right, you know."

And he would say, "I don't even want to say it in English."

But I would say, "Hey, Isaac, go ahead, Isaac." And then he would give me some kind of strange English colloquial phrase that wasn't right yet, because he didn't know them all.

And then I would say something, and he'd say, "Oh, yes. That's it. That's it." [laughter] And he says, "You know, it sounds worse in English." [laughter]

By the way, the same thing happened in Washoe. Where Barton and Roy and a number of others I worked with, telling coyotes

tales, would sometimes be very embarrassed and blush when they were talking about certain things that coyote did that they wouldn't tell these particular parts of the tales among women. But even among themselves, they were embarrassed sometimes, not at what was in the Washoe tale, but in translating it.

*In English, yes.*

When it translated, it sounded dirtier and more awful. And so it was the same sort of thing with the DaZo and the MaZo.

And by the way, I must say that in talking about some of these things with [Paul] Radin, he was very encouraging to me to be aware of such things. You know, he said, "Oh, this is the kind of thing that one must do, one must be aware of."

So anyway, this event with Barton and the rancher was after my first visit. My second visit in 1952, I had gone up by myself. And the other thing about Barton is that we talked about that—I remember mentioning this before—we talked about George's rather heightened fantasies about his peyote experiences and other drug experiences he had that he had told Barton about, and the fact that he also drank when he took peyote and had been drinking before-hand. And Barton was fascinated by him. I mean, here's this little crippled Washoe guy up there in Woodfords with these strange whites coming up and holding court with him, you know, and talking to him. It's kind of heady when I come to think of it, and he handled it with a great deal of aplomb, almost as though it was meant to be that way.

And I think that's one of the impressions that he made on people, that he took these things for granted. But I was always amazed at the fact that here George had come up earlier, and I had come up with him, others

were coming up, and students from California were coming up and trying to get into the peyote meetings and going up to the mountains to have vision quests and talking rubbish to these poor Washoe guys, [laughter] who seemed to take it as normal course of events—the wannabes, they called them. They're all wannabes. They all want to . . .

*Do you have any sense for when that might have started as a kind of a low-key but nevertheless persistent trend?*

I really don't, excepting, let's see, the 1950s, this would have been when there were a number of sort of bohemian—particularly among Cal students—experimental things with drugs, with transcendental types of belief systems, visions of excess (in other words, doing everything to the hilt), and looking for different kinds of consciousness. You know, I see it as middle-class kids looking for an escape into another world, finding something marvelous and wonderful. This is pre-Castaneda. This is, I guess, Hesse and the various kinds of mystical books that were coming out at the time or had come out earlier. I Am, Madame Blavatsky, etc. were still being read. There was a lot of that going on in certain circles, not only among students, but in the area and among the poets. It was a mixed bag.

*Well, you talked before about your concern with distancing yourself from that phenomena as a white person. And did you overtly establish an identity as an anthropologist or somebody that was there to study, or . . . ?*

You mean at this time?

*Yes, at that time.*

Yes. Well, because in my own mind, that's what I was doing. Not that I could distance myself, but I wanted to identify myself as a certain kind of person, which I was, and that I had different interests. I think that was very easy for the four or five people that I worked with beginning to understand that I had a different interest. I was interested in Washoe history, I was interested in their culture, their way of doing things, their families, their way of life. That, I think, they understood.

I'm quite sure they did. Also, there was in the beginning this other level of it in Barton's mind and later Roy James's, who I worked with to some extent, and later a great deal, that I might be a peyotist, that I might give some underpinning to the church there, particularly with regard to whites. That I would explain things, that if I were one of them, that they could say, "Look, we have a white man." I think they were always looking for that.

My friend George Leite, in a sense had started out, in their minds, being that kind of person, but then they began to think he was just a little bit off. As Barton said, "He's gone too far too fast. You tell your friend to slow down. He's trying to go down that road. We just take things from day to day. We don't try to understand the whole world at once," he says. "That little peyote button, that little Chief, that's the whole world in there, but" he says, "it can take you your *whole* life to understand the world in that one little button. And each little button has a different world, and you have to . . . it takes a *whole* life, and you still don't know everything. But" he says, "your friend, he wants to know everything at once, and he can't." He says, "You get into trouble that way. You get into real trouble."

He'd lecture me about this, to take home to my friend this counsel.

He said, "You know, I know what's wrong with that young man. He's having trouble with his family, with his wife, he's having trouble with himself."

And George was going through a terrible personal crisis at that time, and it lasted for a while, because all those wonderful things that he had accomplished earlier seemed to be falling apart, and I'm not sure just what was going on with it, but I know that he was getting . . . . When I look back, it could be that he was on drugs and I didn't know it; it gives me that impression, but I don't know that. He was such a brilliant guy, but he was also, then, because of that, extremely almost scary in the degree of fantasy that he was able to convince himself of.

I think I'd mentioned before, about he had had a vision that Barton was from Mars and had come down from Mars to this Earth to bring wisdom. And Barton listened to this with great interest and didn't say anything at that time. But when I came back, I remember I had a long talk with him, he says, "Oh," he says, "your friend George, he says I'm from Mars. But you know," he says, "I thought about that a lot. You tell him I'm not from Mars. I'm right here from this earth here, from this dirt right here. You see this dirt?" And he picked up some dirt. But he says, "I am from right here in *this* place. I don't know about that Mars business. I'm not from any other planet. I'm from here."

Then he would tell me about how some people, some white people in the valley, said they saw flying saucers over there by Job's Peak and the little people coming out. And he said, "Well, I haven't seen that," and he says, "Maybe they saw that. Maybe they saw waterbabies." [laughter] He says, "I haven't seen that."

But he says, "You tell your friend he has to be careful when he takes the medicine,

because the medicine can leave you in a bad way, it can leave you in a good way. And if you don't have a guide, you don't have the meetings, you don't have the people with you, things can really go wrong." So I was supposed to take these messages back, but George had lost interest already in Tepee Way.

There was another thing at this time. I happened to be reading John Price—who had been a student of mine out of Salt Lake City—his little work on Washoe economy and sort of a resume of Washoe history that he did for the Nevada State Museum.<sup>1</sup> And I found a little statement that I had never seen before that blew my mind. "Ramsey Walker of Woodfords wanted me to attend the services, that is peyote services, but he also wanted me to respect the powers of the religion and warned me about sacrilege." Now Ramsey Walker was a guy I knew very well later, in fact, he was the Road Chief of the first peyote meeting I went to. And then John quotes Ramsey as follows: "A fellow named George," that would be George Leite, "came to a meeting from Oakland. I think your Professor d'Azevedo told him about our meetings." [laughter] Now this is wild, because you know, George came first.

"The second time he came," says Ramsey, "he brought a movie camera and asked to photograph the ceremony."

I don't know that George ever did that, you know. This is a wonderful conflation that takes place in people's memories. Even people that you worked with will have a quite different recollection of what happened than you have and put things together.

He says, "He wanted to photograph the ceremony. I said no, but he could ask the leader. The leader said yes. And so this man George set the camera going and took his own picture and ours inside the tent. He never came to meetings after that. He lost

his home and had trouble with his wife." And then he says, "Up there knows and acts on what you do."

Now this is fascinating to me, because this would have been in the [early] 1960s, that Price would have been working there. And it was a period when I had been away for a while, and here's my friend Ramsey recollecting to an other person a very strange mixed up version of what had happened before, and has George coming up to a meeting taking pictures, which I'm sure never happened.

That isn't what he would have done. Not that he would have been against it, I just don't think it would ever have occurred to him. And then he has me as a professor from university having told George about the meetings, when it was reversed. George brought me up.

But to me, that's also very significant, and I've had it happen so many times, going back again and again to the same area that I've worked. Particularly in Africa, having people who I worked with ten, fifteen years previously, or whose parents I worked with, saying something that just could not have been said, or conflating various events and persons in different ways.

And so I'm very cautious about accepting what is reported sometimes about what somebody else said. For example, here is Price being told something very strange about what I had done; but I can also remember being told things very strange about what Omer Stewart had done, Omer Stewart's visions in the peyote meetings for example. You know, sometimes I would be told what had happened and how he behaved and what he had said and what kind of visions he'd had. Those are very interesting, but I don't take them as what actually happened at all, because people create not only what they want to create, but because of all kinds of impressions over time,

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memory varies and is a fascinating and wonderful thing.

I'm sorry I never saw this about Ramsey, so I could have talked to him about it, said, "Ramsey, I read what you said!" [laughter] And I would love to have heard Ramsey. Ramsey would probably say, as I know Ramsey, "Oh, I didn't say that way. That man got it wrong. I didn't say that." He would deny that that had happened. But that's part of the whole thing.

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#### Note

1. "Washo Economy," *Nevada State Museum Anthropological Papers*, 6 (1962).



## DOING ETHNOGRAPHY

**I**T'S KIND OF WONDERFUL that you've had the opportunity to maintain contact and to revisit the field, so to speak—I mean the people. And most ethnographers do not, for whatever reasons.

Well, some do. There are a lot of people who have maintained the connection. I mean, for example, take Ottenberg, you know, who has worked a good part of his life with the Ibo. And, just recently, you know, Keith Basso was up here, talking about his work with the Apache over many, many, years.

And there was something so rich and insightful about his discussion of place names. You know, what are place names? One can just list them. But Keith had done such beautifully original work about place names, in which he traced those that hadn't ever been mapped. He was able to find them just by analyzing the name itself and bringing back to people's memories where it might be and relate it to the movements of the Apache historically. And, also, he has a wonderful

sense of how people talk about such things, what they say, how they feel.

All this kind of richness is something that grew in him with the work that he did. He's very aware of that, very appreciative of it. I was able to talk to him about it.

And then, of course, there's Kay Fowler of our department, who has worked a good part of her professional life with the Northern Paiute. The same kind of *deep* understanding of what people are doing, what they mean. Her meticulous kind of fieldwork and interpretation and analysis has given her this kind of depth, where she *knows* what people mean when they say something, what they're talking about, what the allusions are.

Another kind of a legendary figure is Sven Liljeblad and the Shoshone and Northern Paiutes that he worked with for twenty years of his life. The same kind of understanding of what's happening. You know, people used to come down from Fort Hall to see Sven. And he could talk to them not only in Shoshone but even in their English. He had a *very* full awareness of the world they were

talking about, the people they were talking about, any kind of references, the subtle references to events and places. And to me it was kind of wondrous to listen to him talking to people. That comes from being around a long time, knowing people, having a feel for what they're doing.

I can't . . . I don't pretend to have anything of the depth of understanding that some of the people here I'm talking about have, excepting I do know that over the years my feel for what's happening is now almost automatic. I mean, I can talk to Washoe people, and somehow or other I know the world they're talking about. I know what they're referring to. I have a feel for what it means to them, to be bringing things up.

I can converse easily with them—not in Washoe; I never was a linguist. But, you know, hardly any of them speak fluently in Washoe, either. But that isn't what I'm talking about.

The subject matter of what they're discussing is something that enriches in your own mind over time. It has depth, and it has breadth. Same thing with Gola, or Liberians. When I meet Liberians, I somehow know where they're at, what they're talking about, what things are important to them and why. What are the unsaid things, some of the things behind what they're saying.

I hardly think about it anymore. That's too bad, because I wish I had written down more of my own awarenesses about this, because after a while you take it for granted. I mean, I could meet a Liberian person, and within a minute or two we are in another world. We're in that world that is different from where I am, and probably even different from where the other person is. We have an understanding about communication, about what I have learned by my long association and what they are. And, you know,

you can just feel that trust. You can feel that awareness in the other person that you know what they're talking about, which doesn't always happen.

So, anyway, that's that. All right, now . . .

*And it's almost like what you're describing is that fine line sort of between the art and the science of fieldwork, that at some point you cross the line where you really, truly understand the full context of the mode of communication, as well as the . . .*

That may be, Penny, except I don't see it in those terms. I mean, art and the science.

*Well, I'm looking at it from a student's viewpoint of what do you teach somebody when you teach somebody to go do ethnography. And there's a certain magical, it seems to me, you know . . .*

I don't think you teach it. That's the first thing. I think the best thing you can do is talk about how you're to behave and what kind of ears you have—you know, to what extent you listen. Listening is probably the main thing. Listening and recording. You listen, and you take in everything that you are able and capable of doing.

And I don't think you teach people how to do it. You can teach people how to interpret, but you can't teach people how to get the basic materials. That is, what a person feels and sees and experiences in an exchange is in the individual. I mean, you either do it, or you don't do it.

There are some people I know who are tone deaf. I can be tone deaf about certain aspects of language learning. And I have to admit that, and I'm ashamed of it. But I am not tone deaf about how people think and how they feel. I mean, I have an ear for that;



I have an inner ear that tells me a great deal about what's going on, and then even if I'm not able to express it or to share it with them, I feel it, I sense it, and I always have been that way.

Now, I have known people who don't have it; they're tone deaf about this kind of relationship. They might be very useful and accurate in recording what people are doing and saying, and even interpreting on a crude level, interpreting on one level what is going on. But to get the resonances, to get the range of possible meanings and feelings, it's not something I think you teach.

You can point out that it is possible, but you can't give it to somebody. [laughter] I feel I've got it, but I don't feel I'm special. I think I know a lot of people who do it much better than I do, who are much more aware, much more sensitive, much more alert and knowledgeable than I am, who are anthropologists. And I admire and respect them. But to the little degree, modest degree, which I have it, I'm happy about it.

*Are there people that come to mind when you're describing that? And I don't mean to pin you down like excluding people; I'm just wondering if you . . . ?*

Well, in the first place, I thought Paul Radin had it, but that's reaching far back. I think Clifford Geertz probably does. I felt that briefly when I knew him and in his writings. I sense that. I sense his awareness of many levels of, you know . . .

*When you're reading, ethnography . . .*

And there are others. I hate to pick them out because there are numbers of others, and yet it's my impression; it's not something

that . . . All I know is that their work sings in my mind. I mean, I feel that's real; that's the way people are. I would say that Basso has that to a considerable degree. There are a number who have written in Africa, but at the moment I won't single them out. Why do you ask?

*I just wanted to know who, possibly. And the other thing I wanted to ask you was when you're reading ethnography, do you..?*

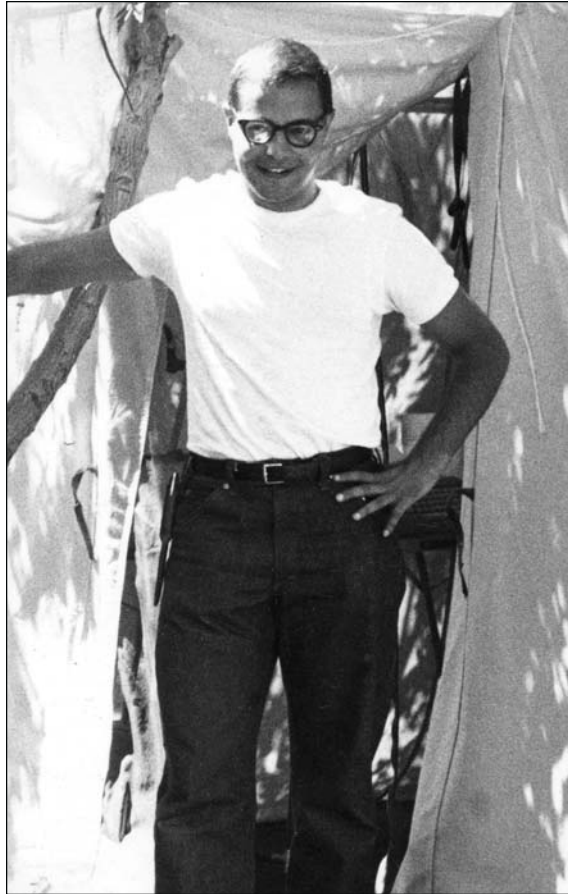
Oh, Jim Fernandez, Jim Fernandez is a little bit more esoteric about it than I am. [laughter] He was much more a philosopher—I mean a formal philosopher. But, nevertheless, he has this kind of awareness that I respect, professionally.

*And do you feel when you're reading an ethnographic description, if I can generalize like that, that you can . . . ? For instance, when I read Don Handelman's description of Henry Rupert, I felt in that little, tiny article . . .*

Good example. Don Handelman, that is a student of ours in the field school, and he worked with Henry Rupert down in Carson Valley, and I used to go down and visit with them and all for a period of time. Don had that kind of intensive . . . what would you call it? Not only involvement, personal involvement, but ability to grasp the significance of the relationships that he was in and the people that he was with. And yet those two or three little articles on Henry Rupert are . . . those are, as far as I'm concerned, landmarks.

*They're thick in context and . . .*

Thick stuff, yes.



"Don Handelman . . . worked with Henry Rupert down in Carson Valley." Don Handelman.

. . . when you read them, you feel like you really know something essential and important about a character, in a sense. Because one thing that fascinates me is how you characterized . . .

I was amazed to find out that he had gotten some of Grace Dangberg's notes that she had given him, that she said she had given him, because her notes are very, very matter of fact. And Handelman's are rich with texture, you know. He understood this guy to a degree—this guy, Henry Moses Rupert, the so-called last of the shamans. Which he wasn't; nevertheless, a very important figure in Washoe history. Handelman captured something special about him.

*Well, the reason I asked you about the art of anthropology or writing ethnography is because it seems like where the art comes into it is when you turn around and try to translate somehow the subtle things that you witness that are so rich in context and are critical to an understanding of what's really being said. When you turn around to try to communicate them, when you try to synthesize an experience, and you want to get the essential truth, that that's when the . . .*

Yes, well, see, I make a distinction between the technology of writing and interpreting and all that, which is very important, and people have to do it. And the better they do it, the more reality is being transmitted from the observer. But the art, I think, is in the person. I don't think it's something that you teach, you know? I mean, the artistry is a matter of a kind of expressiveness that a person has and uses it or doesn't use it adequately. And it comes out in their observations.

It comes out in their writing, not because, I think, they're artists, or they're being artful, but because that's the way they see things. That's how they see it. And yet you can get a very, very good report on the culture or what somebody has seen or observed that's probably very accurate, but it may be tone deaf in a sense. It's useful and important and ethnology, ethnography is that. But every now and then you run across one that sings, you know, that . . . [laughter]

*Well, it's almost like when you read a recipe, you can have a list of ingredients, and then when you get to the part about how you combine them and . . . I mean, that's a bad analogy, it's very bad.*

Well, I could give you a list of people, but I would want to think about it, because

I've never done it, and in each case I'd have to think how that person really fit the category I'm talking about.

*Well, I put you on the spot.*

No, no, it's all right. It's OK. It's a good question, because it's something I hadn't thought about.

*I just wondered if you had immediate takes. What I was going for was just sort of an immediate reaction of who do you enjoy reading ethnography by. I mean, what key moments of talking and reading to people can you recall that you felt, "Well, now, that's it. That really communicates essential character of a culture."*

Yes. I know what you're saying. And there are numbers of such writings that I could think of now, but I don't want to list them, because they fall into various levels and categories.

*When you were teaching, when the department was involved in the National Science Foundation Ethnography School, were you trying to teach maybe just by example of what is good, rich, thick observation and what . . . ?*

To some degree. But mainly our job was to get these young people out in the field successfully, and where they wouldn't do any damage in the field situation that they were going into, because that was all very significant to us.

*Burning bridges! [laughter]*

There were people that we knew out there on the various reservations. The other aspect was to prepare them for the kinds of

things that they might be able to elicit and how to do it. Much more technological, much more just field techniques. But at the same time, if you wanted to, you would try to transmit an élan, a feeling about what was important and all that. But for new students that's not really what's needed. They are mainly worried about not committing any blunders and not . . . .

*So this was for undergraduates or graduates?*

These were graduate students. But anyway, no, I don't think it's something you teach. You might demonstrate, but you demonstrate through your work and your own attitude and feeling when you're talking about what you've done.

But you can't show people how to do that. You asked me a question that I find difficult. It never occurred to me that one purposely transmits this. You either do it or you don't! [laughter] You got it, or you don't.

And I can pick students that I've had that I just knew had it and would do it. That doesn't mean they're going to be great observers or great anthropologists. I mean, a person can have this kind of orientation and propensity to artistry in viewing the world and all that and not necessarily use it or do much with it. Or they may not know how to use it.

But you can tell pretty much the way people talk, the way they deal with their own experiences in research and investigation. You can sense this; you know they have it. And it makes you feel badly if they're not able to transmit it, because they can.

I feel badly about myself, the degree to which I have *not* used all this. And all the stuff that I had in my field notes, everything that I can remember and experience and

think about and even talk about now—how little of that I've actually got down on paper and expressed in writing. Yes, that's the way the coin flips. [laughter] You do it or you don't.

Now, back to Barton, who was so significant to me. He was in a sense my gatekeeper into Washoe. Later there were many others, but he was the first who I was able to talk to and deal with in that few months in 1952—the few times that I would go up there on weekends and see Barton.

And I loved these encounters. He was so wonderful about this matter of being from Mars. "No, no, I'm not from Mars. Tell your friend he's seeing the wrong things. He's not using the medicine right. You don't do that. I'm not from Mars. I'm from this here earth, right here, *now*."

And I would love the way he said that. "Right here!" And he'd stamp his feet. "Right here on this earth. That's where I came from. That's what I am."

*Now, this is in Woodfords, is that correct?*

Woodfords, yes. In his little cabin in the wintertime—snow up five feet on each side, and a little wood stove. Quite a place. And pictures on the wall. He had a picture of a Cheyenne chief with all eagle feathers, a big postcard, I think it was.

And I would admire it, and he'd say, "Ah, those are fine feathers that man has. Oh, he's got fine feathers." But he said, "Those are too strong for me. I can't use them, those feathers."

I brought him feathers sometimes. Did I mention this before, that he'd ask me to get him feathers?

Yes.

And that I got these feathers in a zoo down in San Francisco? Did I mention that earlier?

*Yes, but not in this context at all, though.*

OK. And then he would pick through and sometimes he would . . .

*But it was just during this period that you got him the feathers?*

During this period, yes. I can't remember when I had discussed that. But, yes, I went down to the zoo in San Francisco, and he said he and some of the peyotists would go down and wait for the birds to drop their feathers, and that those guards in the zoo were always watching and following you around, because once or twice one of the people would pull a feather, but you're not supposed to do that. [laughter] You're not supposed to harm the bird or make the bird angry, or the feather won't be good. The bird has to give it to you.

So I went down, and I talked to the overseer down there and said, you know, I wanted to get some feathers. And he said, "Oh, they're laying around all over the place, you know. Yes, you can go." So I went around, with his permission, and picked up just, oh, dozens and dozens of beautiful feathers from various kinds of birds that I didn't know what they were. [laughter] But they were beautiful feathers. And I put them in a bag and took them up to Barton. And he was delighted and deeply awestruck with the glamour of the array, but he wouldn't touch them.

He had me lay them out on a table. He wouldn't touch them. He looked at them, and he went around, and he says, "Well, I'd like to look at that one." He had *me* pick it up

and hand it to him. "Well, I can use that one. And I can use . . ."

And there were two or three South American eagle feathers, long ones and quite spectacular ones. "Oh, I can't touch those. I don't know that kind. No, no. I can't take that. No, I can't . . ."

And he'd go through and pick them out. So feathers . . . in fact, I wrote a little narrative of Barton, "Feathers,"<sup>1</sup> which gives the full feeling of Barton and feathers and his relation to magpies and things of that kind.

So here was this Cheyenne chief on the wall in his place. And he'd always look up and say, "Oh, I can't wear that kind," over and over again. Obviously he was in awe of the fact that this guy could wear a couple of dozen beautiful eagle feathers on his head. "Oh," he said, "Oh, no," he says. "I would faint. That would be bad for me. I can't do that. No, those are too strong, too strong."

And then there was a picture of Jesus, a very elaborate Catholic type of iconish figure of Jesus. And I said, "That's Jesus. What does that mean to you? Why do you have that up . . .?"

"Oh," he says, "you know, Jesus and peyote," he said. "We know Jesus. He used peyote. Jesus used peyote." And, "Oh, yes, those early people, they knew about peyote."

And of course, that was the taking of the bread and the wine. What do you call that? The Eucharist.

*The Host?*

The Host, yes. What's the name for that kind of object? Oh, these things are . . . I'm losing them.

But, anyway, yes, "You know, the peyote was always around. People had it. But they didn't talk about it later on. People tried to hide that fact. Jesus knew about peyote. You

can see Jesus sometimes with the medicine. It will take you . . ." But he says, "You have to believe that way. If you believe that way, that's good."

And the Bible—he said, "You got your Bible; we've got the herb." Barton would sit and hold his hands like he was looking at a book. He says, "With the herb," he said, "it's bigger than the Bible. You can read everything about the world." And he'd take his fingers and go along as though he was looking at a page. "In there is everything. In there is everything. The Bible has some of those things, but we have everything."

Well, those wonderful conversations. And I used to be stimulated, I couldn't sleep for days after I'd leave there.

*Now, were you relating any of these experiences on an academic level? I mean, were you gathering field notes for classes, or were you discussing anything with anybody at Berkeley?*

No, no. This first year was my own private Idaho, [laughter] my own private Washoe. And I was too unsure of myself, too timid, to go around appearing as though I was doing fieldwork, though I used to talk to Stan Freed.

Stan and Ruth Freed were up there sometimes, and I'd see them at Berkeley. He was doing very good, standard ethnography. He did some work on kinship, which is still probably the work that will last a long time, because nobody else could possibly duplicate the detail at the time that he was able to do, and it was really very good—*Changing Washo Kinship*.<sup>2</sup> They were good fieldworkers, he and Ruth both. And I used to talk with them quite a bit.

But I knew the kind of work they were doing wasn't what I was going to do, that I had a different route. It was much . . . I guess

I'm a much sloppier fieldworker, much more involved in people and what was going on and much more interested I guess in trying to learn who they were.

To me, my task was not a formal task, just something I knew I had to do, to understand them. I was constantly stimulated and intrigued by another way of life, another way of thinking, another kind of mind, in a sense, that I wanted to understand. And that meant a lot to me. I felt that I understood more about myself as I was learning about them.

Also, the kind of understanding they had of me: I mean, the view that they had of me and their tremendous curiosity about me that sometimes would be very disconcerting. I would just feel that these people were watching me with such intensity and so quietly and so inadvertently—*every* move I made, and everything that I said that would come back to me later through others, the grapevine, you know. It took me time to learn about how effective that grapevine was. I'd say something one day, and three days later in another part of the country in another town I would get, you know, the leftover glimmers of what I had said. [laughter]

But that was what was important to me at that time. Also, I suppose to tell myself or to find out that I could do it, that I could relate, that I could be accepted by a group and trusted to work with people as gun-shy as the Washoe were. They had been really worked over the coals, and they were very cynical about whites and very shy and cautious. And getting through that was very important to me.

*And is it fair to say, too, that there was a fascination with a people who were supposedly so downtrodden, degraded, but had this essential identity and humor and . . . ?*

Well, you put a finger on a very important aspect, you know. In fact I guess I always *knew* that, because, again, my old grandparents always come back to me. [laughter] These poor old people who were always patronized, who were at the bottom of the heap, barely could speak English, immigrants of the type that their children wanted to change and make them more American. But they never could make it. And so I was prepared to find richness. To find it was wonderful—to discover it and to seek its form, to see its very unique and particular form.

So, yes. That's a very important element—discovery, a sense of discovery. Discovery of the varieties of human existence and expression. That's important, and I have to say that it was a basic motivation.

But along with it was whether I could do this. Was this something that I really wanted to do and was able to do, that I felt I could compete with other people on, like other students, that my mentors or professors would think that what I was doing was worthwhile, all that. I was very timorous about that. So that first year I was really experimenting.

But then I got drawn in; I got hooked. And I suppose a thing that's come to my mind when we talked about the concept of "dead reckoning," which I see as the trajectory of my early life, dead reckoning toward some kind of unknown destination. At the end of my seagoing days, when I decided to come ashore, it was like coming to home port, you know. I had reached a destination, good or bad. I was stuck there. I was back at home port now. There was no other trips, no other trips of that kind to divert my attention from what I had to do. Here I was. It was a tough realization that this was it.

So, really, what I was doing here without realizing it, I was searching for my direction,

now that the previous directions had led me to this. Here I was—home port, beached, you know. [laughter]

And shipping was not going to be my way of life, nor was my seagoing trade union experience going to provide a continuity in my life. The thing that I had always said I was aiming for, to return to school, to return to scholarship, et cetera, here it was.

And then the whole question of writing. I knew that I no longer had the feeling that I was going to be “a writer,” in the sense of a writer of creative fiction. This wasn’t going to be my way of life. I really wanted to have a profession.

And anthropology seemed to be everything that I wanted. My undergraduate work and then my renewed experience after returning part-time to Cal told me that that’s what I want to do. But I wasn’t sure I was able, that I could. And so this was my experiment; this was my own personal experiment. And I felt so fortunate to have the opportunity. And I’ve always felt grateful to George, despite the fact that he was such a different kind of character and personality than me. That, by the way, was part of my own disenchantment and pulling away from the kind of bohemian context of the Bay Area that I had once identified with and felt part of.

What were some of the things that I was thinking about? I got very tired of people searching for transcendental experience. In my past, and when I was much younger, I had these kinds of religious, mystical experiences that would sometimes take me a long way into searching for a separate world and a separate way of looking at the world. Yet I was sympathetic and aware of all that among some of the people I knew.

Some of the poets at the time were creatures of fantasy, searching for the fantastic, as I have said earlier, to excess—the search

for altered states, for revelations, for a state of mind that would separate you from the ordinary world that was so ugly and awful that you would create this great inner world, the search for gurus, for great leaders of great mind who were not like the ordinary world, but beyond that.

It was like George talking to poor Barton about the universe and the planets and coming from Mars, and if he had been around during these times, he would have been talking about the Big Bang theory and all that stuff with Barton, who would have smiled and watched him with great interest and amusement, and said, “No, I’m right here from this place.” [laughter] “I don’t know about that. You’re going too fast, too far, George, too fast, yes.”

That was something I really appreciated—this kind of earthy realism that was, again, like people that I had admired when I was very young, who were very religious, had their own mystical world and all that, but who had to live a hard life of earning a living and bringing up children and doing all the things that . . . and doing it successfully.

And some of these other people that I had known, I thought they would never do that. [laughter] They would never find any way of confronting the real demands of the world around them, seeing what was really happening. They were always setting themselves apart, the role of disenchantment, the role of philosophical dissidence from the rest of humanity; the elite—the elitism of that particular element of the artistic and intellectual world at that time.

In fact, it reminds me of something that Kenneth Rexroth wrote. He was quite a guy, thought of as part of the Beat generation, but actually he was very analytic about that world that had grown up in the 1950s—something that was happening in 1952 and 1953—the

beginnings of the so-called Beat period going on in San Francisco.

Ferlinghetti's City Lights Bookstore would open in 1953, a year later. I don't really remember knowing about this. I think George may have; George may have had some early connections with . . . well, there were people like Philip Lamantia, Robert Duncan, Gary Snyder, and other West Coast writers, and Ferlinghetti, who were part of that earlier movement. And then Ginsburg and a number of others from the East Coast came in, and that was the beginning of the so-called Beat Generation.

Rexroth a few years later wrote a paper. I can't remember the title of it right now—something about the man in the gray flannel suit, whatever. It was about alienation, young artists in that period, particularly in the Beat period, being in a state of deep alienation, being appropriated by the capitalist world around them.

In fact, within three or four years the Beat phenomenon had become trendy, and it had become fashionable and provoked all sorts of magazine articles and films and into literature as a romantic phenomenon, when actually it was in many ways a dreadful and horrible disenchantment on the part of a lot of young people, who were really living their lives in order to be a statement against the world around them, particularly the middle-class world which they had been a part of. They were overtaken by the nausea of the lives that their families had led or the successful people in that world had lived. And it was a revolt really against this, a revolt of the young intellectuals, which had a romance to it and was terribly exciting because of the barriers that were being knocked down, the walls that . . . .

*Really heady.*

Intellectually heady and terribly experimental and new, but at the bottom I used to feel a deep sadness, you know. Something very important was missing. It was just like maggots feeding upon themselves in a barrel. They didn't know the barrel they were in was the barrel of this society that had left them *alone* to feed upon themselves.

*Well, you used the word disenchantment, and I think another word, too, is like disengagement with any social . . . .*

Yes. And a kind of ironic disengagement from any kind of social action, which wasn't directly related to subjective feelings, little nihilistic, anarchistic groups of various kinds—very temporary, short-lived—and then back to this sort of contemplation of the self and the inner world.

I'm being very unfair, because there's some very brilliant stuff that came out of it. I mean, some wonderful poets developed in that time.

*Well, I think you're just describing your personal . . . .*

Yes.

*You were not drawn to it personally.*

It wasn't drawing to me. You know, I was tired of the search for the transcendent high of always looking for the new experience that was at the top of the ladder way out—that other people could not experience because they were *not* prepared, not advanced enough, and all that sort of thing. I was much more interested in the kind of experience Barton talked about right here on this earth, you know, "This handful of dirt is what I came from."



*Well, it seems like you always have . . . I mean, up to now your involvement with the union movements and working people and the concerns and issues facing real people doing . . .*

Yes. I was pulled by that. And I also felt this caution, I guess, about that other kind of world. I had been in it; I think I understood it. I had been part of that when I was much younger in the 1940s and saw that as my world to an extent. At the same time, part of me was resistant, and I just knew that there was no way there . . . that wasn't what I was.

*Are the Phillipsborns still part of your life at all at this point?*

Only remotely because they had begun to move away. Yes, I still knew them, but they weren't key figures. Mostly now I was working with the party and the trade unions and with another group of different . . . well, not different . . . groups of composers and poets who weren't really part of this scene. They weren't part of the Beat scene.

Nevertheless, the Beat scene was terribly important. I mean, it was a gestation; it was a morass of wild experimentation and of search, which I can appreciate. But, nevertheless, I felt it was *sad*. There was something about it . . . Rexroth later on, when he was analyzing this, said some very clear things about that period, about how it was a wastebasket of great talent and misplaced directions and people being set up for total disillusionment, which happened, you know. It did happen.

But when I started back in anthropology and made these forays up into Sierras among the Washoe, I felt, "This is the world that I want to know. This is the kind of look at human beings that I am interested in. It's the

kind of connection with human beings I want."

But I didn't know whether I could write it; I didn't know whether I could express it. But to me that was the challenge. I wanted that.

*Were you taking field notes, though?*

Oh, god, yes. [laughter] I mean strange ones. I mean, I look back . . .

*But this was totally self-motivated in terms of . . . ?*

Oh, yes, this was the thing you did. I mean, I wanted to see if I could do it.

And my field notes, when I look back at them, they're not ordinary field notes. They're marvelous to me, because they really do tell what I thought and what I felt and what I was seeing. They're sort of chronological, day-by-day, who I saw and what happened. And then I would develop a particular event or exchange between people and take some time with it. And most of my early field notes . . . in fact, my field notes all through my working life have been like that to some extent.

In fact, I began to feel badly about them when they got less so, when they became to be more matter-of-fact and more matter of, "Well, I know all that. Now I just want to get this, I want to get that," and be loaded with data that had to do with some article I was writing or some point I was working on, as against that early sort of flow of experience, of learning another people's world and life and learning about myself in the process—learning more about myself than I learned about others. That is, what I was good for and what I wasn't good for, and what I was able to do and not able to do.

I never learned that totally, but I certainly would not have learned it as much had I not done this! I learned to stamp the ground like Barton and say, "I'm here. This is where I'm from." [laughter]

*Is this the first time you've looked at these early, early field notes in a long time?*

In a long time. You caused that, Penny. I have looked at these old volumes of notes, mainly to get some chronological perspective. You know, when did things happen? When did I do this, or when did I see these people? And then I found myself reading back through and having this whole period recreated in my mind, because I was writing rather wholly and fluently about discovery. It was the voyage of discovery.

Also, you know, that was the period of hippie-ism. When I first went up with George, they saw George and me as hippies—hippies from the Bay Area, because . . . That was another thing that was part of my distancing. I just could not bear what I heard about the kinds of young whites—not only young, some old whites—coming up to go to peyote meetings to get the medicine and be guided into transcendental experience by these great . . . the gurus, the Washoe gurus. Any Indian was a guru to them, because they come from ancient cultures, and they know

everything, and they can lead you to the truth. There was something to me so sickening about that. I had a word for it—exploitive voyeurism, exploitation, not really wanting to understand or know them or know about their lives or their culture, but wanting to experience for themselves some kind of subjective inner enlightenment, or to kid themselves that they knew what was going on.

And these "very simple folk" that I knew were very aware of that. They enjoyed the show of having these people come and the attention they got, but they knew pretty well where they were coming from. And they're still around, the wannabes, and the Washoe are very aware of it. The ones who go up to Cave Rock to commune with the spiritual world, like the Washoe shaman or go up to Star Lake to commune with nature and the old spirits of the area. They don't even know what those spirits are. [laughter] They don't care, because they've got their own spirits.

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#### Notes

1. In *Straight With the Medicine* (Reno: Black Rock Press, 1978).
2. In *University of California Anthropological Records* 14:6 (1960): 349-418.

## OF SHIPS AND SLAVES

DURING 1952, all kinds of things were taking place. I've gone over some of them, and I suppose one of the things that was really bugging me was the situation on the waterfront, which had begun in the early 1950s—the screening of left-wing seamen. A number of my friends had lost their jobs, couldn't go to sea. Some of them were leaving the area, going east or into the Gulf, trying to get onto ships. And most of the time they'd find the black-lists waiting for them. The companies had lists, and anybody whose name was on the list would not be able to sign up on the ships.

So there was this unemployment of the Left. And I remember getting letters, correspondence from a number of my old seagoing friends. They were talking about the problems they were having, and did I know of any jobs in the area, not merely seagoing jobs, any other kind of jobs? And some of them had gone home to where they lived in the South or the Midwest or the East.

Of course, I was still involved with the party, and I think I've already mentioned that I had a very real problem when the leader-

ship felt we had to go underground. I'd always been an open communist. The whole idea of going underground I thought was wrong. There was lots of stuff that I read later, written by some of the people I knew of at that time. Their feeling was that this was a stupid thing to do, that it singled out the leadership and put them in jeopardy, and just because leaders of the party along with others had been jailed, this was no reason to go underground. This should be the time when the party stands up for its position and takes a forthright role and the consequences of it. So there was a lot of friction within the movement at that time about this.

But as far as the waterfront, which was my major interest and concern, it was a very deep period of depression. My friend, Pat Tobin, whom I had known for years and gone to sea with and worked on the front with, was screened. Eventually he got into the longshoremen's union, the ILWU, and remained a very active member for many years thereafter. He was somebody I had a lot of admiration and respect for, and I was glad for him. But a number of my friends

weren't so lucky. Floyd Hayes got killed in the Gulf in a fracas down there with some right-wing seamen.

So in a way I suppose I was lucky, but I didn't feel lucky. I felt that I should be there, that I should have been there. It happened, you know, only a year after I came ashore. At the same time, I was very active. I was doing a lot of organizing work. Whenever anything would come up in the way of strikes and other movements that were taking place in the East Bay, I was involved while I was going to school and while I was working at this damn liquor store, [laughter] and the other times I was employed at one of the full-time jobs I had in sequence.

Nevertheless, I had this strong pull about the sea still. There was this feeling of loss. One thing, and I think I've already gone into it before, I used to have these fantasies and daydreams and strong nostalgia about taking a ship and getting away [laughter]—family problems like earning enough to at least feed Kathy and the kids, and things that were going in Modesto. My mother was very ill, and it looked as though it was terminal cancer. Everything seemed to be impinging at once.

And this sort of underscored to me what the meaning of going to sea, aside from making a living, was to many of the seamen I had known, particularly the older ones: You get on a ship, it's almost, you know, involuntary servitude. You can't do anything about it once you are on. There you are, and you got weeks or months ahead of you, and you're stuck on this ship; you're married to the ship, and there's nothing you can do about it. Therefore, you just knuckle in and do what you have to do. And it's detachment—total detachment from problems, like being separated from the earth for that period of time. And all those things that you left behind, you

might worry about them and think about them, but you can't do anything about!

There you are. It's a sense of relief, really, leaving port. And you look back, and you see the lights slowly dimming in the port, and you feel horribly, too. You've just said goodbye to people, and you feel terrible about that. You feel already homesick, you know. Nevertheless, it's also a great relief. I can't do anything about it. Here I am. What can I do? I can't jump over and swim back. [laughter] And then you have to make this world your own for the next period of time, in which you have a chance to reflect, a chance to be away. And that is very addicting.

And so I can remember in that period, when all this ferment was going on, at times having this feeling, "Oh, if I could only take a ship. If I could just sign up, and get out of here." And then the reality, you know, was nobody of my ilk was getting on ships. And the evidence was all around me. So all of that was happening at that time.

And now that I'm in the process of trying to recall some of these things, it still comes back. When I was shipping out, *even* if it was a lousy ship, once you signed up at the union hall, you signed up, packed your seabags, and you headed for that ship. There was a mixed, highly ambivalent feeling of nostalgia about your home. You have that deep, profound problem of saying goodbye all the time. And I remember with Kathy, it was very hard on her and on the kids, and I knew it.

In fact, when I was shipping out on coastwise tankers during late 1940s, we used to try to take the kids down when I would take off, so they could see what I was doing, because everything was sort of a dim mist for the kids, you know. And so we'd go down to the Union Oil docks out there beyond

Rodeo, or down to Alameda, the Oakland piers, where sometimes I'd come in or I'd take a ship. And we'd go down there, and I remember looking at my kids and thinking, "What am I doing to them? What does this mean to them, for god's sakes?" Here's little Erik, you know. He was a year old, and Anya three or four, four or five. And they would stand there, you know, saying goodbye to their daddy.

And here I was with a seabag, and Kathy and I having this profound sense of parting and all kinds problems still afoot. We were loaded with problems and how they're going to be resolved, and I was sort of leaving things halfway. And then I can remember turning and looking at this little group, our kids looking at the big ship, and, "There's Daddy going away again," you know. [laughter] And Kathy with very mixed feelings and myself.

But I can remember as I went up the gangway with my seabag and got on the ship, and they were no longer in sight, a sense of relief. I hate to admit it, but this helped me understand what that whole scene is to a lot of men and their lives at sea. There is this feeling of, "Well, at least now there's some space. I can think. I can find out what's going on with myself and all that," which, by the way, is monastic in a way. I suppose it's why people go into monasteries; it's why people these days go to an ashram—a retreat.

*Well, the big decisions have been made. You don't have any choice.*

Well, they *haven't* been made. They're half-made. Nothing's resolved.

*Well, I mean on your day-to-day life. It's not up to you what you're going to do to a certain extent.*

Where? Do you mean what you've left behind?

*On the boat.*

On the boat, oh, on the boat, yes!

*Yes, your day-to-day . . .*

Oh, highly disciplined. I mean, you could do all kind of weird, crazy things, but the point is you still got to work, and you got to do it. And if you don't do it, there are consequences. Like one old guy went on a ship, an old-timer, an old Wobbly guy—in fact, I wrote a story about him—he just refused to go to work one day. He was a good worker, a damn good seaman. "I'm not going to work. I don't care what you guys say. I'm staying right here. I'm not going to do anything." And nobody knew what to do about him, the captain, the mates.

Everybody was totally mystified on how to handle this guy who everybody liked and respected. An old old-timer. But he had just made up his mind, he just wasn't going to do anything more. That was *it*.

It was like he threw his tools over the side. [laughter] You know, like throwing himself over side. "I'm finished. No, I've got other things to do now, other things to think about."

I remember that there were about three more weeks left on that trip. We left him alone. And there he was; when we got into port, port security would be waiting for him. Every now and then the first mate would come down and say, "It's time now for you to get going here now. It's time to move." But it was such a mystifying situation. Nobody knew even what to say to him, and nobody wanted to order him around. [laughter]

And the skipper was one of those nice guys, and he wanted to keep out of it. He wanted nothing to do with it, he wanted his mate to take care of him. And aside from

things like that—or somebody who just flakes off and doesn't do his job and everybody hates him—aside from that, things moved with certain clockwork efficiency. The watches come and go, and you know what's going to happen four hours from now and what they're going to do, except in a storm or some kind of crisis, and certainly during the war in drills and alerts and things of that kind. But those things just interrupted the routine. Otherwise, things just went on.

So when you stepped aboard a ship, and I can remember that vividly, even when we started bringing the kids down to see me off, I found that was rending. That was very difficult, because I didn't know how to explain to them really what it *was* and *why* I was doing that kind of work. [laughter] Why wasn't I like other daddies? Yet at the same time, I had to do it for at least a few years. That was what I knew I could do, and also during the war, I had to. Nevertheless, it was still weird.

And I remember this awful feeling I had, turning away and heading for the ship—you know, like it was just tearing my gut, until I got on the ship. And then suddenly all that passed away, and I was ready to go to work. Take my seabag, unpack it, stow things away, look over the other members of the crew who were going to be my family over the next month or two. [laughter] And you get around to making connections and learn to do the job so that nobody would think I was a flake-off. And there you are. And my connection with home was writing letters and receiving letters, which is a very organized routine.

It's a very interesting phenomenon. I suppose it's been written about to some extent. I think maybe some of the stories of Melville and others give indications of this kind of seagoing mode.

I was doing a lot of writing of papers during that time. It amazes me to look at the

papers that I have, because all of them had to do with American history, slavery, and the impact of slavery on whites. One I was working on—I have the notes for—was a paper on James Riley's narrative.<sup>1</sup> He was a white seaman who had been captured by the Arabs on the West African Coast and spent months or years as a white slave in Arab caravans.

I was fascinated by the narrator who wrote about this, how he adjusted instead of killing himself, as he thought of doing many times. You know, imagine coming off an American ship wrecked or beached on a shore of northwest Africa and being captured and chained and put in a caravan. And then over a period of months to make an accommodation, make friends, and profess Islam so that he was accepted and became then a kind of companion or indentured servant rather than a slave, under conditions where other people would have committed suicide.

I was utterly fascinated with this, because here are the whites facing slavery. I thought, my god, what a wonderful, wonderful event and topic this was. I still have my notes, and I wrote the paper for one of my classes—I forget which one. It might have been Carter again. And it was going to be a good paper. I wanted to publish the damn thing.

Oh, and at the same time, I was writing on Harriet Tubman. She fascinated me. This was before anybody knew much about her. Now she's an American heroine, you know.

*Right. She's on a stamp.*

Yes. She's on a stamp. [laughter] My god, back in the 1940s and 1950s, nobody ever heard of her except a few black scholars and others who had looked back into their own history, and a few white scholars interested in slavery and the underground railroad. It was a peripheral literature, hard to find. I

looked through the Schomburg collection and I wrote to the New York Public Library and I corresponded with them trying to get information. They did send me some. I have a list. The references were few—four or five where you could even get anything. So I was working on that. I was writing, in fact, a biography of Harriet Tubman.

None of these things got worked up into final articles or anything; they were just papers. But some were worthy of getting published, but I only did one that got published, the one on the Revolt of the *San Dominic*.

Beyond that, I did a number of papers, one on Thomas Wentworth Higginson I may have mentioned earlier, “Search for a Heritage.” I found in that period, the early and mid-nineteenth century, American writers congenial to my own thinking. It was a period of ferment and the birth of real liberal thinking in American social life. Thomas Wentworth Higginson was one of those post-Emersonians, but a political liberal, an abolitionist.

So I found myself really gravitating towards this business of the American slave period, the Civil War, and the impact of slavery on American life, in connection with my own interest in trade unions and the struggle in the labor movement over discrimination and all that. All these things kept going back to this matter of black slavery, its impact on American life, and how American liberalism was forged as a movement, forged in the pre-Civil War and post-Civil War periods, and then the great let-down during Reconstruction and the cynicism that followed the First World War. That fascinated me, this trajectory, and also the labor movement in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. That was a revival, really, of this earlier period of American liberalism on the best level. The

Marxists were probably the most important core of that movement. And so *that’s* what interested me.

And I always remember Carter, for whom I wrote “Discovery of a Heritage.” In a sense, I had discovered a heritage by going through the process of writing this long, lugubrious paper, and Carter wrote some notes on it like, “You really have too much in this damn thing.” You know, “It’s too damn big.” [laughter]

Oh, and I connected it with Howard Fast and the current left-wing writers and what they were saying, comparing that to what was going on back in the early nineteenth century and asking what Higginson would have thought about statements that were being made now which were so much like what he was thinking. And this bothered Carter, you know. “Now, Warren, you’ve gone a little too far in this.” There was a whole series of notes, marginalia.

But that’s the kind of theme I was messing around with in my own head at the time, as well as this feeling that I wished I was on the front facing what those guys were facing. Except that they were no longer facing it. They were all scattered; dozens of them were no longer on the front. But you know, that feeling that that had been a turf of mine for so many years was so ingrained.

On the other hand, I felt I was doing useful activities in those days and going to school and carrying on this lousy job. Why I didn’t become a souse at the liquor store, I don’t know. But I didn’t. I never was a heavy drinker. But there it was all around me, and there were times I was thinking, “Well, I’ll take a bottle home,” you know. [laughter]

I mean, Kathy and I just weren’t drinkers. That came later in Africa. We learned to drink in the tropics with the help of some British friends who were experts at drinking.

We never were heavy drinkers, but we drank  
in Africa.

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Note

1. "Authentic Narrative of the Loss of the American Brig 'Commerce' on the Western Coast of Africa, With a Description of Timbuctoo" prepared from Riley's journals and logbooks by Anthony Blucker (New York, 1816).



## FAMILY LOSSES

WHILE THIS was going on, there was this other thing with my mother getting more and more ill. And I would take runs down to Modesto to see her. Sometimes Kathy and the kids would go with me, but she was very busy.

Kathy was working at a nursery school doing excellent work, something that really thrilled her. She continued that for a number of years, and I always felt that was something that was so much a part of her. She loved that so much and the friends that she made while she was in Berkeley working—it was called Children's Community Center, the nursery, I think.

It was a very invigorating and an enhancing period for her. With her own kids involved—they were also going to this nursery school—she then met all these very, very interesting women and children. One of them, Blanche Garcia, was the head of this nursery school, and the Garcias became good friends of ours. And Mary Sarvis, the psychiatrist was another—some very powerful people really centered around Erik Erikson, the psychoanalyst. And it was a vigorous and lively intellectual thing working there at the time.

And Kathy was connected with that. I felt very good about it, that she had that. It was a very positive period for her. Otherwise, she had to go through the churning and the problems that I was having about what I was going to do and where life was going and what we were going to do after this year, kind of thing. It would have been quite terrible.

The kids, I think, were doing all right. Anya would become a lovely, intelligent young woman, shockingly bright and beautiful, one of those rare creatures, and she managed to do pretty well, even with the way we were living. It wasn't too bad. *We ate.*

But we had a wacky range of friends—everything from an old shipmate dropping in now and then [laughter] with all kinds of talk about the sea and all the language that we used. Everything from that to people from the university and then our professional friends. It was a hell of a range of people.

And I guess it was all right for them. They look upon it as a wonderful and vigorous period, but it seems to me it must have been very hard on them. Also, we were so involved in our own problems, I don't know how well . . . . Kathy was the mainstay of taking



*“Kathy was working at a nursery school doing excellent work, something that really thrilled her.”*

care of each of the kids, where it concerned them as individuals.

Nevertheless, we had so many other things in our lives going on, that we were worried about, concerned about, that it had to leave a mark on them; I’m sure it did. In fact, the rest of our lives was pretty wacky too. We’ll talk about that later.

But anyway, Erik was a very rambunctious little kid, always getting into trouble, a typical younger brother. Younger brothers have a hell of a time—I think of my own brother, Don. Younger brothers have a hell of a time. Older brothers have got their problems. They confront the world and their parents more directly, but the younger kids . . . [laughter]

Maybe girls, younger girls I think understand, but younger boys have a time, I think. But Erik grew up fairly well—a little wild, a little difficult for him to control himself, having wild vacillations in how he did in school.

You know, having teachers write about what a wonderful child he was and how bright but next time writing, “I can’t deal with this kid.” Great vacillation. But again, a wonderful kid. All this was going on, and I would go down to see my mother as she declined, and that was heavy stuff. My father refused to have anybody come to do anything for her. He did it all himself.

*Oh, my word.*

He sort of let his own practice come to a halt—though he still practiced, but . . .

*And where are they located again? In Modesto?*

Yes, my old hometown in the valley. And they had by this time a nice little house in Modesto. And my grandmother, Mama, was staying with them. My great old grandfather,

Simon Erik Isaacson, had died a few years before. And I hadn't been around. I was at sea when he died. I really had fond memories of that old man.

Mama had a room of her own, a kind of little apartment of her own. And I remember every morning she'd get up and sweep. She had this old worn-out broom, and she was out there sweeping the sidewalk. Everything had to be clean. Very Swedish. [laughter] Always washing the windows and busy, a busy old lady. But she still had trouble with English.

I reminded her one time that I had been sent home from school in Palo Alto, because the teacher said that I spoke a dialect. I was getting v's for my w's. You know, [laughter] "Vat is dat" kind of thing. And I'd tell her about that. And she would say, "Vell, that's the right vay." [laughter]

You see, she would help us read. She taught me to read. So, of course, I read with a Swedish dialect, and we carried that on. I remember having to work not to have it when I was six or seven. And instead of laughing and thinking it was funny, she says, "Vell, that's the right vay, Varren." [laughter]

So anyway, my father who had just sort of let everything else go was tending my mother day and night. I guess that kept him going, the idea that he was doing something useful. He had a lot of guilt in his soul, that poor guy, about *everything*: his mother, his family, himself and my mother. And I'd always regret getting him started, because he'd get into the rambling puffy philosophical—what would you call them?—monologues that I'd break into now and then, because it was the only way he knew how to communicate. It was hard for him to articulate his thoughts to me maybe more. Later on with Donald he was able to.

Donald was in the air force. This was during the Korean War, and he hadn't been home for a while. I guess the end of the Korean War had been 1953 or so. So Don was away, but he was making an effort to come back, because he knew the state my mother was in.

So I'd go up and help out on the weekends when I could get there and, you know, help straighten up the house and work in the garden and things of that kind. I spent long periods of time sitting with my mother while my father would then go off and do something in his office. She was still able to talk, but she was in great pain, having chemo . . . not chemotherapy, radiation.

In those days, people knew *nothing* about cancer. She had had probably uterine cancer for ten years or more, because she was always complaining of pain. And I think part of my father's depression and guilt was that he hadn't . . . didn't know enough to do something about it. When they had finally diagnosed it as uterine cancer a year or two before she died, it had already metastasized, and she was getting these radiation treatments once a week that would just knock her for a loop, you know. She was losing her hair.

And yet she held up very, very well. She had always kept herself . . . she was a very proud person about her appearance. And she'd always see to it that she was well-dressed even in bed, and would ask . . . Oh, I know, my cousin Pat. That's right, later Patricia.

Patricia Stone was my Aunt Jenny's adopted daughter. And Donald and I had harassed her all through her early life. And I mean harassed in every possible way. [laughter] Oh, we played tricks on her; we made life miserable for her, but she loved us. [laughter] Like my cousin Jean, the same way.

And anyway, so Pat was grown up by this time, and my mother would ask Pat to come

in and fix her hair and give her some makeup. She always wanted to be presentable.

*And who was doing all the cooking in that time period?*

My father or one of us when we were there. He did get around to having a woman come in I think once a day to prepare a meal or something, but he could cook. In fact, I'm a good cook, and it's not because my father was a good cook. But he cooked. He made pancakes on Sunday mornings for the kids. Or when he'd get green stuff for us from the farms, he knew how to fix it for us and all that, and we loved that, the Portuguese dishes.

So anyway, this kind of thing would go on for a weekend. I'd run up and then have to go back down to Berkeley. But I had long talks with her, and she told me more about her life and the life of the family than I'd never known. You know, it's a strange thing as you get older and people are dying off, you learn so much as they die off . . . more about your past than you learned during their lives.

People usually don't talk about their past and their lives. But here she had time to reflect and think about what she was interested in. I learned a *lot* about my grandparents, a lot about my father.

I discovered she had a lot of resentment for my father as well as admiration for him. Then I realized that she knew that she had really goaded him on to become a doctor, that way back, when they first got married, he had given up the idea of going to medical school and was doing all kinds of other things: He was in banking, insurance, a door-to-door salesman, every kind of thing. I guess he was avoiding what his father had been, because he had practically been his father's mainstay. From the time he was in his early teens, he'd

been the nurse and the accountant and the x-ray attendant and everything for my grandfather in his office in Oakland at Lake Merritt and struggled with his two younger brothers and his two sisters. He had enough of family, enough of his own family and his constantly complaining mother—the-grand-dame mother.

I got another picture of those days from my mother, who had seen them as people who looked down on her own family. They were fairly well to do—not really, but in those days, under those conditions, it was a kind of wealth because they were professionals, doctors. And my mother saw them as patronizing her and not really at first helpful to her when she was pregnant. I didn't learn about this until later. But she kept talking about how miserable she had been when she had lived in their house when she was pregnant with me and I was born, and how the older daughter Molly, my father's sister, how mean Molly had been to her and was constantly putting her down, was jealous of her clothes and would constantly compete with her on appearance, and all these things that a person thinks about. She, all her life, had been working these things over in her mind. And because my father was really so abstracted from everything, he didn't really see it and understand it, or was unable to cope with it or do anything about it.

So I would go down to Modesto where this kind of thing would continue. Then finally at the end of the semester at Cal in 1952, I finally decided to go down and stay there. I quit my job. In fact, the job I had at that time . . . Oh, that was Handy Spot. I was glad to quit that job! Handy Spot. I was a truck driver going around filling up shelves with junk, patent medicines and stuff like that. I think I talked about it.

That was a job I had when I told my father, “Well, I’m going to quit my job and come down here.”

He was very relieved, and said, “I’ll give a little money, just to keep the kids going and all that.” He just happily offered that, which he didn’t usually do. But under these circumstances, he was desperate too, and I knew he was. And I guess I took advantage of that, but I couldn’t do anything else.

I said, “Well, I think I ought to come down. I want to come down and stay. Kathy will come down when she can, and we’ll sort of help out around here.”

And that was OK. So I did. I went down there, and Kathy would come up when she could on the weekend with the kids, and we’d all be there. And then I’d stay the rest of the time. So I really . . . I really became a kind of general factotum for Dad.

I watched my father slowly descend into a kind of strange—I don’t know—depressed kind of condition. And he kept doing this, sort of like an automaton, this sense of guilt that he had not recognized what was wrong with my mother. In fact, early on, she told me that he had thought that it was all psychological, that she was just working over her past and that had become something that was now psychosomatic. This was the beginning of a concept of psychosomatic illness, you know. And my father had indicated that once or twice, and she was very hurt by it.

And it turned out that it was not that. It really was there. And he was very, very distraught about that—terrible things that can happen to families.

So anyway, I remember one day she was very ill. It was a few days after her last radiation, and it really had knocked her out. And yet she was very strong, she was able to talk, but she couldn’t sit up. And she says, “I have something to tell you. I feel terrible, and I

should have told you many years ago. I didn’t do so.”

And I think I already knew, and I said, “You don’t have to tell me. It’s OK.”

“I want to.” And then she told me that I had not been born prematurely as people were told, but that she had been pregnant before she was married and what a terrible thing this was for her family, excepting they were kind to her, they were helpful.

They blamed her, though, “How can you be so careless?” and, “How did you let this happen?” and all that kind of thing. Here was the old Lutheran preaching from her parents. At the same time, they took care of her.

Her mother went to Amalia, my father’s mother, and said, “My daughter . . . your son has made my daughter with child, pregnant.”

It was a tremendous shock to the Catholic family, to both of these families. “Oh god, what a scandal this is! Terrible thing!” Can you imagine that in those days?

This was a scandal. And so my mother told me this as though somehow or other it was the *most* momentous thing in life that she had to get off her chest. I was astounded. I didn’t know how to handle this thing that meant very little to me except in terms of what it meant to her. So I said, “Helen, it’s all right. It’s OK. In fact, I find it kind of wonderful, kind of interesting.” And she didn’t think I was funny at all. It was a terrible thing.

And then she was saying how she had really blamed it on my father, and this really bothered him, too. He had forced her. She was not ready. He had visited her at her parent’s home down on Seventh Street in Oakland, that old ramshackled house. Well, everybody was gone, and he had begun to, you know, play up to her, and then it happened.

And she felt guilty and terrible about *letting* that happen. It was *her* fault. She shouldn't have. But it was *his* fault too for doing it, and on and on. And I said, "Helen, it really is all right. It doesn't matter. To me, it's fine." I said, "In fact, I've always felt maybe that was the case. And it's OK."

She couldn't accept that. She *wanted* me to be upset.

*Well, it was the defining moment in her life.*

Exactly. And she thought that I ought to be responding to it like, "Oh, my god!" you know. And I couldn't. And that was a long session with her. And she cried and all that. And I think it came out where she felt a lot better. She had done what she felt she had to do.

And so . . . . Oh, yes. And next day when we were talking, she says, "Now I have to ask you something else. Do you believe in God, and do you believe in Jesus as a savior?" Well, this is the sixty-four dollar question. You know, in my family and later on in my field-work, I had to face that question I don't know how many dozens of times. Do you believe in God? I don't know if that's ever happened to you, but when you get intimate with people and you're . . . .

*Well, it was very important in Africa; they want to know what kind of Christian you were.*

Of course you had that experience. Yes. Of course you would know. And even with the Washoe, the idea you didn't have to believe in the Christian God, but you had to believe in some kind of power, some kind of god. And what was it? What kind of a guy are you anyway? is what that question means.

And what you believe in says something about your character, that's what it means to

a lot of Christians, a lot of religious people, a lot of religious people around the world. It's a statement of your character.

And so here is my mother on her death bed asking me this question. I remember that was one of the hard moments of my life.

*Were you tempted to lie to her?*

Well, I was tempted to lie. I was tempted to lie. Later in my life, I have lied about this a number of times just when I thought it was quite credible, helpful. But with her, I couldn't. I couldn't. Also, I never had with her. I got in a lot of trouble with my folks when I was a kid. I was the one who was always saying that I believed something that they didn't believe or I did something that they felt was shocking. And I just, if asked, I'd say, "Yes, I did do it." I won't go through all those, but I remember a number of typical young person's problems and secrets when I could have lied and didn't. [laughter]

One of the few times I ever stole anything, I stole something out of a store. It wasn't anything serious, but I had stolen something out of a store, and I remember my mother looked at me and said, "Where did you get that? How did you get that? I've never seen that around anywhere." And I remember thinking to myself, I stole it. [laughter] I stole it. And I had this impulse to do that when I was a kid, I think because it was a way of identifying myself with regard to my parents.

I'm me, you know, and I couldn't say . . . I couldn't make it up. I'd learned to make up stories. I'm a good storyteller even these days, but I have problems with purposefully lying.

Also, that came out of my family. Lying was a terrible thing to do. Therefore, unless it might hurt somebody and you might lie about something like that, you told the truth.

So, “Yes, I stole it,” you know. “Yes, I stole it.” And then, of course, after a little lecture, I had to take it back to the store. Well, it was all right. It was embarrassing, but I did it.

For many years, I didn’t steal anything until one event that happened in Modesto there when I was a kid, when I wanted to go on a camping trip with a friend of mine, and I wanted to take some food. And I remember stealing, oh my god, it must have been a lot of stuff, a couple of bags full of canned goods and other things, beans and things like that, taking them out in a bag and walking out of the store. Once I went out with it, I stashed it in the backyard in my tent. And the next day, I went back and did it again. And this time I was caught.

The guy said, “Well, just what are you doing? Are you stealing my stuff?” And I was totally flabbergasted. It was a horrible thing. I mean, this was going to get all over town. My father is going to have a son who is going to be reported as a thief. And what are his patients going to think? What’s going to happen at school?

And I was very lucky—he was a nice guy. And he says, “Bring this back in the store.” He says, “I expect you to come here and clean up this store. Three times this week, you come here and you sweep it out, and I won’t tell on you.” And I did. [laughter] And boy, that taught me a lesson.

So blurting out something like that became a kind of a . . . I did that for the early part of my early life. Somebody would confront me with something, and I just said, “Yes, I did it,” or something like that.

So I did this with my mother to an extent, and earlier with her and my father, I had done it. It would make my father very upset. He would see it as a confrontation. He would see it as competition too, you know. “So what are you going to do about it?” kind of thing. I

would say there was an element of that at times.

So anyway, when she asked me that big question, I remember it really threw me. Well, I just said, you know, “I don’t think I believe in the kind of god you do.” I mean, I remember it sort of helped me define my views at that time, because I had to think about it. And I said, “The universe is . . . we can’t even imagine. It’s too big for me to imagine there’s any being who controls it or any beings who are more powerful than we are deciding on how it is to be or helping to create it.” I said, “Whatever there is out there that makes all that possible, I can think of it as God. That’s the way I think of it. It’s not a person, it’s not any *thing*. It’s no sentient being that is doing all of this. There is no purposeful being, a being with a purpose doing it. And my view is I think I’m not an agnostic; I don’t say ‘I don’t know,’ but I *don’t* know. I don’t know. On the other hand, I don’t *think* so. [laughter] I don’t think so.” And I said, “I’m not an atheist, because I don’t go around telling people I don’t believe in God and because to me it’s a silly way to talk. If I’m asked if I believe that, I’ll say I believe in the existence of all that out there that I don’t understand. What I don’t comprehend is probably what I would think of as God.”

“What I don’t comprehend . . .” And what was the other thing I said? “Maybe I’m a humanist, a secular humanist.” That was when I first sort of learned these terms. “Maybe I’m a secular humanist. You know, I don’t have any church. I believe human beings and their consciousness is a remarkable and wonderful thing that we can know, but I don’t believe that that consciousness leads to the changes in the universe around us or that there are spiritual consciousnesses running around the universe.” I said, “I just don’t believe that.”

And I remember getting more and more violent as I was talking. And she was saying, "Are you going to bring up the children to be Christian?"

And I said, "I probably am not going to go out of my way to do it, but if they wish, I will not prevent them from learning about it. I will even help them learn about it. I will talk to them about it but also talk to them about other things and it will be up to them."

And she says, "Warren if you think like this, it means you are not saved." And it was tragic, you know.

And that's when I learned that when she told my grandmother this, and my grandmother had told her—and my mother told me this, which was very nice—she said, "Mama said, 'Be nice to Warren. He's a good man.'" [laughter]

Here's the old lady that I had doubted when she had seen Jesus and told her that she was sleeping and had not had a vision; the old lady that I had fun arguing with about religion and the talking in tongues when she talked about the language of the Lord. And I'd say, "Oh, Mama," you know, and all that.

And she would say, "Oh, Satan is in you, Warren."

But here's this old lady saying the "devil was making you do it," and then saying, "Be nice to Warren." [laughter] "He's a good man."

This was very lovely. And Helen, my mother, she always sensed that's how I felt, but she felt she had to say it. I mean, she felt that she was dying, and it was her duty now to press me about this. Because she believed she was going to heaven, or hoped she'd be going to heaven. To her, it was just part of her belief, her Christian belief. She wasn't a fundamentalist in the sense we think of fundamentalism today. She was more like my father, if he could even be considered to be a Christian, [laughter] a pagan Christian, in his

strange ex-Catholic way, it was much more of a kind of a domestic—oh, what would you call it?—socially-oriented Christianity. There was a lot of writing about this at the time, but at the moment I can't think of some of the literature. But, you know, self-renewal, living a good life, how to live a Christian life in the world as it is. And I forget what it is, but sort of philosophically oriented classical guide to . . . Christian humanism.

And that was really very open. At the same time, she had a very strong conviction of real heaven and a God and angels.

*And a savior, the idea of a savior.*

And Jesus. And the savior. And, you know, she in her childhood had seen angels. I can remember the visions that she claimed to have had when she was a child of seeing these wonderfully beautiful spiritual creatures and being saved by them one time when she was a little girl.

So all this mysticism was around. And I guess I got honed then to not believing that, seeing it as myths, not believing it even when I was a kid. I always thought about how wonderful it would be if it were true. Oh god, how marvelous, you know. I never doubted it out loud; I never fought over it. I naturally accommodate to it—it was just the way some people were.

*Some people have that.*

Some people do that. Some people think that that's true, and that's perfectly all right.

Only later, when I was in my late teens, I began to argue with people about it, you know, and put up some kind of smart-ass argument about it. But, you know, most of the time I just sort of . . . First of all, I loved these people, my grandparents, I thought they



were wonderful, with all their weird, crazy fundamentalist visions and view.

So anyway, I see that as bedrock, that sort of thing. You know, when I was talking about Barton, here in a sense, I was talking to a man like my grandfather, like my grandfather might have been, like my grandmother's people might have been. Those Washoe people, those little Washoe ladies looked like my grandmother, you know. [laughter]

And in a way, anything they said, I could fit into this framework, and it's kind of beautiful, it's kind of wonderful. I don't have to be that way; it's not that I have to believe. I just have to accept the fact it's very real to them. And then if I'm confronted, then that's like with my mother.

And many times I can remember over the years, I would talk about these sorts of things with people. And they would say, "Well, what do you believe? Do you think that . . . do you believe in *metsungé* in water, you know? Or do you believe in the *anyun kuwi*, in the water people? [Magical beings in Gola cosmology] Or do you believe in God?" And I never really learned to handle that easily.

*But you were actually asked directly if you believed in waterbabies and . . . ?*

Many, many times. Oh, particularly in Africa, especially. But with the Washoe I was asked many times, because I asked about things like that. People were very, very cautious about ever talking about it, because, well they might get ridiculed, or worse. But once you got trust, people would begin to . . . well you've experienced this with the things the Shoshone were telling you. And then to suddenly have such a person say, "And do you think that's true? Do you believe that?" And then you have to stop and ask yourself, "How do I answer this?"

*Well, how did you?*

Well, many ways, depending on the situation, as you know, and the person and your relationship with them. Most often though, I'd probably say, "In a way. In a different way," you know? "Not that way. We don't have those kinds of things."

"But what about . . . ? Do you believe in powers and spirits and ghosts? Do you believe me? Do you believe dead people's ghosts are in whirlwinds? When you see a whirlwind, do you see that?"

And you know, I'd always say, "You know, I don't . . . that's not the way I see it, the way I think about it."

But it's always something that one has this idea . . . I never was able to be brusque about it with my parents, people in my own society. I always felt it was two things. First place, it was deeply . . . it contravened the relationship to be brusque about it and was really insulting. And secondly, it interfered with the work I was doing. I mean, there was the practical aspect of getting along with people, and then the other aspect of interfering with the relationship, the situation. And then secondly, in those situations I thought, well, I didn't know enough about what they believed to give a point blank answer, or to confuse the situation with my own views, that I wanted to leave it open; I wanted to leave the situation open.

I must say, people I knew in Africa, they thought of me as an atheist and therefore I might be a little dangerous. Not to everybody, because I didn't seem to have a motive, but certain people felt that way. I don't remember it really interfering so much with my work, just somewhat with my relationship with certain people who felt that you had to believe in God. You had to believe in God, or you were suspect.

*Well, I realize this is a gross generality, but I think in the African situation, there was an expectation that all white people were Christian or whatever . . .*

Or missionaries.

*. . . because of contact with missionaries. And I think among the Washoe it wasn't quite as strong of an identity.*

Oh, yes. Well, they [the Washoe] knew that most white people had some kind of church. Well, they can tell that today, because they belong to them. There were some Washoe Baptists in those days, because there were Baptist missionaries in Carson Valley and Dresslerville and . . . what was his name? Ward.

He was a very nice guy. A little fat, rotund guy, and he had this little shack in Dresslerville and a little church. And some of the people would go there and listen. They'd go there for "Jesus talk," in those days. The Washoe are so sophisticated today, but in those days, it was "Jesus talk."

And yes, they had the feeling that whites . . . that people should have a belief, you know. "We've got our tradition and our view of the world and how it's organized and spirits and powers of the world. And the whites have a church and their prayers and their Jesus and all that." And if you don't fit in there somewhere, you represent a kind of a gap in their experience.

However, I don't remember that being a problem for the Washoe, as it was for certain of my African associates. They were polite, though. Like my Gola interpreter, who was in his view, at least, a devout Christian. And he would query me about this. At the same time he believed in every local African legend and myth that there was and in African

"science" and all that. And at the same time, he was a Christian.

It bothered him that I did not profess a belief or that I didn't come to their little camp meetings and sing praise. Though I did once or twice as a polite gesture to my friend. At the same time, I told him, you know, this isn't the way I worship, this isn't my belief. And it bothered him but they're polite, and you're polite, and you get over that. It's only when you get to very critical matters that it becomes an issue; that is, something that is crucial in their lives and yours. And there were a number of events of that kind I remember. Oh, of course with my mother. [laughter] That was a crucial event where you're up against . . .

*But what you said about her accommodating because she sort of knew how you felt anyway, but she felt it was something she needed to do as part of her exit was to . . .*

It was her duty. Her duty before she died, before she went to heaven. Somebody up there was going to ask her, "Did you try to straighten Warren out?"

And she had to be able to say, "I did. I tried. But Mama says he's a good man anyway."

*Anyway. That's lovely. And you're right. It was wonderful that she told you that.*

Yes, she did. And I think it was her way of easing the situation.

That whole scene, as I remember, drew before me a panorama of my family life and my own struggles. I hadn't even been aware of all these things in my family that in a sense created part of my identity—how to separate myself from them. How did I do that?

And I didn't have to do it by denial. I mean, it was just that I felt I was different.

They always thought of me as different. My parents always thought of me as being a difficult child.

*So you're saying that the lack of belief was one of the things that made you different, set you apart from the rest of the family.*

That was one aspect of it. Also, the fact that I didn't stay around the family, that I went off, I left home. I ran away. Also, I had different kinds of friends, a whole different life and a different lifestyle, and I argued about everything. I argued about politics, and then I became a communist, and oh god, you know, that's enough! I mean, what more do you want? [laughter] And I *told* them about it when I was asked all those arguments about politics!

But the business of the formation of an identity when you're a kid, when I come to think about it, that is part of it. How one separates one's self from the others close around one and yet maintains a relationship with them, and then to be able to live with that, to live with being a different member of the group. Also, the part of searching for another turf, another world, another family, all through my life. When I was a little kid, rocketships to get off in space somewhere, you know, or envying the boxcar tramps.

Ran away, this happened a number of times when I was a little kid. Reading. Reading about every strange and different place in the world that I could, pouring through *National Geographics*, planning places I was going to go to and what I was going to see and do, and then going to sea and all that. Part of that was this business of separation and looking for another land, another place, another . . . . And I suppose anthropology provided part of that, in a way.

*Well, during this time when you were with your mother, how long was it? When you quit your job and you went there, did you stay there till she died?*

Yes. It was well into the summer. And I don't remember the date now, but it was many weeks that I was there. And she got progressively worse and finally almost comatose. And at that point, my father was quite . . . . He always held it in, whatever he felt. He was falling apart. He was tired. He would stay up and denied himself food and sleep and everything. He was punishing himself, was kind of shaken.

*Yes, trying to . . . .*

And he felt guilty about that. And I felt my mother, in regards to me, I think she always felt that I represented the sin that she had committed, and therefore—well, that's a harsh way of putting it—that I was the result of sin that she had committed, and therefore I was some kind of remarkable child. The business of the love child, but on another level—that is, God's child. I think there was something of that in there.

I think my grandmother had this view that a lot of illegitimate children were in a sense God's children. That's a terrible thing to do, but once they're there . . .

*But once you're there, they're . . . .*

. . . once they're there, then, you know. She always had this feeling that even if I did all these things, she deserved it in one level or another. It was her . . . punishment.

On the other hand, it also was kind of wonderful, because I was doing some of the things she had wanted to do and never

got . . . . Oh, that was a huge . . . she was talking to me about all the things she wished that she had been able to do.

*Did she talk about dancing?*

Oh, yes. Not just dancing, but the theater and running away and going off to New York, because somebody had asked her if she wanted to join this troupe. Travel, you know, all these things. Being somebody was very much a part of that nostalgia and sense of loss and failed opportunities that came about because of pregnancy and early marriage and the problems of their kind of family. All that was there.

And in a way, consciously or unconsciously, I represented this in a way to her. I always felt later in life as the one who was acting out a lot that she wanted to do. But it's too complicated to put this together in a package. All those little strands were somehow there.

OK. So anyway, she began to go into periods of unconsciousness and was on an IV and my dad doing all of his . . . . And I remember when Kathy would come up, we'd clean up the house and do the laundry and all that and the kids would stay with their [other] grandmother and now and then would come up. But it was just a dismal scene. We didn't have them come up every often.

And it was pretty much, you know, a family thing. My brother was able to get leave from the air force, and he came in somewhere in this early period. So he joined us. It was a quite a closely knit group.

We had long talks with my father at night when my mother was sleeping. These impossible discussions in which I decided my father was absolutely mad. I mean, he was loaded with the language of early philosophy that

he had learned in school and from the priests who had been his teachers at St. Mary's in Oakland, all this early Catholic analytical thinking along with this new philosophical thinking. And he would hold forth, and I found it exhausting, utterly exhausting. And he didn't really accept anything that Don or I had to say [laughter] but would counter with a long speech. So though we'd been thinking this guy had a miserable life, yet he was doing very well in his practice. He loved people, people loved him. He had a tremendous amount of feedback in the social world of his profession.

But in his personal life, I felt this guy had a miserable take on things. And he always was, I learned later, competitive with me. It wasn't a matter that he just disagreed with me, the elder son. I was like one of his brothers who became relatively successful in the educational system in San Francisco—his brother Alfred, who he always thought of as a blow-hard because he was on television one time, and, "What does he have to say this time? Who does he think he is?"

Well, Alfred was really quite a guy. I mean, he was very active in the Democratic Party, he was a very good educator, he was well liked. And my father couldn't accept him. I always felt in a way he was putting me in the category of this upstart. But he never could express that; he would do it in terms of these interminable philosophical lectures that got nowhere. [laughter]

But anyway, this was going on as my mother was dying, and we would sit with her, and when she couldn't sit with us, my father finally said, "I think we should get the family now, because I think this is getting there." So he called my Aunt Edith and Uncle Armond in Oakland—and I don't know if my Uncle Raymond was around then or if

he had died—and then my Aunt Jenny, whom I could not abide, that prim, priggish, self-righteous, “poor widow.” [laughter] “I’m just a poor widow,” who was bringing up this adopted daughter, Pat, who was a very disturbed girl.

But anyway, at that point, all these people gathered together, and two or three other people, some friends—Oh yes, and Arthur and Agnes, my Uncle Arthur and Agnes. This was the family.

They all came up, and the house was a rather nice one—small, but there was a big yard and a lot of garden furniture. You could sit out there in the summer in the sun in Modesto under the trees. But people came because she was dying. Helen was dying.

I also got the picture that Helen was the bad girl who had managed to do well; she was the bad girl in the family. She was the one who was always doing strange things, always trying something new, the experimenter. She was the one who was bright and quick and able even when she was a little kid. So there was a lot of jealousy among her sisters. Nevertheless, they liked her. And she had married well; she married a *doctor*. They didn’t realize that she had actually gotten my father to go on to school and gave him the confidence to do it. It was a very difficult time for them. It was really ten years that they were really close to starving when we were growing up.

Well, it was never bad, but we were that very poor while my father was going to school. And her sisters’ attitude was sort of, “Joe, Joe’s a difficult man, but oh, he’s so good. He does all these things for everybody, and you know, he’s got money.” [laughter]

And when I come to think of it, the value system of that family was you were rich if you were making \$10,000 a year, \$15,000 a year,

or if you had a house, a nice house, you were rich.

*Well, in those years, that was . . .*

Oh, yes. If you had a car, oh wow, you know, you were rich. You were rich. And they just struggled to have that, that’s what they wanted. My Aunt Edith having this little house down there in Rockridge, in Oakland that became the eyesore of the neighborhood, one of the earliest, smallest, funkier houses on the street. And Uncle Armond worked all his life and put away ten dollars a month for years in a bank account to have it and scrimped all the time. That’s the word, scrimped.

And Uncle Arthur, who was a dental technician or whoever it is that makes dentures and stuff, he was doing fairly well. And his wife, Aunt Agnes, a woman I never could talk to, but interesting. She had been a chorus girl. Oh, that was a family thing. She had been a chorus girl; she had danced in nightclubs and bars and things of that kind. She was Scotch, and you know how those people are. On and on, all these wonderful memories.

These relatives were all out of the Finley clan. Yes, I think earlier I talked about the fact that my father had really sort of moved out of his own family. He still saw them and cared for his mother, all that, and his difficult siblings, but he had really settled into my mother’s family, had become really part of it, the big man in that family, the successful professional.

And so there was Agnes and Arthur. Agnes, the former chorus girl—actually she probably had got a job as a waitress, you know, at a restaurant or something like that and maybe appeared in a couple of shows or some-

thing. [laughter] But that stigmatized her, that took care of her.

But, you know, everybody got along somehow. People always got along. They might fight terribly, like my mother and her sisters, but then everything would pass away and they'd move on. There never was a family gathering when I was younger, that my mother and her sisters didn't have one screaming fight about something. Somebody had been insulted by somebody else or remembered something about the past. This always was about the past—who did what to whom kind of thing, you know. And people would cry and sometimes somebody would leave and all that. [laughter] But it would get settled, you know, and they would go back to where they were—real family stuff.

And then I think my Uncle Raymond and his wife Clare were there. He had died somewhere in there of lung cancer. I'm not sure that he was there, but he was a man I liked very much. He had been a house painter. Together with his smoking and painting for half his life, he got lung cancer.

He was a wonderful guy. He had a lot of artistry in him. He'd make all kinds of things out of wood and paint them; he was sort of a carpenter/sculptor, and he'd make frames for pictures and things. I always admired that. I thought he was quite remarkable. He and I understood each other in a way. We didn't see him much, but we liked each other.

And he married twice. I think I mentioned his earlier wife. He was a wild young guy and married this "flapper." [laughter] He married a flapper! The family tolerated this, but they talked about it.

You know, you talk people down, but when they're around, you were nice to them. And what was her name? Well, anyway, I don't know. She was famous with some of the family for a while.

*How did they relate to your life experiences up to this point? I mean, were they interested?*

They never talked about it.

*They never . . . . OK. So they just . . . ?*

Never talked about it. No, I don't think it's because they thought it was so terrible. It was just that it was outside of their . . . .

*It didn't fit in anywhere.*

Well, they would ask, you know. They might ask when was I going to sea again. And now and then, somebody like my Aunt Edith would say, "Oh, Warren, he's got those funny ideas in his head." [laughter] That sort of thing. But it never got into any kind of confrontation. [laughter]

*Oh, that's wonderful.*

That's the way families are you know. They're an amorphous pool of lord knows what but never really coming to the surface. It just keeps bubbling up.

And no, I don't recall there ever being an issue. Oh, my Aunt Jenny would turn up her nose at me and press her lips and say, "I don't know how you can do such things. It makes your parents so unhappy," you know, that kind of a woman. And yet, neither of my parents had ever confronted me directly with it except to disagree with me sometimes or say they wished that I wasn't doing that. They wished that I had some steady job. You know, come home to Modesto to do something. [laughter]

*Buy a house and get . . . . Yes.*

Buy a house and have a car and do all that sort of thing, yes, there was that—lower-middle class values or just post-immigrant values, the up-and-coming second generation. Very interesting. And I found it difficult, but at the same time I always found it fascinating.

So anyway, they were all together in the yard this one afternoon. They were staying at various places, and some were coming down for the day as though she was going to die that day. And it was rather great. Everybody was talking very ordinarily.

Something about that kind of family, when I come to think about it, with that kind of background, there's no great demonstration about death. Part of their kind of Christian fundamentalism was that you just take this as life the way it is. It's solemn, but you don't put up a great deal of shouting about it, and the mourning was for the few people who might have a good reason to mourn.

I think my Aunt Edith cried a little, but my grandmother, who cried about everything, was very stoic and always saying things like, "She will go to heaven. She was a good girl," even though, you know, she probably had some doubts. [laughter]

*[laughter] About that one.*

No, she had been very supportive of my mother in that early period, you know, in the old peasant country way. "We're about to have a *baby* now. We have to see to it that the baby has a father!"

*Everyone rolls up their sleeves.*

Yes, the baby's got to have a father, you know. And so, of course, my father's people took my mother in, partly because my grandmother on my father's side wanted to keep it

quiet, and the best way to keep it quiet was to have her in the house and get her married. [laughter] And they got them married in the house.

My grandmother (my father's mother) had done that for two or three others. She did it for her brother—I mentioned my uncle who was the priest who got defrocked for having a mistress, who my grandmother kept in the house so no would know she was pregnant until the baby was born? [laughter]

He got defrocked anyway. [laughter] He was a poet and a wild man. Oh, this same grandmother once compared me to this uncle who was such a roustabout, this priest, and I was quite proud of it.

So anyway, here they all were. And it was strange, because there wasn't any sense of crisis. First place, there had been a long period of getting ready for this, that she was going to die.

And people went in and saw her. And finally I remember my father called Donald and me in, and he said to us, "I think this is time. She's been comatose for . . ." It had been like this for two days. "Do you think that I should stop medicating her and giving her IV and all that? What do you think?" And it was very hard for him to ask us.

And I remember Don and I just said, "Of course, do what you think is best. It would be ridiculous keeping her like this, you know. And what about chance of recovery?" Well, the metastasis had gone through her, and she would have been in horrible pain if she would have awakened, you know, terrible pain.

So we said, "Sure." But of course, this would be a terrible decision on my father's part. This is euthanasia, you know. In those days, you didn't do it. In fact, . . .

*I think people did it, but you never talked about it.*

Oh, yes. Just like this case. I mean, I am sure doctors were doing that, but it wasn't anything that you let anybody know about, because it was a terribly personal family situation.

And later on when my father died, we did the same thing to him. We had a woman doctor who was a friend of his. She asked the same thing, and we said, "Get going. Do it right now," you know.

He had been comatose for . . . it had been five days or six days, and I was sitting with him for days, day and night, because he was just lying there, obviously no . . . you know, brain-dead.

*But do you think it was harder because your dad was acting as the doctor and was the husband?*

Oh, yes. Oh, terribly hard. Yes, I just sort of took that for granted. Yes, that was a terrible thing. He was the head of the family. His two sons were there and the whole family was there. But I also feel that he planned it. He said, "Let's tell everybody to come." He thought that would be a good time for her to die when everybody was there, a perfectly reasonable, wonderful thing.

And I told him so later. I said, "Joe, I think that was a very good decision that we all made and that you brought it up. And that was the time to do it with the family here and all that." But I think that's what he had had in mind.

So we stood there, Don and I. Nobody else wanted to come in. I guess they were squeamish; the ladies were squeamish. Edith in particular was ghost-ridden. [laughter]

But, you know, also, they didn't feel it was their part. Don and I were there, and Joe took out the tube. I forget what else was going on with her. But anyway, we waited for about an hour, and she died. My father fell

apart and went out and told everybody that she was dead. And you know, we cried a little, and it was very sad.

But in a way, when I look back on it I think it was a good thing, a real family thing. With this crazy, crazy family, we did something very nice together, you know. [laughter] This bunch of wild people managed to come together like a family, as they should. My grandmother presided in a way; she said prayers. Everybody used to be very irritated by my grandmother or grandfather blurting out their prayers at all kinds of . . . sometimes totally incredible moments. But she did then, and everybody felt it was right, because she was an appropriate kind of mourner. She would wail and call upon Jesus to come and drive out people's sins, you know, because everybody was sinful. [laughter] But that part was marvelous and appropriate.

OK. Having my brother there was good. He and I have had a very good relationship as two very different kinds of people. We are quite different and have had all kinds of differences over time, but in the long run I have tremendous appreciation for him as a kind of person. He was a very *kind* and generous guy who never was able to do everything he could do or wanted to do. Lots of defeats in his life that were unnecessary in a way. And still he managed to survive that. He wasn't married at that time, he got married later. But anyway, that part was good.

Right after my mother died, and that must have been mid-summer, I still had time I remember to go back to Berkeley before the beginning of the next semester to line up a job with this fancy gourmet and wine shop for which I was so well equipped and experienced because of my liquor store days. [laughter]

And so after I lined this up, Don and I took my father to Santa Cruz, and also Kathy



and the kids . . . . Well, this was after the funeral and things.

My mother had had very definite ideas about how she wanted to be dressed in the coffin, how she wanted to look. Kathy was wonderful. Kathy has such an ability to rise to these occasions. She and my cousin Pat went into the mortuary in Oakland and fixed Helen up like she wanted to be fixed. I could never have done that.

I could never have done that to anybody, and Kathy was able to do it, because Helen had asked her to, and she saw to it that Helen was dressed in the dress that she had gotten for the occasion, and you know, all these things that are beyond . . . . Well, I believe this is the way one goes to other cultures, too, and accommodates and learns how to deal with reality.

And I remember that Donald and I had had to pick out the coffin. That's the other thing.

We had thought we would just pick out some . . . he and I did agree on some things, "We got to spend money on this goddamn box!" you know. And yet there was a certain kind that she wanted. So we bargained for it. And I hated it. I hate funeral parlors; I hate the people that are in them. I hate those goddamn—oh god, what are they?—pious bullshit characters who run these places and the way they talk to you and all that. "I'm sure that your family would rather have this than that one." Of course, it's the one for \$5,000 as opposed to . . .

*Right.*

And we managed to get something.

And then there was the service at the crematorium columbarium at Mountain View Cemetery. Most of that family is buried there, because it was prestigious in those days. My

grandfather was buried there on the hill with no marker; people didn't have . . . . My grandmother and grandfather don't have markers. And he was on the hill, because he always wanted to look out over Oakland. [laughter] Like my Aunt Jenny, who when she died, she wanted to be not too high up among the crypts, because she gets dizzy when she's high.

*Oh. That's wonderful.*

We had family like that. By the way, my Aunt Edith didn't want to be high; she ended up kind of high though. [laughter] Kind of hard to reach up there to put flowers in it.

Well, anyway, Papa, my grandfather, is up there, underground because that's the way he wanted to be, in the ground, but he wanted to be able to see out over Oakland. Oh, these things are very important. And oh, everything is marble and gardens and all that sort of thing. Can you imagine 5,000 years from now what that place is going to be? It would be an archeological fairyland. [laughter]

So anyway, we had this service, which was very good, and people spoke and all that. And she was laid out the way she wanted to be.

I can't imagine why with all her sophistication she wanted this kind of show, but it was terribly important in those days to people. It's the way proper people died and what they had done for them and all that.

A certain minister presided that she knew, and then she was put into the crypt. And next to it was a place for my father.

He got shoved in there later. I shoved him in myself. He was wrapped in a white cloth. His guilt then was expressed in the way he was . . . .

*Then he had explicit instructions also.*

Very explicit. He wanted to be wrapped in a white sheet. He didn't want anything done to him and didn't want any coffin that cost any money. My brother and I, we loved that. We went down, and we had such fun.

*With the . . .*

Yes. We ended up with a box. We *outraged* this funeral parlor. "Your family's been coming to us for . . . . How can you do this to your father?"

"That's what he wanted. [laughter] This is what he wanted."

*How wonderful that he gave you that license!*

Oh, he did. Well, he didn't realize how wonderful it was going to be for Don and me! It was such a sense of total closure and conclusion to be able to get this box that was covered with cloth. It was a shipping box, but it was a nice one.

[laughter] *But a nice one.*

It was a nice one, well put-together and all that. It cost about \$100 as against \$5,000 or \$6,000.

I hate that. I hate these goddamn . . . the technology of death—the technology of death, the commerce.

So anyway, he was wrapped in a thing like a shroud, you know, and I was supposed to look and see that that was what had been done, that they had not dressed him differently. He wanted it that way. Would I look? Well, that was a hell of a thing to do to me, because I didn't want to look. Oh, and I was to make sure it was *him* in there.

*The things that people think of!*

The things that come up in families! Was he really there, you know?

But also, for him. He never said this, but I could tell by the way all this was done, it was his penance—wrapped in a white sheet, he didn't deserve anything else. He did this for my mother, and that's the end of it.

So I remember going there and shoving him into the pit, next to my mother, and some guys looking in, staring you know, and they said, "Is everything all right?"

I said, "Well, lift the box lid, I'm going to look in."

"Oh, all right." [laughter]

I said, "Will you pull the sheet away? Yes, that's my old man."

And after everything was done, they closed it, shoved him in. They thought I was pretty strange, but I followed instructions.

*Yes. Well, that's the beauty of the instructions. You don't have to explain anything.*

Well, this is just how they did things. So anyway, my father was in very bad shape and all of us were exhausted and tired and the family spread out and went home. We stayed with him for a few days, about a week, and we said let's go down to Santa Cruz where he and my mother had spent their honeymoon. And when I was a kid, we used to go to Santa Cruz with them. So I thought, "Oh, he'd love that."

So we got in the car, and Kathy, Anya, Erik, Don, and I drove Joe down to the beach for about three or four days.

*Where did you stay?*

They had a place called the Breakers. It's *still* there.

*Is it?*

An old hotel overlooking the beach, an old board hotel with those big bay windows, and it was always important to get that front room. It was very cheap. I don't know. It was

four dollars a night or something and is now turned into something else that's still called the Breakers. We all loved it.



## EMERGING INTERESTS

AFTERWARDS, I went to work at this new job with Jackson's Party Service and continued classes the next semester. I had an interesting class from a guy named Tebbits. I think he had written a book on American naming practices or something. I wrote a paper for him on what little I knew about not only the Washoe, but California Indian naming terminology, the way people named each other, how children were named. Not that I knew too much, but I sort of garnered stuff from the literature plus what I had asked people like Barton and a few others when I was up in Nevada. That was sort of linking what I was doing to a course in anthropology.

And what was the other thing? Oh, I did a paper for McCown on West African migration, the purported relationship between Egypt and West Africa. In those days, that was all conjectural and loaded with strange and marvelous theories.

Who was the West African group that was considered the Hebrews of West Africa? Somebody had written a work on the

Hebrews of West Africa. There was a lot of that kind of strange literature.

But aside from that, there were some serious things about what had happened after the A.D. 600 Arabic migrations over the north that ended up becoming part of Islamic world—what was happening to interior Nigerian societies around Kano, their relation with the Sudan at Lake Chad and the Niger Delta, and to what degree this may have influenced the development of Nigerian arts as well as ancient Ghana. It was at that time pretty conjectural stuff.

Well, McCown, that wasn't his field. He was interested, but it wasn't his focus. Nevertheless, he gave me a lot of literature to read. I went through it, and I did a paper for him, which he liked, because I had reviewed what was being done.

There were two or three different opposing theories about whether early Nigerian societies, iron work and bronze work, and *cire-perdue*, [lost-wax process of bronze metal casting] et cetera, came out of Egypt through Upper Egypt and Meroe, the Merotic exten-

sion. Would it have gotten to Nigeria, or had it been an independent development? This is the old question—independent invention or diffusion?

So I had gone through the literature on that. And it was very interesting to McCown. It was an extension of his kinds of interests in paleoanthropology. You asked me the other day how I had gotten to talk to him about Northwestern. It was this paper actually.

*The other thing I latched onto was you said you did a paper for him and you went to him and told him what you were interested in and that he provided you with the literature, and what I am latching onto is also trying to get a feel of what it was like to be a student of anthropology in those years, too.*

OK.

*And it sounds like there was an expectation and a relationship with the professors where you could go in and say, "This is what I'm thinking of doing," and that he . . . . I was just interested when you said that he provided you with some literature. I mean, he actually thought about what you wanted to do and . . . .*

Oh, yes. Does that sound kind of strange to you? [laughter]

*Yes. I will be honest. [laughter]*

Well, as I remember, any student at that time who showed an interest in what the professor was talking about in class or doing, did get attention. I remember very few who avoided students.

Well, there may have been some. I'm trying to think. You know, that's not that unusual. Nevertheless, there were not that

many students. Classes weren't large except for the introductory classes in anthropology.

*Well, also, the body of literature, I think, was controllable, particularly if you brought up something that was a little off the wall. I would think it'd be kind of challenging and fun to dig around through the "literature" and point a student in a direction by providing . . . .*

Oh, yes. Oh, that was taken for granted, that that's what professors were for. And I remember John Rowe. I mean, you put your fate in his hands when you went into his office, because you'd be there two hours while he was going through his files giving you the bibliographies. You'd ask him a question, "I'm writing a paper, and is there something that you would suggest on this?" Well, he'd open up those filing cabinets of his and all those little card catalogs and go through and pull them out and stack them up in front of you. And you'd come away with a stack, you know, two inches deep of references and things of that kind. He was delighted that anybody would ask him, you see, and he took the time to do it. And I suppose that has gotten to be scarce.

*Well, part of it is just the development and huge expansion of the field, the profession, the specialization, the technology of libraries and databases and all that. So there's not . . . .*

Well, the meat market of university students. Of just getting people through. But anyway, . . . .

*But I was struck by being able to go . . . .*

Yes, well, I remember way back when I was an undergraduate student, talking to

Kroeber, going in and asking him questions about that strange course on art . . . [laughter] that I took from him. I still think it was one of the more remarkable fantastical courses I've taken, from which I gleaned little. I don't think anybody gleaned much. I think he was just using it as a way to make time for himself to do something else. He would just show slides and yak about them, and we were just supposed to remember.

[laughter] *Which has given you a life-long phobia about slides!* [laughter]

Maybe that's so.

*Yes, because I remember . . . .* [laughter]

Yes. I am really bored by slides unless they're really specific to a problem, and not too many of them, you know. Anyway, so yes. I also remember going in and talking to Lowie, going in and chatting with him. You know, these were the days that this was possible.

*Yes. Well, also expected.*

In a way.

*I mean, what was the point of being there unless you . . . ?*

If you were a serious student, you showed interest by going in. And sometimes students would go in, because that was polishing the apple, that was rubbing the back, . . . scratching the back.

But anyway, we'll get back to McCown in a moment. So I went with my father a couple of times on the weekends to Santa Cruz. And that was very good for him, and, you know, he enjoyed it.

I can't get back to what we're talking about here (McCown) until I say that a few weeks later, my father drove to our house in Berkeley from Modesto, very depressed, very glum. It must have been oh, well into the end of the semester—October, I guess. He came down, he was very depressed, all by himself, lonely. And I just felt very sorry for him, because he wasn't used to that.

My mother had really kept him going in many ways. So he sat there talking. He said, "I want to tell you something, ask you something. I cannot live alone. It's a terrible feeling. I am not able to think when I am alone. I want to tell you that I'm thinking of marrying Jenny, your Aunt Jenny." So I remember I had a real double-take, because it used to be said about him by some relatives that, you know, he might run away with a redhead.

I think even my Aunt Jenny might have said that, "Joe might run off with a redhead. You can't have *that* in the family," and all that sort of thing.

So, "I'm thinking very much of marrying her. And I want your take on that."

And, I thought, "Couldn't it have been a redhead?" [laughter] "Does it have to be Jenny." And I couldn't comprehend why.

I put it together. I think she had been setting it up. She had been the receptionist in his office for years, because she was this "poor widow" who had to have a job. She had moved to Modesto when her husband died. She had no place to go—she was this poor widow, "Aunt Jenny, the poor widow."

So she worked in my father's office, and I always wondered, in the way young people do, whether or not there had been some hanky-panky. I don't think so. But you know, even if they had . . . . But the point is why with her, you know? Why of all people.

[laughter] And I have other theories too, but there're not the kind one talks about.

So anyway, he went on very sheepishly, "We need each other, and she was with me before."

And I thought, "You bet she was with him."

And so when it was over, I was feeling kind of depressed, but I just said, "Oh, of course." You know, how could you say he shouldn't? "Do what you think you've got to do."

Kathy was also very helpful in talking to him, and, "We're happy for you and Jenny."

Of course! It's all in the family. [laughter] And it turns out that my grandmother had come to him and said, "Joe, I am still strong. I'm a strong woman. And if you need a wife . . ." [laughter] And this is a case of continuity with the old peasant family idea.

My grandmother was concerned that what little my father had might get dispersed to someone else, and it should stay in the family, and she was available. "Hey, I'm still strong." [laughter] This old lady, and if not, one of her daughters. I'm sure she helped push this, too. And I was thinking, it's all right, you know. I mean, now my aunt becomes my "mama." Oh, god forbid. [laughter] And my cousin becomes my sister, and all that sort of thing. And had it been my grandmother, that would have been even more interesting. [laughter]

But the fact that . . . I have to look into that. The fact that that was allowable in my grandmother's consciousness is interesting—a woman's mother marrying her son-in-law. Certainly in Africa and elsewhere the fact that a mother-in-law might become a kind of a surrogate wife after the death of her daughter, does not actually . . . I don't know. I would have look that up.

*It probably turned some hair white. [laughter] I mean, to think about . . . I'm just thinking of traditional mother-in-law avoidance.*

Yes. Well, I'm not suggesting . . . it couldn't possibly have been in my grandmother's . . . where she came from. It was just for her a natural sort of thing.

*That's very interesting.*

Or maybe it was just pragmatic or maybe despite all traditions. She better do something because the son-in-law with those few little bucks might you know, give them to some redhead.

*Oh, that's truly wonderful.*

So anyway, we said OK. And by the time that year was out, they were married. And I'm awfully glad I wasn't around for reasons I'll talk about.

To me, she was one of the more unlikely people that I have known. I could tell all kinds of stories about things that she did that tell what kind of person she was. [laughter]

She was very competitive with my mother and very mean to her, snobbish and rude and all that. She could make my mother cry easily. She was insulting in a snide and small-minded way; that was it, she was just small-minded. There are hardly any people I feel that way about—she was one of them.

Poor Aunt Jenny, she's now in the crypt at Mountain View Cemetery just down the lane from my parents, and she's up half way rather than at the top, and she's by herself. [laughter]

I always asked, "Why didn't she bury herself next to her daughter? Why wasn't she



buried next to her husband who had died and made her a widow?

He was a pretty nice guy, Paul, you know. Well, she “wanted to be next to Joe,” and I said, “Well, that’s two wives in the same aisle, and that’s not too bad.”

Oh, anyway, so there we are, and I’ve gotten that off my chest.

All right, there was this next semester at Cal, the fall of 1952. I’d gone in to see McCown, as I remember it, about this paper that I had worked on, and we were discussing it. I was talking of my interest in Africa, that that was one of my interests even though I was thinking of working with the Washoe and doing some work with the California Indians for my dissertation work. I was also wondering if I could do something with my interest in Africa at this anthropology department.

McCown said that although he was interested in African archeology and paleo-anthropology, that certainly would not be enough for the kind of interests I had. And he didn’t know if in any other related departments there were such people.

In those days, Africa was really way out in the periphery. There was scarcely anybody. It was the British who were doing this or the Europeans. So he was telling me that. He says, “If you really wanted to work on Africa, you’d go to London, you know. That’s where people do it.”

And also I had talked to him about my African-American interests, you know, in American history and slavery and doing field-work on that. And he says, “Well, there’s certainly no one around here who could do that.” [laughter] “But,” he says, “have you seen this? Here is a notice from Northwestern University on the Department of Anthropology. You know, there is an African

program, and Herskovits is heading it up and his Afro-American interests.”

I don’t know if McCown was the one, but I’d gathered from different people that Herskovits was considered something of a wild hare.

*Kind of a heretic?*

Well, a heretic, but a lot of people didn’t like him. He was a feisty little . . . I think Simon Ottenberg was right, he was considered a feisty little Jew, and I don’t think Kroeber liked him. They had both been students of Boas’s at Columbia at the same time, although Herskovits was younger, Margaret Mead’s age level and generation. And there was this kind of slightly snide, patronizing view of Herskovits and Northwestern at Berkeley—and also because, you know, who studies Africa? [laughter]



“I’d gathered from different people that Herskovits was considered something of a wild hare.” Melville Herskovits.

Now McCown understood that, but he also was not into cultural studies and things of that kind. That wasn't his interest. He was really interested in migrations, early man, development of early societies, the Levantine in North Africa. The rest was interesting but not his special turf. He said, "You know, you might be wise to contact them." So anyway I took this notice, and I don't know how long Kathy and I talked about it. I don't think I did it right away. I kept it around, and somewhat later that semester, I think I did write a letter to Northwestern, applying.

And yet I really didn't have any idea that I was really going or that they might accept me. It was just something . . . why not try it? And at that point I was asking people like Mandelbaum what he thought.

Mandelbaum was very positive; however, I think it was Kroeber who said, "Here you are in the seat of American Indian studies in this country. Here's where everything is going on, and you have the opportunity to do some fieldwork, why would you want to go there?" You know, somebody said that, it may well have been Kroeber. [laughter]

Mandelbaum was a little more positive. Well, you know, he had been a student of Herskovits's. He said, "You know, Mel is quite a guy, very opinionated, makes a lot of enemies, but he's done a lot of work. He's a teacher, and he's very good at getting people into the field. He gets them into the field."

And somewhere along the line, I discussed it with Paul Radin. And I forget when, but it was before I made any decisions.

And he says, "Go!" you know. "Oh, go! Africa is a coming thing," even then in that time when nobody thought so. "Africa is a coming . . . . Go there. Do it." I forget his exact words.

So then Kathy and I talked about it, but I don't remember that I was that serious for a

while. It didn't really register on me I would go there.

Kd: Nor on me, for a while. [laughter]

It did not. Yes, not that semester.

Kd: I don't think I really knew that, Warren, until you made up your mind.

I must have mentioned it to you.

Kd: I don't think you did.

Well, anyway, maybe I was a little embarrassed about it. Here I am changing venues again, you know.

*Well, had you gone back to Washoe country at all in the middle of all this?*

Yes. Well, yes, that was going on, too. Every other weekend or two I would go up there, and I got to know Barton John very well. Oh, and by the way, I sent off the letter somewhere in there, and I forgot about it, just paid no attention. And yes, I was going up to Washoe when I could. I have some notes from November and December of that year. I had been up three or four times. And I don't know whether you [Kathy] went up with me at all at that time, that early.

Kd: I don't remember.

I'm not sure you did that early. But when we came back from Evanston in 1954, you spent a lot of time . . . .

Kd: Oh, I went up before that, one or two times.

Did you?

Kd: I didn't go every time.

Well, maybe it was 1953, the spring of 1953?

Kd: Before we left, yes.

So before we left. OK, so one or two of the times you went up with me.

Kd: Nineteen fifty-two or 1953, yes.

And I really didn't do much fieldwork. I was just writing notes on my impressions. It was highly impressionistic. I was taking down everything I could think of, everything I saw and everything I reacted to. I have those in the spring of 1953, and then it stops.

*Could you discuss your knowledge at this time of the lands and claims case and how that . . . ?*

I only knew that Kroeber and Heizer and others were working on the California Indians Claims Case, and also Omer Stewart would come in and visit with Kroeber on this every now and then.

*Did you meet Omer Stewart at this point?*

I am not sure that that's where I first met Omer. I *think* it was later; I think I met Omer the following year. I don't think at this early stage I did.

But I knew that was happening, and it was one of the reasons why I was very cautious about talking about things I was doing. I felt that these were the big boys, and this was all their turf, and I was messing around with it. And I didn't want any confrontations with them or to be directed by them [laughter]. Later, I was welcoming that, but at this

point, I was just sort of deciding whether it was something I wanted to do.

And in the process, I got to know Barton very well. My notes show that I spent a lot of time with him talking about everything and getting a feeling about what life was like for those people up there, what they were thinking about, and what they were doing. And I met Ramsey Walker. Barton took me over to meet Ramsey, who was the Road Chief up there in Woodfords. And Roy James, I met him, too. I didn't really work with them; I met with them. And so the groundwork was laid.

And then I learned, you know, the extent of the peyotist organization up there, the movement. This was kind of a high point in the mountain peyotist movement. After Omer had done his work in the 1930s and early 1940s, this was all that was left of it, in the mountains.

There were a lot of experiences I had there, which I could go into, but I won't right now. I first want closure on how I started at Northwestern. But anyway, somewhere at the end of that semester in the fall and maybe the early spring, I got a letter from Bill Bascom, who was acting chairman at Northwestern while Herskovits was away, saying, "We have decided that you are welcome to come. However, the first semester you will not get your stipend. You will get it on the next semester." So I guess I was in if I wanted to come.

I'm *sure* we had talked about it at that time. [directed to Kathleen d'Azevedo] It took us a while to decide on that. I went around asking people. That's when Paul Radin said, "Go." You know, "Go, go. This place [Cal] is a dead end. The California Indians are finished." I remember him saying that.

“You know, they’ve been worked over. Don’t listen to Kroeber. Go, because . . .” By the way, Radin had had a problem with Kroeber and Lowie, so he was very happy to put in this little dig. [laughter]

*And Radin at this time isn’t a full professor.*

No, no. He wasn’t. He was always in the extension division, if at the school at all. You know, I told you, later on when I came back to teach, I was in Kroeber’s office, and he told me, “Don’t let Paul Radin into this room. He’ll steal books.” [laughter] So they didn’t get along too well. [laughter] Kroeber knew that I knew Radin, but I didn’t know that he thought I knew him that well. He says, “Don’t let Radin into this room.”

So anyway, that letter sort of laid out a whole new set of problems about what to do and where I was going and what Kathy and I were going to do, what the kids were going to do. You’ll have to help me later, Kathy, put together what the problems were. They were terrific. [laughter]

Oh, at that point, that’s when my father, probably as a sop to Donald and me because we agreed to his marrying my Aunt Jenny, he told us that my mother had said that she wanted part of her money to go to us to do what we thought we wanted most to do. And I remember talking to my father about wanting to stay in school and that I may want to go to Northwestern, something like that. And it was not a lot of money, but it was certainly in those days enough to help us make a decision about where to go and whether we could live on it. Well, it was \$400 a month or something?

Kd: Yes. It was a great deal of money.

Oh, in those days it was a lot of money. This was probably as much or more than I made at the *most* at any work I’d ever done. It was enough so it would last us two or three years, and it seemed like a fortune. As for my father, he didn’t have a lot of money, but he had obviously agreed to this and had told us. So that helped me make the decision and maybe helped Kathy, too.

I need to emphasize that it really was that gift from my mother at that point that made a difference in direction for us. Otherwise, the only alternative I had was to stay at Berkeley, which I was very unsure about. I was not so sure that I wanted to concentrate on the kind of studies that the department had available, though there were people like Mandelbaum, McCown, and . . . well, not many others that I could have worked with.

The pressure was, really, to do work among living California Indians. And that’s, in a sense, what I was pegged for, particularly because I had shown some interest in the Washoe, even though Kroeber and Heizer later on had told Jim Downs, a teaching assistant of mine when I came back to Cal to teach, “Don’t go to the Washoe. There’s really nothing left there. Warren is doing some work, you know,” Kroeber says, “and I have done that earlier work, and Barrett, and Lowie has done work, and there are hardly any Washoe left. That’s sort of a dead end.”

You know, when I think about that, in a way it says so much about territoriality among departments and the umbrella of the older, more conservative members of the department. I mean, they had their agenda—they were doing a survey of California. Heizer was the key student of Kroeber’s at that time doing that kind of work, and they’re interested in doing this major survey and retrieving the last of the California Indians, getting to all

the little pockets. Very important work, very good work, but in a way, I had the feeling that any work that I would do would just be part of their quick survey.

*Well, doesn't it also speak volumes to the attitude that was prevalent, the assumption that those tribes were going to disappear culturally if not physically?*

Oh, yes. Well, they were. [laughter] They had. I mean, Heizer did this remarkable work. It's a kind of a landmark work in my view on the destruction of the California Indians in which he and some others later documented, very forcefully, genocide among the California Indians. So they had very much the feeling that this was a last-ditch stand, that their task was . . . their duty, in a sense, was to get everything they could on the remaining California Indian cultures, which I think was admirable and good.

Later I remember, in discussing theoretically the kind of work that was done in the West, the California Indian studies were sort of looked down upon snobbishly by people that I knew and worked with later. You know, this was retrieval of cultures, cultural reconstruction. It wasn't the new wave and . . .

*The ethnographic present, was that part of it?*

Well, not only that. The ethnographic present was just one idea—that is, most anthropologists worked in terms of putting together cultures as though they existed timelessly, and, of course, that was true of most ethnographers in the past.

It wasn't just that. It was the idea of retrieval and reconstruction and hanging onto the remnants of culture. When I look back now, this critique was rather silly because of the turn of events in terms of the new move

towards structural studies and culture change—at that time acculturation—and all of what was then new kinds of approaches. It was kind of foolish to criticize, because it was extremely important, also.

Culture area theory went into disrepute and all those earlier theories that Kroeber had helped to develop, so that there was this feeling that this was a dated orientation; this was a little pocket of territoriality on the part of the anthropologists under Kroeber in the West. That was the view in the East that I got later.

*The East being Chicago, right?*

Oh god, yes. I mean [The University of] Chicago and even Northwestern and Columbia and Pittsburgh, later when I was there. You know, what a cul-de-sac that was, out there. The other side of the Rockies is no-man's land, you know. [laughter] Very interesting when you think back how these things go.

But anyway, that wasn't necessarily my reasons for leaving. It was just that I didn't feel that I had a place, and Berkeley wasn't the atmosphere or the kind of work I'd wanted to do. But that wasn't the main reason, either. The main reason was that Berkeley had been the place where I had done my undergraduate work. I felt more and more that being in the cauldron of one's mentors was not always . . . I mean, where you had worked a long time and done your undergraduate work, as well as graduate work, was a kind of a trap in a way. You felt surrounded by scrutiny of the kind that you wouldn't in another place where you'd just be taken as a graduate student doing your work.

At Berkeley, it was the idea that somehow or other you belonged there; you *belonged* to them. When I was asked to come back

there and teach for a year, I realized . . . I *knew* I couldn't stay there. I'm glad I went there for it, but in a sense, I was called back *because* I had been their student, and I felt the pressure to be what they were was too much, and it wasn't what *I* was. Anyway, that's another matter. My reasons were also that I really was interested in trying a whole new area, that the idea of Afro-American studies in the South . . .

*That term hadn't even been coined, had it?*

Afro-American had.

*Had it?*

Oh, yes. Afro-American studies, that was, again, Herskovits. People didn't have much respect for it, you know, it was, "What is *that*?" Oh god, when you think back in the 1950s? "Who does that?"

*Well, especially, "What is that?"*

Yes, left-wing nuts and liberals and a certain kind of historian. An anthropologist? It's not the kind of thing anthropologists do, you know. And Africa, it just wasn't something that American anthropologists were into yet. But nevertheless, the whole idea of doing an entirely different area of work, and in Africa, intrigued me because of earlier interests that I had had.

If I had not been accepted at Northwestern, I probably would have stayed at Berkeley. And when I think of it, it might have been a dismal affair for me. I may not have measured up to what they wanted.

That was really one of my worries there was that there were other students who were much more *into* it than I was. And of course I was working part-time, I was only part time

in the department, so I felt slightly the outsider. Again, I was older than all my fellow students. My gosh, I was thirty or thirty-one or -two at that point. And all my fellow students were in their early twenties. So in a sense, ten years of my life had gone over to going to sea, the war, et cetera. Oh, there were a few others like that, but in the department I felt a little estranged.

*So you didn't have a cohort of G.I. Bill-returnees that were . . . ?*

Yes. Well, there were some, but as I recall, not in the department. But at the university, yes. But I don't recall there being . . . there might have been. Erasmus had been there, and I'm not sure just when. I'm not certain. But in general, I just felt that I was older, and Mandelbaum's seminar helped hone me to that.

Although I did well in it, I realized that I was in a group of very, very sharp young people who were doing excellent work and were much more informed about the field generally than I was. And although I made it and I managed to pull myself together and do a job, and Mandelbaum and I began to have a very good relationship, that sort of created in me this sense that this isn't the kind of situation I felt that I might be able to get through doing well. On a thesis proposal and fieldwork, I wasn't sure that the kind of direction I would get would be the kind that would be congenial to me, that my own interests were kind of off-beat anyway.

I was, nevertheless, geared to staying there if I had to and going through the program. But I had many doubts about whether it was what I really wanted. And even though I was very much interested and involved in my connection with the Washoe at that time, I didn't feel the connection between that and

formal academic work that I was doing in the department. In fact I felt a little bit disconnected in the sense that here on the one side were my mentors and the authority, and on the other side was me, a kind of an oddball doing my own thing. So I would have had to solve that, and that might have taken quite a bit of doing on my part. Now you had a question.

*Yes. I just was struck as you were talking about your interest in Afro-American studies and your early interests in the whole idea of Africa and . . .*

And the New World, yes.

*When we were talking about your own background, you've mentioned several times your own admiration for and interest and fascination with your Swedish grandparents and your very early interest in your Portuguese background and just sort of as a student, almost as if you were looking at your own life as the immigrant experience; I mean, you were interested in the immigrant experience, what happens to people when they relocate.*

Oh, yes. Oh, sure. I . . .

*And the African . . . it just seems that it was right there.*

I don't think at that time I would have seen it in that context. However, when I look back, yes. I think *much* of my interests, in fact, throughout my life have been partly determined by my relationships with my families, with the families of my progenitors. The way I saw them or understood them became part of my view of the nature of the world. The people who were pioneers and immigrants had been, you know, in my back-

ground, the most fascinating people that I had known as a kid. All my fantasies and the legends of family, which I will go into in a minute, were part of that. And I suppose the African diaspora was part of that interest in me. The extremities of life, the difficulties that people go through to survive as groups, as communities, that interests me. And so the African experience in the New World was, to me, fascinating, and I suppose that was one of the factors, the one that you asked me about. But at the time, I wasn't aware of that. I just was interested.

*It just seems like you've been interested for a long time in displaced people, including the . . .*

Including myself. [laughter]

[laughter] . . . well, including the seamen experience; the men at sea . . .

Yes. Well, and the labor unions . . .

. . . and how they construct a new reality and then . . .

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Right. In fact, always in my past, as I look back, the most moving experiences that I can remember that I've had have been in having contact with or being in communication with people who were going through enormous personal changes under extreme conditions, under great difficulty, and somehow managing and surviving.

*Well, wouldn't you say your interest in the peyotist movement is the same . . . ?*

Could be. Well, there were other factors in there too, the nature of religion and what it means to people.

My early notes with the Washoe are really my long conversations with Barton about his belief system. And I felt a great deal was very congenial. I felt a great deal of camaraderie with him about the way he looked at the world. Even though I didn't look at it that way, I had this feeling that it was familiar to me.

That is another thing: the familiar. I ran into, later on, a lot of theoretical controversies with others, because in some of my early writing I discussed the fact that I really felt that there were these familiar things in other cultures that you just felt; they were talking about something, and you *know* what they're talking about. And, you know, a lot of anthropology later warned you against this business of transferring your own cultural values onto another or looking through the lens of your own culture and distorting another culture. That's true. One has to be very careful of that. At the same time, there are these realities that hit you of tremendous familiarity and sudden recognition of a connection that not only you experience, but the other experiences. And those moments, to me, are great and are to be cherished. And I'll defend the reality of them. You know, they do exist.

*Well, it's the mystery of the field, isn't it? I mean, that connection?*

Well, in a way. Some people deny that this takes place or deny that this is a valid apprehension or perception.

*Well, one thing that struck me about your talking about these conversations with Barton, for instance, was that he would ask you equally what you believed.*

Yes, and that kind of give and take conversation, to me, was a very important part

of my early experience and later, my fieldwork.

I remember later, well, not to divert now, but you know, in Africa, I went over there not to study art at all. I was really interested in social organization and the development of the chieftainships, et cetera, and found that the people I talked the easiest with were the carvers, particularly one with whom I had these marvelous conversations about aesthetics in which I knew . . . I thought I knew *exactly* what this guy was talking about. There was a place for it in my own culture and in my own background.

I was always aware that there was a difference. It was very different, but that there was somehow communication of a very real kind going on that perhaps verged on metaphysics and the mystical and the concept of artistry and aesthetics.

I had a lot of controversy about that first article I wrote about that a few years later.<sup>1</sup> I felt that even people who liked it and used it didn't understand what I was getting at. They thought that I was saying that all cultures have the same kind of individuals [artist-innovators], and that our values and our systems of cognition are the same as somebody you can find in any culture. I wasn't saying that at all. I was saying that there are now and then these kinds of connections one can make that are real and valid and that they tell you so much.

Same thing with Barton; Barton had that kind of impact on me. He wasn't a terribly loquacious person and not always very communicative, but there were times when he was able in his very halting way to expound on his belief system to a degree which I found absolutely entrancing, because I felt I really could understand what he was getting at, really understood the world that he was talking about. And again, one has to be cautious



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of that, but that kind of thing was, to me, one of the lodestones of fieldwork in anthropology, finding moments of that kind of insight. And even if you might slightly distort it, it is very important and very real.

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Note

1. "A Structural Approach to Esthetics: Toward a Definition of Art in Anthropology," *American Anthropologist* 60 (1958): 702-714.



## TAKING STOCK

SO HERE IS where we were in the fall of 1952, and I think I would call this moment “taking stock.” I was immersed in this moment of having to make some rather crucial decisions that involved Kathy and the kids, involved everybody I knew, involved all the kind of connections I had in the Bay Area, my connections with the party, with the labor movement, with the university and with my work there, with friends of many.

I mean, I had finally come to home port. [laughter] I think I mentioned earlier that not going to sea, deciding that I was finished going to sea, I had returned to home port, by god, and it better be something, because that’s all I’ve got. Finally, I’m grounded. [laughter]

Finally, I’m a stump farmer. I’m stuck ashore and no way to get out, but it was home port, and I knew it. There was a long history there, everything: my own family, Kathy’s family, everything. And here I was talking about picking up roots again and heading off. It was like deciding to go to sea again and all of the problems that ensue from that kind of thinking and decision-making.

And, of course, one of the things in taking stock was the experience of my mother’s death during the summer, getting a new look at the Finley family, my mother’s family that I had had more to do with because of her death and the funeral and all the things that surrounded that. And also my relationship with my father: I guess that was the point when I began to see my father as somebody that needed care. [laughter] You know, the custodial years, people talk about, when you get to a certain age and you move from being dependent—even an emotional dependent if you are that, which I don’t think I ever was in my family, but nevertheless, where you are in a position of being a younger person, a product of that family—to being, in a sense, a kind of a custodian. Because I felt my father was losing his sense of purpose, his sense of self-confidence, and I think my mother’s death had filled him with guilt. He was prone to guilt, prone to deep depressions.

The depressions were often thought of as a result of his being just a silent guy, that he didn’t have much to say. But when I look back, I think we were aware—and my mother

would even talk about it—that he'd go through long periods of deep depression having to do with a lot of his guilt, his sense of the world not being what he wanted it to be.

It probably had a lot to do with the fact that he had had a family early, that in a sense *he* had been responsible for my own birth early and all that sort of thing, that had interrupted his development in school. He was going to go on into medical school, but suddenly here he was married with a child, and later two children, and so, therefore, he tried a number of other things. How was he going to make a living?

He was also, I think, unconsciously rebelling against his family. That had been a great burden to him, and he was the older son that everybody relied on. He loved his father. If there was anybody my father felt emotionally connected with deeply, it was his father. And I can remember that he and his father had this close, warm relationship that didn't extend to anybody else.

My brother and I, I don't think, had that kind of relationship with him at all. He was remote, withdrawn. Always loyal, always helpful, but never close.

He and his father would embrace. That Portuguese family was highly, eloquently emotive. [laughter] Always embracing. But my father wasn't, except with his own father, where I felt there was this deep abiding connection. When I was a kid we'd go down there, and he'd sit for hours with his father, who was sometimes in bed not well, and sit for hours talking to him and holding his hand. And I used to think, "Gee, that's nice." That was wonderful. But it didn't transmit outside of that relationship.

I think my mother felt that remoteness on his part. He was seldom joyful, seldom light though sometimes witty, but in a sar-

donic way, and even an ominous figure at times. If he was in a depression, you felt he was angry. So for long periods, you felt he was mad at something, you know, and you didn't know what. [laughter] And he didn't know what.

But anyway, here is the point. My mother had died, this anchor he had had in her family. The only way he knew how to handle it was to marry her sister, so the sororate was his way of handling the situation. He needed that anchor; he needed that small, extended family, because that had been his life.

He had withdrawn from his own family. But he was still very thoughtful about his mother and concerned about his siblings, but in a sense looked upon them as difficult wash-outs. Because he'd been the older son taking care of everybody, he wanted to slough off all those kind of duties.

His mother was this last one he cared for, but she drove him crazy. She would call day and night about her complaints. And she lived longer than anybody else in her family. She was one of those people, you know, who live forever, but they're always dying.

[laughter] And she was extremely eloquent about her physical condition. And I remember in the middle of the night, her calling, and he would be talking politely to her in Portuguese and then sometimes I could just see that he was ready to strangle, and he'd say, "I've got to go now," and hang up on her. And then, of course, she would call the next day saying how mean he was and, "What kind of a son was he?" and all that.

Well, at the time, this stuff didn't register on me in terms of what it meant to him really. It was more in terms of what it meant to my mother, who just felt overwhelmed by my father's mother, who was this gracious grand dame. And yet my mother was very

resentful of her for the attitude that that family had had about her earlier. So all of this was going on in my father's life.

And I suppose when I call this "taking stock," at sea the analogy would be a cargo manifest. [laughter] Every time you leave port, come into port, you have to prepare a cargo manifest, which is an accurate description of everything that the ship is carrying. So in a way, [laughter] I was taking stock and preparing mentally a cargo manifest—where in the hell was I, and what was going on?

And my relationship with my father was rather important to me at that time as something I thought about, because here I had seen him at a moment when he *needed* others. And he needed *me*, though it was hard for him to admit it. And later on while he was dying some years later, it was extremely hard for him to accept help from me in particular, his oldest son.

He had always thought that I was going to be a no-good ne'er-do-well, you know. Here I was a communist, going to sea, and talking about being a writer and all that sort of thing, which I think drove him up the wall. But also, he didn't know how to communicate. He was much better with my younger brother, a younger kid. And Don was much more dependent and I suppose pliable in terms of the family's interests and values.

I was always sort of resisting and all that. And so Joe, my father, really didn't know how to deal with me. And one way to deal with me was just to put me out of his mind.

But during that period of my mother's death, he really needed the people around him, and I was able to do things that he would accept. He didn't show any gratitude for it, but I think the one gratitude was that he told us about my mother's wish for us to have some money.

He didn't have to. He could have not said a word about that, you see. But he did that, and I suppose in his view, that was a great gift. He was being very noble, you know, though I never accepted the fact that it was anything but what he should have done.

But I was also very hard on him in terms of my views of him, because I felt that we had been deprived, really, of a real father. Not that we didn't expect that he was always going to be helpful and loyal to the family, but there was something big missing.

All of his time was . . . his real interests were in his work with his patients. You know, they loved him. My god, his patients adored him, and around Modesto and that area, he was a highly beloved figure, particularly to the Portuguese immigrant people that he had worked with. And he was very much involved in giving lectures at schools and to local groups.

*You mean like medical schools or . . . ?*

No, just to the school kids. He would be asked to come and talk about something—health problems. Or sometimes with a group of young kids—boys—about sex. And when I think we *never* talked to him about sex, and to think that he was very eloquent, apparently, about this subject with others and very professional and all that sort of thing.

*Yes. Oh, that's great.*

And he had been there long enough so that, you know, there were grandchildren grown up of the people that he had first dealt with, so that he was a figure, a kind of an icon in the area. And he liked that.

We admired that, but we never felt it was transmitted to us. That was that other world

where he shone, where he flowered as a person. And I understand that he was a very witty guy and people thought he was very funny and very comical. And we never saw it, you know. [laughter] It was that sort of thing.

At the same time, part of our image of him *was* the image that others had of him, and my mother's very ambivalent image. All through her life she would make excuses for him to us. At the same time, we'd hear about all the ills that his family had imposed upon her and how difficult he was to live with—and she was very talkative. She never held anything back. She was a very open person about herself, but more than that, it was mostly complaints. On the other hand, if we were at all upset about him, she would make excuses for him, you know, about how hard he worked and how good he was, how really good he was and how concerned he was about us. So there was this double-edged thing going on. So I . . . .

*That's what she got from her family too, that double-edged . . . ?*

Oh, yes, "Oh, you defend the family." At the same time, you know, her values were you show loyalty to your children about your spouse. But at the same time, she was showing the other side of it, which gave us the feeling of the fact that he was an extremely problematic man. And we saw it too, we saw it in our relationship with him.

So after her death, I began to feel the slight difference that I now found myself in a position of advising him. Although he would never admit it to himself, he needed to know that my brother and I felt somewhat good about him, that we would be helpful.

We were. We'd go . . . my brother in particular would go down and mow the

lawn—all the way from Oakland and Alameda down to Modesto on Sundays to mow the lawn and to help keep house, even after he'd married our rather distasteful aunt, who never felt that we did anything right. [laughter]

Her famous line that we always remember of her was, "That's a mess," or, "He's a mess." She was very disapproving of everybody, and she wasn't a very likable person. Nevertheless, he felt comfortable with her. She kept that family situation together and my grandmother and all that—my grandmother who would have married him if she had the chance to just to keep things together. [laughter] And so that was a change in the relationship.

*So you're saying that was the draw to stay?*

No. No, it's just that that had happened. This was part of taking stock; this was part of cargo manifest, Penny. [laughter]

I was aware of how little I knew him, how little communication we'd had. He never talked about . . . very seldom talked about his family. I tried—sometimes successfully, sometimes not—to eke information out of him as I began to get older and wanted to know about the family. Every now and then he would get talkative and tell me a few stories about his parents or about various relatives.

But I got most of my information from my grandmother. When I was going to Berkeley, earlier when I was a student, I used to go visit her. I think I mentioned that. I'd go down and visit her, and I was actually doing genealogical work and didn't realize it. [laughter] I was trying to find out about the family, take notes on who were the various relatives and how they were connected and

where they were living, the diaspora of the great Portuguese family.

And with my grandparents on my mother's side, who were very hard to talk to, because they didn't speak English very well, they didn't have a history. I got very little from them about what their past had been, not because they were withholding it—maybe partly. Maybe it's because their children didn't want to hear about the old country, you know, the second generation wasn't too interested in that.

Well, my father wasn't interested in his family history either, but there were others, and my paternal grandmother, Amalia, who wanted to be known for the family she came from. She was proud of it, and she had all these stories and legends about the past.

My other grandparents weren't that communicative or aware. They did have a past. They did have family in Sweden and in Finland, but they didn't have much connection with them. Now and then a letter would go back and forth. My grandmother had some cousins and sisters there, and my grandfather had some, but they had really disconnected.

They had come to this country and started a whole new life. So it wasn't that they were withholding, they just weren't that interested. So I always felt they had no history or very little history.

I learned something about it later. I did some work in archives and things of that kind and in their own letters and got some background, but it was very slim.

On the Portuguese side, it was voluminous. I mean, there was a rich tradition, a lot of it made up and fictionalized on the part of Grandmother, but nevertheless, there was history, you know. And the two families were quite different, their whole cultures were different, their values.

*I think we mentioned before . . . I can't help but think of Ruth Benedict's Dionysian/Apollonian dichotomy.*

Well, except, you know, it wasn't quite that lovely. [laughter] Not that neat. So anyway, on the one side was the Lutheran immigrant peasants, charismatic evangelical fundamentalists, to me, in the most delightful way, because it wasn't like modern political fundamentalists. These were people who just believed the Bible was the source of wisdom in life and that Jesus Christ was our savior, and that's all there is to it, and there was a heaven and hell, and you better prepare for one or the other. [laughter] And they lived their lives in terms of these very strict codes. They broke them all the time, but I mean they had these codes that constantly reiterated over and over again.

And their children, my Swedish grandparents' children, always admired and respected that in their parents, but at the same time were deeply, powerfully annoyed by it. I mean, they found it a constant drag and a source of irritation and boredom—the constant preaching, the constant prayers and visions and lord knows what, and their failure to become American, that they sort of remained peasants all their lives.

My grandfather had a little more education in the old country so that he could read well. And he would read to my grandmother. I mean, he told her everything that was going on in the world. Everything went through him to her, and so he was her newspaper, he was her source of wisdom, et cetera. And they would pray together.

But she was really a very uneducated, simple-minded woman. Not simple-minded. No, she was very able, very bright, but limited, highly limited. She could work hard, she

could sew, she could iron, she could wash and all that sort of thing, and she did all the time, and pray. And that was her world.

But on that side, it was a small extended family, really just an extended nuclear family. It was my grandparents, their children, and the affines they had married, which really was the family. And it was a closed family—very, very aware of being a unit, and anybody marrying in was never quite of the stature of somebody who was in the family. [laughter] The in-laws were not quite all part of the family. They were sort of family and accepted and involved, but always they were, in a sense, outsiders. My uncles' wives or aunts' husbands were never really in the family, except my father, who had status when he came in.

My mother had seen to it that he'd gone back to school. And she got prestige from that. She had married into a professional family, and so he was acceptable, because he had done something. He had arrived, and so he had certain prestige with the family.

More than that, he had stopped being an active Catholic, and my mother got a certain amount of points for that. He never, though, was saved. He . . . [laughter] he never really professed a full belief in Jesus Christ the savior or in some form of Protestant religion even though my mother dragged him to church once or twice. Everybody knew that Joe wasn't . . . that was too bad, but nevertheless, he was very good to the family, he had a little more money than the rest, and he helped people. He also gave free medical care to . . . examinations to members of the family. So he had a certain status.

So he was the one outsider who was in, and he knew that, and they were important to him. He had found a family. And his own family, really, he was estranged from, except indirectly.

So there were these two kinds of families: On the Portuguese side, this highly emotive family. I mean, you never walked into the house where kids like us when we went in were embraced and kissed and slobbered over for, you know, for hours. And tears: tears and wailing and weeping when you go to weddings or you go to funerals. My god, I mean, you knew you were at something important, because everybody was *dramatically* involved.

And then, as I said, a heritage, a history—my grandmother telling me stories about my great grandfather, which was part of the image I had of this man I had never known, who became a kind of heroic, mysterious figure in my childhood, in my fantasies. And she would tell me the story about how he had been captured on one of the islands of the South Seas, by the chief, along with the members of the crew. And they were kept for weeks by this chief, and the chief liked him and wanted him to marry his daughter, one of his daughters, and he was afraid about this, because he thought he would be stuck for the rest of his life. And he managed to escape, and he . . . [laughter] somehow or other, he got away from this island, got away from the chief and came to the West Coast of the United States, and he found his cousin, another d'Azevedo, who had come over. And they worked as miners in the foothills of California. Then when they had some money, they bought a little land and decided to grow grapes. They had vineyards and a farm along the Sacramento River just south of Sacramento. Then they started a winery, the Eagle Winery.

I heard about the famous Eagle Winery that they had owned for, oh, from the 1870s through the 1890s or something, and how they had shipped wine all over, up to Virginia City, even to Nevada during the Comstock.



And they made a lot of money, and they sold wine and liquor everywhere. And it was a rather well-known winery, the Eagle Winery, in those days. I've looked back on it.

I don't know if all *her* stories were correct. And certainly the South Sea story has got to be just a family myth or legend. [laughter] And who knows? But I bought it, hook, line, and sinker when I was a little kid. And I remember when I was in high school, I wrote a story based on that story that my grandmother had told about my great grandfather. It's a rather good theme, you know. And the teacher's remarks on it said, "Is this real, or is it fiction?" [laughter] To this day, I will never know; there's no way of knowing.

I think my father confirmed that there had been a South Sea episode, but he thought his mother had elaborated a lot on it. But my father would never talk about these things. My brother and I had to *dig* out of him who were the various relatives in Hayward and Sacramento. My god, we had relatives all over California. In fact, today I've got relatives in Nevada.

The Portuguese really moved around, and that diaspora fascinated me. And now and then we'd have family gatherings where we'd go out to these various places and meet these people. But my father was disinterested in it.

He spoke *magnificent* Portuguese, high Portuguese, you know, elegant Portuguese, and yet not to us. We would never hear it. But when we were with his family, we'd hear this.

*Would he speak it to his patients, too, that were Portuguese?*

And his patients. Oh, yes. I remember when he first went to his office and I was working as his receptionist. [laughter] Oh, yes. I used to think how wonderful he could

talk with such fluency to these patients. But among his family too, and he was a different kind of person when he was talking Portuguese. In fact, one of the fascinating things to me was when he was dying—this was, god, twenty years later—he only spoke Portuguese the last day or two of his life before he went into a coma. I mean, he spoke Portuguese. I'd come in to see him and bring him things, he was talking, in Portuguese, you know, "Come on, boy." And then he'd go off speaking this highly elaborate Portuguese—poetry, everything. And he wouldn't speak any English. So, you know, there was this *weird* kind of disconnection in him between his own heritage and the way of life that he had chosen for himself.

So all of this was important to me in taking stock at that time when I was deciding where I was going to go and what I was going to do, my different relationship to him and understanding. It didn't change our actual relationship, but it changed my view of it, and I felt much warmer toward him, much more accepting of him than I had when I was younger. But at the same time, actually nothing really changed in what was communicated between us except I think he appreciated it when I did something positive to him or for him. But it was very hard for him to express that. I don't think he even understood that that's what was happening.

So there was on one side this damn Swedish-Finish tradition, on the other side, this flamboyant, extensive diaspora of Portuguese throughout California, many of whom were related to us. [laughter] But I always felt I wanted to know more, and later I did have some connections with some of the descendants and got to know them, but at the time, my father really had removed himself from that. He only went on trips when he was coerced into going.

But that family, they had not only a tradition, but they kept connections with the Azores. From the very beginning, you know, Joaquim and then Jose and then Guilherme, they would go back to the Azores and bring relatives with them. Over the years, they just kept returning to their home islands and then bring two or three daughters or a couple of sons of other people over with them. And there was this constant connection with the old country. And they had pride in it.

They had a community—that was the thing that I was trying to think of—the Portuguese family had a Portuguese community. Even though they were a minority in the Bay Area and looked down upon, you know, as certain Hispanics and even upper-class blacks would be looked upon today, they were looked upon as one or two steps below the rest of the white population. Nevertheless, they had a large community, and within it, a lot of activity.

They had their own churches, they had their organizations, which my father's people were very involved in. They were very involved in all the Portuguese associations, the literary associations, all of this kind of thing, which I didn't get to be part of, but I used to admire and think about and see what they were doing. They were all well-known within the community. They were people of stature within the Portuguese community.

And that is so different from this sort of simple Protestant fundamentalist Swedish Lutheran family and their second generation descendants, small extended family, an entirely different experience.

On the other hand, it's in my mother's family that the values were expressed. I mean, my mother had very, very rigid moral values about injustice, about snobbishness. The worst thing one could be would be a snob about other people. And she always reacted

to what she considered to be injustices, people not treated right or equally or put down. Because, you know, that was their background. Oh, what were some of the other things?

*Well, also, the high value that was placed on your father's goodness, I mean, that he was a good man, that he helped people, that he . . .*

Yes. Yes, see, he didn't have to be nice, he just did his duty. He did his duty, and he could be counted on, you know. And you had to take care of him, because he was doing all these good things.

But it was that simple kind of thing which was kind of endearing when you come to think of it. And to be un-Christian was terrible, and un-Christian covered a lot of things, covered all these things: injustice and all that. To be Christian was not only to be saved and believe in the Lord but to act right and to do unto your neighbor kind of thing. That was drilled into us by everybody in the family, even those who certainly didn't live by it. [laughter] That's the ideal; that's what you should do. And stinginess. Generosity was a positive . . . And by the way, this is the way the Washoe were—generosity and being an ordinary person, not putting yourself forward, helping others. Well, all those simple, positive values were on my mother's side.

On my father's side, I'm not sure what the values were. I would say their values were much too Baroque to fit.

*I love that.*

[laughter] I mean, anything went as long as it helped the family or helped whoever you were with. Oh, they were very hard-headed, the Catholics, so they followed those pre-

scriptions and proscriptions. At the same time, they were in a much more sophisticated Latin way aware of how people were weak and were going to fall by the way-side. And it wasn't a terrible tragedy if somebody got pregnant or somebody did a little hanky panky or a little corruption or something, because as long as they asked for forgiveness and went to confession, everything was OK. [laughter]

Well, this used to drive my mother's people crazy, confession. "God doesn't forgive you if you just confess. You have to not do it." [laughter] Once you do it, you're in danger of hell, and you have to go through an awful lot to keep from going to hell.

And hell was really not so terrible a place. It was a literary place among the Catholics. It was Dante, you know. Hell was there. It was pretty terrible, but you know, not so many people really went there. [laughter]

[laughter] Well, that's what purgatory's for, . . .

Purgatory's for that.

. . . so you can just hang out. [laughter]

[laughter] Intermediate. Yes, I've forgotten all these marvelous things that I used to know about the way they thought. But it was a much freer, more open, colorful kind of world, and yet a little amoral, you know. That attracted me, [laughter] you know.

They would have forgiven a lot more than my mother's people would forgive, because if you got into trouble with the God of my mother's people's side, you were *in real trouble*. Oh, I tell you, and it took a lot to get out of it. You had to pray and pray, and you had to do penance over and over again. I mean, sliding on your belly from here to Verdi. [laughter]

*Your whole life was a penance.*

Scraping your belly until it bled would be nothing. I mean, you really had to knock your head against the wall and pray and pray and pray. And, of course, somebody who didn't do that was . . . people worried about them. They might go to hell. My grandmother always worried that I was going to go to hell, but she did tell my mother I was a good man. [laughter]

Oh, lovely. Well, I'll tell you, this was great preparation for the peyotists, you know. In a different frame, but nevertheless . . . . You know, people who grew up in an intensely religious environment and who broke away from it are in a much better position to understand a lot of other cultures than people who didn't. I mean, there's something about middle-class prophylactic distance from the things in their own culture which would give them the instruments and the keys to other people, not only in their own culture, but outside. I think that's a very important thing.

And my old great grandmother on my father's side, Vovô, in Portuguese. That'd be something, to ask my brother how to spell it. It's v-o-v-o with the last "o" having a circumflex: vovô. That means grandmother. Ávo is grandfather.

We used to call her Vovô, and she was a *de Gloria* on Amalia's side, on my father's mother's side. She lived to be a hundred and two or three, and all her life she did needlework, this marvelous, Azorean Portuguese needlework. Everybody had these *beautiful* tablecloths and spreads, these beautiful, fine-textured things.

And she would sit, and you'd talk to her if you *could* talk to her—she spoke only Portuguese, but, you know, I sometimes through one of my cousins or something would talk to her. And I always wished that I

had been able to spend more time with her, because she had lived in the Azores, and she knew that whole life, and she knew where all . . . what was going on, and she knew Joaquim and all those wonderful people. [laughter] And I remember her, this wizened little old lady, bright to the very end. Never would speak a word in English—was ashamed of speaking a word in English—and sewing. And she got a big write-up in the newspaper, when she had her hundredth birthday.

And I felt on that side a great deal of life and heritage that I was disconnected with because of my father and that I had to go around him to get to it. And on my mother's side, immersed in this other kind of marvelous wildness, which was what my father was attracted to. They had a simple, direct way of life that he found comfortable and congenial. They left him alone and admired him, and that's all he cared about in this world. [laughter]

So anyway, now with my mother's death, part of taking stock at that time, I realized in making decisions about going, . . . oh, I forgot. There's also Kathy's family, her wonderful mother and father, whom I always admired. They were also simple people—non-religious, but they had very firm, clear ideas about what was right and wrong. And they worked very hard.

Her father was an engineer, I mean the kind of engineer that works in big plants, hospitals taking care of the machinery, and was good at it. And his father had been an engineer and had had a machine plant, one of the earliest ones in the Bay Area. She was English, and he was Scotch, and they come from that whole tradition of sort of . . . oh, and partly Mormon. She had come from Mormon stock, but she herself was not. And he had no use for religion, but he was a very strict authoritarian about what was right and

wrong, you know. They were very good people, and I had a lot of admiration for them.

So also, there was the idea that Kathy, who was very close to her mother and father and her two sisters, who for reasons that I cannot understand, she feels that she has to take care of. [laughter] Well, as older sister she still felt that she had an obligation to them. So leaving there for any length of time was also a problem. And I realized it.

She didn't say too much about that, but I realized that it was going to be hard for her to be away from her friends and her work that later turned into a very good thing for her when she got a degree and became a therapist and all that—that early work, stood very well for her. It also was very wonderful for us when we were in the field, because she did a lot of good fieldwork on children and marriages. I couldn't get her to do anything with it, but it's wonderful stuff, and I'm glad we have it. So you know, there was *that* family.

This was the business of pulling up roots. When I was talking about coming to home port, I thought I was going to stay there, and then now pulling up roots again, and I felt very guilty about this, that I was causing this goddamn change again.

Oh, it was the period then, also, of the decline of those families. That was another thing that was going on. My grandfather on my mother's side had died, my grandmother was alone and had to be supported by her children, and they were becoming more atomized as little nuclear families, and the old family get-togethers weren't happening so much anymore. People were off doing their own things.

*So this was the trend?*

A trend, yes. I think this was going on in American society, but in my family, after my

mother's death, it was even more so, because my father, you know, was now remarried to probably one of the least companionable . . .

So anyway, that was happening on that side: a sense of decline and my father in a sense, now realizing that he was getting older and that he was not as vigorous as he had been. Although he was still working, he still had a practice, it didn't serve the same kind of role for him as it did before. And on his parents' side, his father had died, his brothers and sisters were scattered all over and were having great problems. His two sisters had serious problems—I don't want to say mentally. I'm not sure that was it. They just had life problems.

And his two brothers. One brother did very well—Alfred. Quite a guy. I would have liked to have known him better. And Virgil was something of a ne'er-do-well and heavy drinker.

And after his father died, my grandmother really became destitute. You know, she had spent all the money, or the money was gone, what little they had. She had to sell the house that they had lived in and was living in a little apartment in Alameda, in fact, and I used to visit her there as she was getting older. And the whole feeling was of the decline of families, the decline of the families as they had been.

And so that was part of my feelings, that the area was no . . . oh, it was the decline of the families, and the decline of the party and left-wing organizations, the sense of loss. That part was very important to me at the time.

*Did you have the perspective to observe that same trend among the larger Portuguese community as a whole, or . . . ?*

No, I don't know. I think this has to do with individual family traditions and circum-

stances. I think generally throughout the whole United States, the trend towards atomization of large families was taking place. I'm not so sure that that was what was going on here so much as just the wearing out of family traditions and the key figures, the iconic figures dying off.

You know, my grandparents had really held that other family together because of their admiration for their old people and the loyalty to these old people. And also all their arguments and fights with them and all that was part of a system that held together for awhile, while they lived. [laughter] When they died or were dying or became helpless, all the others were growing older, and everybody had done their own thing and developed their own . . .

*Well, was it unusual in that time? Was it unusual to have your grandparents living with their children?*

Oh, I don't think so. Oh, no. I think that was very common. Oh, I think it was very common for older people to be in the family. There was no other place for them. You took care of your older people and you didn't make much use of hospitals either. You couldn't afford it.

And those are the days that doctors did house calls. And my father, I would say spent three quarters of his time on house calls all over the area. And I don't think he did that so much when he was older, but when he started out, he was a traveling man. [laughter] He was in his car day and night going out to farms and ranches and to people's houses and taking care of people in their homes. Oh, yes. People lived together.

My gosh, my uncles—my mother's brothers—stayed with us frequently when they were broke, had no place to go. And people

put people up. You put up family. I think I mentioned way back, we had three people in a bed. I mean, nobody thought different, you just did it. You doubled up.

So yes, taking care of the old folks was just something you did. And I don't think that was unique to my family. That's a good question, because I think that's been written about. In fact, there have been a lot of studies of that, the changes in attitude about care of the elders. Now people don't have time. They don't have the funds, they don't have the time, and the whole idea is to find a way to get long-term care for people and get them out of the house, get them . . . like what's happening to Kathy's sister right now. Nobody can take her in.

She's pretty helpless. In the old days, she would have been there, and people would have been taking turns taking care of her. You'd have pooled their money to get a helper in and part-time nurse or nurse's assistant in, which wasn't too expensive in those days. But never put them in a "home" unless they were crazy.

*Right, right. Or a danger to . . . sure.*

Or a danger. So yes, that was just taken for granted.

OK. Oh, yes, then the decline of the Left. To me, this was a whole period of shedding. This was a watershed. And in taking stock, I was just thinking, you know, where am I now?

And I was still very active in party affairs, active in labor affairs and Left activities. Even when I was going to school, that was just, to me, taken for granted . . .

*Was Eisenhower president yet?*

Oh my god, 1953.

*Probably not, huh? I'm just curious what that whole scene . . .*

I'm not sure.<sup>1</sup> I do remember one thing, that in the spring of 1953, Stalin dies. I remember that. And Stalin's death had a real impact—both positive and negative—on a lot of the people that I knew in the Left.

It was a period when the party was breaking up. A lot of people were leaving it. Some were deeply cynical and became anti-party, and some blamed the party for everything that was going wrong—you know, the party had created its own destruction. And some became informers and anti-party during the hearings, the whole ex-communist thing of informing on the party because you no longer thought it was valuable, or because there was some emollients to be gotten for doing that. So it was a very mixed and depressing time on that level.

But I stuck with it for that while in 1952 and 1953 out of a sense of loyalty that I felt that I owed, not only the party but the Left in general. It had been a great learning period in my life—a period of awakening and sharpened awareness that I would never have had otherwise. I was very grateful for that. I also liked some of the people that I had met and known and had a lot of respect for their determination, their hard work, their willingness to give up a lot of themselves for a movement. And their values, you know, the fact that they were the people who were doing the thinking about all the things that ten, twenty years later became important.

*About social responsibility.*

Yes. I mean, gender problems and the place of women in society, the minorities and African-Americans. Those were key party

issues all the time; to me, that was wonderful. I felt very, very grateful for that experience.

But as the party was breaking up under Earl Browder it was a terrible thing; it was like losing a great instrument, something very important. And I was very irritated by anybody who would tell me that the party was responsible for what was happening. And I'm awfully glad I had that view at the time, that it was the aggressive capitalism confronting all this that was overwhelming, overpowering. Stalin's death was timely as far as I was concerned. I had already had doubts about the role that Stalin had played. And I wasn't alone, because a lot of information was coming through about the brutality and ruthlessness of some of the programs and the fact that socialism and Marxism had really been set aside as policies. And I had real doubts that the Soviet Union represented socialism anymore.

On the other hand, it was the only experiment of that nature and of that size that the world had seen and, in that sense, it was important, and I would support *that period* of growth and change in the world. And it didn't surprise me that there was *decline*. [laughter] Decline in my family, decline in the Left.

And later, Stalin's death, as far as I'm concerned, seemed to me to be an opening, because I felt that he had had his day, and that it was well passed time for something else. And there was a whole series of people, Malinkov and others, followed by Khrushchev later on, and there was some hope that things were going to be revived. But I had the feeling that the Soviet Union as a socialist experiment had had its day.

Even to this day, I just feel anger rising when anybody says socialism is dead or communism is dead. My god, just because the

Soviet Union as we had known it and the Communist Party of the United States had become a husk of itself, it was a husk of a chrysalis, by god, and that live thing inside had flown out and was reproducing elsewhere, propagating elsewhere. And it was going to go on.

And so to this day, my response to anything like that is, "I am not only a socialist and perhaps a communist to some degree, but the Marxist orientation to the world, to me, was one of the great contributions." And what is the alternative to a future that is socialistic? *That's* frightful to think of what the alternative is.

My view is that is the only dream, socially, that human beings of any thoughtfulness can have, is a socialist perspective. Without that, there's hell to pay—predatory capitalism or fascism.

*Well, you know, when you talk about the demise of the party as you had known it being a consequence of—or at least occurring against the backdrop of—the social context and the pressures and being overwhelmed, I wondered if it prepared you to observe that same phenomena in minority cultures that are being engulfed and overwhelmed . . .*

Oh, yes. I think so.

*. . . by a dominant . . .*

You know, I think it's dialectical. I mean, I felt enough connected with that kind of theoretical orientation, even though I wasn't very well informed. I mean, I felt, that all movements of that sort are going to reach a certain point that, if circumstances in the world are not ready, they're going to corrupt themselves and decline. That happens to all kinds of movements. And the socialist experi-

ments all over the world have gone through these cycles.

The Soviet Union, and the great power of the dream in the 1920s, then think of the historical context of the Cold War, up through the 1980s. I mean, there's no way that that country could have survived as a socialist-oriented country in the predatory capitalist world of Europe, the U.S., and its globalization. From a Marxist perspective, one could say that capitalism had not reached its end, its zenith.

That phase of capitalist growth and exploitation I think is much more visible now than it was twenty, thirty, forty years ago. I mean, the globalization, the decay of this system during its expansion—its ruthless lack of regulation, I mean where every predatory instinct of human beings is not only accommodated, but encouraged, where every good thing is appropriated for commercial aggrandizement. I keep thinking of Marcuse who I read years later, you know, the idea that, actually, we're being taken *over* by that system. Our minds, our thoughts, everything is part of that great stew.

In fact, you watch television for twenty minutes, and you realize the news has become entertainment. Half the time is spent telling you about films, because the makers of films are putting money into the stations, and news has become advertising. I mean, that's a small example of what's happening all over the world in a globalized sense. And this is capitalism, in its flowering, and it's giving off its pollen. [laughter] There are weeds growing all around, and those weeds are the sprouts of other systems that are trying to find expression.

I always felt that way. Although it was sad to see the breakup of the party, personally, because I had been part of a section of it that I had a lot of respect for and I felt good

about, and to see that fall apart and to see the depression and cynicism among people that I knew. I personally never blamed the party or the Left or thought that its decline was because the whole socialist idea is, at its base, wrong and unworkable.

It couldn't work *now* [at that time]. There just is no way, when you're thinking of the pressures that were put on the Soviet Union that caused characters like Stalin to arise to compete with the capitalist world, militarily and in terms of the kinds of industrial activities that were not necessarily the wisest kinds. Nationalization of agriculture could have been done much better. Partly, it was for speed to get up to snuff, to compete with the capitalist world. That was corrupting. It helped to destroy it. It may be happening to China or Korea today.

Interesting enough, in a strange and weird way, it hasn't happened to Cuba, you know, that little postage stamp of a country. [laughter] I admit to admiration for Castro and his group. Under the conditions that we have created for them . . . we have created the starvation there if there is any, *we* have created the problems, because it was on its way to being a rather good experiment. It is on its way like the others. These things can't last in this world the way it is.

There has to be basic monumental change, and that will take *a lot* of time where something like a socialist perspective in all the various forms it could take begins to be part of an awakened human understanding. My view is it's always there, that there's not a human being in this world, and in every culture, who wouldn't understand the values of socialism as being what everybody wants, but would say, "We can't have it, because, because, because, because . . ."

One of the big *because*s is because one system that we have developed, capitalism,



is still in the last of its most powerful phases and globalization. We have to see that through. I don't know whether we will live long enough. I don't mean you and me. I mean, I don't think the human race will exist long enough for it to take place, when you think of the potential for its own destruction. And then also, you know, given the millennia and the billions of years of the solar system, I suppose the planet can do without the . . . .

People. [laughter]

Well, not people, the slime that we represent as the mold over the face of this earth. If you look at the earth from a distance, where are the human beings? They're a mold spreading and creating noxious fumes. [laughter] And maybe the planet could regenerate itself into something else, and we won't be able to appreciate it. [laughter] Nobody will be here to appreciate it.

Well, look what the dinosaurs . . . [laughter] became birds.

Yes, if there were any thinking dinosaurs, they would probably think the same thing: what would happen without us? Well, here we are. So, you know, it's only a few million years later.

So my view is if there's time, maybe human beings will be able to develop the kind of societies where they don't destroy their world and destroy themselves.

So you didn't leave the party . . .

This was going on.

. . . because you had an ideological revelation, . . .

Yes.

. . . *it's just because the party crumbled around you.*

Well, not only crumbled around me. I just felt that I wasn't useful in it as it was. I didn't feel very able to take part in the underground activity. I didn't feel able to sort of shore up what was left of the very depressed and cynical people I had known who were facing enormous difficulties.

And I stayed very active until the time I left. But when I left, I realized I wasn't going to renew my connection.

Oh. *So part of this taking stock was your recognition that that would basically terminate that part of your . . . .*

That it was going to . . . that kind of connection was going to end.

*Well, that's a huge watershed, it is a benchmark.*

Oh, enormous. I felt a lot of guilt about it, but I never felt anti-party, I never felt anti-left. I felt loyal to it, but that I was no more going to be part of it in that way, but in other ways. In fact, the only difference was I wasn't active in one area anymore, and I wasn't . . . . That's the only difference. I wasn't a union seaman.

*Do you think it's fair to say that after you left—and I realize I'm jumping ahead a little bit here—but do you think you became more of an intellectual communist rather than a practicing, hard hat . . . ?*

Well, yes, in a way, but not a fat-ass pinko.

*You'd been a social activist.*

I wasn't very well informed theoretically.

Yes. *Did you become more informed?*

More so, but I never was an astute Marxist per se.

*Well, you didn't explicitly pursue that line of . . .*

No, I never felt that I was locked into a system, into a theory, however, I had a lot of admiration for it, and I'd always go back to it, refresh my memory about things. I'd re-read Marx and Engels you know, the various works that had been suggested to me earlier that I should read. And I would go through the period when Lenin was making his first major statements during the early part of the revolutionary period. I also read some European and American Marxists.

I was very influenced by Marcuse. I had a tremendous respect for him.

*Was he a political or social commentator? I don't know.*

Social historian, sociologist kind of writer. I'm not sure what his profession was, but Marcuse wrote in the 1940s and 1950s and 1960s. I can't remember the title of some of his more widely read works. Oh, I wish I could remember. Had a wonderful title to one of his works, that I have read in extensively [*One Dimensional Man*, 1964].

Anyway, I never felt that I was ideologically in track as a Marxist. However, Marxist thought was very important to me, and I absorbed a lot of it, and it guided much of my thinking. It gave structure to my thinking. And I felt it was one of the most important things that had happened in the Western intellectual world. And I don't think many

people would disagree with that. And it still is, it's still active, it's still alive.

However, sometimes I feel sheepish about even saying that I'm a Marxist, because I'm not that well informed. I haven't read everything, I don't retain everything, but it's congenial to me. Whatever I hear, whatever I read that is Marxist sounds OK to me. I get a little tired of some of the neo-Marxists.

*I was going to ask you about that.*

Yes, yes. I mean, people like what's-his-name in England whom I met? Well, can't remember names anymore. But I'll think of him.

*Oh, Ian Hodder?*

No, he was a young Englishman anthropologist. Anyway I ran across him at a conference, and I listened to him, and I got very not only bored but irritated at something so effete and overly abstract and refined and convoluted about the thinking. It may be important, but I'll be damned if I have time to dig it, you see. And a lot of the neo-Marxists feel that they have to show how advanced they are by dealing with what I consider the most peripheral aspects of the social problems. And it has become a literary event; it's literary criticism to a considerable degree rather than social criticism and a lot less really hard work about society itself, much more about the studies.

*Well, it's endless commentary without any real application . . .*

In a way, yes.

*. . . in action. I mean, there's . . .*

However, I'm glad it's there. I'm glad it's there as against a lot of the other crap that's going on, you know. But there's very little hard-hitting Marxist thought of the kind that, to me, moves things and makes things happen. And what little there is comes out of the remnants of the Marxists in the labor movement in Europe and the United States, the people who are connected with the original problems, you know, the basic problems of capitalism. [laughter]

So anyway, that's neither here nor there. I still feel more connected with whatever kind of Marxist thought, than its opposite.

*Would it be fair to say it was really your value system?*

Yes, in a way, to the degree which I understood and had done it. I wasn't a fundamentalist, because I didn't know enough, but to the degree that I understood it, it made a great deal of sense to me.

*Well, your sense of fair play and . . .*

Well, in a way, yes, but Marxists don't necessarily have to have a sense of fair play. There are a lot of Marxists who are . . .

*Well, the collective good.*

. . . a lot of the Marxists who are bastards, you know. [laughter]

*Well, there are a lot of Christians who are . . . .*  
[laughter]

Same thing. That's what I'm saying. That's what I'm saying. Yes, well, yes, I can see what you're saying. Yes, that sort of simple, direct value system of my grandparents on my mother's side and Christian values, what

I consider the basic ones, one could find support for them in the Marxist view of class struggle and the values in the working class. Sure. Yes, I see what you mean. Yes, of course there is a connection there.

So yes, over again, I want to repeat, "What is the alternative to socialism in the future?" You know, if there's no dream that's "socialistic"—not what our society and its press and its middle-of-the-road right thinkers call socialism; I mean socialistic perspective on human relations, a humanistic perspective, or even a secular humanistic perspective that is socialistic with reference to the organization of society—what's the alternative in the future? I dread to think of living in this alternative.

You know, the extreme alternative is what we used to know as fascism and naziism, but there are all sorts of gradients in between, and none of them are worlds that I would want to live in as an ordinary person. Maybe as an elite. Yes, it would be nice to be an elite, but you never know if that's where you're going to be. [laughter] So I'd like to live in a society where I don't have to feel that I have to be an elite in order to live out a life of some self-fulfillment.

To me, "socialism," and all that means, is the *only* way one can hope for the future. You know, if that makes me a communist, OK, I'm a communist. If that makes me a whatever, it's OK by me. It's just I believe that.

Therefore, I've never felt the party was the wrong thing to be a part of or the wrong thing to happen to this country. By god, it was all there was for a period of time. It was the gestation crucible for some remarkable people, and I'm proud to know some of them and to have been connected with them. And its demise is nothing shameful. It happened, and it happened for reasons which have never been fully discussed but will be. It's the battle-

ground where the opposing forces were stronger, bigger, technology was greater, the wealth was greater, and the values were ruthless and still are.

I mean, what a beautiful example is Cuba. What harm can Cuba do to us? But we can't stand its existence. By we, I mean "them;" them who control what we're doing. If you listen to people like Helms and others in the government, I mean, the arrogant stupidity of their position is unbelievable. Here is that little country . . . .

*But it gets them elected.*

Well, of course! Of course, and that's the sad thing, the appropriation of the values and of the hopes and aspirations of millions of people, the distortion of their perspectives. OK, enough of that. We're going to have to come to an end here.

All right, so with all this long detour, what it comes to in this cargo manifest, this taking stock, is that here I've realized I was almost thirty-three years old! What the hell had I done with my life? What was I going to do with it? How was I going to take care of a family?

The future was suddenly enormous, a great cloud over a vast desert. How was I going to do it, and how was I going to be anything like I want to be as a person? How is my family going to be able to do it, as well, and how could Kathy?

What did anthropology mean to me at that time? I don't think I had any idea that I could do anything else. I think I said somewhere that it was the only discipline that could, that would accept me as I was. But no, it was a vista that allowed for so many alternative ways of being and thinking and doing that I saw it as a remarkable opportunity. That was where I could *figure out* what I really

wanted, *figure out* what I could do and wanted to do, and there was so much in it that I found fascinating and exciting.

*And the subject, too, of African-American studies was not only intrinsically interesting to you, but it must have been a pull, because it wasn't a crowded field, it was new ground, and you could sort of create, be a pioneer of sorts and . . . .*

Well, that's the other thing. You could go out and formulate and create your own program as a person. I think it was easier to do that then than it is today. Anthropology was a more open and amorphous field in a way, even though it was divided into four very rigid parts. [laughter] Nevertheless, there were all kinds of people in it doing all kinds of things. Anthropologists were fascinating people. There are still some who still are—from weirdos to extremely admirable persons with tremendous knowledge and ability and thoughtfulness. There was a whole range, and in between, just about everything. So that was congenial. [laughter] I mean, you never would feel hemmed in.

I felt a little hemmed in by Cal, but that wasn't because of anthropology. It was because of the nature of the research focus there and the particular point in my trajectory where I happened to be while I was there. That, to me, was a problem. But I would have gone on, because that was the only place where I could do anything.

*Were you ever pointed toward or tempted by sociology given the currency of your interests?*

No. I was interested. I read a lot of sociology. I took courses in sociology, and I saw it as a related and very interesting field, important field, but it was much too narrow and disciplined for me. I mean, the kind of

problems that at least most . . . There were many maverick sociologists too, good ones, but academic sociology was, to me, a little bit too rigid. But anthropology departments were mad houses of variety and, I mean, you got somebody like Radin around. [laughter] And there were other people.

There were some real crazy guys! There was that guy who taught physical anthropology, Ronald Olson. I mean, he was still living in the last century. You studied crania and cephalic indexes and had to learn the seventy-two racial types and all the stuff already going out of fashion at that time. I mean, he was immersed in it and deadly wedded to it.

So it was a lively field. And anthropology students that I knew were lively people. They were concerned about things that I thought were important. They were interested, like I was, in discovery.

*Yes. And very eclectic. I mean, you could do . . .*

Very eclectic. That's right. And that was true in other fields, too, but in anthropology it was . . . I don't know, it had a certain élan that I felt good about. But again, the pull to Northwestern, I would never have thought about it as a serious thing to do. It was too hard to do if I hadn't been invited, and if I hadn't gotten a little money, I just wouldn't have done it.

I couldn't have afforded to do anything else [but stay at Cal] and I would have found a way; I would have plugged through, but I don't think I would have been as happy with my life. Maybe. I don't know.

I got along well with Heizer; I had grown to like him a lot. Later on, I liked what he was doing, the kind of view he had of his

work and the mopping up business of California Indians, the influence he had on others.

A lot of people hated him. I didn't. I had fairly good connections with him. And that's what they [at Cal] were really known for: their enemies as well as their friends.

But the pull to Northwestern was really new worlds, opening up the door. When I come to think of it, except for my sea-going days, I had never been outside of California.

*Yes, I was struck by that. With all the romance of the sea and travel and all of that, your home port was home.*

I was in home port, and I had never been east of the Rockies, and I don't think I even got that far more than once or twice when I was younger to the national parks or something, with my folks, at least once.

*I mean, the way you talk about it, it sounds to me like it occurred to you if you went to Northwestern that you might never come back to California.*

Oh, yes. Oh, you know, "You'll go back there, you'll never come back here." Friends were very concerned that they'd never see us again and all that. But that became a pull.

The magnetic compasses of our lives, as we talk about it, the shifting magnetic poles of the world . . . Sometimes they go to the North Pole, sometimes they go to the South Pole. [laughter] The shifting poles. Well, there are shifting poles in people's trajectory. But the pull back there for me was the resolution of this indecision that I had and that here was a whole new world and one that was extremely exciting, and the prospects were marvelous, and it tied in interests of

mine that I had not been able to do. It was a new world. I suppose I was tired of where we were.

Now Kathy was not tired. [laughter] Kathy was just not as excited about going as I was. That is true, excepting I have to qualify that. Actually, *she* had encouraged me to do this, because she felt that it was something I really wanted to do. And she was willing to do it, and she was extremely helpful about it, getting us ready to go and shaping up with regard to the kids and our friends and our families.

Her family, of course, accepted the idea, but they wanted her to stay. And, of course, my family . . . well, my father and the other members of the family thought that this was a terrible thing for us to be leaving, picking up, taking the kids, and going away like this. They saw it as kind of nutty, as not the way people should perform. And, of course, their view of me was that this was what I had always done. But Kathy's folks were very supportive.

And my father, he was in a complete morass after my mother's death, and he was alternately depressed, and then he'd become lively again and try to make plans for himself. And then the prospect of a new marriage, I suppose, was his only support, the idea of marrying my mother's sister. And yet I can't think that completely satisfied him.

He was helpful, because I think that period of the year or two after my mother's death was the time when he was the most outgoing to myself and my brother. There was a kind of emotional letting down his hair and being more of a person, in a kind of a lugubrious way, because I think to him it was a terribly dangerous situation to be in personally, to be so vulnerable. But he would cry now and then and talk about the past and things of that sort which he had never done

before. And in a way, I felt much closer to him because of that, and also he was very helpful at that time. He told us about the fact that my mother had left a little money for us. And he didn't have to do that. He could have not said anything, but he did it.

So there was this feeling at the time of a kind of, I suppose, letting go. The family was letting go. And . . . My god! [looking out the window] Look at that little bird. It's a fledgling out of the nest waiting for its mother, a robin. I'll be darned. Oh. [Tape paused while d'Azevedo stepped outside and checked fledgling who flew short distances away.] So we'll let the little fledgling go. That was remarkable. But in a way, it's part of the continuity here.

[laughter] *It is.*

So, there was what I considered to be a kind of a relaxation of anxiety, disapproval, warnings, and all that sort of thing that families do to other members of their family, particularly younger ones. I felt that my father was immersed in his own trauma, his own sense of loss, and probably reflecting on his own life and himself. He seemed to be a little bit more tolerant of others—of my brother and myself in particular—and even visited us a few times, which he had *never* done. And he just did this on his own. He would come down from Modesto and visit with us and sort of mope around. And I don't know, I felt not only sorry for him, but I kind of liked him more than I had, and then he was helpful.

Oh, I just remembered that the car we had was an old car he had had, an old Studebaker. It was, oh gosh, from the early 1940s or something. It was running well, because he took good care of cars, but it was an old one, a very old car, and he told us to take

it. I think I might have said earlier that we had a Jeep; that was later when this one wore out from trips across country. But anyway, he gave us that.

This sounds very ordinary, excepting he never had done things like that. It was always my mother who did these things. And he was always aloof from such transactions, or I always felt that he was always reluctant or was critical about anything that she did for us, feeling that she was going overboard and she was being too helpful when really we could do all these things ourselves.

But anyway, that was a very, to me, significant aspect of our changing relationship. And the fact that I was going to Northwestern, that I had been promised a fellowship and all that, that pleased him in a way.

*Did that carry some weight with him?*

Perhaps, but I think it was very hard for him to accept anything that I did as positive.

I was still like one of his brothers—a problem. His brothers had given him such a problem all his life. And I was one of that ilk, not to be relied on to do any one thing and stick with it but to be moving from one thing to another. And that's partly true.

I don't know if he was conscious of this, but the idea that other physicians that he had known in his area, often one of their sons or the older son followed into the profession, like he had with his father. And so the idea that his son or sons did not, in a way allowed him to dismiss them. I don't know. I think he was a generally withdrawn, morose, undefined individual that way. But this period, I felt that I grew closer to him *for a while*. [laughter] It lasted a while, and it was very nice, but . . .

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Note

1. Eisenhower was president 1953-1961.





## LEAVING HOME PORT

NOW AT THIS TIME, I was winding up at Cal. I spent that last semester in the spring of 1953 taking another course from Mandelbaum, a continuation, really, of that seminar, which was extremely useful. That whole period of working with Mandelbaum, I learned more than probably at any other single time during my school years, and I got a kind of full range of what was going on in anthropology at the time, because we were dealing with that conference.

I had mentioned before the Wenner Gren conference in June of 1952, the symposium on anthropology that eventually turned out to be that massive tome, *Anthropology Today*,<sup>1</sup> where we had gone through all of those preliminary manuscripts and wrote papers on them. And I recall now, what were the key things that we were dealing with? We were dealing with the beginnings of the ecological approach in anthropology with people like Marston Bates, and we read [Robert] Redfield on the relation of anthropology to the social sciences and the humanities—this was the period of the defining of the field in

relation to other related fields—and Washburn's "The Strategy Of Physical Anthropology," the new physical anthropology that was going on.

And by the way, I was taking a course from Washburn which was very valuable. And Oscar Lewis on fieldwork—a lot of concern about the strategies of fieldwork, interview techniques, and various new kinds of technologies, the technological apparatuses for fieldwork. Linguistics—Joe Greenberg's historical linguistics, [Floyd] Lounsbury. Harry Hoijer had an article which we had to review and critique, and then, of course, Clyde Kluckhohn, the universe of categories of culture. [laughter] All of this was going on, all these vibrantly new theoretical orientations in anthropology which now no one talks about anymore, that have been absorbed by osmosis into the field and then, in a sense, discarded through the kidneys of the discipline. [laughter]

*Probably rediscovered, though, and renamed.*  
[laughter]

Yes, and renamed. [laughter] And Hallowell on culture and personality. Oh, this was the big bone of contention, the degree to which this was a significant aspect of cultural anthropological work—Margaret Mead's "National Character," and others with the national character studies and their significance and their value in anthropology.

And Lévi-Strauss was being read. We had to read that long article of his on social structure that appeared in that book, but also other things that he had done. And he was fairly new to American anthropologists at the time and not always well received.

And Meyer Shapiro. Gosh, Meyer, I remember him. I met him. He did this article on style, which was a kick off, again, for bringing the humanities and the arts into anthropology, which had been really on the periphery.

And David Bidney, of all people. I don't think anybody reads him anymore, but everybody read him at the time.<sup>2</sup> He was the philosopher of anthropology and social sciences, he had done an article on the concept of value in modern anthropology. He was something of a platonic character; I think Plato was his ideal figure in philosophy. And the way I felt, it was . . . well, I think everybody would say he was a little bit on the edge for anthropology.

Then there was Ralph Beals on acculturation, culture change, and what later Herskovits would call culture dynamics. All these things were lively things in the field.

And applied anthropology. Oh, my god, contentions were going on about the degree to which anthropology should or should not be applied, whether or not anthropologists should be involved in planning, should be involved in the U.N., in national policy making, or in studies for nations, et cetera.

Of course, this was anathema to Herskovits later, but it was emerging in the field.

*Had Ruth Benedict published that book on the Japanese national character?*

I think so. I think it was *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*.

*Yes. Didn't that generate quite a flap?*

Yes, yes, all the national character studies, all these things were all gestating stuff, just coming into the discipline.

And then the Chapple and Coomb applied anthropology. They had done a study in which they observed and notated every move of a staff of a large bank for days at a time. I don't remember this very well, excepting this was quantitative, systematizing observation, et cetera. Chapple and Coomb. But Chapple had an article that we had to read, "Applied Anthropology in Industry." Then Daryl Forde on British territories and colonialism, and Edward Kennard, whom I got to know very well later when I went to Pittsburgh, and then he came out here, he and Gordon Macgregor on the United States and culture change and the role of anthropologists in policy.

V. Gordon Childe was kind of a heroic figure of mine, and I'd always pull him out to annoy some of my professors, because he was also a bone of contention on neolithic prehistory. Then Heizer's work on long-range dating in anthropology and, of course, Heizer I had worked with. Moviuss, Irving Rouse on "The Strategy of Cultural History." Julian Steward was another guy who had emerged as a kind of a major figure by this time.

So all this was swimming around in my head at the time, and it was a very useful year

at Cal with Mandelbaum. Then I took Washburn's course on physical anthropology, which certainly was a great improvement on old Ronald Olson—I think I'd mentioned him earlier way back in my undergraduate years—from whom I learned what was wrong with the older physical anthropology and cephalic indexes, head counting, and measurements and all the races and sub-races of man. [laughter]

*I was going to ask you if you recall any of Oscar Lewis's work on fieldwork. Was that something that you think informed you?*

Oh, yes. Oh, Oscar Lewis was a very bright and effective anthropologist at the time. And he had more of a personal approach than many others, and in his work he raised questions about the role of the observer and the reaction an anthropologist has in the field. I forget now whether he dealt with the idea of culture reaction, culture shock, and things of that kind, but there was something very immediate about his work, though I don't recall it very well.

*So it didn't necessarily resonate with you at the time because of the work you were doing—informal contacts you'd had with the Washoe at this point.*

No, no. I don't think there was any work that I read that affected me at that time, because I was still in this very unformed frame of mind, probably rejecting using—or thinking in terms of—the work I was doing in classes with what I was doing in the field. I was still on a very personal level developing personal relationships, and namely with Barton [John] and Roy James and Ramsey and a couple of others when I would go up there, with this little group of peyotists with whom

I was sort of working out in my own mind what they were like and what they were thinking about, what was important to them.

I really wasn't thinking in any kind of formal, theoretical terms. I did later. The following year, I wrote a paper and read it in a meeting—in fact, my first paper—in which I did try to think in kind of a theoretical framework. But I'll discuss that later. But no, I was really just . . . “getting to know you” and absorbing the situation.

*So there wasn't among all this reading you did at Cal . . . ?*

Yes, well, to some degree, I would say the new work that was going on with culture change, acculturation . . . the acculturation concept was in my head a lot when I was out there, because I could see this. This was a laboratory of acculturation, but it isn't something I made a great deal out of in my own mind. I was getting my feet wet, you know, that sort of thing. How compartmentalized can one be?

I was learning a great deal, and my papers were fairly good. I ran across one or two that I did for Mandelbaum, and, you know, I really went through an awful lot. I read a great deal and obviously had absorbed a great deal at that time. I have no recollection of that now except when I get cues, but it was a rich period.

And the Washburn course: Washburn was dealing with all the new work that was going on, particularly in Africa, the Australopithecines. And when I look back, I'm fascinated, because he was very, very cautious about Dart's work and Dart's claim that they might be tool users, the South African Australopithecines. I remember him being, in a way, rather satirical about some of the claims Dart was making, which later, of

course, became accepted. And also, gosh, Piltdown was still in the picture. [laughter]

*Gosh! That's right.*

Piltdown was still in the picture and fascinating. In another few years, maybe 1955 or 1956, I guess, later on was when somehow the proof developed of this being some kind of hoax. Before that, there was a lot of questioning and discomfort.

And I don't recall Washburn's position on this, excepting I think that he would probably have been one of the skeptics. I'm guessing, because he was also very, very concerned about the fact that there had been this Eurocentric orientation to early man. And, you know, the other alternative was the Far East, early hominids developing in the Far East. And the Africa thing was very hard, even in the early 1950s, for a lot of anthropologists to accept. [laughter] This is where the working in Africa happened, you know. I mean, my going to Africa: not only culturally was it a backwater, but ye gods, you know, what is there there? [laughter] But it was beginning to emerge, this whole thing.

And I don't recall. I have some notes, I think, that I took in Washburn's course. I have to look them over. Nevertheless, he covered a lot of material, and that together with McCown's course on the Levantine and North Africa and early social developments in North Africa. And my readings in V. Gordon Childe, whom I really liked. I loved his Neolithic revolutions and the revolution in his concept of social history. And so Washburn's course on early man and the human . . . .

*I'm really intrigued when you said that you trotted Childe out to the irritation of . . . .*

Because V. Gordon Childe was the loud Marxist. He was an evolutionist, and a lot of other people were not, certainly the Boasians were not, and he was talking about stages of development and in an extremely sophisticated way. He had done a great deal of work. And a lot of these concepts about the emergence of early societies and the Neolithic in particular were contentious. Also, he was a Marxist. [laughter] And there was something about his views . . . . Julian Steward was, in a sense, OK, because he didn't *seem* to be a Marxist. I always felt—not only me, but a lot of people—that Steward had used the basic developmental sequences of old Henry Morgan and Marx and Engels, et cetera, revamped them, thought of them in a new way, but never gave credit at all to that part of whatever background he acknowledged. Now that doesn't mean he was a Marxist, but in a sense . . . .

*Well, now, Leslie White was a Marxist.*

And Leslie White was a *kind* of Marxist. Yes, White comes later. Was I dealing with White? Oh, let's see.

*Well, Stewart was the . . . .*

White and Opler. Oh, my. Oh, yes. Morris Opler and Leslie White had a great debate that went on, but that was later at Northwestern. Oh, yes. Leslie White: *culturology*. [laughter] These things are, you know, like back in the Pleistocene.

But, you know, that was very rich stuff. I mean, it was all new. There was a great excitement in anthropology. The 1950s and the 1960s were very exciting in anthropological theory. Everything seemed new, and there was a new look on everything.

So those two courses, Washburn's and Mandelbaum's . . . and earlier with my course with McCown, and I also then took another course. I was busy that spring. I had the feeling I had to get everything I could, and I took another course from Eberhard in sociology, and then I even took a summer course. This was before we left! I'm not sure, that may have been Heizer's North American Indians. I'm not sure. I have to check on the number of that course, but I did take a course, and this is just before we left. [laughter] We left in August or September.

At the same time, a story of mine on the Korean War called *Casualty* was read by a young guy at this great radio station, KPFA. That was a wonderful radio station. It was the most wide-open station, part of the Pacifica network, I guess. *Every* strain of left and liberal thinking was presented on things. [laughter] It was a landmark station.

So Chuck Levi, I think his name was, had seen this story, and he asked if he could read it. And so he read it—in fact, I still have the tape of that. He did a good job. He read the story on the air, and all kinds of comments came in. Everything from, “We're going to blow your place up,” [laughter] to, “We like that story. It was very good.”

It was sort of an internal dialogue thing of an American G.I. who had been shot on the battlefield, and he was lying right next to a half-dead Chinese guy who had been shot, and what was going through his head for the hours before he was found and finally picked up screaming because he was shot. Everything was . . . one of his arms was falling off and all that sort of thing. It was a strange, peculiar, gothic kind of tale, and it got this great reaction.

As we were just leaving, Chuck Levi called me and said, “Hey, that story raised . . . We're going to start a whole new

series now of authors' stories being read.” [laughter] “This thing has really raised a rum-pus.” And I got letters for the next three or four months from friends of mine who had heard it and heard about it, and then I kept hearing about how the station was being blasted as a commie station, and, “What kind of story is this that has an American soldier lying next to a Chinese soldier and thinking good thoughts about this character who had probably been the one who shot him? And what kind of thing is this?” So I was revved up.

*Now was the Korean War still going on?*

That's 1953? Yes.

*Right, because you haven't mentioned the Korean War.*

Well, I think it ended in the fall of 1953. I'm not sure. My brother was in the air force, and he got released somewhere in the fall of 1953, so the Korean War was just coming to the end; it hadn't ended yet.

So all this was happening. And so I guess what I'm thinking about now is what kind of shape was I in to be going anywhere? I was uptight. When I look back, and then when I think of Kathy, when I say she wasn't necessarily as happy as I was to leave, I wasn't sure I was happy to leave; I was tense about it.

But, you know, she had to deal with me, and I was probably really tight as a steel wire trying to handle all this stuff and my anxiety about whether I was doing the right thing or not, then my anxiety and guilt about the kids being ripped out of school and Kathy being wrenched away from her job and her family and her associates, and the fact that I wasn't sure I could cut it where I was going.

What was I doing? I didn't even really have the fellowship yet. I was there for a semester. I was told I would come for a semester, and then they would make the decision. But as Bascom had told me, it was pretty secure. Unless I just didn't cut it at all, it was assured. So I was even going under those kind of unsure things. And when I come to think of it, knowing myself, what kind of person I was then, I must have been a *very* difficult person to get along with.

*Well, also it was the first time you'd really asked her to leave her network, her support . . .*

Her support group.

*. . . which she had always had the whole time you were at sea and all that.*

So the whole pattern was undermined, disrupted at once, and I was aware of that. I was aware of what I was doing, and I wasn't sure I had a right to do it. And I was scared, I was anxious, but I never would have admitted that to myself. But when I look back, I was.

And so this was the climate in which we were leaving. And I remember something when I look back. I remember thinking, am I being like my father? You know, the way I was dealing with Kathy, with the kids, and even some of my friends where I was getting a little remote and morose at times with certain people. And I remember thinking, I don't want to act to my kids like my father acted to me. I remember trying to lighten things up and do interesting things, but it never worked. [laughter] You know, all that stuff.

I'm going into this, I suppose, because it was a major transition, a major decision that could have fallen flat on its face. I felt this is

a great risk, and yet I wanted to take it. And Kathy didn't stand in my way. In fact, she was even encouraging it reluctantly.

*Well, it sounds like perhaps she didn't want to be the reason that you wouldn't pursue a line.*

Of course, of course. That too. But who knows what goes on in the minds of men and women? [laughter] Excepting it wasn't easy for her, excepting that she decided she was going to *do* it, and that was that. And Kathy was one of these people . . . her family, they make a decision, they're going to do it, and they just do it. That's the way it is. And I think I must have been the real difficult one, the problem in all this, trying to write papers, trying to be a student at Cal, because I had some feeling that maybe . . .

*Well, when did you write this story that was read?*

I had written that earlier—a year or so before.

*Yes, because you're still writing in the morass. Well, I don't mean morass, but in this ferment of taking classes and planning to move and . . .*

And the liquor store job. [laughter] The wine shop. I think I wrote it not too long before. Somehow or other at that stage in one's life, at that age, you do things that you can't imagine how you did it. I wrote that story probably very quickly.

*It's interesting to me, because up until this time, you really haven't mentioned your reaction to the Korean War, which must have been rather extreme given your . . .*

Well, yes. I was opposed, and everybody I knew was. I'd go back over all that, but the

Left was very critical of the Korean War. And, you know, finally when the parallel was decided on and all that, there was not only great relief but a kind of a sense of victory in the sense that the Chinese had managed to swing this. [laughter]

And I can't remember in detail how I felt about all that, but certainly I opposed it. I was anti-war anyway, namely anti-war where we were the great capitalistic aggressors—the invaders.

*Well, beside the issues that are real about the United States' role in Korea and all of that, there was this other, it seems to me—I mean, I want to ask this . . . . It also fed the entire reactionary atmosphere on the home front that contributed to the demise of the domestic Communist Party, right?*

Oh, what was going on while that was happening. Sure. Oh, yes. Oh, Harry Bridges was accused of . . . . [laughter] He wasn't a communist, but he was an important labor leader. That's enough. Oh yes, he was accused of undermining the war effort.

*But the Korean War fed that whole anti-communist . . . .*

Yes, the ILWU was critical of the war, and Bridges was accused in one of his last hearings and trials of his union undermining the war effort. Oh, it was a messy time. And then, again, my friend Bill Bailey had been hauled before the House on UnAmerican Activities again when they were out there on the West Coast, and he became a kind of a minor hero at the time for telling them, "Why do you come all the way out to Washington here just to talk to me? Who in the hell am I, anyway?" you know, and refused to answer, say even where he worked, saying, "You're going

to take my job away from me. You've already taken one job. Are you going to take my other job away from me, too?"

And you know, he was quite great. That was a good show. And, of course, all of us thought of him as a terrific guy, which he was. He was a terrific guy.

And so, again, I guess I was strung up to the point of breaking at this point. We got the car, fixed the old car up.

*Now this is the car your dad gave you?*

Yes, the old Studebaker, and it looked fine, because he kept it up, but it was old. And we had a trailer with all our belongings. Not everything, but it was a fairly good-sized trailer behind the car with all the kids' stuff and things that we would need and all that and my books and lord knows what else. And that was all packed.

And then I got a letter from Stan Freed, who was up in Gardnerville, and he was staying at Crystal Springs Campground. Somehow that became a place where a lot of us stayed right next to Woodfords. And he wrote and says, "Oh, you're leaving. Gee, great. Ruth Shelly and I . . ." Her name was Ruth Shelly at the time. They used to refer themselves as Stan Freed and Ruth Shelly.

I don't know if they were married at the time or married later when she took Freed as her name, Ruth Freed. I don't recall that. Nevertheless, they said, "Would you come by on your way? Gee, stop by."

Well, this was too much for me. I was thinking about everything else, you know. [laughter]

And I *did* want to stop by Woodfords and say goodbye to the few people I knew up there, and it would be wonderful to see Stan at work. He and I had talked a lot about the field. But I just couldn't do it. My thought

was, I just got to go straight on. If I stop, and the kids and Kathy, you know, stopping and doing that, diverting . . . .

And later Stan wrote me saying, you know, "Gee, that's too bad, because I had some wonderful times with Roy James," and this and that. I was very envious. [laughter] He had been working with some of the people I knew.

*Had he just started in the field? No, he'd been doing fieldwork.*

No, in 1952 he had gone up there, doing . . . . I don't know what he started working with, but he'd make little forays like I was doing. He did it about the same time—a little earlier. And yet, we'd go at different times, and his interests were different than mine.

*But you were talking to some of the same people.*

Yes.

*The same Washoe people.*

But he was working mainly in the valley, in Carson Valley, with Hank Pete, whom I worked with later, and Bertha Holbrook and people of that kind, who were great informants. I knew them later, but I was working mainly in the Woodfords area. And he said in his letter, "Ruth and I are just staying at Crystal Springs near Woodfords, but I don't know anybody here, and so we're going to be moving down to Gardnerville. And I wish you'd come, because then you could introduce me to some of your friends up here."

So he and I had sort of different venues in a way. But I really had this feeling I just could not stop by there. I remember I wrote

to Barton saying, "I'm sorry I can't come, but I will come, you know, when I come through on my way back," which we did.

And Barton wrote me a number of letters while we were in Evanston later. One wonderful letter he wrote me just before I left saying had I gotten the feathers that I said I was going to get for him? Which I had.

I had gotten them, and I wrote to him saying, "Yes, I have the feathers." And there was something else he wanted. Oh, yes. The feathers, and he wanted some of the boundary maps from the California Indian case that dealt with the Washoe. And he had heard about a certain archival paper and a map from somebody else, and would I try to find it? This is, of course I learned later, what Earl James and Roy James and a number of the people up in Woodfords had started. They were working with their lawyer, [George] Wright, starting to really press for the Washoe [Lands Claim] case. And here was Barton, who really didn't know that much about it—not his sort of thing—but he had been told to ask me about this.

So I just had to write him saying I just couldn't come, but, "I'm leaving the feathers that I got for you with George Leite, and he will either bring them up to you or send them up to you or whatever." Later, Barton writes me in Evanston that he went down to Berkeley, and he stayed with George Leite, and that George was in a kind of a dreamy state.

Well, this was a period when I think George had really gotten hooked on some kind of drug or drugs, and he was not in very good shape, as I remember. I'm not sure what shape he was in. But anyway, he stayed there, and George had given him the feathers. [laughter] He wrote in his letter a wonderful paragraph or two on the kinds of feathers,



the ones he could use and the ones he can't use. And he loved it. Later, I did a story on feathers. Not a story, but it was from an interview which I published that I worked up from an interview with him on feathers.

So anyway, all this, and we finally get packed up and ready to go. And I'm not very clear on just how we got out of town, because there's something about leaving home port like that. Everybody descends on you, and I remember practically everybody we knew either wrote or came over. And Kathy must have been absolutely exhausted. The kids were wild. Erik was at that point . . . what was he? Oh, gosh. Erik was five, six years old, and I think he was out of his mind just running around screaming and running like a real problematic kid. And Anya was I think trying, was very excited about going, but everything was so much in an uproar, and leaving your house! This is the house the kids had liked, you know, their rooms and all. A little house, but it was theirs. And they had kids in the neighborhood that they knew and the school.

Everybody was coming in either to say goodbye or saying, "When are you coming back?" and all those questions that drive you absolutely up the wall. And bringing gifts and food to take with us, and sandwiches. [laughter]

Well, in those days, that trip was no small thing. You didn't just get on a plane and go or even on a train. You couldn't afford that. And gosh, had we ever flown? No, we'd never flown. You could go across country in twelve hours, I think, in those days, but it was very expensive, so you drove.

*Well, at this point, you'd never seen Chicago.*

No, never seen Chicago, never seen that part of the country. I had only seen New York

by coming in from a ship and by bus across country and slept most of the way, so that's my only experience. [laughter] Or when Kathy and I went to the NMU conference in New York by train, but we were yakking and talking, and, you know, weren't looking at the country, really. So our view of the country was the East Coast and the West Coast and nothing in between. The two coasts could have been put together on the map, and we wouldn't have known the difference, except for Nevada, which we knew. [laughter]

So we headed off. Now that was, in a way, a wonderful trip.

*Once you got going.*

Yes. About 250 miles a day or something like that. Stopped at little motels. And I have some notes on costs. We'd spend seventy-five cents, a dollar a night on motels. Gas was five gallons for \$1.70 or something. And, you know, that was expensive. I mean, we were counting our pennies, so five gallons of gas for less than two dollars! [laughter] Carton of cigarettes for two dollars. And oh god, what days. Food, going to the restaurant, all of us eating big meals, \$3.50 and \$4.00.

But we had to make decisions about this, about whether we were going to eat at a restaurant or pick up food at a store. And we did that. Kathy sometimes insisted that we just go to the store and buy some stuff and then go out and picnic. And we did this in city parks all across the way. I remember doing that in Reno, in Elko, in Wells, Nevada and Salt Lake City.

We looked for the parks, and we'd stop and have lunch and take out the sandwiches and open a can of sardines and thermos flask of milk and coffee.

*Do you have any impressions at all of Nevada from that drive?*

Well, sure. Passing through Reno and on old Highway 40, I guess that was. Old Highway 40 going across? Guess that's what it was.

*Well, 50 is the one that's the loneliest to Elko.*

Well, 50 is, yes, but . . . .

*Was it old 40?*

We went through Winnemucca, and we did get to Elko, so we must have gone . . . . No, Wells. We went to Wells, not Elko. That's right, not that trip. We went to Wells and then to Salt Lake and then north up through Wyoming and came through North Dakota, et cetera, down to the lakes.

But yes, it was a very useful trip to sort of unwind. I didn't unwind very much, but some. And we'd stop at parks having our lunches, and in the evening, we would try to find a cheap restaurant some place and stay in a motel for \$1.00, \$1.50 for four of us. [laughter] God, it was amazing!

And those motels in those days were different than they are today. They were these little houses where you went in, little separate shacks, in a sense, and sometimes it was hot but no air conditioning or anything, just open windows. And roaches and stuff running around and spiders and things of that kind a couple of times. Most of the time, you know, it was quite all right. And we had sleeping bags for the kids if there weren't enough beds. You got one room, and they would sleep in the sleeping bags. We didn't have camping equipment that time. It was just too bulky to take stuff like that along.

Anyway, I remember we went out through eastern Nevada, and that was just

amazing to us and entirely new out there to Elko and down through to Salt Lake over those flats. And it was just foreign country. It was another planet.

And oh, Erik. At that time, Erik was absolutely out of his mind. First he had been Superman before we left, but then he became a cowboy.

He was going to be a cowboy. Somebody gave him a pair of boots and a cowboy hat, and he slept in then. He would not take his boots off, because he was in the West. He was out in cowboy country. When we got to Wyoming, I remember one day . . . Kathy found a letter that she had written about this to her folks that Erik left the motel and went out on the street and said he was going to go out. And he was walking looking for cowboys, and he saw a guy that looked to him like a cowboy on the street, and he went behind him clicking his boots, clicking his boots and pulling his hat down and looking tough behind this . . . .

*Oh, how wonderful! That's wonderful.*

So in his little mad fantastic mind at that time, he was having something of a good time. And he had a set of cowboy and Indians, those little figures that he would play with in the back of the car on the floor of the car. And he kept very busy.

Any, she was very quiet during all this. I don't recall too much on *that* trip, except I think she kind of enjoyed it, and she enjoyed, I think, being with us.

*Was there television?*

No, we had no television in those days. I think television had come in, but we didn't have it. [laughter]

*I'm just remembering the early Hop-Along Cassidy, just wondering if this was feeding any of Erik's . . . .*

Well, see, 1948 . . . his grandparents had television, an old black and white television, and the kids used to stay there sometimes and watch television all the time. But I don't think we had television until the late 1950s when we came back. No, television was one of those things that *some* people had.

*And, of course, the motels, that's not part of the . . . .*

Oh, never. We were lucky to have a bed. No. Let's see . . . . Anyway, we went up through Wyoming—beautiful. That was wonderful. We did have this feeling of seeing the country and the sense of distance and where we were. And we came through Nebraska and then down to the lakes into Chicago. I forget just how we came in.

Anyway, our friends, the Merrills, Bob and Barbara Merrill, he was at Chicago at the time. I think he was a student or a teaching assistant or something at Chicago, and they had a little apartment way over on the west side of Chicago. They were away, and they told us we could use their apartment when we came in.

So I remember we drove through this city. It was just unbelievable, the outskirts, these industrial outskirts and the stockyards. And I had the sense of . . . . Who was that early writer? Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*. That had been to me one of the great books I'd read; I felt I was experiencing Sinclair's *The Jungle*. Miles of stockyards and the stink of cattle and rotten flesh and all that, and all the slums on the outskirts. And finally we got into the edge of town to this sort of little run-down neighborhood where they had this apart-

ment. And it was a little two or three room apartment. Hot as hell! It was just unbearable.

*This is September, right? Yes.*

This was summer in the Chicago area. Muggy, hot, smelling of industrial . . . the smoke and stockyards.

And to us, we felt that we were dying. We couldn't stand it. I remember we'd throw the windows open, and of course no screens, and flies would come in. [laughter] You know, where in the world was there a place like this in the West? There wasn't. This was the Midwest, this was the East.

And so that prompted us to start looking for a place. I guess I've wiped out of my mind what shape the kids were in. Kathy will probably remember exactly what was going on with them, but it couldn't have been good. They were probably out of their minds, you know. And we were . . . I was out of *my* mind. [laughter]

Oh, the car all the way out had done beautifully except on grades that we'd have to stop, because it would boil over. I think I carried big five gallon cans of water. In those days, a lot of people would boil over on grades, but I had to stop four or five times going up each. [laughter] But we made it all the way across. And that car gave out, in fact, in a few months.

So the first thing we had to do was start looking for a place. Well, a letter was waiting for me at the department. I had run in there, nobody was there, and May, the secretary, had got some mail. And one of those letters was from Simon Ottenberg.

Now I didn't know him, but he had been a graduate student, and at that time, he was just leaving. He and Phoebe Ottenberg were living at this place we later knew as Anthro



"Oh, the car all the way out had done beautifully except on grades." Kathy with the car and trailer at Donner Summit.

House. And he wrote to me a very nice letter saying, "We hear you are coming to Northwestern, and welcome," and all that. "And there is a very interesting place where most of the anthro graduate students stay, and you and your wife are welcome to stay. However, if you have children, I'm afraid we can't accommodate you." [laughter]

So they didn't know that we had kids. And that was a blow. Our view was we'd both like to stay *anywhere* but Chicago, get up to the lake to Evanston where it seemed cooler. We had driven through that area, through Glenco, a beautiful residential, upscale, gentrified area. And, you know, my first thought was, "Oh, is this what it's like?" It is

like that around Northwestern, but that isn't where we stayed.

And so we started out looking for housing, going to real estate agents. We didn't know anybody, and I was embarrassed to go to talk to anybody in the department about housing.

I could have, when I come to think of it. It would have been the thing to do. And I may have talked to a secretary or something, but mainly I just thought Kathy and I had to do it. So we wandered around, and it was expensive compared to Berkeley. Eighty-five dollars a month for a three-room apartment! [laughter] Oh, my god! And one hundred dollars for anything that was the size that we

could use? Eighty-five to ninety dollars? Oh, my god! That was a fourth or a third of our income, you know. Unbelievable! And the same places would have been twenty-five, thirty, forty dollars in the West.

So that was a big revelation, a haunting one. Finally, we went to the east side of Evanston, to a kind of run-down area on the border of Chicago, which we were thinking would be an area where we could possibly afford. Again, nothing in Evanston was within our reach. Gosh, they might go as high as \$125, \$130 a month, you know! [laughter] And we didn't have it.

So we stopped at a real estate agent. We had seen an ad about, "You need to get good low-cost housing in Evanston, et cetera? See so-and-so." Turned out to be a black guy, a black real estate agent, which in those days was rather rare in itself. And it was even rarer for a white family to walk into his office, and he was very intrigued by us. [laughter]

A nice guy, very nice guy, but the whole thing was rather awkward, you know, because he had obviously been servicing black families. The ad was made to order for us, because, "If you need low-cost housing in Evanston or nearby because that's your place of work, et cetera, I am the guy. We are the ones to come to."

So we came and said, "Here we are. What can we do?"

And he said, "Well, I'm not quite sure."

He showed us a couple of places which were impossible and obviously places that he wasn't even sure we could use, because they were for black families in black neighborhoods. And we didn't mind that so much as the fact that *he* felt very uncomfortable about it.

And so, you know, we just said, "Well, keep looking." And he had taken us and

shown us this little place on Greenwood Street in Evanston, and it was a kind of a mixed Polish-Black neighborhood. I forget what this mix was. I think there were even some Hispanics there.

It was a Polish woman who had this little house, Mrs. Drewswiki. Little old lady, and she was a sour little lady. And, you know, she had this little squatty house, and she was going to live in the basement and rent out the upper floor. She obviously needed money, and she wanted a hundred dollars a month.

And we said, "We can't do it." We want to wait while this guy looks. We said, "If you can bring her down, that's closer to the uni-



"It was a Polish woman who had this little house, Mrs. Drewswiki." Kathy with Mrs. Drewswiki (right).

versity. We probably could do this.” Also, he had trouble talking to her, you know. [laughter] Obviously, she was totally confounded to have a black real estate man bring in this white couple. And I guess she was wondering what kind of people *we* were, you know, but she needed the money, fortunately.

So we just said, well, we’d wait, and we kept looking around. And it was very dismal trying to find housing. There were such wonderful places to live that we could never dream of, and the lake was so beautiful, and the campus was wonderful to look at, right there on the lake.

And so finally, I called this guy after two or three days, and he says, “She will give it to you for eighty-five dollars a month, but you’d better grab it, because she doesn’t like the idea.” [laughter]

We went over, and Mrs. Drewswiki in her high little voice, you know, saying, “Well, Mr. d’Azevedie, you have to be very careful. I’m going to be living down there. I don’t like noise. I don’t want your children to make too much noise. You’ve got to do this, you’ve got to do that.”

And I thought, boy, what we’re going to have to pay just to live here. [laughter]

*Well, she wouldn’t have been welcoming to anybody, I would think.*

No. The whole time we were living there, every time there would be a little bit too much noise or I’d walk too loud, she’d go “bonk, bonk, bonk” with her broom on the floor, you know. “Mr. d’Azevedie!” [laughter]

So anyway, we did have a place. And it was then that I was able to start thinking about checking in at the university and getting to know people and all that.

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#### Notes

1. *Anthropology Today: An Encyclopaedic Inventory*, ed. A. L. Kroeber (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953).

2. *Theoretical Anthropology* by David Bidney (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953) was described in the preface of *Anthropology Today* “as a product of a decade of research in cultural anthropology and social philosophy.”

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## THE HERSKOVITSIAN MILIEU

I REMEMBER going up to the campus, and it is a beautiful campus.

Mosley Hall is where anthropology was up on the second floor, and I don't know whether I saw Bascom or Herskovits first. I had an appointment to see Herskovits, but I don't know that he was the first person I saw. But anyway, I went in to check in, all that, and saw the department.

It was a little place, with a lot of little rooms. Francis Hsu, Alan Merriam. Dozier wasn't there yet. I forget who was there at the time. Oh, Dick Waterman, Glen Rouleter. Herskovits had a fairly good-sized office, just loaded with stuff. And I was very impressed by this grand and massive office with its mass of material all along the walls and photographs and pictures of his trips to Africa and lists of his students. Oh, he always did things like that, gave me, you know, "Here are the students that we've had and where they're going." He was impressing me about the department.

And this little tiny guy sitting behind the desk with his little glass, his pince-nez, and

little button nose and red face. "So this is the big man. This is the great man." I've written about this, so I'm not going to go into it, but I was a little taken aback by this little guy, this little bantam. [laughter]

I mean, he was very energetic, and he was very decisive in his speech and talking, asking me questions, snap sort of questions and shotgun questions and expecting quick answers. "And now," he says, "Are you interested in working in Brazil?" [laughter]

I said, "No, I am here just for African-American studies, and I'm interested in Africa."

"Well," he says, "you speak Portuguese, of course," or something like that.

And I said, "No, I do not." Whoa! [laughter]

He had to do a double take, had to pull himself together. He had me all pegged. I was going to go down and study Africans in Brazil. [laughter]

And so we got over that little hurdle, and he started talking about the department and what I'd have to do. And in fact, it wasn't

until the next semester when I was finally accepted for the grant. So, yes, he says, "We're going to watch you now. Of course, we're going to be watching and see how you do."

*So your first semester was . . . .*

Was, I suppose, a kind of a preliminary. It was sort of understood that I was there to receive the fellowship when it was available the following semester. But obviously, I wasn't going to be let off the hook with the idea that it was just taken for granted. Nobody said that, but I just knew it, and so I was very uptight about that.

But he was telling me what courses I needed to take and who I had to work with, and he wanted me to take his course on the Negro in Africa that semester. And that was the first course I took there. Oh, there was going to be a social at their house, and Mrs. Herskovits would expect myself and my wife to come. The children could come some other time. And I was thinking, "Oh, my god! What are we going to do with the kids?"

And later on, they were extremely nice to the kids. But at this point, they didn't know who we were and what was going on. When I come to think of it, I'm not even sure they expected us to bring two kids.

*Did he talk at all about Berkeley or the people there?*

Oh, yes. He was very curious. He would ask me about, "How is Al Kroeber?"

And I, of course, would end up saying, "Well, I'm a student. I took two courses with him, and he was fine when I left." Well, I guess he was sort of probing for my views of Cal. But it was only later I got the picture of his problems with Kroeber and the West and all that.

*Had there been other students from Cal?*

Not that I know of. I don't know of any.

*Because it must have been rather intriguing. I mean, looking at it from that perspective, sort of an opportunity to see a young product of that . . . .*

You mean on their part?

Yes.

Well, I think in a way, he was thinking, "Oh, boy! I have attracted somebody away from Kroeber." Something like that.

Well, like Kroeber had told me earlier, "You don't want to get tied up with that stuff back there. I mean Herskovits and African studies out there? My god! Go to London or something."

But then later, Herskovits told me when I went back to Cal, when I couldn't get to Africa, he said, "Don't let Kroeber talk you into staying." [laughter] And I later found out there had been a lot of tension between them. But anyway, I won't go into that very much.

That few weeks of "getting to know you" was very interesting, because they remained kind of aloof. I mean, we were a whole new set-up. They didn't know what we were like, and I think they were a little taken aback that we had kids.

Simon Ottenberg had written me saying, "You can stay here at Anthro House if you would like. We'd be happy to have you for sixty-five dollars a month, but if you have children, we're sorry. We can't accommodate children."

That changed the following year. We took over Anthro House. [laughter]

So anyway, we were set. We had finally gotten there. And our friends the Merrills



came back, and it was pleasant to have somebody we knew there. He was an anthropologist, and we knew their families. The Goldwassers who were in Urbana . . . Ned Goldwasser, who was a physicist from Cal, was in Urbana. So there were some connections. Matter of fact, we went down our first Thanksgiving to see them drove down to Urbana.

I'm not too clear on that first six months, excepting I took Herskovits's course.

*Now this is all at a graduate level, right?*

Well, it was pretty much a graduate level department. It was a program of African Studies.

*That's true. I just take for granted this undergraduate-graduate school progression, but it's not . . . .*

Everybody I knew was a graduate student, so I don't think there was an undergraduate component. I believe, but I don't recall. I don't think so. A lot of people came in as new graduate students or making up materials from where they had been. But no, it was a program of African Studies.

*So how many people were in this program, do you remember?*

Well, you mean how many students?

Yes.

Well, I think there were about twelve, fifteen. In fact, let me see. Some of them were James Vaughn, who ended up for a long period of time in Indiana; James Fernandez. Ottenberg was just leaving, and I didn't get

really to know him well until a year or so later when we were going to Africa—he and Phoebe were very helpful to us. Surajit Sinha from India who became a very good friend for many years; Arthur Tuden. Peter Hammond was there; Igor Kopytoff, who is now in Philadelphia, spent many years in Philadelphia. In fact, he married Herskovits's daughter, Jean. Phyllis Fisher, I think she's still there teaching—not in anthro, but in some capacity. Very bright woman. Phil Leis was there—a little later he came in; John Hamer, I didn't know him very well. Norman Scotch was there; Iris White, who later became Iris Roberts, from Jamaica, she was a wonderful woman. Paula Hirsh, whom I lost track of very early. She had come over from Europe at the end of the war and had been a refugee as a kid or as a teenager. Brilliant young woman. I always wondered what happened to her. Jeanetta Cole came in later and went to Liberia as well and went on as a dean or a president of a women's college in Atlanta; Tom Price, who worked in South America; Margaret Katsen. And some of the



*"Phil Leis was there—a little later he came in."*



Norm Scotch.

people who had been there, they were still coming in and around but were leaving. They had finished their work. Vern Dorian, Robert Armstrong. Alan Wolfe had been there and had done a lot of work throughout Africa and already was being published. Joseph Crowley, the folklorist, and Alan Merriam, who had done work with Donald Levi, with the Flatheads in western North America, had also worked in Africa extensively and was essentially an ethnomusicologist.

So there was quite a group of us there. And of those people I have named, five or six of that group went on into professional anthropology and teaching and fieldwork, mostly in Africa. And so it was a lively bunch at that time.

*You had to go from being the only person interested in African studies to . . .*

Yes, well, either Africa or of the new world, African-Americans. Well, South America attracted a number of them, but I think most of the ones that I knew were interested in Africa.

So I didn't know these people all at once. It took me that whole fall.

*And like you said, some of these are seasoned, have done fieldwork already that were taking this class.*

No, no. Some of the last ones I mentioned are people who had finished up their work there and already done fieldwork. Simon and Phoebe Ottenberg were doing their fieldwork and coming through. Vernon Dorian had already done some fieldwork, Merriam had done fieldwork. These are the bunch previous to us, the students who either

were taking their degrees or had gotten their degrees, but they would come through. So in a sense, we all felt like one big group, with the older brothers and sisters and the younger ones. [laughter]

Yes.

And so that first course . . . I don't know what else. I think I may have taken Francis Hsu's course. It was sociological, family structure or something. It was very good, but I don't remember being very impressed by it. It was very imaginative. He was a wild lecturer, and in a way he was entertaining, but I don't recall too much about his course.

But Herskovits, we went through the whole bit. I was in deep up to my knees in Herskovitsian milieu. He went through the culture areas of Africa. His contribution, in his view, was the laying out of a plan or a scheme of the culture areas of Africa, which was very useful at the time. You know, those areas of Africa that represented significantly similar or typical cultures in relation to the ecologies—East Africa, two or three areas of West Africa and central Africa and South Africa. And most of the course dealt with defining these culture areas. And let's see, very little on pre-history, as I remember, and quite a bit giving his very strong opinion about applied anthropology and how this was anathema, the most deadly poison to anthropology and cultural relativism, which was his sort of favorite view or theory.

So I have a rather dim recollection of this excepting it was very useful to have this survey of Africa. I mean, he was very erudite. He had tremendous resources at his fingertips about the reading that we did.

We did extensive reading on the older literature, and this was the colonial period, and the whole orientation was to the kinds

of cultures that existed with the overlay of European colonialism. And Herskovits's view of anthropology always filtered through—I mean, this idea that you did *not* get yourself involved in the politics of the country, you did *not* take sides, you did *not* become an instrument of any governmental authority (your own or the local authority). You were an independent, detached observer, which, of course, is not possible, but nevertheless, it represented a kind of a Boasian orientation to fieldwork. And then cultural relativism: constantly reiterating this business of ethnocentrism.

By the way, I'm saying this in a kind of a semi-sardonic frame of mind, but I don't mean to, because that was extremely useful. Always in anthropology, even way back in my early undergraduate years, that's what anthropology was, a kind of a opening up the world to various cultures and the tolerance of various kinds of cultural expressions in the world. But Herskovits had made a special strategy out of it: ethnocentrism, which was the thing that had to be fought, that had to be dealt with internally and externally by an anthropologist. And relativism was the instrument by which you did this. That is, you maintained the kind of a neutral attitude about judgmental views of . . .

*Was that a new term, really?*

No. Ethnocentrism, I think Boas had used it, but I think Herskovits had turned it into a kind of a theoretical topic. I don't recall it being used to the same extent that he used it—prejudiced discrimination, chauvinism and all those things. The word had been around, but in Herskovits's work, it was just *always* there: ethnocentrism or Eurocentrism and things of that kind, white Euro-chauvinism, et cetera. But no, this was a special topic

of his that he constantly reiterated over and over again, particularly to anybody going to the field. "You must not make judgments."

You had to stand aside and realize that every culture had its own development and enculturation and acculturation but particularly enculturation. "A child brought up in a particular culture is going to see the world in a particular way, in a special way, and if it works, that culture is perfectly equal to another culture that works." Not equal, but it must be looked upon, in a sense, on the same level as any other successful culture. Australian Aborigines or modern United States."

The idea was you must not in any way disparage another culture because its tools seem simpler, et cetera. It's worked for them for all these centuries, who knows? They might be here after we're gone.

And that I dug. I mean, this was very, very nurturing stuff. Later in seminars, we students would argue with him a great deal about relativism and all the critique of relativism that came out about Herskovits's work or other work later, we had already had worked out with him. [laughter] We had argued and fought with him in seminars.

He was a little terrier. I mean, he could fight and bite back as much as anybody. He'd get red in the face and struggle and fight in the seminars, and we were always baiting him. Relativism was an easy thing to do, and things like culture focus and reinterpretation, his favorite theories, we wrote papers and critiqued him.

So to say that he was a Boasian and that we as a students were therefore Boasians, or bought everything, that's just not so. He was a learning board for us. We cut our teeth on him literally. And he was available to argument and discourse, and often lost, in our view, an argument. He didn't think so, but

we knew when we'd bested him in an argument.

And one of the things was relativism in which we constantly talked to him about what he was saying: "Don't talk about this on a value level. We must not . . . . The whole argument about relativism has been in relativistic values, whether or not one set of values is as good as another, what's truth, and all that." He says, "I dispense with that. I'm talking about practical relativism, the day-to-day working with other cultures in the world and the relationships with one another. And we must maintain this dispassionate and neutral, non-judgmental view, because in the first place, we *don't* know enough about these other cultures. And until you know enough about it, you have no right to even make any judgments. Even after you know a great deal, then you usually find that you're saying to yourself, 'Well, they're doing pretty well. These people have worked out quite a system.'" Well, we used to argue that, you know.

*What were some of the arguments?*

"What about the Nazis? What about the Holocaust?" I must say that always troubled him, because it was a big issue, you know.

He would say "The Nazis had a successful system for ten, fifteen years or so, and they almost won a war. One of the greatest industrial nations that the world has ever produced, and we should not be judgmental." He was saying, "*That*, you're talking about on a value level. No, of course not. We can't dispense with our own cultural views and the way we feel about it," he would argue, "And *of course* we have our feelings and all of that. On the other hand . . . " he says, ". . . on the other hand, just on the basic level of a cultural contributionistic sense, and the fact that they existed before all these cen-

turies as a Germanic people and a Germanic culture, we have to respect that fact. But that doesn't mean we have to like what they do, because we are what we are."

On and on. Oh, these arguments were wonderful. He called that "practical relativism," you know. For all practical purposes, one should not be judgmental. But he admitted that there are times when you were judgmental, but that was because you were a member of your culture reacting as a member of your culture.

*And you stepped out of the anthropological . . .*

Yes, because he would never, ever admit to universal values. That there were universals would be very non-Boasian—that there was a kind of an ultimate truth overall in which we must all adhere to, and that all cultures would be put to the scale or evaluated in terms of some ultimate values or truths.

*But there were universal systems and structures, or is that not . . . ?*

There were things that that were similar and universal, because human beings are human beings, but cultures . . . everybody reached the ultimate of their development in their *own* way. Each culture had its own trajectory and must not be judged as higher or lower than any other.

This is where things would get very contentious and fuzzy. There's no answer to that. He didn't even have any philosophical answers to the question of ultimate values, [laughter] excepting he was against applying them, very much as Boas was against generalizations, particularly evolutionary generalizations and stages and the generalizations about development and progress and

all of that. Herskovits applied it in his small way to this relativistic concept. And he was hit from all sides, some articles by Soviet anthropologists denouncing him as really a bourgeois idealist.

You know, a bourgeois anthropologist, and here he was: "This relativistic idea makes no reference to Marx or Engels, who have already shown that societies and cultures develop in their own ways and must not be judged in relation to this or that, unless they're judged in terms of their success in providing for their people the things that human beings must wrest from nature in order to survive." And, "Each of them will do it in more or less successful ways depending on circumstances, mode of production, continuance of history in the Marxian sense, and Herskovits doesn't understand any of this." Which is true! [laughter]

But those seminars and those classes were highly argumentative. And I must say, the great thing about him as a teacher was though he didn't like people disagreeing with him, he would take them on. He would never stop a discussion.

*And he provided the atmosphere that . . .*

That made it possible, yes.

. . . *encouraged it, yes.*

And yet he always maintained a certain dignity, in spite of the fact he acted like a little bantam cock sometimes. [laughter] He was small and rather rotund and red faced, and his voice would rise and all that. Nevertheless, he had a kind of authority and dignity, because he . . .

*How did he deal with whole papers that would be written that would basically take him on?*

Well, I think I wrote about that once, about the famous one, Jim Fernandez, who wrote on cultural focus, and he titled his paper "Cultural Focus, Hocus Pocus?" And tried to critique the whole concept. I don't recall the details of this, but . . .

*But this was in a seminar?*

Yes, whether the concept really could apply to the kind of cases that Jim had brought forward. And Herskovits sat listening to this paper getting obviously more and more irritated, his face getting red. You could always tell if he was angry, his face would get red. He sat there at the end of the table, little guy, face beginning to glow, and his glasses glint. [laughter]

And when it was over, Jim stopped, and I think Jim was also very worried and scared to death, and the rest of us were really . . . Oh, some of it was a little raunchy, you know, a graduate student kind of critique. And we sat there, silent, and there was a long pause.

Finally, Herskovits pulled himself together and says, "Well, James, very interesting paper, but I think your title is a little misleading. It should not be 'Cultural Focus, Hocus Pocus?', but 'Cultural Focus, Hocus or Pocus?'" [laughter]

That, to me, was typical of him. He broke this tension that was in that room and his own anger or irritation, and was able to come through on this level. And then we had a normal discussion in which Jim critiqued himself even, you know, that he'd gone too far here and all that, but he held to his view.

So I felt in those seminars and all through that two years that I was at Northwestern, I felt the seminars that Herskovits had and the program in which he would bring in people from the outside . . . We had, oh, all sorts

of anthropologists who had worked in Africa or South America and public officials and people in the state department, a wide range of people, because his view was you had to be exposed to a variety of orientations.

And part of our job was that each of us had to take turns writing up the seminar—outlining it, who had spoken, and major questions that were asked, et cetera—and then we had to run that off on the mimeograph machine and give it to the members of the seminar. But the main thing was the questions that we asked these people. Were we asking questions that brought out data? You know, get the data. Or were we just being confrontational? If we were just confrontational and didn't know why we were asking a question, he would give us hell. If you ask a difficult question, one that has within it, you know, what students would call a turd in the hamburger bun . . . If you asked a question that had within it hostility at its center or a confrontational note and you weren't sure why you had asked it or that you were aware of what this person could do with it, then you just shouldn't even have been in the seminar. You ask questions that are gauged to get from this person information, what they know, not telling them what you think of them, but what they know, because that's your data; that's your material.

And oh, we had some weird characters. We had some Belgian officials coming through from Central Africa who were racists, outright racists. And I remember Herskovits being very proud of us one time, because we had asked serious and polite questions of one person, got a lot of data. We kept hearing this absolutely unbelievable crap from this guy.

*Right, but data.*

But we heard how he thought, and what they thought, how they think.

*So, you're almost doing an anthropology of the people?*

Yes, yes. And his view was this is what you do in the field with everybody, not just with the people you went there to study, but the whole milieu is of importance to you—what the various kinds of people within it think, how they act, what they do.

He never was very clear about how you handle your own orientation to all this. You keep that under the lid all the time. In fact, later when he came to Africa to visit us, I learned a lot about this, because I had a lot of views about what was going on that he just didn't want to hear. You know, he was interested in *ethnography*!

Oh, he was interested in more, because he did this later survey of Africa in his trip around Africa, in which he talked to officials in politics and economics. But he didn't want his students to mess around with that sort of thing on their first few field trips. They were there to do a specific problem job, and that's all. Keep out of the way of all this other stuff. Very specific, on the other hand, kind of useful. I don't know if it's useful today, but it was useful then.

*Well, also, was there a sense—and I realize this is a very small portion of his overall orientation—but there's also this sense in not poisoning the well for future ethnography. I mean, the reason you don't get tangled up in politics isn't just because of the quality of the data you're getting, but you're not screwing things up for . . . ?*

Yes, I think that was part of the thinking. The idea's that you didn't want to create any kind of stir or make of yourself an object.

You were an instrument of the task you went there to do.

Now that can be carried too far, but the point is, that was, in a way, very good initial orientation for students, I think, going into the field, because all of us . . . . My god, when I think of that group, there was a whole gamut and range of political views. Everywhere from me, you know, and I was an activist at heart and wanted to change the world like everybody else, and there were some sort of right-wing persons; there were a couple of religious people in the group, very religious; there were a couple of *nuns* that would come in to some of the sessions, you know, who were going to go . . . .

Yes, there was a quite of range of people. They weren't students, but they would come into these sessions. And so, you know, there was this wide range of views, and from Herskovits's point of view, this must not be part of your work. This is not what you are supposed to do. You are . . . . What was it, that wonderful term he'd always use? Not "ethical detachment". It meant complete detachment. You stand aside, you are objective, which of course is impossible for anybody.

So, as I look back, it was valuable, exciting, and rich. For all the criticism I could make of the content of not only the courses or Herskovits's views I had had over the years, extensive disagreements with his basic orientation at the same time, I have tremendous respect for how he galvanized us, galvanized people to think. And he did *not* stand in our way of independent thinking, except that you better not do it in a paper. [laughter] You better not do it in an exam. But on a personal level, you could disagree all you want, and he would not hold it against you. He would never have hard feelings about that. You know, there could be very, very sharp

disagreements. On the other hand, what he expected in the courses was that you give him what he thinks is right. [laughter] I suppose, in a way, that's a mentor's right. But at the same time, he was encouraging all this other kind of very, very wide-ranging discourse, and in a very volatile setting.

*Do you think you were able to concentrate more on school and what you were getting out of it? Now that you were on a path, so to speak, you'd made a commitment to being an anthropologist now, being in graduate school, it sounds like . . . .*

Focused, yes. This was total focus; that's all I did, I worked on it.

*And do you think you knew less about the ills of the society around you in Chicago so you couldn't get distracted with activism? [laughter]*

I had, in a sense, separated myself from that home port. I was now in a separate reality, in a separate world. I knew what was going on, and I read . . . in fact, not this first semester, but the next year we had a television set in the Anthropology House, and all of us would sit around watching the McCarthy hearings.

I think every one of us were liberal left-wingers, you know. And I kept close tabs on what was happening politically in the country and had connections through the mail and letters and stuff from friends of mine left in the Bay Area, so I was aware of that world. But I had decided to concentrate on this, and that was my main focus.

*And don't you think, also, that's because the subject, your area of study, had the kind of social relevance that you wanted your work to have?*

What do you mean, Penny?

*Well, maybe I'm just reaching too far here, but it seems like having decided to focus on African studies because of its link to your interests in . . . . I guess in the American scene and the whole nature of prejudice and how that happens, it sounds like if you're studying that phenomena, you are, in a way, making that social contribution that a lot of your writing and . . . .*

Yes. Well, I felt I was preparing myself and studying to do something more in that area, but that was not at that time going to be expressed in activism. My activism was going to be academic at that point. But that was a big enough job, and it was. I mean, I had to . . . I did an enormous amount of reading.

I was also very aware of the fact that there was a lot of real discrimination and prejudice in Evanston and Chicago, and there were a number of occasions in which I even took part in a small way in demonstrations, but not in a leading way or in a big way. I was always pleased with Herskovits who would put up a real fight on the campus for bringing in his African students and Afro-American students and finding housing for them. And he was very good on this level, and I really dug that.

But my political activities were diminished. I mean, I was concentrating on academic work for the first time.

*Was this the class that you wrote the paper for that you said brought in a lot of your Berkeley . . . ?*

Yes, that was "The Negroes of the World," in which . . . . He gave me an A on that first exam I took from him. One of the questions



had to do with, "Discuss the following statement: Africa is isolated from European and Asian regions of the world." And boy, I just went to town with materials that I had worked on in McCown's courses on the interrelations of the Levantine and Asia with North Africa and East Africa, and the spread of technology out at Moroe into East and South and even West Africa; the Arabic expansion in the sixth and seventh centuries, and the possible effects upon the West Coast of Africa; all these things that had been misunderstood and misrepresented in the literature; and the slave trade from the materials that I had worked on in Carter's and Eberhard's courses. [laughter] I just brought in all this stuff that I had.

Oh, and pre-history: Australopithecines, the fact that no early hominid types had been found in Europe, and the ones in East Asia were younger and not as old as those in Africa, and on and on. Well, I just went to town on that and a couple of other questions in which I did something similar.

I forget what the other ones were. Oh, the backwardness of Africa: "Africa is backward technologically," was another question, "Comment." And, of course, I had done a

lot of reading on this. Early Afrocentrism, but also, I had some real material on the early technologies of a number of the large civilizations in central and South and West Africa.

And he was impressed. I was so glad he was impressed. "That's rather interesting. That's rather interesting. Give you an A." [laughter]

So yes, I transferred over a lot of that. And I was very interested that at Northwest there really wasn't a sense of bringing in pre-historic aspects of Africa or the long-term development and evolution of societies in Africa; the program was interested in contemporary Africa.

*Did you feel overall that there was less emphasis in any way on the four-field approach at Northwestern?*

Yes, it was a program of African studies with some linguistics—not enough. Emphasis on technology and fieldwork and folklore.

*And art?*

And art with Bascom and Herskovits. It was a narrow program.



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## PREPARING FOR THE FIELD

**A**BOUT THE PROGRAM of African studies, I think I should mention that although the Department [of Anthropology] was, in a sense, part of it, for a while, it was called The Institute of Contemporary Africa. And this was the program in which Herskovits would bring in speakers from, my god, all over the world, practically. A number of anthropologists—Kenneth Little, Meyer Fortes, Joe Greenberg, a number of others—would come in. However, the program of African Studies at Northwestern was a sort of a consortium of people from various departments who were interested in Africa.

Probably one of the major contributors were the political scientists. David Apter was one. I got very much involved in his courses later. And there were two or three historians who were part of the program. Psychologists like Donald Campbell, who later on wrote a book with Herskovits on visual perception that wasn't published until after Herskovits died. But Campbell and he were very much involved in developing this theory of cultural perception and developed it later in a book

form. And some of the economists were involved.

It was truly an interdisciplinary program, but not a great many people were involved, but those who were interested in Africa were and would speak at the seminar. The other departments who had pertinent interest in what the students were doing would be on their doctoral committees. Dave Apter was on mine, and at the moment, I can't remember who else was outside the anthropology department—there was an historian I don't remember.

Nevertheless, it was a wide-ranging program, and it took quite a while in the early 1950s for Herskovits to be able to get the thing established. There was some resistance at the university from the administration about allowing the department to expand in this way, and it cost a little money, but Herskovits, in his usual bumptious way, managed to push the thing through, and it did develop something of a positive record for itself.

I have a collection of the various talks that were given. My god, it's two large vol-

umes of an amazing collection of people who either had an interest or were working in Africa on all levels—applied anthropologists, applied economists, administrators, officials in colonial societies, demographers. It was a *mélange*. Nevertheless, very stimulating and very good for us, because we got this feeling of the breadth of the problems that were involved in dealing with any particular area and that there were so many *levels* of expertise in various disciplines and in professional activities and positions. And these people were able to present within the seminar positions and attitudes and data which was very important to us all.

So the program had a really positive effect, I think, on not only us students, but other people who came in. These weekly seminars were usually crowded. A lot of people from Chicago would come up. I think Fred Eggan came a couple of times and people who were passing through, various anthropologists would drop in.

So Herskovits, despite the fact it was a very small anthropology department and the fact that it wasn't entirely Africa focused—Hsu interested, of course, in Asia and in certain problems in American sociology . . . Nevertheless, the program of African studies gave the department a kind of a larger presence at the university.

And Herskovits, he blustered and bumbled and pushed his way through. This little man had enormous energy. And how he kept up the pace he did . . . Not only that, he was constantly making trips out to give talks or go to meetings, going to Europe. And then he would teach and administer the department, organize the seminar, and write. And he wrote indefatigably. He was constantly at his desk, usually at home at the large desk he had in their home in Evanston. He would spend the early hours of the morning

there before he came to the university. So some of these older guys were admirable in their disciplined energy and focus, and he was one of them.

Later on, I was to see that with George Peter Murdock at Pittsburgh. Not that I agreed with him much or even had much in common with him, but I would watch this guy working into midnight hours in his office with the only light on in the building. This is Murdock, and the light in the building, the “tower of learning” at Pittsburgh, as they called it. And he would be there early in the morning as well.

He was a hunt and peck man, by the way. [laughter] “Tap, tap, tap, tap,” and it went on constantly.

Well, Herskovits, was even more so—a terrific amount of focused energy and activity. He would sit down to write, and he'd write. And, you know, it'd take a lot of the rest of us a while to get organized, and we'd have to prepare, and we're not always ready to really sit down and do the job. He would sit down and start to work. The writing pad would be full before he came to work. [laughter] Pass them over to his secretary, type them up, and that was his day's work. So those were all eye-openers at this point.

*Well, it sounds, too, like it provided not only a forum for students to be exposed to all these different interdisciplinary approaches to a geographic area, but also maybe, do you think it might have provided a forum for the other disciplines to be exposed more to anthropological . . . ?*

Oh, yes, yes. And that's one of the values of any interdisciplinary program. Oh, yes. Herskovits as the central figure and the dynamo within it . . . nevertheless, my gosh, people from other departments were constantly sitting in and arguing, and particularly

those interested in Africa. And it was very stimulating to them.

They were often very critical. Not in general, but I mean there would be individuals who were very argumentative about what was going on and what the positions were that were taken. Nevertheless, they were there, and we would hear this. We would hear these exchanges.

*Do you think it a focus, maybe, of some . . . or that one of the common threads of potential criticism would have been the relativism of anthropology?*

Yes, but I won't go into that now. Not the relativism in anthropology, the relativism of Herskovits. [laughter] And that wasn't necessarily in the seminars a bone of contention. It certainly was in the literature. And I'll go into that later. But no, I'm just thinking of the fact that he would select certain kinds of people to come.

Sometimes they'd say, "Why in the hell are we listening to this character, some colonial official?" And he would have such people because he believed in this wide range of input, and he wanted his students to hear all these people. He wanted them to hear their attitudes and the way they talked, how they presented themselves, how they explained what they were doing, what their political positions were, without us being argumentative in the least, but merely questioning in wide-mouthed curiosity to cover up our deep concern and interest. [laughter] And we better not show our biases in the questions. He would tell us, "You can ask questions in terms of hypotheses" "Supposing such and such were the case or something else were the case, what would be your view of that or your decision about it?" And that way, you don't reveal your own views. You are presenting in a neu-

tral way a contentious situation as though someone else had raised it and then allowing the person to deal with it their own way.

Always being polite. Always *seeking*, never telling anybody what you think or what they should think, because you are seeking answers. On and on.

He was such a pedagogue. But it was good for us, I think. It created an atmosphere of getting information and how to *get* information and what one's role was. One's role wasn't to tell other people what the score was, but to find out what they thought the score was, you see.

Anyway, I didn't mention in regards to that first exam I had with him in his Africa course, that one of the things I wrote on was the Hamitic hypothesis. That was something that he was always getting at, the Hamitic hypothesis, the older view of some Europeans that any evidence of cattle or complex culture in West Africa had come from the Hamites, the Hamitic people of north Africa and the near East. Like the idea of the Fulani in which it was said that they were one of the groups, because they were cattle raisers who had come over bringing Hebraic ideas all the way to West Africa.

That was sort of an extreme example, but there was this general view that wherever you found those areas high culture—complexity in culture, kingships, sacred kings, et cetera, that you had either influences from Egypt or from the Hamitic peoples, and the Arabs coming in at an earlier time. And that was, of course, one of Herskovits' hobby horses. And it was a *good* one at the time, because we forget looking back forty, fifty years, for god sakes, how naïve was the view of Africa.

We didn't realize that at the time. I mean, what little was known about Africa, we thought was a lot. It wasn't. It was distorted, cloudy, often mystical, and all kinds of weird,

strange writings were done about Africa. The good solid research being done by the British and a few other Europeans was all there was.

The Egyptologists earlier had laid the groundwork for this overlay of the view that somehow Egypt had been the center and the source, the point of diffusion of all important ideas and the developments throughout Africa, which even then we rejected. But those were very prevalent ideas. They had an influence on the thinking about Africa. Africa was the great void, and anybody who could put any kind of a sticker on it in a sense, made a mark, and people remembered that.

So I remember I did write about the Hamitic hypothesis, because, again, McCown had dealt with this problem, the problems of the near Asian and European influence on Africa—Greece and Rome and Egypt as being somehow the great generating forces for developments in Africa and other areas of the world. And he had criticized this. I had read some of the work, people like Carruthers and others who had written on African mentality. And these strange earlier works were very influential, so that people like McCown—who had actually done work in Africa and in the Levantine—and Herskovits and his African American orientation with his earlier work on the myths about Africans in the new world, had taken this on. This was Herskovits' hobby horse, and he hit it hard.

This made him a very peculiar and marginal character even in anthropology and certain of the other disciplines. He had an *idée fixe*, a guy who was biased, he leaped to conclusions, et cetera, et cetera. Well, of course, he was just ahead of his time.

And he *was* a bumptious little character, and he did argue about everything, and he did sometimes become not only an irritant, but a laughing stock, because he would pop

up at meetings and come forth with all this material on Africa when people were talking about North America and South America or Asia. And he would always use African examples.

Nevertheless, he was the first in the United States to be doing this, and he was developing the culture areas of Africa back in 1920, 1924, when Kroeber was working after Wissler on culture areas of North America. Very early he was seeing the world and continents as clusters of cultures and their interreactions. Herskovits was always making a big thing a la Boas on history and time sequence rather than a synchronic trait-listing kind of approach to cultures and their divisions throughout the world. And he was, at the very beginning, utilizing these earlier views.

His culture areas of Africa he revised any number of times. He had the general outlines. Nobody had done it, and he had figured out these five or six areas that were significant and had not only cultural but culture-historical significance. Not so much in ecology, to the degree that Kroeber was concerned with natural areas and ecology, because there wasn't that much known about African ecology.

I mean, my god, North America and South America had gotten an enormous amount of material by that time for laying out much more sophisticated kinds of approaches. Africa was this *great empty space*, loaded with the writings of early European colonists and their descendants. So there *was* this tension between that program and I'd say other programs elsewhere in the country in anthropology, particularly those not necessarily interested in Africa, because it was a pioneering period. And Herskovits was a great enabler. He pushed people into the field, got them out there, you know.

*At the time, were there other programs in other institutions, though, that had a geographic focus? Because you were saying you had so much data . . . .*

Berkeley certainly had a geographic focus on California and the West.

*But not as explicitly interdisciplinary as the program at Northwestern?*

No. Well, there may have been others that I didn't know about. But certainly with Africa, that was the only one. Well, at that time, there were interdisciplinary programs with regards to Meso and South America. Where was it? Cornell or Harvard? The American Southwest, but that was much more specific. For continental interdisciplinary programs, yes, there were some, but not focused on Africa, even in England.

*Now among the other disciplines that were involved in the program at Northwestern, was there an understanding among the academic disciplines about this culture area concept, or was that not the point? They were just there to share their expertise?*

No, the culture area concept, as such, was something that emerged out of geography and anthropology. It was pretty much a theory within anthropology as far as I know. It was an attempt to be analytical about distributions.

I don't know if you recall the culture element distribution series—twenty-three studies that were put out in terms of trait listing out of Cal. Now this is while Kroeber himself was criticizing the trait-listing approach, but he, nevertheless, utilized it as a tool, and he helped to push it. And that was very Wisslerian.

It was sort of dated to do this, and when one looks at some of those things in an area where you worked, you find out how misleading that kind of approach can be. In the first place, the person doing it, like Omer Stewart who did the work on the Northern Paiute and the Washoe, is recording whether a trait is present or not present. My god, you go through that, and it just drives you crazy, because he's talking to a few informants, and in many cases, you know a "trait" is present, but a particular informant said it isn't; and then the list goes on as plus or minus or question mark.

Except for the most general, peripheral kind of checking to see whether or not something was reported at that given time, it doesn't really give you much of a picture. I mean, it's the epitome of trait listing.

And yet, Kroeber accepted and pushed this kind of thing. He was critical of it, but he used it, like many of these guys at that time. And the culture area concept, he was critical of it too because he was more interested in things like culture climaxes and centers of development. He saw this merely as a tool, and he drew a map of his revision of Wissler's culture areas, reluctantly, saying, "Nevertheless, this gives us some kind of visual view of what we might be trying to get at and analyze."

They were very eclectic in those days, because anthropology was a small and growing field, and everything was useful. And everything had to be dealt with. Everything had to be taken on. Things that now would be considered utterly useless controversies over small theoretical matters were terribly important at that moment, because it was a kind of formative period in the discipline.

Herskovits also came from that early Boasian orientation trying to understand historic cultural center areas, and his culture

areas of Africa were an experiment in that. He didn't like the 1923, 1924 versions. He kept reorganizing it, and he kept writing new analyses. But that was the kind of work that had to be done as new information kept coming in, and as students, we saw that happening, we saw the beginnings of that, and that was very useful.

I remember in his seminar on Africa he was talking about the Guinea Coast area and its connections with the Congo. Later I remember when I had done more work myself and there was more information around, I began to see how ridiculous that was, because the so-called Guinea Coast was really a very complex area involving contacts and contributions from all over West Africa and even farther north.

He tended to ignore the Islamic and Arabic influence. He mentioned it, but the importance of the impact was somehow not, in those days, taken seriously. In fact, one of the problems with recognizing the Arabic influence was that it was related to the Hamitic hypothesis, and therefore, there was a tendency I think on the part of Herskovits and Bascom and a number other of the Africanists at that time to be very leery of the importance of Arabic influence.

That was unfortunate, because there was a tremendous amount of such influence, but not of the kind that was being written about. It had much more to do with a very slow persistent influence. Usually it was talked about in terms of invasions. The area I worked in, the great invasion of the Mandi agriculturalists and cattle raisers was talked about as a war, as an invasion, when really it was a very slow infiltration over centuries that slowly created a quite different complex on the coast than there had been earlier. It's one of the things I got very interested in.

So, at that point, there was some reason for setting the Arabic influence aside for fear, I think, of keeping the Hamitic notions going. In fact, that's one of the things I found that I had missed in my early work. I tended to ignore or just not deal with what influence was coming in from the Savanna. There was a very strong Islamic influence very early in the areas that I was working, and I tended to see it as a kind of an unfortunate intrusion. [laughter]

I didn't give it as much attention as I wish I had. I since have gone back and reinvestigated and thought through some of the material, but at the time . . . I'm trying to think. I guess why I'm hesitating, I'm trying to think to what degree that might have been the influence of the department and the program—that I was focused on “a culture,” the Gola and their history and their customs and their traditions. I suppose I didn't *want* to know too much about any other group that was interfering with that nice little cluster of a culture there. [laughter]

*Well, it reminds me a little bit of some of the criticisms that have been leveled against the anthropology of its time when Kroeber and others were doing what they considered salvage work among cultures that were considered to be dying. And if you're trying to describe what you considered as being pure culture . . .*

Yes, the kernel of a discrete culture, and I think that was a bias. It certainly was in me. I was interested in the Gola when I first went over. Although I knew there were important groups adjacent—the Loma and the Mandi and certainly that important complex of peoples on the edge of the Savanna, and the Kru to the south. All these groups had been important historically. I somehow



saw them . . . now I don't want to exaggerate this, because I wasn't that stupid, but I felt that they were . . . I was seeing them as discrete groups, discrete cultures, and that *was* an orientation in anthropology to a considerable degree at that time: *a culture*, a specific culture. I think we all knew better, but that was the way you thought about it. You were dealing with *a culture*, and you became something of a custodian of that culture.

And, in a sense, I have done that with the Washoe, too, to an extent. But not as great, because it's rather hard to avoid the tremendous amount of movement and change that has taken place even in two or three hundred years in this area, and the interreaction of peoples and the migration of peoples. Well, it wasn't such a serious problem working in this area; nevertheless, that bias is there, you know, to be working with *a culture* rather than a region, rather than a collection of interreacting groups and peoples with a long history of interreaction.

I later saw that very clearly in West Africa and did some writing on that, but at my first fieldwork, I had this . . . . It's hard for me now to recall it, but I know it was there. I was working with *a people, a culture*.

*Well, don't you think, really, in anthropology one of the goals either has been or still is on what level you're going to make your generalities? One of your challenges is to make generalities, and you've got to pick what criteria, and finding the core of a culture over time seems like a . . . .*

Sure. Well, when I first went over, I wasn't interested in developing generalities. I was interested in ethnography and ethnohistory. I was going to find out about *a* people and what made them tick, you know: who they were, where they were, what their past had been, whatever could be recon-

structed and retrieved. And it really wasn't until, oh gosh—well, not so long—until the early 1960s in my next fieldwork, that I began to think in terms of more dynamic interrelationships that had been taking place and were taking place in the area that I worked in.

*Well, one of the things that strikes me, though, is that in order to be interested in the dynamics at a later time, you do have to have a foundation of understanding of what that core culture is. I mean, it's sort of a logical progression . . . .*

Well, having immersed oneself in one culture, then if one is moved to do so, it gives a kind of a model for dealing with others around, and then more dynamically, with interreactions, interrelations, and *historical* interreactions. I didn't really start developing that until six or seven years later. In the early 1960s, in fact, I wrote a paper on the problems of defining a West Atlantic region, in which I sort of rethought that whole region in terms of what had happened historically. It was very helpful to me to do that, to see my little private enclave of the Gola in the larger framework of the kind of things that had taken place on that whole west Atlantic coast, including Sierra Leone, Liberia, and what was then Ivory Coast. And I did an enormous amount of reading about that.

I remember Herskovits was a little bit wary of that approach. It was historical, and that's fine, but he felt that I was being also kind of political—he was always a little worried about me—but I wasn't. I mean, it was purely a matter of trying to see what the area was that I was working in in a larger regional context of what had happened.

And that got published and argued about a lot. I remember Ferriservice, I think he was, who did a lot of work in Egypt. What was his

first name? Ferriservice. Anyway, he was very critical of my paper, that I was talking about seven-league boots migrations here, there, and all that, which I was, but as I answered him, I said, "Because they were there." [laughter] "They happened. They actually happened. And it took seven-league boots to go from the Savanna just one hundred miles to the coast? Well, it did take seven-league boots. We're not talking about across all Africa, we're talking about from the interior mountains to the littoral."

So you know, these kinds of debates were going on all the time. But that was an interesting period of seeing West Africa in a much more dynamic context, which was going on among Africanists getting out of the little shells of the discrete cultural groups that we were looking at.

I hadn't thought of that before, but that was really very much my orientation that I had gotten out of my early work. Certainly at Cal where people were working with tribal groups. Even the little rancherias, two hundred people.

*Right, and that in itself could have been driven in some ways because there were so many discrete lingual groups in California.*

Yes, exactly.

*I mean, you're looking in an area that's just incredibly packed.*

And there are these little cul-de-sacs of languages and fairly discrete groups. They might even be three families, but they are what is left of the culture: Ishi, "the last of the Yahi," you know. [laughter] So there was this idea of identifying with "a" culture. And the Washoe at that time . . . well, Kroeber

and Lowie had been there and had done it, and, "There were hardly any left now" kind of thing, so turn your attention to where there were at least five hundred people someplace, or a culture, a language, et cetera.

So, even in African research at that time, it was pretty much a matter of discrete groups, discrete cultures. There were some exceptions, because people like Hambey and others were doing regional surveys that were coming out which were very useful, but again, I don't remember it grabbing me, because I was interested in *one* of the cultures within these surveys.

That didn't last long. I think all my life, I have identified with the two cultures I worked with. [Washoe and Gola] Nevertheless, my views of the importance of either my work or anybody else's have changed considerably in terms of what needs to be done historically and with cross-cultural comparison.

*Well, at this stage, were you already very interested in Liberia specifically?*

In Liberia as a nation, as a political entity and a cultural entity on the West Coast. But the Gola were the unstudied group that I was going to try to understand and see what their role had been in the development of that larger society.

*Were there others that were unstudied, or was that the one that was the most unknown at the time?*

Actually, it was the most unknown. There were little enclaves of people that had . . . What were some of them? Some of the eastern Liberian groups on the borders of Guinea and Ivory Coast, like the Kru, Kran,

Bassa et cetera. No, all of them had had something written about them, and the Gola were only mentioned anecdotally as a problem.

*[laughter] As an anomaly because they hadn't been . . . .*

Well, we didn't know enough about them to make them anomalous, but they were a problem. They had been a social and political problem. They were a feisty group, they were expansionists, and they made trouble for all the tribes around them according to the Liberian historians. And they were a very difficult problem socially.

How to handle and contain the Gola and their expansionism, that fascinated me, because I thought, here is this group that had created so many problems, and yet nobody had actually worked with them. The Kpelle nearby, an enormous amount of work had been done with them. The Vai, the Dei . . . .

*So the Gola were not necessarily well represented among the political hierarchy of new Liberia, I mean of the nation, at all?*

Later. Oh, yes, in the 1960s and 1970s, but when I was there, there were two or three Gola in low echelon positions—one as the head of the cultural center, a man named Oscar Norman. Well, we're jumping the gun here. That's my later fieldwork.

But yes, there were two or three Gola who were working in government in cultural affairs, and they were tokens, true tokens. But the Gola were held in suspicion by the government, and probably for good reason.

*But as a student at this time, you're drawn to them already because so little had been done?*

Because so little had been done, and they apparently had an impact; they had been an important force in the interior, and, therefore, I was interested in the development of that kind of enclave within Liberia and what it had meant.

But my earliest interests would have been to study their culture: Who are they? To put them on the anthropological map, the ethnographic map.

*And I just want to ask one more question on that topic. At this point, you do have a map in your head in terms of a specific category—a methodology of going out and putting people on the map. I mean, you do kinship, and you do . . . .*

Oh god, yes. We don't want to go into that yet because I hadn't gotten to it, but oh, no, Bascom's course and seminar that I took the fall of 1954, spring of 1955 was really a preparation for fieldwork. Herskovits talked a lot about fieldwork.

*Well, and ethics too.*

Yes, he was interested in, pretty much, the ethics, the ethics of fieldwork. And I had a lot of respect for the position that he had, his notion of ethical neutrality and distance. Though I didn't fully agree with it, it was an important cautionary kind of a position about what to be careful not to do, about the way you think of yourself in the field, and how you behave, and what you do with your material and all that.

That was pretty much his forte. He talked about that. In every course, in every lecture, something of that sort would come up—the problem of entrance, the problem of integrity within the field and all of that.

A lot of it I would consider to be kind of naive and, on his part, extremely personal and subjective. Nevertheless, it caused us to think. You had to think about what you were going to do and how you were going to do it.

*Did it deal much with . . . I think you talked about the consequences of your fieldwork to the people around you that you studied?*

Oh, it was very much on his mind that if any of them should ever read or hear about it, they must learn something from it about themselves. They must also learn from it what anthropologists do and that they can be trusted, and that they are not *applied* anthropologists; they are *not* government administrators, but they are neutral, objective observers.

Well, of course, one could argue this forever, you know. [laughter] And it certainly, in recent years, has been a major bone of contention within the field. Nevertheless . . .

*So applied anthropology in those years—and maybe I'm naive now . . .*

It was very fresh, new.

*But it had this connotation of automatically being sort of a tool for the government or enabling the spread of capitalism?*

It could be, because . . . Well, when I went in the field, I was asked if I was a missionary. Most people I worked with thought I was really some kind of missionary, and I was asked what my god was.

*What are you really doing here? [laughter]*

Well, what my god was, because I must be some kind of missionary. I must be trying

to tell them something. And the notion that somebody was coming there just to observe, to record . . . It was accepted and liked by the few people it got over to, but I don't think anybody really believed I was just coming there to understand their history and their ways. Nobody had really done that, you know. You don't do that. You had to have a purpose that had to do with government or God or something like that. [laughter]

So, yes, there was that element that he talked about. But he was very rigorous and narrow-minded on this business of what he called ethical neutrality. He was really concerned—and he would give me double barrels on this—that I would be political. And I think I might have gotten kind of a distorted view of his attitude about this. He might not have done it with others, and it may not have been his general attitude, but I was always getting sort of lectured to on how I must not let my personal biases interfere with objectivity.

On the other hand, his kind of objectivity was so objective that you never got into things. But Herskovits did, although there has been some criticism of the fieldwork he did in Dahomey. I have a lot of respect for how much those guys did. My god, the amount of information in the few months that they took. I mean, over years I didn't get that much information. And most of it seems to hold up fairly well, although it can be nitpicked, as many have done. A lot of things were distorted, got wrong, and all that; nevertheless, the gist of it was very valuable, very good, new. So anyway, that's what we were doing.

Yes, I guess the thing that I was pausing over was this idea of ethics in fieldwork, which was so much a matter, of proper procedure. Going through channels, doing things, not precipitously, but making sure that in terms of the local culture—whatever that

culture may be, whether it's the administrative authorities or the hierarchy of tribal groups or whatever—that you start, as they see it, through the key figures who are supposed to give you a certain accreditation or, in a sense, verify your role and who you are. Everyone from the President of Liberia on down, and you go to each one so that they know who you are. They need to also feel that they have laid some kind of stamp of approval on you. You need to have that, and they have to feel, in a sense, involved and that you gave them the courtesy of seeing them. Down the line all the way to the water-carrier, you go through channels. I remember that line—we used to joke about it, you know, a lot of the students—“Going through channels.” [laughter] Going through channels of the department, starting with the janitor.

And anyway, those were terribly useful things, because, you know, most of us had no experience in the field. I had some with the Washoe, so all this stuff helped and caused me to reflect on what I had done.

*On what you had done?*

And then I suppose what I'm thinking of is at Cal there was nothing of this. Fieldwork, even Kroeberian fieldwork . . . Now, each individual certainly has their own style, and they had a set of rules for themselves, and they had a pattern that worked for themselves, but it wasn't talked about. It really wasn't talked about at all.

You went out. “Just go. Here's fifty bucks, put some gas in your car, and head down to such and such place and spend three weeks there during the summer, come back with a report. You might want to look at this and look at that.”

And from Kroeber: “I have gone through that area, and I have talked to this family

and that family,” and he would name people. “And you might as well see so-and-so first. And now, go!” No discussion.

Now, I don't know why. I don't know if this just wasn't in the picture at the time. Fieldwork was an initiation, and you just went, and you figured out what to do. You had some ideas in your head what you were supposed to be looking for, but how to do it was something you'd better find out yourself, you know.

*Yes, sort of a trial by fire?*

Yes, an individual sort of thing, highly personal and I guess not thought to be so terribly important, at least in California.

*Oh, because there were no political consequences, really.*

Yes, I suppose in California you were dealing with groups that were in a fairly helpless position.

*Like going to the museum. [laughter]*

Yes, right. It was. Well, that's been said about California. That's what Paul Radin said about California or something like that. You know, the morgue of cultures. [laughter] He didn't use that term, but he gave that impression.

Well, the point is these were little scattered groups of people living on the margins, dependency, and the problem would be very personal how to get to know somebody and be able to talk to them. But you didn't have much interference from the outside, even from the Indian agencies or anything of that kind. You didn't have to get a lot of permission to do *anything*.

*Well, there wasn't a political hierarchy within most of the groups to go through.*

Yes, exactly. The idea was, you weren't really working with viable societies. I think this attitude was sort of general throughout anthropology at the time, but I think when I look at the California situation, it was sort of the epitome, and I don't recall any discussions except among students, because you were desperate! "How am I going to do this? What am I going to . . . ? Where do I start? What . . . ?"

And I remember my first trips to Washoe. The fact that I didn't talk to anybody in the department about it was because I was so unsure of myself, and I knew I would be left on my own, and I didn't want to reveal all of my qualms and difficulties. If I made any mistakes, I didn't want to have to explain them. Later on in teaching, I would insist that students would write about their mistakes. I mean, that you should talk about the difficulties, put it in your field notes, all that, and others should see it, and you should discuss these things.

But at Cal, there was no encouragement to do that. You didn't go to your mentor to ask, "I'm having problems talking to so-and-so, and how do I get into this group?" You went and said you had a problem with some aspect of a particular research question—kinship or social organization. "What should I be looking at?" You didn't really talk about the problem with fieldwork itself.

*Well, and of establishing contacts with people?*

Oh, yes. Oh, you know, that's the great problem of "entrance," the important problem of entrance and then divesting yourself at the end. Culture shock and reverse cul-

ture shock. [laughter] Oh, Herskovits: "Boy, sometimes you have a worse problem coming back into your own culture than you had going into the new one." [laughter] "And you had better be aware of that, and you'd better think about it."

So that was all very good. It did make a difference in how you looked at what you were doing, and I would say that that few months at Northwestern, when I went back to the Washoe, I felt much clearer about how to go about what I was doing.

I had some sense of looking at myself doing what I was doing; who I was as against who they were, the Washoe people that I knew, and what they were probably thinking of me, you know—not in an obsequious kind of a way, as I might have before, guilt-ridden about being a "whitey" and coming in among these down-trodden people. Not that, more in terms of having a job to do and who am I, what am I doing, who are they, how do they see me, how do I behave, and what do I do in order to make everything easier and simpler? In other words, to understand better and to behave in a way that shows that I understand.

*Yes. And encourage revelation or whatever.*

Yes, and to talk more freely myself and yet judiciously, you know. [laughter] But to be more of a person. And also to start keeping some regular journal and notes, which I never did very well in any of my fieldwork, but nevertheless, Herskovits and Bascom insisted upon this—the importance of a journal and a set of notes. And I'm always telling people and students, as you know, "Did you put that down?" Well, I'm the worst offender. I'll let things lapse and don't do it, but I know that that's not good and it's very important to keep a very well-organized journal and file.

*Did you keep or were you encouraged to keep sort of a dual . . . like a journal and field notes, two separate records?*

Yes. To Herskovits, that was absolutely essential. It was the golden rule. You have a journal of personal observations, like a daily diary, and then you have your field notes. Well, I tried doing that, and I didn't do too badly. I mean, my god, I've got three or four file boxes full of cards that I organized for different categories of material, data. And then I had a good, very weird running journal. And then they got mixed together a lot. I mean, the journal became the recording of material and vice versa, but I tried to keep a kind of an index, some kind of a cross-reference of material, which was very helpful. I'm glad I did a little of that.

*Do you wish you had done more?*

Oh, yes. Oh, god, yes. When I look back and I look at something I did, I keep thinking, "Oh, if I had only organized this better and done this and that," but I'm glad to have what I have. [laughter]

But the Washoe material, that was sort of my first thing. I was much less organized than I was later in Africa. And my notes are pretty much chronological observations and notes, setting aside some blocks of material

here and there that are specific data. Well, I'll get to that.

Let's see. At the end of 1953, the end of that first semester, I took my . . . Well, in the spring, I took my French exams and passed, and that was an enormous relief. And I still had the German ahead of me, which I thought, "I will never, ever conquer German. Why didn't I take Spanish or Portuguese?"

*So you had to do two languages?*

Two languages, yes.

*And English didn't count?*

[laughter] No, that didn't count. Nor my Swedish patois. [laughter]

And I kept thinking, "Oh, I should have taken . . ." I would have taken Portuguese, but nobody was teaching it at that time. Then Herskovits would have sent me to Brazil or Mozambique. [laughter]

So, anyway, I also took my reading exams and passed those and was accepted as a Carnegie Fellow; therefore, I had some funds.

*And this was after your first semester.*

This was the end of my first semester, the beginning of my second, during that transition.





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## CHRISTMAS BREAK AND SPRING

**D**URING THAT PERIOD, I had not gone [back to the Washoe], even when we went back briefly for Christmas. (Did we? I think we drove across country.) I stayed away from the Washoe though I was getting letters from Barton and Roy James urging me to come because important things were happening. This is where I began to get—what would you call it?—co-opted into Washoe politics and planning. And, of course, they were right in the beginnings of their land claims case.

It was the Woodfords group, and mainly the peyotists, who were the most active at the time. Roy James and his brother Earl and his son Ronald. Earl was tribal chairman at the time. These were the Woodfords group, the peyotists. Although not all of them were peyotists, nevertheless, they were considered to be, you know, [by other Washoe], the peyote bunch up there in the hills.

And so my concern . . . . In fact, who was it? One of the people that I knew at Northwestern, and also maybe Stan Freed, were saying, “You know, you ought to be careful not to be pegged.”

Of course, this was a very important part of the instructions Herskovits used to give. “You don’t want to get identified with any factional group. You want to stay above the factions.”

Well, that’s impossible, you know. Nevertheless, it’s a good thing to always keep in mind. So I was a little concerned that if I was going to really work with the Washoe, that I was getting pegged as a friend of the peyotists—in fact, something of a pleader of their cause, you see. But there wasn’t much I could do about that at the time, because they were the people that I knew, and they were very active.

So I was getting these letters from Barton and Roy telling me about the problems that they were having and their arguments with their lawyer, George Wright from Elko, and how he was making maps of their land that were not really right. They were being cheated out of a lot of their land, you know, for the case. Would I come and do something about it?

Well, I wasn’t ready to return at that time. If we did go back, we just went back to see

family and friends. And it was at this time also, that Stan Freed and I had some correspondence.

Stan was moving ahead on his work with kinship and did an admirable job eventually—very well organized fieldwork. Stan was doing things right. And I guess Stan was working with Lowie—Lowie or Kroeber or both. Nevertheless, he was doing good, standard, careful, focused fieldwork, and I don't think he was any more than I, ever instructed on how to do the fieldwork. He just did it. He had one or two informants.

*But there was a specific chronological order by which you acquired certain information, wasn't there? I mean, you had to do kinship first, and even if you weren't instructed on how to do fieldwork, you had your categories?*

That was the old saw—genealogy and kinship were the things that you could work best with, and it's still true. I mean, if all else fails, you just ask people about their families, and somebody's going to talk. But I don't know if that was necessarily what we called a rule.

But, Freed was interested, because Lowie had done a kinship schedule and he was re-checking it. In the process he developed a tremendous amount of new material and refinement in the kinship system and change. "Changing Washoe Kinship," I think was the title of something that he wrote. He was working on that.

I think he only had two or three informants, but they were very good ones, like Roy [James], who I also worked with later. Well, I knew him earlier, but I didn't start working with him until later; Hank Pete I also didn't work with until later because he was down

in the valley and I was up there with all those peyote-eaters, you know.

*Now were Barton and Roy brothers?*

No, no. Barton John was a different family, but they were all interrelated. If you go back far enough, as I say, all Washoe are like cousins; they are all related. [laughter]

I remember I had letters in that period not only from people in the tribe, but from this wonderful woman, Katie Huggins. She died young. She was a young African-American woman in the department at Cal, and she knew everybody. She had been both a teaching assistant and a departmental aide, so she knew everybody, and she was close friends with a lot of people that I knew, even outside of the university, a lot of people in economics and history. And you know, she was one of these remarkable figures.

Kathy and I knew her fairly well, and she would write these long, marvelously informative letters about what was going on at the department. And she wanted to work in India with Mandelbaum. She had been very taken by Mandelbaum's courses.

So that was very much a part of our going back at Christmas, to see people that we had known. Jack Dalton, Kenneth Rice, and people like the Friedmans were living in our house, and then there were a number of my friends in the movement that I went to see. So it was a very rich, busy period there going back and seeing people that few weeks during the winter break.

Oh, one of the reasons we didn't stop by Washoe was that there was a very heavy snow pack, and we had a hard time getting across, as was true of those winters on those roads. And I just didn't feel like it. I wasn't ready to

see these people yet, though I did correspond with them. And I was *loaded* with what was going on at Northwestern. That whole thing was very absorbing.

So anyway, I saw a lot of the people that I had known and worked with and some in the party and all that. And I remember feeling at the time, visiting people that I had known in the party, that there was so much going on with the Left, there was so *much* paranoia and inside warfare. I felt that it was very unwise for me to see some of these people, because in the first place, I was not *in* the party at the time and I didn't want to be seen as somebody inquiring or keeping in touch for nefarious reasons.

It was a very terrible time. There was an awful lot of anxiety and unease and suppressed anger and frustration, not only among the left people. This was just the beginning of the heat-up of the McCarthy period. But I did see some people which later got into my FBI files.

*I don't think I ever asked this, but when you say you "left the party," I mean, you just sort of let your . . . ?*

Just left; just didn't do anything. And as far as I'm concerned, except for making a statement later on to the state department that I was no longer in the party because I had let my dues lapse, I never even said anything about it. But for all practical purposes, I was [in the party], but I wasn't around, and my history for a few months in the East was not clear, and I didn't want to be in a situation where my motives were mistrusted. But even those few visits I made were in my FBI report later on that I obtained through the Freedom of Information Act—that I had visited certain people on that trip, you know,

and that my car was seen parked at so-and-so's house, and all that kind of thing. [laughter]

So that I was right in a way, that one should be . . . I wasn't so much concerned about myself. I was concerned, well, about their attitude about me. I didn't want them, in the very understandable state of frustration they were in, to wonder what I was up to, what I was doing, even people that I knew well except one or two friends on the waterfront who were going through a similar kind of soul-searching of their own.

*So there were people in the party that you could talk with about some of these issues?*

A few. A few. But you know, I was away, and I wasn't able to keep up a lot of the contact. But there were two or three that I was able to talk very fully with, and they were having their own problems about what they thought about the work and the party and all that. I am glad to say that the ones I knew most were never people who ever turned on the party.

*Were you ever contacted by anyone explicitly about the party or re-joining the party or going to meetings or anything [at Northwestern] in Chicago?*

You mean after I left? No. But one time when I came back, they said, "Didn't so-and-so contact you in Chicago?" Well, they had not.

But apparently word had gone out, "Hey, d'Azevedo is back there now. Why don't you go see him?" or something like that.

*Right. But you actually weren't contacted.*

No, I wasn't.

*Well, what do you think you would have done if they had?*

I don't know. When I come to think of it, I don't know. I probably would have put it off on the basis I just couldn't do anything at the time. But then my attitudes were still the same.

*Yes. I mean, this is sheer speculation.*

I thought about that then. What would I do if somebody came and says they wanted to know about my signing up in the local branch?

*I bet if they'd had a cause, you would have felt . . . or an incident that needed . . .*

Well, on the other hand, I guess I feel fortunate that it didn't happen, because I don't know if I would have reactivated, but I would have supported whatever was going on in some way. That would have worked very much against me a few months later. So in a way, it was fortunate, but I didn't have to face that. And I knew later when I got back from Africa that I was being watched, because I was visited by FBI agents.

*Right. And they're hard to spot.*

Yes. Well, they're sweet people. Oh, they're sweet-talking people.

Anyway, when I went back, you know, Kathy and I and the kids, we visited our families.

*And was this a couple of weeks?*

Oh, yes. Not more than that. I'm trying to remember how we fit that in. There were long breaks. It was quarter systems, so there were long breaks. It wasn't semester. If I said semester, we were on quarters at Northwestern.

And so anyway, then we saw our families, and that was quite an experience. My father, I've got to put in a word about that. He had gone through a transformation, I think I had mentioned before. He had written the first really feeling, personal letters that I ever got from him after my mother died when he was in this state of loneliness and reflection. And he was a person! And I thought, "My god!" I never really knew this guy. And it was a very good feeling, and, you know, he was being helpful, and he wanted to help us, and he visited us. Later, he even visited at Northwestern. But he had visited us at Cal in Berkeley, and we went down to Modesto. And even my Aunt Jenny was nice, and I thought, "My god! What's happening in this world?" [laughter]

I realize now that my father was a person. But only when he was in a state of agony and dislocation after a great crisis like my mother's death, when he was seeking new connections, a new way to identify himself, could he relax—not relax, but open up a bit, you see. And that was very wonderful. I feel I got a glimpse of him as a person, and that's quite nice.

I think then he was going to marry my aunt, and they were getting ready to do that. Aunt Jenny was just all a-twitter and just wonderful and nice to us and all that. She *wasn't* a very nice person, but I thought maybe I even liked her a little bit. We were writing letters back and forth and being very cozy, all of us.

And that went on for about a year, and then it lapsed back into . . . Well, of course, he became part of another family, and my aunt saw to that. *Her* children. [laughter] And we began to close off.

My brother, however, was very much around. He had been in the Korean War in the air force. Let's see, the Korean War ended in the spring of 1953, I guess, and he was released but wasn't sure what he was going to do.

Don and I had a lot of very close connections at that time. I have a lot of respect for him. He went through a lot. He never really got what he wanted in the way of . . . he worked very hard, and tried to go through medical school, didn't work out. So he was doing different jobs. Finally, he got in Fireman's Fund Insurance and stayed there for many years. He did very well, and he was an effective worker in that.

But he was very tied to the family and my father. I think my father was able to deal with him better than he was with me, but nevertheless, Don was just a factotum. He'd go down there and do the lawn, take care of the yard; on his weekends, go down there and then come back. And fortunately, when he married a few years later, that stopped. [laughter] Otherwise, he would have just been one of these young members of the family who tie themselves out of a sense of obligation to the family. And my father was never very forthcoming personally, but he was helpful to my brother, in a way, more than he could be with me or more than I let him, I suppose.

*So did you see your brother? Was he back? Did you see him at that visit?*

Oh, yes. Sure. When my mother had died, he came down, got leave from the Air Force. And then by this time, see, this was

winter. Well, no, I didn't see him when he got out of the service, but I did see him briefly there that winter, and then, of course, a couple of months later. At the end of the war, he was out, and then I saw him later when he visited us in Northwestern.

OK. The other thing that had happened just before we left for Christmas was that we had been invited to go to the Anthro House, the anthropology house, where we had initially not been allowed to go because we had children. But I'm trying to remember who it was . . . Two or three students and maybe the Herskovitses figured out that we could be the house mother and house father, we'd be the house family.

It was a great big, rambling, old Evanston house, a quite wonderful house in a way—a big basement where often some of us would go to work and listen to television, and it was a four-story house. It was just a couple of blocks from the university, and this was where this wonderful motley of students—graduate students mostly—lived, and almost all of them anthropologists.

We were told that we could have the first floor, you see, which was kind of a small apartment with one great big room, which was like a meeting room, and then a little kitchen and a couple of little back rooms for the kids and us. We were just delighted. And it was very reasonable rent.

I forget what it was, but it was reasonable, because we were expected, also, to watch over the house. I had to see that things worked. I mean, there was a great big coal furnace in the basement, an *enormous* old-fashioned thing that had these runners that carried coal from the coal bin, and that had to be tended and watched. Although I didn't have to do it all myself, I had to see to it that it was done. And organize the place. People had routine tasks that they had to do, like



*"It was a great big, rambling, old Evanston house."*  
Anthro House.

take out the garbage, clean up once a week, and all that sort of thing, and we had house rules. So because of that, we had low rent.

And the kids, I really wonder how those kids survived. [laughter] I think they liked it. They were very brave and wonderful about it all. Erik was five, six years old and absolutely out of his mind with fantasies that changed. One day he'd be Superman, so intent upon it that nothing else counted. And then he'd be the Lone Ranger, and then he'd be a cowboy like when we came out to Nevada and he was walking with his cowboy boots and walking down the street behind a cowboy. [laughter]

He had some friends next door. Fortunately there were three or four kids in the family who lived next door and they got to know each other. But Erik was a pretty

harem-scarem kid, and all this change, I worried about it. Well, you know, you worry about that. And he was a highly determined kid, determined really to keep any obstruction of his desires from affecting him. Lived a lot in fantasy and all of that. And, of course, he became an artist. [laughter] That's probably the way it goes.

Any, oh god, she was a little older, eight or nine, and I don't remember if she had a lot of . . . She did well in school and all that, and she had a few friends, but as I look back, I guess I was more overwhelmed by my worry about whether I was doing them a disservice by all the changes that I put them through, and Kathy, too.

Kathy was wonderful. She also got a job in a nursery school there. That's right, the kids were involved in the nursery school, so this created something of a group of people that we knew.

So, there we were now in Anthro House, and we were this mother and father figure at the Anthro House—the first time ever children had been there. All the students loved it. They got along well with the kids, and the kids knew them all, and certain ones were their favorites. One in particular—Surajit Sinha, the Indian student—was quite a wonderful guy. He and I and Art Tuden were something of a trio. And Sinha for long hours told the kids tales and stories from India.

Sinha was a lady's man, and he had a new girlfriend every month or two and did very well on that score [laughter] and was a very, very intelligent, able guy, a good student who later became head of the Indian ethnographic institute of some sort in New Delhi. I haven't heard from him for years, but I understand that he did very well.

He had wanted to work in the Andaman Islands, wanted to follow Radcliffe-Brown and do a *real* job on those very remote and

difficult to work with peoples in Andaman. And we talked about . . . he had fantasies about, if they were shooting poison arrows at you, how could you get to work with them? And we'd have these speculations about suits of armor one would wear until you could lay out some food and show them that you were friends. [laughter]

Wonderful, wonderful place. Oh, just a little aside. I think we were showing Sinha Chicago. Art knew Chicago better than I did, and we went down in my car into Chicago, and we drove him around all through Chicago to show him sights. This was in the evening, and we were stopped by a motorcycle cop. It was my introduction to what was then Chicago corruption in the police department. "What are you guys doing? Who do you think you are?" And he kept looking at Sinha, you know. "Who do you guys think you are?"

We told him we were students from Northwestern.

"Well, what are you tooling around here for?" He held us, and finally, he said, "Well, come with me. Come with me." And then he'd go to his motorcycle, and then he'd come back. "Well, come on now. Follow me." He was waiting for a bribe, and we were too stupid or rather resistant or whatever. Well, we didn't have any money, but he was looking for a five dollar bill or whatever it was. [laughter]

He got very irritated, because we didn't do anything, and he got on his motorcycle and said, "Follow me." And he wandered around I would say for at least fifteen, twenty minutes, wandered around, I guess waiting for us to stop him, you know. Finally, he took us to the police station.

We got in that station, and there were two great big guys, and they were playing with us like toys. "What do you guys think you're

doing?" And they grabbed Sinha's hair and said, "And what's this cute nigger doing with you?" you know, because they thought he was just a black. And boy, this *horrible* situation.

And Sinha, well, I think Sinha could have killed. I could just see him seething at the guy holding on to his hair. "Yes, where did you get that nice head of kinky hair, huh? Where did you get that fuzz?"

And oh god, I'll never forget that. I was so angry, I didn't know what to do. Then, of course, they let us go, you know. "Oh, we're not going to book you. Get back, and take that little Topsy with you," and that kind of stuff. That was the Chicago police in those days. We got in the car and went back. We just felt so awful.

Now Sinha, it had had such a deep impact on him that he couldn't talk to any of us for days. It had a deep *humiliating* and *infuriating* effect on him.

I wanted to do something, of course. I wanted to write a statement. I was going to go to Herskovits, I was going to go around town and get a statement against this police action, three witnesses and all that. And Art would have done it. I mean, we were very upset about it. It was such an obvious, horrible situation, and we were very embarrassed for Sinha. But he didn't want it. He just wanted to forget it. "Please forget it. Let's don't talk about it anymore."

And it took me a long time to understand that, you know. I was irritated by it. I thought, "For god sakes, you know, let's do something." And those are the lessons one learns. I learned a number of those in my lifetime about trying to push other people to do things that you think are the right thing to do. And I later realized he did not want to be involved with that at all. He wanted to put it *out* of his life and out of his mind. He wanted to let it sit there where he could think about it and

work it out over a period of years, and I'm sure he did. And so, anyway, that was one little anecdote I remember about that early time.

*Well, you know, when you were first mentioning the list of students at Northwestern, it seemed like a very diverse group, and I thought probably unusually so for the 1950s at a university, but then I was thinking maybe that's just my ignorance. I don't know, but probably around the campus, he wasn't going to be faced with attitudes like that.*

Oh, they were there. Herskovits had put up a real struggle about racism in Evanston. And he used to struggle with hotels about putting up Africans when they'd come to speak.

Kenneth Dike came to speak, and there was some problem getting him a hotel. Kenneth Dike. He was an African historian, and Herskovits would go to town, he would just go to the mayor, he would go to the president of the university and made a real problem out of himself, in a sense.

*But did he resolve it?*

Yes. Well, sometimes it would be resolved by somebody taking the guest in.

*Into their house, right.*

But Herskovits wouldn't want to stop there. He would write to the newspapers. When I was his teaching assistant that next semester, the next quarter, a lot of the time, I was taking down statements for the newspapers, and he was complaining about something like this racism in the community.

*So he really would have jumped on this incident, you think?*

I think he was told about it, but I think he felt that it was up to Sinha. I don't recall. I don't remember the details, but I remember we just let it drop. And I felt badly about letting it drop.

In those days, I felt I had to do something about everything. It took me a while to realize, "What would have happened?" That little bunch down there would have walked all over us. They might even have accused us of being drunk or disorderly.

*And then really foul him up, yes.*

Yes, right. I mean, in a way, you were helpless. And then Sinha, I think Sinha didn't want it in the papers or anything where his family would see that he had gone through this terrible thing and say "Come back. What are you doing there, anyway?" And it was an eye-opener.

So anyway, back at that second quarter at Northwestern, I took some courses, and I'll mention something about them later. But now it was at the end of that quarter that I was planning to spend the summer with the Washoe, or a good part of the summer.

And I notice now that the department gave me \$100 to work with the Washoe that first summer. Later on, I got \$200 when I couldn't leave the country because of my passport problem, but you know, in those days that was something. That was really just a recognition by the department. Cal didn't do much better. I think Stan Freed got \$50 to pay for gas.

*Yes. Well, was the idea at Northwestern that you were kind of cutting your teeth on ethnographic . . . ?*



Yes, but I wanted to do it. I had probably asked them. Maybe I even applied for some funds. But it was amazing to get it, I think.

*Well, yes, particularly given, that it's an African studies program.*

Well, they had given some grants to people to work in the South to work with the Creole groups.

*Yes, but they're black. [laughter]*

Well, not necessarily. This reminds me, I had a partial interest in working in Florida with the Seminoles, and I did a lot of work in going through the material on the Seminole. I was fascinated by them, again for the same reasons. The black Seminoles, some of whom had gone off to the Bahamas, and the relationship between them and the black ex-slaves fascinated me—the period in which Seminoles took on blacks, really protecting them from slavery. Though they were, in a sense, in dependent positions, some of them became leaders. I forget the names of some of them, but I knew something about Seminole history.

That was, to me, an alternative thing that I might have done.

*You mean alternative to Liberia?*

Yes. If I didn't go to Africa, I was thinking of other possibilities. And later on, I learned that Sturtevant at the Smithsonian had done extensive work with the Seminole.

*Well, you know that Tom King's [Director of the University of Nevada's Oral History Program] dissertation is on Seminole oral history.*

Well, that would be a connection. [laughter] But anyway, I know I have a little collection of papers, not only that I wrote, but some research that I did on the Seminole.

*Well, I just think it's interesting that they'd fund your . . . . I mean, you had a certain track record in Washoe country, but it does seem a little more removed than the other areas in terms of an African connection.*

Yes, well, it is. And as I remember, I was very grateful. It was a kind of gift from the department. It didn't break the department, even in those days. [laughter]



## BACK TO THE WASHOE

SO NOW THEN, we're getting ready to come back for a summer, not just to the Washoe, but Kathy and the kids, too, to California. And I had been corresponding with two or three Washoe people that I knew, and I had a lot of new ideas about what I wanted to do, not only with peyotism, but I had begun . . . . Oh, and that trip that I had made in the winter to Cal, I had talked to people. I saw Stan [Freed] and a few others, and I think I talked to Heizer about the claims case, the fact that it was going on. I began to get very interested in distribution. Where had the Washoe been? What was their territory? And, were the present estimates of their numbers and of their territory accurate? All that sort of thing.

So I was making plans in my mind about the kind of fieldwork that I wanted to do. And it wasn't only peyotism, though that interested me, because I had an entree and I knew these people. But at the same time, *they* were all involved in claims case matters so that I found myself gravitating in that direction. And their letters were just obviously trying to pull me into the activity. So, for

fieldwork, that's great! You're being pulled in by the people. They see some use of you, you know.

Oh yes, and Barton wrote me that he had been arrested for fishing out of season. He and three others—Franklin Mack and one or two others—had gone out and purposely fished out of season and got arrested. This was up in Markleeville or somewhere.

This was really an act of defiance. It was a protest act. And they were fined, a very small amount each, and then let out. But Barton refused to pay and was kept for something like two months in jail.

He wrote about how he would never have accepted the fine, because nobody had a right to keep him from fishing. This was Washoe land, you know. This was the most wonderful statement of latter-day Washoe views about what power they had—none, whatsoever. And he says, "Also, I like jail. I've done a lot of thinking, my friends come to see me, and I'm eating better than I ate at home." [laughter] "There's not bad feed in here," he was saying.

And I really enjoyed that letter from him so much. Of course, when I saw him a little later, he told me this whole story, and he was seeing himself as a protest leader at the time. A peyotist, he said that he had had dreams, visions about the fact that somebody had to stop these people from keeping the Washoe from fishing, that they had a right to the fish, the fish were theirs.

*This is interesting in 1953. It's wonderful.*

Yes, yes, right. Well, this endeared that group to me even more, you know—the fact that there was one person up there who had taken a stance. And the fact that it should be Barton, this crippled guy, of all people who did it.

He said, “You know, I told them, ‘What did you do with the fish that I caught? What did you do with the fish I caught? You guys take everything, don’t you? You take even that.’”

You know, “Maybe I could have had it here or eaten it here or given it to one of my friends who come, but no, it’s gone. Oh, you wasted it. What right do you have to waste the Creator’s things?” and on and on.

And so I thought, “Oh, there’s a real mensch, this guy. There’s a guy I can get along with.”

So we came back that summer, and we rented a house. That was very nice. Oh, very inexpensively up in the Berkeley Hills. You know, we were low-land people in Berkeley. We never could afford to move out of the flatlands. All of our activities had been in the flatlands, and anybody up in the hills was a little bit too fancy for us. Once or twice some of our friends got places up there as they went up the world, and we were always a little snobbish about the Berkeley Hills.

Well, we had a chance to get this old concrete house. It was really very dilapidated. It was just concrete blocks but rather nicely done inside, but kind of worn and run down. One of those unusual early . . . Somebody had obviously done it themselves, and yet it was a kind of a nice sprawling house on about an acre of land up there.

Oh, my god, later on, we could have bought the damn thing. If we’d have had enough to put a down payment on \$16,000, we could have had this house. [laughter] The land itself would have put us in clover for the rest of our lives, but we didn’t have enough to even pay the rent, I don’t think. Anyway, we were sort of house-sitting for some people, and so Kathy and the kids were ensconced there.

And on the way back, we had stopped. That trip, we stopped and saw Barton and saw Roy and Maisie James.

*Where would you stay?*

Well, there was a little motel in Woodfords. Not really a motel, but a couple of cabins that was run by Stewart Merrill, who had the Merrill’s Woodfords Store. And that was about all there was in Woodfords at the time—the little store, two or three kind of run-down cabins, very cheap. I mean, it was a buck a night or something. Then really not much else in Woodfords except at that time mostly Washoe people living off some little distance away along the river. And I remember I saw Stewart Merrill and asked him how everybody was.

He was a very nice young guy, later became sheriff, I think. His father had owned that store for a whole generation. A very nice young guy, but he would say, “What are you



*"That trip, we stopped and saw Barton and saw Roy and Maisie James." Above, Roy James with Warren. Below, Maisie James (center) with Kathy and Anya d'Azevedo.*



doing around here? What are you coming around here for? To see the Washoe?"

And I said, "Yes."

He says, "Well, you know, they're having a lot of trouble. There are a lot of drunks now." That was about the time that the law about the Indian drinking prohibition was taken off, I think, and there was a lot of excess drinking. And he says, "Yes, you know, there're a lot of drunks around. You've got to be careful."

And he knew all the people I knew, and I says, "How is Barton?"

"Oh, he's all right. Oh, good old Barton, he's getting along. He comes in every now and then and asks for a handout."

I got this other look at the people I knew from the point of view of a white resident who was really a very good guy, but he had this sort of white-settler view of things. "Oh, you know, Ramsey. He runs that peyote bunch up there, and we have to watch them, because they get into trouble sometimes. There are all these characters." That was when they had had experience of some hippies—"hippies," like George Leite, my friend—coming up. And, "Some of them get drunk, and they have marijuana, and they create a lot of trouble. We have to watch them." And so, you know, I got this picture of things going on.

Later, when he heard that I had been to a meeting, he was cool to me for some time. And he made the comment, "You know, we have a lot of nice people around here who . . ." You know, he was giving me a hint about whites just don't play this kind of game, you know. Later on, he and I worked things out. But that tension was there.

*Was that the first time you talked to him or other local whites in that community?*

Pretty much. Though I had gone into that store, things like that, I had never really conversed.

*Do you think you were deliberately kind of getting that picture?*

Oh, well, we knew the picture. I mean, I had gone around to Gardnerville and other places, even when I went up the first time with George, and we saw the attitude of whites about Indians.

*Well, I was just sort of harking back to Herskovits "going through channels," and you contact everybody.*

No, that wasn't in my mind, no. It's just that he was there. You know, I had to go to him to get a cabin. [laughter] I had seen him before and been in the store. And no, it was just one of those things that happen.

On the other hand, I wanted to avoid whites, because I didn't know how my Washoe friends would take it. But it turns out that the Merrills had been very friendly to the Indians, but very patronizing. You know, "Oh, these poor goddamn Indians running around here, they haven't got anything. You've got to help them out now and then. And they get drunk, and they do this, and they do that, and they eat peyote. They get into trouble, and you have to help them out."

And I was in those days extremely . . . that sickened me when I'd hear that. You know, now I, I expect it, but then I wanted to argue and fight. And I guess that's where I was learning not to. I had to get along with this guy. And a couple of times, he sort of lectured me indirectly about, "You have to be careful."

*Well, also what you were just saying before, not only do you have to get along, but there is actual value. He's giving you information, maybe just reinforcing some ideas.*

Wouldn't have done me any good for he and I not to be able to talk to each other, and he was an influential person among the white residents of the general region there, Markleeville, et cetera. But I liked him. He was a nice guy.

And I remember they had some baskets there—Maisie James's baskets and Wuzzy [George]'s baskets and some bead work. You know, this was a little trade store. And, they were only ten, fifteen dollars. Well, we couldn't afford anything. But when I think of it now, these last of the great basket-makers were selling this stuff at this local store along with the groceries.

*Right. A bag of flour and a . . .*

Yes, exactly, exactly. Now even ten dollars was an enormous amount of money for us at the time. Oh, good gosh! Ten dollars would keep the whole family for a week, even staying in cabins.

So anyway, we just kind of stopped there, and Kathy met Barton, and she had some very interesting reactions to him. She said, "You know," she told me, "He sees everything. He's sitting back there, this little crippled guy, and you're talking to him, he's smiling." She says, "His eyes are everywhere. He's noticing everything, he's watching the kids, he's watching me, he's watching you."

Well, I was never that alert to all this, you know—the body language and all that, and the face. Kathy was very alert to that. Everywhere we went, she had a take on people, and how intently they were watch-

ing us. And I never thought of that until I was told. I was just talking to somebody, but the fact that we were really being scrutinized, Kathy saw that.

In fact, later on, Kathy did some wonderful work with women and kids and families, and her field notes are better than mine. Hers are organized. [laughter] She has organized field notes.

And so, we just passed through, saw Roy and Maisie James, and our kids got to know their kids, Russell James, who became Butch James, was running around. I guess he was seven or eight. And he took a fancy to Anya, and Anya thought he was great, and they would run around all over the place. And Erik was chasing around with little Marvin. Marvin was a great little kid who later died when he was a teenager.

And so we had an entree, and Roy agreed to work with me, and Barton was happy to



*"And Roy agreed to work with me, and Barton was happy to be working with us." Left to right: Barton John, Warren d'Azevedo, and Roy James at the James house in Woodfords, California.*

be working with us, because he said, "Roy knows something. I don't know anything. I can't talk about all that." And we established that I'd pay them a dollar an hour. That was only when we sat down to do special work.

I had gotten that advice from Stan [Freed], who had worked down in Gardnerville and said, "Please don't overpay beyond me. I can only afford a buck an hour." He said, "I think it works very well," and he said, "Only for formal work, you know. Make very clear that what you . . ."

*And in those days, formal work did not necessarily include actual taped interviews.*

Oh, no. I didn't *have* a tape recorder. No, I was writing it. And so it's when you see someone . . . and I agreed with him. You sit down at a table or a desk or someplace, and you are writing and asking questions, and for a given time—we're sitting down for this hour. But otherwise, don't get caught in paying for every time you're talking to somebody. So yes, I think I already had an idea to do that, but Stan confirmed it and he'd already been working like that.

*So at that time, it was absolutely standard to pay the people who were then called informants—I mean, people that you talked to.*

Not necessarily. I think the idea was if you could get away with not paying, you did it. I mean, if you could work it out. But I wanted to set up a formal connection. And I was new, and I wanted to let them know I wasn't there just to take their time, particularly Roy.

*Were the Freeds really the first students of your generation that had worked with the Washoe? Is that a fair statement?*

I would say they were the first really to do formal work. I was there about the time he started. I was up there.

*So he, by necessity, would have set some of those standards for you.*

Maybe, and I'm sure in talking to him, I learned a lot, but he also wanted to know people that I knew, and I got to know Roy James from him.

*Well, in fact, did you trade? I mean, did you work with any people in the valley, and he work with people in Woodfords that you . . . ?*

Later. Oh yes, later, I worked with Hank Pete and Bertha Holbrook and people like that whom he had worked with. Not just because he had, but you know, I got to know that in some cases he had worked with them. But no, I would have to say that Stan was the first person to do organized fieldwork up there after the earlier bunch. In 1952, I was up there, probably about the same time he was, but I wasn't equipped to do any real fieldwork. I was just sort of putting my toes in. But Stan was doing fieldwork. So, I would say he grandfathered the present era, yes.

Yes. And Jacobsen came in around 1955. Let's see, was there anybody else around except Omer Stewart who came through now and then was doing other things? But no, I don't think . . .

*Because Siskin didn't come back, did he?*

No, Stan really was a kind of a pioneer. Can't say "pioneer"; after the ancestors, he followed. [laughter]

So, we went down to Berkeley and got the house, and it was very pleasant. I started going up almost every weekend in July,



August, and September, and station KPFA in Berkeley lent me a marvelous, in those days, tape recorder. It was an *enormous* thing. It was a Studio One. It weighed a ton, and I had to carry this thing around. It was big; it was like an enormous suitcase, but it did beautiful work. I mean, it was high-quality recording.

So I got the feeling that when I went up, I had to start recording, but the first thing I had to do was go up and visit and get to know people better. And I went up two or three times, had long sessions with Barton, in which he told me all sorts of inside information about the group up there and what was going on in the claims case.

Oh, and Roy, too. Roy and his brother Earl were very much involved in the claims case and wanted me to get material for them from libraries, which I did. I got the dockets on the earlier claims cases so they could see them, and we started talking about territory.

But at the same time, I was being asked by Barton and others to come to a peyotist meeting. You know, "Sometime when you're here and it's going on, you can come in."

And oh, just in general, I would take Roy, Franklin Mack, and others in my car up to Tahoe to look for jobs and to get wood, to line up wood for the winter. And they put as much in my car as they could, and then everybody would go up and find that pile of wood and bring back the rest. And they would interview with some of these white settlers up there for jobs. I remember going with them and having seen the patronization of these poor guys and how helpless they were and deferential to some of these asses that they had to deal with.

You know, they would try to tell them, "Well, you're not going to get fifty cents an hour up here, boys! You'll be lucky to get a quarter an hour, and we don't have much



"Roy and his brother Earl were very much involved in the claims case." Earl and Roy James.

going on anyway. I don't know how useful you're going to be anyway." You know, demeaning kind of conversations.

And I would take them around looking for jobs. I don't remember anybody getting one on those trips, but they did get firewood, piles of firewood.

*Well, Roy, in particular, had had contacts, though—was it before the war, maybe—of working on those big estates on the south shore, Tallac?*

Oh yes, that was his family, Ben James and his mother and others who used to camp out there around Camp Richardson. And his father [Ben James] had connections with campers and stables and things of that kind and would lead packing parties back into Desolation Valley and places like that. The

women would sometimes work as . . . . But that had pretty well passed away by this time, and so they were just going up to the east [from Meyers to Kingsbury Grade] side you know.

*So, he had lost those contacts, really.*

Well, they knew a few, but it wasn't the kind where he could get a job. But no, they were just looking around Bijou and some of the south Tahoe places for . . . .

*Was he looking for day work, or anything?*

Anything. Any kind of job. Caretakers—that's one thing they liked was a caretaker job, because you get food and a couple of bucks. And what were some of the other things? Any kind of help around resorts and things of that sort. Roy wasn't looking so much for work, but I remember Franklin Mack was really eager and trying to find a job and one other guy that was with us.

And that's the trip where I first knew about Cave Rock, because when we went up north along the east side—we had some business there at Zephyr Cove or something that they knew somebody—they wouldn't go any farther. They wouldn't go through the tunnel. In fact, I just remembered that a few weeks ago, that I had some notes about going with them. I had forgotten about that. And they said, "Oh, we don't go through there." They didn't want to go any farther than Zephyr Cove toward the rock. And, "That's not for us. That's not a place for us." Well, I had to turn and come back. So, that was my first recognition that there was something special about *De-ek Wadápuš* [Washoe: "rock standing gray"]. So, anyway, we came back, and on that particular trip, I stayed a day or two by myself.

*This was the same time the Catholics were . . . ?*

That's right. I didn't realize that was when the tribal council was joining with other Indians in the area for a petition to stop the plans for a religious shrine. The Catholic Church of Gardnerville were going to put an electric sign of a cross on top of Cave Rock and dig into it to make a kind of a grotto shrine and a parking lot. And there was a petition, a protest, by the Indians.

I didn't realize that was going on at the time, and it's not a kind of thing the people I was with would have talked about, even if they knew about it. It was going on down in Gardnerville, anyway, I guess. Ray Fillmore was Chairman at the time—I wonder if it could have been Earl . . . I don't know.

Anyway, I didn't know that. I learned about that just a week ago. I saw the newspaper article from that time.<sup>1</sup> So, anyway, we went back, and that was the trip where Barton told me that there was going to be a peyote meeting on that Saturday. It was going to be down at Streeter Dick's house way down at the bottom of Antelope Valley. And, you know, I wanted to go down to a meeting. Maybe I could go to that. Maybe I could go, and he wanted a ride anyway.

So, I decided I guess I would go. Franklin Mack had his own car. He was going in his own car, and he had started an hour before us, and we passed him about two hours later. [laughter] We passed him in his car, sputtering along at, oh, five miles an hour, and he couldn't make it go any faster.

So we got down to this little camp near . . . . What's that town way down at the end of Antelope Valley? That little village way down at the end [Coleville]. But before you get to that, up on the side of the hill the Dicks had a little camp.

And we got there around six o'clock or seven, toward twilight, and they were just beginning to put up the tepee. And all the men . . . it was quite a crowd. There must have been fifteen, twenty people, and the men were putting up the poles for a very large tepee. I have a picture of that.

Ramsey Walker was going to be Road Chief of that meeting. The Woodfords people were getting together with the Streeter Dick people down in Antelope Valley, and they'd always had some tension between them about the peyote ritual. And the tepee was going up, this great big tepee of canvas, and being done in a very special order in the way that poles went up and the way the men helped each other spreading the canvas.

And who was it? Lawrence Christensen was going to be Drum Chief, and he was fixing his drum on an old iron kettle, and he was stretching the deer skin over it. I remember watching him as he stretched it with very special kind of knots. You had seven knots like stars around the edge that are tightened over the top of the water drum. There's water inside the [kettle] drum, and you can pour water through the hide, too, into the drum. And I remember he was tapping it and listening to it. I didn't really know him. Later, I got to know and admire him a great deal, a wonderful guy. He's Lynda Shoshone's family.

Lawrence Christensen. And he was tapping the drum and listening to it, and now and then he would put the drum up to his mouth, and through the buckskin he would take a sip of water.

And Barton says, "Well, are you thirsty there, Lawrence?"

And he said, "No, it's just to set me straight." He says, "We've been singing into this water."

And I began to feel, "Wow! I'm there." I'm here. And I have good notes on that

meeting, all this preliminary introduction that I had.

*Now was there expectation that you were going to be taking notes? Did they know you were taking notes?*

No. They didn't know why I was there. They just knew I was a friend of Barton's.

*But you say your notes are really good.*

Oh, I didn't take them *there*.

*No, that's why I'm asking.*

Oh, it's a good question. No. In those days, you learned to . . . I had an enormous ability, and other people I knew, of having an experience and then very shortly afterwards sitting down and writing it up. And I couldn't do it now, because I don't think my memory is as good, but I had an extremely good retentive memory, visual and auditory and other of things that happened, what people told me. I would sometimes, during an event like this, go up to the car with some excuse to get something and jot down a quick note or two to remind myself of something special. But oh, no. The notes came the next day.

*Well, how did you feel about them knowing you . . . ? I mean, if you had gone back to the car to get a pack of cigarettes or whatever and opened a notebook and started making notes, and someone had said, "What are you doing?" I mean, would that have been compromising or what?*

Well, I would have said, "I'm taking notes, because I've never seen this before. I want to make sure I don't forget some of this."

But it would have been awkward, and I'm glad I didn't have to face that.

But no, there was a lot of disagreement about me even being there. I came as Barton's friend, and Barton was, again, asserting himself. He was going to bring this guy, this white man. And, you know, "Our way up in Woodfords is that the tepee is open. Anybody can come. Anybody can come who is looking for the way, looking for what the herb has to say. They have a right to come."

And Streeter Dick didn't say it in front of me, but he was taking the position, "What are we having this white man around here for? What kind of meeting is this, anyway?" And Ben Lancaster's group had very rigid notions about ritual.

*So that [Antelope Valley] was Ben Lancaster's group?*

Well, they would go to Ben Lancaster's place, but he wasn't there. I mean, Ben Lancaster was in a sense the titular leader. But he wasn't there. In fact, was Lancaster there? Yes, he was around.

So, all this was going on. I could feel it, but I didn't hear it. There was a lot of strong feelings about whether or not they should even have the meeting. And Woodfords people—Ramsey, Franklin, and others—prevailed. You know, "He's our friend. We're going to help. He's here."

In fact, I heard somebody say that, "The man's our friend. I don't care if he is a white man." [laughter] "He's our friend." So it was a very strange feeling as my very first experience being in a quite alien situation and environment. And I was excited about being able to do it.

At the same time, I had very mixed feelings about my role. What right did I have to be there? Should I be there? In a way, I'm

intruding; this is a real intrusion. And in a way, I also have a kind of secret mission here to report all this and all that.

All that was very much a part of that first experience for me, very much, and it was agonizing in many ways. I don't think I want to go into it now, but you know, that whole night was a terribly moving and exhausting kind of an experience.

The meeting was for Birdie Dick.

*So, it was a healing . . . ?*

It was a healing meeting.

*They weren't all healing meetings, were they?*

Well, usually, yes, because the meetings are to cure you of your problems. They could be any kind of problem, but this was specifically to help Birdie. In most meetings there's somebody there to be helped. Sometimes it's just for an emotional problem or a problem in a marriage or whatever, but in this case, it was Birdie.

And, of course, anybody else who needed help could get it. I remember Franklin, you know, saying when he made that remark about the water, and he says, "Well, they have to give Birdie some of this. There are lots of songs in this water." I was deeply impressed by the veneration with which he approached the drum and the tying of it and the water inside where apparently, they had already done some singing with the drum, so that the songs were in the drum.

I watched and I sat around kind of with my thumb up my arse, as they say, [laughter] not knowing quite what to do or where to go. I sort of sat around people, all who ignored me. None were giving me a bad time except Pat Eagle.

Later, Pat Eagle, who was part Shoshone, a real rough guy, was going to give me a bad time. And he did, because he kept going by looking at me like this, you know. [staring] He was the only one who did it. But then I was all on my own and sat there quietly, watching.

It took about an hour or so for them to get . . . . Oh no, it wasn't until *dark*. It wasn't until 9:00, 9:30 or so, and I wondered if anything was going to happen, because people just sort of wander up in their cars. People wandered around—not much conversation, even, just sitting. People just sit and look. And now and then I'd see somebody looking at me and saying something, but then if I'd look over, they would just look away. They just weren't going to bother me. And now and then, somebody would come up. I think Franklin would come up and talk to me and Barton would come and sit by me and all that. But I was obviously an anomaly in the situation. [laughter]

And I remember feeling terribly, terribly tense and mixed in my feelings and yet deeply intrigued. You know, glad I was there, but I didn't know what I was going to make of it.

And so about 9:30, Ramsey stands in front of the tepee. He gave me a picture of himself standing in front of that tepee. I have to resurrect that some time, because it was my first and almost my only formal meeting.

And he just stood there and then blew the eagle bone whistle, that high, shrill whistle. And there was just enough light to see the tepee clearly up against the mountains there. If you have ever been down to Topaz Lake, down to the bottom of that valley, you know it is a rather steep escarpment, the Sierra all along that whole valley. And so, this little camp was really up on an escarpment, kind of a little ledge.

And here was this tepee with these hills behind it and this dying light, you know, that you get here in Nevada—deep, deep lavender light that takes over everything—and the smell of sagebrush and the fire that Franklin . . . . Franklin was Fire Chief, and he was very dutifully bringing in wood in just the right way and had started the fire, so you could see a little light from his side of the tepee.

It was an extremely affective moment. Every part of that just continues to be vivid in my memory of that moment, one of those in your life, you know. And with all my trepidation, I nevertheless felt I was in a very special situation. I was having an extremely great gift from these people to be there. It was an important moment in my life there with the light inside the tepee and the smell of this burning cedarwood.

The meeting was being held, really, for two people. One was old Birdie Dick, a very old lady of the Dick family in that area. She was a quite shriveled and small little lady, and she hadn't been well. And I don't know how old she was, but she was supposed to be very old from the point of view of the people there. She was one of the oldest people in the area. And she may have been in her eighties. I doubt nineties, but she looked that old. And she was referred to as Birdie, and actually, she was bird-like. [laughter] She was a small little lady who they say used to hop around a lot when she was younger, but now she shuffled and she was quite feeble. And so the meeting was for her to make her well, to bring her up, as they said.

And then the other was Lena Dick of the Dick family. She was a younger woman, but she had been having some kind of physical difficulties and had asked to be prayed for at the meeting. So those were the two people

for whom the meeting was specially for, but particularly for Birdie.

And so when Ramsey gave the signal after blowing the eagle bone whistle, he went around the tent, as I remember, I think four times before the meeting while we sort of lined up and waited. And at each point of the compass, he would blow the whistle again to the four points of the compass. And then when he came back the last time, he went into the tepee and beckoned for us to follow.

Everybody went in order. Ramsey was the Road Chief. The Drum Chief went next, and that was, I believe, Lawrence Christensen, and Lawrence's son, who sat next to him. They went in. These officials went in first, and the Fire Chief, of course, and that was Franklin. And the Water Lady; I forget who that was, but the woman who handled the water.

*Was that always handled by a woman, or did it just happen . . . ?*

Usually a woman—The water woman, Water Lady. Oh, and the Cedar Chief, who handled the incense and the cedar.<sup>2</sup>

And then all of us went in counter-clockwise around the tepee and were told where to sit. Most of the women sat on the far side. They had gone in and went counter-clockwise all the way around and sat near the door near the tepee entrance. And the Fire Chief also sat there near the entrance.

I'm looking at a little diagram I did, a sketch of the tepee where all the people were sitting. There must have been about fifteen, sixteen people, even more than that—I think—as things got going, about twenty people all lined up around the edge of the tepee, and some inside, and some sat behind others. And they sat there very quietly while the Fire Chief arranged the embers into a

kind of a crescent shape. Then there was a “moon” of sand behind the crescent, and a little depression for the Peyote Chief. That would be—and was, later—the large peyote button which Ramsey took from his paraphernalia kit and prayed with it and to it and set it on the moon. Then, of course, the fire.

So it really was the fire, and the embers behind the fire which the Fire Chief maintained by brushing embers into the shape of a crescent behind the fire, and then the Moon with eventually the Peyote Chief on top. And behind that sat the Road Chief, Ramsey, and on each side of him would be the Drum Chief on one side and on the other side the Cedar Chief. And I think Franklin, the Fire Chief, was at the entrance to the tepee, because he had to go out and get wood and keep the fire going.

So everybody got assembled—it didn't take very long—and sat there. And after a while, Ramsey lit a cigarette. He rolled his own, and I think he put some sage in the tobacco, in the Bull Durham, and rolled his own. [laughter] And then he took a smoke and prayed and asked for the herb to help these ladies who had come, particularly old Birdie and Lena. And both of them had some problems that they wanted to have taken care of.

By the way, this was done in Washoe, but Lawrence was sort of assigned to translate it into English. And it wasn't just for me, because there were I think two or three Paiutes there and maybe a Shoshone. And, of course, some of the Washoe didn't speak great Washoe, so it was translated. It seemed to be a matter of course, it didn't seem to be just for me, though it's possible that more of it was done by Lawrence because I was there.

So then Ramsey would pass his cigarette to Lawrence and the other presiding people and pray through the smoke. And then the

Cedar Chief threw some juniper-cedar on the fire, and this marvelous incense smoke would go up into the tepee. And someone—I don't know if it was one of these officials or some other person—had an eagle-feather fan, and would sweep the smoke of the cedar onto the people on the side, and then everybody would pull the smoke to them and beat their chests. They were taking in the cleansing power of the cedar smoke. Cedar is essentially a cleanser. Clears the air, makes things good.

*Was it cedar or juniper, or was that the term?*

Juniper-cedar, I guess, is Utah juniper, but it was always referred to as juniper-cedar in that area. It's a juniper, but it has this cedar aroma. So I don't know where the term juniper-cedar came from. I should know, but I don't remember. And it grows all over . . . used to grow. In fact, there is a new housing development up here in Reno that drives me crazy. They're bulldozing down all of the old juniper-cedars; it's that squat bush that in the fall has grey berries. And they're bulldozing it all out, and they call it Juniper Ridge. [laughter] There are no junipers left. They're planting all kinds of crazy trees there that have nothing to do with the area. But that was all over that area, and it was always burned in people's houses to clear the house out—not only to make it smell good, but it had a cleansing effect, spiritually cleansing.

So anyway, that was happening, and Birdie was brought forward, first Birdie. I think Lawrence, the Drum Chief, went to get her where she was sitting and brought her tottering forward over to the fire, over near Ramsey, who had also opened his paraphernalia kit, taken out the large peyote button—in this case a fresh peyote, a very large one. And it was his Chief, as it's referred to, the Chief of the meeting. He prayed, as I

remember, and then put it on this sand, shaped as a crescent moon in front of him.

Then Birdie was brought over, and I think it was Lawrence with his fan who brought in the smoke and beat her all over from top to toe, beating her very hard. And she, this poor frail little lady, was sort of tottering back and forth at every blow of the feather fan. And yet it was done very thoroughly, every part of her with this fan, while the smoke was brought to her. Then she was led back and sat down.

Oh, I think at that point she was given some chopped fresh peyote buttons, put in her mouth, actually. Lawrence, I think, stuffed three or four pieces of peyote in her mouth, and then fanned her again and brought her back and sat her down and then brought Lena forward and did the same thing. And while he was doing that, Ramsey was intoning this prayer about, "This lady here, she has problems in her stomach, and she wonders about what is wrong. And she's trying to live a good life, but it doesn't help, so she's here for us to help her, to think about her and to help her." So they did the same thing to Lena and sat her down.

I think that was the point that the peyote was passed around. It was passed around in a cup. And as I remember, there were two kinds of peyote. One was dried and powdered, and the other was the fresh buds, quartered sort of, chopped—and I'm sure they came from Lancaster's place. I'm sure that Ben Lancaster did well at that meeting supplying the peyote. So the cup went around counter-clockwise. Everybody took what they wanted. Some didn't take any, some did.

And Barton was sitting next to me, my friend Barton, and he was saying, "You don't have to take it, but it would be good if you did. It's good. It'll be good if you take it," meaning I should. I should do that. So, as it

was coming around, I was thinking, "What is this going to be? How is this going to taste?" And how would I handle it?

Everybody that took it sat and chewed carefully and swallowed and closed their eyes and prayed. And in some cases they had cigarettes, or they rolled their own, or they asked the Road Chief to give them a cigarette. The Road Chief handed them a cigarette, and they lit it and smoked it and prayed. And a few people had fans, like the Shoshone-Washoe guy, Pat Eagle, my nemesis. [laughter]

Pat Eagle was sitting opposite me. I didn't know him at the time, and he was very suspicious of me. So were Streeter Dick and the others who were hosting this meeting. They were not presiding, but they had supplied the place and the tent, and it was their relatives the meeting was for. They brought Ramsey down from Woodfords.

Actually, what I later learned was that this had been an opportunity—a setup, really—to bring the two groups together, because they were feuding. They hadn't gotten along. There were two different styles of holding meetings: the Dick family's way, the old Sioux Way that had come with Ben Lancaster from the plains, Oklahoma, et cetera, and then the New Tepee Way, which had come from Fort Hall. Anyway, a man up in Fort Hall had been something of a mentor for a number of the Washoe after the decline of the Lancaster way. And Roy James and the Woodfords group were, in a sense, part of this. In fact, Roy James had gone up to Fort Hall and learned the New Tepee Way.

So, really, it was a difference in styles, and one of the main things was the New Tepee Way was the *easy* way to fix it. It was relaxed. You didn't act so proud, you didn't act so arrogant like the Dicks, who were complaining about me being there. "Anybody can come to our meetings," they were saying, "but down

here [Antelope Valley], you know, they have these ways, they think they're like the Sioux. They think they're warriors or fighters, but we don't. We're just Washoe people. We just take it easy."

It's interesting, because the Dicks were part Paiute and all that, and there was *that* tension that had to do with the Antelope Valley Washoe-Paiute relations. And this Dick family, like the old Rube family, had been a part of the old Antelope Valley interrelation between the Paiute and the Washoe in that area during historic times, and even prior to that.

I've since looked through the literature carefully, and Kay Fowler and I have discussed it to some length. What was Antelope Valley really in terms of what tribes had dominance there? It's really hard to say, because it looks like it was more of a corridor for people going down to Mono Lake. And it was during historic times that the Paiute came in mainly, as well as the Washoe, working for white ranchers. So, they mixed a lot.

But the tradition is that the Paiute were on the east side of the valley and the Washoe were on the west side, on the Walker River and west of the Walker River, which is where our meeting was. And, of course, there were entirely different views from the Paiute and the Washoe as to who had originally been there.

But one telling thing, probably, is that the Washoe name for Antelope Valley is *?ungáibiya*, "Place of Salt," where they gathered salt from these springs that were all over the area and the dried potash that was collected and referred to as *?unabi*. That's a Paiute word, so . . .

That's all very interesting, but nevertheless, in historic times it was always a matter of contention as to whose valley it was. But the Washoe kept pretty much to themselves



on the west, and the Paiutes came in only occasionally when they needed the work. And there were no Paiute settlements.

*The way Long Valley was shared, is that analogous in anyway?*

You mean Long Valley in the north?

Yes.

Well, Long Valley *wasn't* shared. Long Valley *was* Washoe, but the northern part of Long Valley next to Honey Lake, one could argue that this was also Paiute—the Paiute in the east over in the hot springs area on the east side of Honey Lake. But the Washoe really camped around . . . what are the names of those towns up there? It's the Sierra Valley Washoe—Doyle, the town of Doyle. The Sierra Valley Washoe and the Washoe had camps all around Doyle and around the southern part of the lake.

*So, it's not the same as the way Antelope Valley . . . ?*

Well, in a way. There was a kind of accommodation. A lot of these areas were accommodation areas. But actually, who owns it?

Like the claims case imposition on all this kind of investigation was, "Whose was it?" Well, lots of times it's a stupid question, because it wasn't *anybody's*. It was whoever happened to be there, and over a period of months or years during any kind of gathering season or hunting season, who happened to occupy a region. Then to go through it, there were certain courtesies having to do with going through and passing through other people's habitation areas.

But I don't have any indication—nor did Fritz Riddell, who did work up there later—whether or not Honey Lake was *mainly* Washoe or *mainly* Paiute. Even Pit Rivers came down there occasionally, and the Maidu came over and went through and used the lake. But the Washoe think of southern Honey Lake and Long Valley as theirs, regardless of the fact there may have been these interreactions.

In fact, back in the 1860s, Numaga of Pyramid Lake—or was it Winnemucca?—sold most of Long Valley to the whites for, I don't know, a number of sacks of wheat or something. And the Washoe complained. Captain Jim went up there and complained and said, "This is our land!" And so the whites had to give him an equal amount of payment. Nobody ever settled whose land it was, but the Paiutes were very hostile and expansive. That was during the period just before the Pyramid Lake War. They were really moving around and making demands and being very aggressive toward the Washoe.

So, anyway, that's the kind of area it was, and I think probably Antelope Valley had a similar kind of history that way, of interreaction between groups and being a corridor of movement from the north, south, down toward Mono Lake and over the mountains. And actually, Little Antelope Valley, just to the west of Antelope Valley, was occupied for a long period by a number of Washoe families who were well known way back in the pre-historic times.

So, while the little tins of peyote were being passed from one to the other, Ramsey, the Road Chief, continued to unpack his little paraphernalia suitcase and took out a couple of little Mexican throws, little striped Mexican cloths, tourist kinds of things, and laid them out before him so he could put out

the rest of his paraphernalia—his fan, which looked to me it could be an eagle feathered fan, his peyote, and his little pouch of tobacco which he would pass around for people to roll their cigarettes if they wanted to.

Then after it [the peyote] had made its rounds . . . Oh, by the way, when it got to me, I took four or five pieces of the fresh peyote and swallowed them and pulled the cedar smoke to me as others were doing and patted my body. And then it went around, and when it got back to Ramsey he picked up his little gourd rattle and held this staff he had in his left hand and his rattle in his right hand and began to sing. And his drummer, Lawrence, on his right, drummed for him.

Lawrence had, of course, prepared the drum, this little black kettle drum with the deer skin over it and the water—it's a water drum. And he, as Drum Chief, was drumming for the Road Chief.

Ramsey sang four versions of the song, or four songs, a cycle, in a sense. And then Lawrence sang his, and then the drum was passed on to his right clock-wise to others along the way, and anybody that wanted to sing could, and the person next to them, either to the left or right, depending on who could drum or wanted to drum, would drum for them, and they would sing.

Now right across from me was Pat Eagle, this Shoshone-Washoe fellow, and two or three Streeter brothers, and they were pretty somber, rough characters. They were wearing bands with feathers in their hair. They were Nevada cowboys, the way they dressed, and really very good looking guys, but different from the other Washoe. They were sort of tall, lanky, hard-bitten ranch-hand types of guys as against these sort of shorter, easy-going Washoe guys from Woodfords. [laughter]

And when they got their turns, I could just tell the difference in their singing. They were singing . . . In fact, the nearest thing I can remember to it being was the Burns Reservation Oregon Paiute, who are very aggressive singers, who would shout their songs with a great deal of verve and a great deal of not only energy but rhythmical structure. And Streeter would get up on his knees to sing, and he was extremely serious, and he was shaking his rattle toward the fire and with the fan, singing to the Fire, singing to the Moon. And mostly, those Dick boys did that. I guess that's the old Sioux way, I mean this aggressive sort of warrior type of singing.

Then it would go on, two or three other Washoe guys singing their quiet little songs. I don't think any of the women sang. There was no drumming for them. In fact, I think that was when the women did *not* sing. They would hum in the background. They were helpers. They would sing along with the singer when they felt like it, sort of a rich humming behind the singing.

And then the drum went around, all the way around, and it got to me. And I was thinking, "What am I going to do?"

And Barton said, "Sing. Sing anything. You can sing anything. Just sing something. I'll drum for you." [laughter]

When it got to me, Barton took the drum, and the only thing I could think of, because the kids loved the song, was "I'm a Wayfaring Stranger." Who was the folk singer who made that . . . ?

*Is that Pete Seeger?*

No, Seeger had done it, but before Seeger. I forget, but it was a folk singer who was widely known, and the kids loved the records that I had, and one was "Wayfaring Stranger,"<sup>3</sup> and so I thought, "I'll just do it."

So I started singing. Barton went right along with me with the drum.

“Bonka, bonka, bonk, bonk.” “I’m just a wayfaring stranger . . . .” “Bonka, bonka, bonk, bonk.”

And I finished one sort of stanza, and Barton said, [whispers] “Sing it again four times.” [laughter]

And so I did. I sang it over again. When it was over, he passed me. [whispers] “That’s good. That’s good. That’s good.” I had done the right thing.

And I felt, of course, very strange. I really, at that point, didn’t know what I was doing. And I don’t think the peyote as far as I can remember, had much of an effect on me. I was so—what would you call it?—estranged and traumatized, in a sense, by the whole situation, that I can’t attribute it to one thing or the other. And my mood was one of shock, you know.

I was having culture shock then. Not terribly unpleasant, but I just felt strange and weird. And I imagine that the peyote may have helped that happen.

While this was going on and the songs were going . . . . In fact, the drum went around two or three times, and I didn’t sing the next time. And I was wondering whether I’d have any visual experience.

I probably did, because I remember the fire getting extremely bright, and I remember the tent seeming to wobble particularly when there was this one old man, a member of the Dick family, who sang in a very high, warbling kind of voice. It’s a sound I’ve heard in a lot of Indian singing, and it was considered very fine. There was a kind of catch in his throat, and the tone would resonate and would wobble as he would sing.

*Was this a canvas tepee?*

Yes, canvas. And so I remember while he was singing, the tent seemed to shake, and I had this sensation that everything was shaking like an earthquake. The tent seemed to be wobbling and getting larger and larger, so I must have had some kind of visionary hallucinatory effect from the peyote. But I don’t recall having anything more intense than that.

So this may have gone on for a couple of hours. I don’t recall now. If I check my notes, I’d know it lasted most of the night, and at what point these things happened. I remember the fire getting very bright as well as the crescent moon, the embers became alive, and everything was exaggerated, marvelously. And the people all seemed different, renewed.

And old Birdie over in the corner, we were all supposed to be thinking of her and praying for her. And she just sat there. I thought she was dead the way she just was sitting, a little crunched up person in the corner. And every now and then, they would drag her out and fan her again. I didn’t know if she’d make it, and she did barely make it.

Oh yes, and vomiting. This little pot went around, and people vomited in it if they had to. I wished that I could have, because that’s a very good sign. You’re supposed to vomit. You get rid of a lot of junk, you see. But I didn’t feel that way. I wasn’t sick to my stomach, I wasn’t nauseated. I was a little wobbly.

So, well, my notes are loaded with observations. All kinds of things were going on. I remember Pat Eagle, my nemesis, pointing his eagle fan at me across the fire somewhere during the night, and shaking it at me. Later, it was said that you do that to keep coyote away.

And the peyote would go around a number of times. The people would take what they think they needed or wanted.

At midnight, of course there was the midnight water-call where water was brought in. The Water Lady, or the Water Girl, brought in this bucket of water, and I remember it was so marvelous to me to see that spring water, you know.

In those days, my god, the water in this area was so magnificent, particularly from the springs up at Woodfords and here in Antelope Valley. And this beautiful pail, this grey pail with this lovely water in it and a dipper. I remember looking at it and thinking it was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen in my life, you know. [laughter]

And she went around dipping the ladle in, and everybody drank from the ladle. I remember not even thinking about what this meant in terms of what was being transmitted. I was so thirsty, and it looked so magnificent, and it tasted so good. I had ladles full.

And everybody drank—that was the midnight water call—and then sat back, and things would start in again. Ramsey had to keep things going. And any number of times, Birdie was brought forward, and Lena was brought forward to be fanned and specially prayed over.

That went on until almost dawn, and then we had breakfast. This was peyote breakfast where some kind of fruit cocktail was passed around. By about three or four in the morning, things had wound down. You could just feel this whole thing just sort of slowing down, and some people slept, and others pulled their blankets over their heads. And it was a strange looking place, and yet the Fire Chief had to keep the fire going, and Ramsey had to stay awake and supply people with what they needed smoke-wise and pray.

And the Drum Chief had to see that the drum was . . . . I remember at one point Lawrence taking the drum and drinking from

it again and saying, "Oh, that's good. That's full of songs. *That* is wonderful." Anybody who wanted to, then, could drink from the drum. I didn't. I didn't know how, and I didn't want to. [laughter]

So it just went around, and things slowed way down, and finally Ramsey gets up and takes his eagle bone whistle and goes outside of the tepee and blows in the four directions, and that was the end of the meeting. Most people just stayed there, some just sort of sleeping, but you could get up and get out and stretch.

And that strange feeling of coming out just before morning. It was hardly yet twilight, cold and grey and this marvelous valley, and Topaz Lake to the north and the Sierras behind us and that wonderful air and the smell of the smoke coming out of the tepee. And my god, I remember that and stretching and just feeling like, "Oh my god, where have I been?" you know.

People started coming out and all that, and we were just hanging around, because then comes the real peyote breakfast. Not the peyote, but real breakfast. Peyote breakfast is that little bit of fruit and stuff like crackers that were passed around. That was a kind of . . . what would you call it? What is it called in the church?

*Host food?*

No, the real peyote breakfast is a kind of sacrament, just as the peyote itself is, the herb. But that's just the sacrament. It's a sort of a sacred imbibement of food to sustain you at the end of the meeting.

But then as you come out, you're waiting now . . . a lot of the women are down at the house getting the breakfast ready, and that is the regular breakfast where people are going to be hungry and have to go home, and they

want something to eat. It's going to be an Indian breakfast, but it's going to be a proper breakfast. So, here the women had gone down, actually, the ones from the tent, except that Birdie stayed in the tent.

They asked her to stay and they continued to pray over her and continued to sing songs for Birdie. I don't know if Lena was still there, but nevertheless, Birdie was still there. They said they had to work on her. They had to continue to work on Birdie, so the Road Chief and the Drum Chief and two or three others stayed in there.

But everybody else was sort of wandering out, and the younger women went down to help prepare the food. I was standing around there really lost. It was wonderful. I just felt, you know, that I was in a new world, wonderful world, but nevertheless, estranged.

And nobody really talked to anybody. They just sort of wandered around, stood, and looked in all directions. Finally, Pat Eagle came up to me, and I'll never forget it. "Well, Warren, how are you doing?"

I said, "Well, I don't know. I'm doing my best."

"Oh, did you have a hard time?"

And I said, "Yes, sort of. I had a hard time thinking about things."

"Well," he says, "how did you like looking at all these poor down-trodden Indians? Doesn't it make your heart weep to see all these poor down-trodden Indians?" And I knew that I was getting it from an expert, you know.

All I did, I decided just to be absolutely dumb and simple and just said, "I don't know. It's something, isn't it? I don't know, Pat. I'm just doing my best."

And he kept prodding me. But I didn't really work back. I didn't get back at him. Later, I did. So, he gave me a few more ribs and went on, but he wasn't through with me.

[laughter] He and I later became good friends, but he was really out to get me now.

I didn't need it. There was something about the way I was feeling that that was the last thing in the world I needed was that kind of ribbing. And by then, Barton came over. He said, "Don't pay any attention to that guy. He does that all the time. The meetings don't do *him* any good. He's still the same no-good guy," and on and on. [laughter]

And I said, "Well, OK, Barton. That's fine, but," I said, "I don't feel too good." And I didn't. I felt . . .

He said, "Well, why don't you go to the car and nap or sleep."

I says, "No, I don't feel like sleeping." So I just sort of hung around there. A couple of times, Pat . . . I wish I could remember some of the exchanges that went on between me and him, because he had sort of dedicated himself to getting at me, this white man who was coming around messing with Indian ways. [laughter]

I did say something to him later on, and I can't remember what it was, something actually very clever. I sort of shot something back at him, and it stopped him in his tracks, and I wished I could remember what it was. I can't now.

But anyway, two or three of the guys around thought it was very funny, and they laughed, because I just sort of put him in his place and said, you know, "Is this the way you handle things? Doesn't seem to me like it's any Indian way at all. It's some kind of Reno street way or something."

And he shut up, and he left me alone. Oh, I can remember, at one point, he had said something like, "You know, I saw coyote last night. I saw a coyote sitting there on the other side peeking at me and peeking at what was going on. I wonder what that was. I wonder what that was. I tried to keep it away with

my fan, but he was still there. I could see him coming around.” [laughter]

And that was me, you know, *coyote*. But that stopped. That stopped, and then we had breakfast—a big long table and of course many children.

Oh, Lawrence’s son, that was one of his first meetings. And Lawrence spent a lot of time with him at the meeting helping him with peyote, helping . . .

*And how old do you think his son was?*

I guess he was about nine or ten, something like that.

*So there were, on occasion, children?*

Oh, there were children there, but that’s the one I remember in particular, because Lawrence was very, very helpful showing him the way and how to handle the rattle. Didn’t have him sing, because he didn’t sing, but showed him how to hold the drum when it went around and would have let him sing if he wanted to and seemed to be explaining things to him and giving him peyote. Gave him a lot, as I remember.

And apparently, he hadn’t been well. He had had a cold or something, so Lawrence was administering to him, which was a very tender thing. I remember that during the night. And the kid sat there all this whole damn night with the elders, you know, and slept a lot. He went to sleep.

So anyway, here was this big breakfast, and it was corn-on-the-cob, canned fruit salad, venison that somebody had shot, and that was it. Spam, of course, and, oh, a number of things of that kind. It was quite a spread. And Ramsey prayed over the food again with his fan, and everybody was blessed. Then everybody said prayers and thanked the

Chief and thanked the herb for the meeting and hoped for the best for Birdie and Lena and all that. All this while, either Ramsey or Lawrence would go back to administer to Birdie. And they finally came out and said, “She’s well. She’s feeling good now, and she’s feeling fine. She says she never felt better. She really feels good now.”

And I remember this was very touching. I remember thinking, “Oh, my god!”

You know, everybody was saying, “That’s good. That’s good. Oh, that’s good. Oh, that’s fine.” And then they went in and brought Birdie out, and she looked exactly the same to me, but she was smiling.

She was smiling, trying to, anyway, and came hobbling out. They sat her down for something to eat, and she had a little, and everybody prayed for her, and then they started drifting away. So that’s a very, very superficial outline of what happened that day.

*When did you start writing your notes?*

I would say an hour or two after I left and went back to my place. In those days I really could take . . .

*So you didn’t sleep, you just went back and started writing?*

I think I did. I was staying at one of the cabins in Woodfords, I think, after I took Barton home and all that. But it’s hard for me to remember. All I know is I wrote a hell of a lot on the date that this happened. You know, one has a lot of energy when you’re young.

I couldn’t sleep. In fact, I think the peyote I took, it just kept me in sort of a heightened, alert kind of frame of mind, highly anxious and alert.

This business of note taking is very interesting, because I have voluminous notes about that meeting in great detail, and I wrote it on that same day, when I went back. I took Barton home and went back. Oh, there was somebody else with us in the car.

*Did you talk about the meeting at all?*

Oh, at great length.

*With Barton and . . . ?*

Yes. I have a lot of that discussion [in my notes].

*So it was OK to talk to him about it?*

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And he told me a lot about the difference between the Dicks and the Woodfords people, the Jameses and others, on the meetings and the Ramsey Walker family. And although I remember being very tired, it wasn't so much being tired as being disengaged. I just felt dislocated, and yet . . . .

*Do you think that might have been the peyote?*

I think it's possible, quite possible. But I was very alert, highly alert.

I drove back and left Barton off and went to the cabin that I was staying in in Woodfords. It was one of the Stewart Merrill cabins just for that one or two nights that I was there—I had come up from Berkeley. And I sat down, and I wrote. I typed.

I had my little typewriter with me, and I still have the typed notes. My gosh, there must be six, seven, or eight pages of single space notes in great detail, because I have this—I imagine a lot of people do under these conditions—high state of recall. I can

remember just the way people talked and what they said and the sequence of events. And I couldn't do this now for love or money; I just couldn't do it. But I remember doing that.

I did that often in my fieldwork in those days, and I have a great deal of confidence in the accuracy of what I recalled and remembered. I thought of it really in terms of dialogue: First my own thinking, and then the dialogue that people had. That's how it came back to me, in terms of very specific dialogue—who said what, the sounds of their voices, how they looked, and all that. So that's how that got down.

But then I had to go back to Berkeley. Yes, I stayed over that night, and I had done all this writing. I saw Barton and Roy James in the morning, and they were very worried about me driving down. You know, "Oh, be careful," and, "You're supposed to rest after a meeting. You're not supposed to . . . ."

And it's true, you know. You have double vision sometimes. I didn't this time, but when I first tried peyote before, I had had all these hallucinations. And this time it wasn't, it was just sort of this highly alert, sensitized frame of mind. Just a feeling of being detached from everything but what had happened, and yet I was able to drive very clearly and all that.

But Roy in particular was very worried about me going down. He felt I should stay another day and just sleep, you know, rest. But I had to go. I had to get back. The family was down in Oakland, and I had to get down, so I drove back.

And all the way back, I was going over this stuff in my head, I mean, everything that had happened. And it probably was one of the special experiences of my life.

*Is it going too far to say perhaps it was one of those liminal, you know, Victor Turner's . . . ?*

[laughter] Well, we have played with terms. Certainly there was a lot of liminality about it, because that sequence was out of time—I mean, it had its own time.

*But the peyote experience is designed to be that, isn't it?*

Can be, yes.

*To provide an alter . . . .*

It can be that. I suppose it is. It depends on how you think about what liminality is. But yes, there is a lot of that in the sense that it was a timeless few hours, a timeless day. Everything else outside was non-existent.

*I really think of it as not necessarily the turning point it's supposed to be, but I think of it as just an experience that nothing in particular in your life leads up to it or continues or evolves from it.*

Yes, but not quite. I must say, I thought about my grandparents time and time again during it. I mean, there was something about that experience with those people; I felt that I was with my old, Swedish peasant grandparents.

*So there was something intensely personal about that experience?*

In a way. That part of it. I mean, the thing is, that was the only thing I could connect it with, that I was among people like that, you see.

*Oh, do you think that's part of it, is that even though you're a "detached observer"—and I'm putting that in quotes . . . .*

I wasn't a detached observer while it was going on. I was an observer, but I can't say I was detached.

*But don't you think the reason you were thinking of your grandparents is that no matter how foreign the experience is, you're constantly looking for threads that relate back to the personal?*

Oh, yes. They're still your supports. However, it also had to do with prayer; it had to do with being expected to pray, and I wasn't a pray-er.

Later on, the same thing happened in Africa. And the only way I could relate is to the business of *wanting* to pray, not because I thought or believed that way. I wanted to pray because I felt that I should, that it was my duty being there to do that.

*Well, almost a courtesy.*

And also to sincerely want something good to happen for the people there, and not to be the dissembler. I remember thinking of my grandparents, what would they be doing there? How would they be acting if they felt any connection with these people at all? And so, it helped me feel that I could be a part of it really sincerely, not as a Christian, not as a true believer of any kind, but as somebody who felt strongly on the behalf of the people that I was with and that what they were doing was important for them. Therefore, I should be more than courteous. I should be supportive, you see. It's a very complicated thing.

*But actually, it brings up to me a key issue, this whole business of participant-observation, you know.*



And so-called empathy and all that stuff.

*Yes, and of drawing those lines, and at what point you become so much a participant you're no longer an observer, et cetera, et cetera.*

Yes, well, at moments . . . well not at moments, during that whole liminal period, as you referred to it, I would say that I was more than a participant. I felt part of it. I felt that it meant something to me and to those people, and it did. It meant something different than they might feel, but nevertheless, it meant a great deal to me. I felt positively a part of it, and also I felt especially a lot of gratitude that I had been allowed to be there.

So the praying that went around and the smoking with the prayers, I really did try to do it honestly, that I believed in trying to think positively about these two old people, wanting them to be well, sending good thoughts to them through the smoke, through the incense. And I remember feeling that I really felt that, that I wanted to feel that. And then, of course, the next day, that becomes, then, a little event that happened of itself, and it was liminal, one of those timeless moments in itself.

So anyway, I left there and went back to Berkeley. And I was coming up every other week or so.

*When you started that summer's work, did you explicitly think to yourself that you would attend a peyote meeting? I mean, was that a goal?*

I had great trepidation about it. I didn't know whether I should. I had a lot of feeling about that it maybe was best not to; it was best not to get myself in a position where I had to make a commitment.

*Was that partially because of your concern about that business of getting identified with particular factions?*

Well, that was a problem, but not the main one. The main one was my relation with those people there. Did I want to be in a position of them seeing me as a neophyte or a recruit, which was part of all sects of that sort. And then what would I do about that?

*Was that part of your conversation with Barton in the car the next day?*

Oh, he was very proud of me. He said, you know, "That's good you came. It's good that you came." And [he was] glad. "And now you see. You've seen what the people do and what they think. And you sang a song, and that's good. You sang songs." And he felt that he'd been vindicated.

I was very glad about that. He felt vindicated, you know, that I didn't make a fool out of him or act like an ass.

*Do you remember saying anything to him in particular or being aware about wanting to not "lead him on" into thinking that you were . . . ?*

Later. I just said, "You know, I don't know whether I can *belong* to this church. I respect it, and I think that the . . ." But that came out little by little later in my relationships with them. But no, at that time, nobody really pressed me on that. But I was concerned about misleading them into thinking that I wanted to be a peyotist, but it didn't work out to be a real problem. They sort of accepted the fact that, you know, as a white guy, I would come in there, and I was studying the church, and that I wasn't necessarily a deep believer.

I would say that the peyote . . . that I didn't have the kind of dreams and visions, except that first time like in the meeting. And Barton said, "Yes, you didn't puke either. And it's good to puke." He says, "You've got to puke, get rid of all that stuff."

And I said, "Yes, I didn't do that."

"Yes," he says, "that's the only bad thing. You should have been able to do that."

So, we had discussions about what it might have been. But he felt vindicated that I had gone through, sat through it, and I didn't make any trouble. I didn't get up and leave or anything like that.

*Or ask a stupid question.*

Or make a nuisance out of myself. So, that was good.

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## Notes

1. Warren d'Azevedo was conducting an ethnographic study of Cave Rock at the time of this interview.

2. The "cedar" referred to by Washoe and other Great Basin Indians is actually juniper.

3. Burl Ives recorded "Wayfaring Stranger," his signature song, on a number of albums. Ironic to the context of this interview is the fact that Ives is also remembered for naming names in front of the House UnAmerican Activities Committee.

## WASHOE FACTIONS

SO THE REST of that summer was almost gone now. I came up two or three times more, and lots of things began to happen. I was doing then all sorts of work. Going to the meeting opened up a lot of the people to me. They felt more confident about me. I had never been able to use a tape recorder. Of course, in those days, it was wire recorders, and then I just had the beginnings of the tape recording, and there was a lot of reluctance to be taped. I began to be asked. And so, that's how I got the songs later.

Toward the end of that summer of 1954, by now, I had had enough experience with the people that I was seeing that they had more confidence in me and didn't see me as just some California hippie coming up to eat peyote. Also because the men that I was working with were just beginning to get very interested in the Washoe Claims Case and had just gotten themselves a lawyer, George Wright from Elko. They were of course, very inexperienced, are they wanted me to interpret the various documents that they were getting on earlier writings on claims cases.

They had found two or three maps of Washoe territory, all of them which disagreed with one another, and when we discussed that, they became very interested in having me work with them. So, here were two things that were going on, at least. Well, there were more than that. But as far as they were concerned, there was the peyotist movement, development of the Native American Church in the area. They were also beginning to make connections with the League of North American Indians, which, at that time, was a rather important national organization. I can't remember the name of the man that was head of it that I eventually wrote to. In fact, I became something of a scribe and was writing letters for them on their behalf in regards to the claims case and to the lawyer, et cetera.

Roy James's son, Ronald James, had just been appointed secretary to the tribe, and he was an interesting young man. He'd been away a lot. He'd been down to San Francisco and had moved around a lot in urban areas. He was slightly crippled—had a bad leg—but he was sufficiently able with a typewriter,

and he and I did most of the correspondence for Roy and Earl and some of the others on the council.

A little bit later I'll talk about what was happening politically in Washoe, where the peyotists were in the forefront of the tribal council for reasons which I found extremely intriguing.

Nevertheless, that was going on, the claims case problem. And there was also a great deal of factionalism, as usual, but in a very special way, mostly in Dresslerville, where the tribal council met. I worked very hard to keep out of that, to keep away from that issue, but it was hard. It was almost impossible *not* to get involved and to be tagged as somebody who was supporting the peyotists up in Woodfords. But I eventually surmounted that.

*Were the peyotists mainly identified with the Woodfords group?*

Yes. It was considered the Woodfords' movement, though there were peyotists all over. Woodfords was sort of the center, had become the center.

I haven't talked about that; that's very interesting. Earlier during Omer Stewart's and Edgar Siskin's fieldwork in the 1930s, Ben Lancaster had come in as a proselytizer of the church. He was the one who sort of brought the idea to the Washoe and became something of a celebrity in the area. It was probably the high point in the development of that movement, involving as many as two or three hundred people. And there were Paiutes and Shoshone involved, also California Indians involved, who sent out delegates to the Washoe meetings.

Ben Lancaster, who centered in Antelope Valley and built that octagonal round house, kept green peyote buds in little sand boxes

and, I think, sold them and used them. Very enterprising guy. In fact, it was even . . . . Well, I won't go into that, but there were a lot of rumors about the ways he had tried to make money and that he had been called an Indian medicine man in the East before he came out. And he wore moccasins and feathers in his hair. Some people are very cynical about him, that he *played* Indian.

But he was a Washoe, and he had been around. He came back and began to give meetings, and *many* people came. He had sometimes meetings involving fifty to one hundred people, and he'd move from place to place, you know, out to Nixon, out to Walker Lake. Whenever he was called, he would go and hold peyotist meetings. The ones that he held at Antelope Valley were very large and went on for a number of years.

Also in Dresslerville, they held meetings. I believe the Smokeys were sort of hosts to him at that time, old Willie Smokey, who later dropped out and became antagonistic to the church—to Ben's church. And Woodfords, that group up there, they held [hosted] most of their meetings in Antelope Valley, though Ben would hold his in Dresslerville and also up in Woodfords and anywhere else around.

There was a *growing* animosity to the peyotists during the 1930s from Carson Valley on the part of whites, white administrators of Indian programs and others and the police on the one hand, who saw this as . . . . And at that time, there was an Indian agent who was very much opposed to what he considered heathen practices. [laughter] And I wish I could remember his name.

But anyway, there was this growing movement denouncing peyote as a drug, as a hallucinatory drug which was worse than alcohol, et cetera, et cetera, and that it was creating health problems among the Indians

and also making them very poor workers, because they'd stay up all night at their meetings, and they wouldn't turn up to work. Some of the ranchers were complaining about the impact upon their workers. Of course, you know, this is the old story.

That was one side of the opposition, but probably the most effective opposition came from the shamans, the three or four major old shamans that still existed. Somewhere I have a list of those, and I don't want to just rattle it off without checking. But there were a number of very important shamans who were opposed, because this was competition. And they saw it as foreign; foreign Indians brought it in. It was also foreign because it was bringing in Christian principles to some extent and that it was really not Indian, or it was foreign Indian and not really Washoe. And, of course, it really cut into [the numbers of people seeking] their services.

There was already a lot of anti-shamanistic feeling among the Washoe because of the high fees that the shamans were charging for curing. It got to be astronomical. I mean, they were asking for funds that would wipe a family out in those days. They had nothing.

And there was just this basic fear and antagonism about the shamans; at the same time a need for them, because people felt that they could cure, they could do something. They could also do harm. They could make life very miserable for you or kill you. At the same time, if you knew a shaman and the shaman was friendly to your family and all that, that was a person you felt you *had* to call if somebody was sick and needed help.

So there was this deep ambivalence about the shamans, and at the same time, the shamans were feeling that they were now under pressure because of this new movement that was claiming to have curative powers and

calling upon local Washoe and other Indians to change their lifestyle and to do away with alcohol *and* to stay away from the old doctors, because the old doctors were evil. The old doctors were pecuniary, they were just out for themselves, for self-aggrandizement, and many of them were fakes; and also, they were dealing with dangerous powers.

And peyote, the herb and the meetings brought you to good powers and a good way to deal with healing, a good way to deal with changing your life for the good, et cetera. And the old shamans never tried to change your life for the good. All they did was take your money and give you some kind of medicines and sometimes make you ill, and on and on.

There was that kind of argument going on in Carson Valley, which had a deep impact on the peyotist movement in the valley so that Ben Lancaster stopped almost completely having meetings in Carson Valley or in Dresslerville but held them in Antelope Valley. Once or twice some others tried to hold meetings in Dresslerville, but they created great problems within the community. There was a lot of anti-peyotist feeling.

In fact, ten or fifteen years later, I still heard that in the valley: "Oh, you're up there talking with those peyote eaters, those cactus eaters, those crazy guys, those wild people up there in the mountains at Woodfords." The Washoe people down in Dresslerville would say that, and that feeling was still there to a considerable degree in the 1950s. It's amazing how that's changed since then.

So, anyway, the development of the movement really changed course in the late 1930s with this rather concerted attack on it from both whites, white leadership, officials, the BIA—the Indian agency—all that along with the shamans who went right along with the conservative members of the tribe, watching out for their own interests.

The peyotists were essentially driven out of the valley and held their meetings in small towns and small camps away from Carson Valley. So by the time I got there in the early 1950s I don't think there had been any meetings in the [Carson] valley at all in years, and they were being held at Woodfords, which was considered out of the way and somewhat private. The Washoe camps were secluded up there and they could drum all night and put up their tepees and not attract too much attention. And they could be held down in Antelope Valley, or devout Washoe members would go out to Walker Lake or to Pyramid Lake when Lancaster or others would hold meetings out there.

So, by the time that I began working in the early 1950s, the movement as Stewart and Siskin had known it had pretty well disintegrated as such. It wasn't a unified movement around Ben Lancaster as it had been in the period when they were there. However, they had been there long enough to see the beginning of this break-up and Lancaster and others being excluded from Dresslerville, the central colony. So they had predicted that peyotism was disappearing, was on the decline, and was a disintegrating cult at that time and saw no future for it. In fact, I think Stewart, because there were some peyotist leaders among the Northern Paiute, felt that that's where it was going to be centered or up north in the plateau.

But by the time I got there, things had taken another course, and this was what I was interested in. I was really working ethno-historically on the development of the three factions that I found in the area of the peyotist movement. The three factions were essentially what was known as . . . there was Jim Summers's way. Jim Summers had been a close associate, along with Sam Dick, of Ben Lancaster. Jim Summers still held his

meetings in Lancaster's (Lancaster had died) round house out on the eastern side of Antelope Valley.

And there was Harry Sam's way. He and the Dicks—Streeter Dick and his large family in Antelope Valley, a sort of Washoe-Paiute group—were holding their meetings there. That's the meeting I went to under the guidance of the Washoe peyotists from Woodfords that took me down there. And so there was that, Harry Sam's way, which was partly referred to as the old Sioux way. It was considered to be the proper, old way from the eastern Indians of the plains, et cetera, that had been brought in by Lancaster and then had divided up into two small factions in Antelope Valley—Harry Sam and Jim Summers.

Then there was the Woodfords group that referred to themselves as "the New Tepee Way." They had gotten their guidance and direction from two or three members, Roy James being one, who had gone up to Fort Hall and McDermitt and had gone to meetings up there that were called "the New Tepee Way."

This was a western peyotist movement, and it was, as the Woodfords members say, the easy-open way, where you are open. You want everybody to be part of it. Anybody can come, whereas the meetings of the Dicks, Harry Sam, and Lancaster had been very closed. Well, not Lancaster, but his disciples had been very closed, held closed meetings only for Indians. It was the Indian way.

That was an argument among the peyotists about to what extent whites could even take part in it, or would the herb be of any value to them; it's really for Indians. And that argument was a very profound one among them.

The Woodfords group said that anybody could do it. However, they were very wor-

ried about the kind of whites who came to their meetings—the California-based “seekers” or “wanabees.”

*So, you considered in the 1950s, it was really kind of a vital movement?*

Well, yes. It was vital in a different way than it had been. When Lancaster was there, it was a *new* proselytizing movement.

*Messianic, really.*

Messianic. It was millenarian. It was growing. And there were all sorts of splinter groups moving out and taking the message. There must have been about seven hundred peyotists Omer Stewart listed, and I found that list very helpful, because that was one of the things I was doing. I went over Stewart’s list of the participating, practicing peyotists, and I tracked them all down and saw how many were still there. Well, it had diminished to about one-third the number of people.

*Well, was that list something that was published?*

Yes. Oh, yes. It was in his *Washoe-Northern Paiute Peyotism*. [Stewart 1944] And it was typical Stewart, his way of doing it, a sort of checklist like his trait-list publications, you know. [Stewart 1941] But he had all these names and their degree of participation, where they’d come from, the Northern Paiute, the Washoe, and other groups. And it was large because many people came out of curiosity to the meetings, and it was also lively in that sense. It was creating a big stir, as you can imagine, in western Nevada. I mean, these “peyote eaters,” were regarded as a kind of Ghost Dance by northern Nevadans. In fact, some of the people who

had been curious about the Ghost Dance back at the turn of the century were seen to be still participating in this as “seekers of truth.”

I don’t recall that there were any whites who had come around during Lancaster’s period and had gone to meetings excepting Omer Stewart [and with less frequency, Edgar Siskin]. He was something of a figure. Omer was a remarkable guy. He could sing three or four peyote songs, and he could drum. I never could do it adequately. But Omer could do that and was known and remembered for that.

He was also remembered for other things. Well, I won’t go into that. I mean, I’m very interested in the folklore that develops about anthropologists and whites who hang around, and you hear all these stories. There are stories about me, and they’re wild. They’re strange and wonderful stories.

But anyway, Omer was something of a celebrity for a while, because he was a white man who actually participated and sang and, “. . . ate a lot of peyote, but he had lots of problems.” Oh, boy, he had problems. And I have notes on all the problems that they claim that Omer had and that he would pray about in the meetings, and that they would pray about for him, mostly having to do with his family. But I don’t think I have a right to go into any of those things.

But anyway, that sort of thing about early anthropologists: Siskin, Lowie . . . . [laughter] Lowie was considered to be a very strange guy. “He worked with a kid named Skimmerhorn, up north, a kid who *hated* the Washoe. He didn’t know *anything*,” and on and on, this kind of thing. And yet, “He wrote a book on the Washoe.” You know, one could go on and on.

And so by the time I was there, there had developed these sorts of three factions. They

weren't really hostile to each other but a little suspicious of each other and competitive. Who could have the most people coming to them and what families? The prestige of the larger families and the important families as against others was important.

And for one, this New Tepee Way . . . Roy James, a man that I knew well, had really been instrumental in forming it. I think the man that he had met up at Fort Hall was Jim Humpy, who told Roy that the way it was being done out here was wrong—this was typical, you know—and that the meetings should be held in a slightly different way, they should be more open, there should be more participation. The leader should not be a hard leader, should not be one who is hard on his people or mean to them but who helps them along, who is comforting, et cetera.

Also there were a lot of ritual differences—small differences, which were very important. I can't go through them now, but I took them down. I went over Stewart's element list, the things that were present in the meetings that he went to and then compared them with what was going on now and what the different groups were doing. So that was very interesting to me, because it showed the development of the three different phases of the movement in this one little area involving a few hundred people at the most.

Its influence was greater, though, than the number of people who came to it, because people were either for it or against it. And there was a lot of vociferous opposition, and a lot of the Washoe were ashamed of it and saw this as a retrogressive thing—people becoming savages and eating this terrible herb.

That would be the extreme, but then there were people who were just doubtful and felt that it was a hype and a sham and distrusted the leaders. And, of course, the old

family differences and the factionalism had to do with it—which families were part of one or not part of the other.

By the way, the factional differences that were going on about peyotism are like the factional differences that go on about the tribal council and every action and policy of tribal leaders before and since. That, too, was part of what was going on in response to peyotism.

Also, the peyotists not only gave the impression . . . and even consciously claimed to represent the old Indian way. They were making a claim to represent the true Indian way. They did have something of an edge there in bringing discomfort to more acculturated Indians and those who were members of the Baptist church or doing the white thing: "What are you guys doing? What have you got, anyway? You're just going along with these guys who are your conquerors and who took all your land. And you don't even remember what it was to be an Indian," and on. So, they played . . .

*So, it was that explicit.*

Oh, yes, when things got hot, yes. But you know, Washoe don't argue publicly. It's done all with insinuation and in rumor and getting things around like, "So-and-so said," and all that. I don't remember any open antagonistic arguments or fights. Washoe don't do it that way. They do it through sarcastic humor and undercutting rumor and all that. And that was there: "Those guys think they're real Indians you know. They're just a bunch of backward savages." Woodfords was [characterized] as where the "poor people" lived, the "mountain people," and, "We down in Dresslerville and in Carson Valley are more civilized," kind of thing. "We know white



ways, and we can get along in a white world," which they couldn't. I mean, they weren't. They, too, were living in slums.

*How important for those kind of considerations of status or relative stature in the white world were connections with the different white ranching families and who had worked for whom? Was there a legacy there?*

Yes, in the old days. By the old days, I mean pre-1940s. Those things were important if you had worked for a large ranch and had lived there or had lived in a camp there, but that had all pretty much broken down by the 1950s.

*Right. But I'm just wondering if there was sort a legacy there where the people who had worked on big ranches . . . .*

Well, a legacy in terms of people who had had a community on a ranch, who had been in certain families that knew each other. I don't recall that it was necessarily prestigious to have been on a Dangberg ranch, for example.

*Yes, that's what I was getting at, I think, sort of a patronage . . . .*

I think much earlier there may have been. But I think by this time, that had worn away.

Nevertheless, associations had developed in these ranching communities that continued to some degree in the Dresslerville Colony and in Carson Colony, where families had been interrelated for periods of time on these big old ranches. I don't think there was any nostalgic mystique about the ranch itself. In fact, there was a lot of hostility about the old ranchers. Not entirely. That's not fair, because I think certain of the Dangbergs had

a good name. Nevertheless, they were ranchers and owners, and there was a lot of friction, and when the ranching enterprise was beginning to slow down in mid-century and Dangberg had given over some land to form Dresslerville, there was the idea, "We're being gotten rid of, and we're being shoved off the land."

However, many of the Washoe did still stay on those ranches but not as many as before. Those ranchers weren't doing as great. They weren't the big operations that they had been, so that Dresslerville was thought, in a way, to be a kind of dumping ground for the Indians that they didn't know what else to do with.

And that's the way some of the Washoe felt, and the Woodfords people made a lot of that: "Oh, that old rancher is shoving them all onto a colony so he doesn't have to deal with them anymore." And the Woodfords people saw themselves as living more in the Indian way, in that they were remote from the big towns, there was less urban impact on them. They felt that they weren't as drunken and as dissolute as the people down in the valley and that they were living up in the mountain area with its good air, and they didn't have white people telling them what to do all the time. Even though there were whites around, they had a certain degree of autonomy.

*How did the dynamic of the peyotist movement work in competition with—or not—things like the pine nut dance and the rabbit boss?*

I will be getting to that. So, in the Woodfords area, there was this feeling that they were living cleaner more orderly lives, and their relationship with whites was a little less onerous. They had friends among the whites locally like the Merrills and others,

and they felt that they had a more friendly setting.

To me, what was interesting was the difference ecologically and economically in the various areas: Antelope Valley, Carson Valley, and Woodfords. In Antelope Valley, there was the very old ranching tradition of large, big ranches that had employed a lot of Washoe and Northern Paiute hands on the ranches, and that had gone on longer. The Dicks and others still felt attached to the great ranches and being cowboys—they were so-and-so's cowboys—and a feeling of being connected with that frontier ranching land, that kind of land use, and their role, which was relatively good in terms of pay and conditions; they had space.

*Well, also, did they have access? They had access to resources more, didn't they?*

Yes, there was space, and there was still some fishing to be done, and still some hunting to be done in that area. Yes, they felt freer and more open. And there was that connection, continuity, with the old ranching economy that, in a way, they were peripherally connected with. But that was all mostly gone in Carson Valley and Dresslerville.

Families that had been in one place for a long period of time had congregated at Dresslerville, and then in 1917, the Carson colony as well, and these were also near the Indian agency. They got the most immediate attention. I mean, my god, the agency hardly knew about the northern Washoe up at Sierra Valley and Loyalton, et cetera, and had much less connection with Antelope Valley. So, it was the Dresslerville Washoe and the Carson Colony Washoe that were really under the immediate attention of the agency, and those near "big cities". Carson City and Gardnerville and Minden, these

little hamlets, were the "big cities," where the action was. These communities were really considered the center of things. So the outlanders, you know, like the Antelope Valley people and certainly the Woodfords people were wild mountaineers.

That was the joke: "Those are the mountain men. They're the wild mountain men," and cynically, "They're the old time Indians," and all that, throwing it back at them. Not only that but historically they had also been connected with the Miwok and the Maidu, and there had been some intermarriage with them, and in Antelope Valley, intermarriage with the Paiute! "These people could hardly claim even to be Washoe, for God sakes." You'd hear that from Hank Pete: "Oh, those wild guys, I don't even know if they're Washoe. I don't think they even talk Washoe anymore. They talk Miwok, and they talk Paiute. They talk every kind of Indian thing but Washoe."

So, intermarriage had a lot to do with that. Of course, there was a lot of intermarriage going on everywhere, but there was this historical aspect of the Paiute-Washoe relations in Antelope Valley and of the California Indian connection with the Woodfords people. There had really been such a connection historically.

In fact, they were even referred to by Eagle Valley people as diggers: "They're the diggers, you know, like those California Indians," or they're *dewb'imiš*, I guess, like the Maidu, and the Miwok, or *tánglelti?*, "Westerners." "They're out there. They're the *tánglelti?* you know, and we're the *páwa?lu?* we're the middle. We're in the big valley, we're in the center."

So, there was that kind of thing that had been there a long time, but to exacerbate it was peyotism. It slowly moved up, as it became unpopular in the valley area, to

Woodfords and down to Antelope Valley, the outlying areas.

*But there were plenty of members from the other, more conservative . . . .*

Who would go to those meetings, but secretly and not many. Not many, because it was really considered beyond the pale. I mean, "You went to those goddamn meetings?"

"Well, I did. I'm not feeling too good, and so-and-so told me I would feel better if I went, and so I went."

"Well, gee, you shouldn't have gone to that. You should have gone to old Doctor Hand down here or even to one of the Indian doctors," you know, who were still plying their trade.

By the time I got there, only two or three people would even admit that they were doctors of the old style, though there were probably many more.

*Do you think your association with the peyotists may have made people a little more hesitant to talk to you about them?*

No, not just to me, because this is what everybody would say.

*It's a small community.*

I mean, even the Washoe would say, "Oh, you're not going to get anything out of that guy. He don't want to say anything anymore about what he does."

But there were a number of the ex-shamans or the new neophyte shamans—not a lot—who people would secretly go to, too. So both these elements [Peyotism and shamanism] had become sort of secretive. And at the same time, the Baptist mission was . . . .

*But didn't they get some of their power and identity from the fact they were secret? I mean, both the shamans and the peyotist movement, wasn't that part of its . . . ?*

Well, yes, but there was this other factor that you can't ignore, the white attitude. They were a minority, a very, very depressed minority in the middle of a dominant, white society, and some of them were hoping to enter into white society, striving for upward mobility. Not many, but there was that idea that if you did the right thing, you could become like these guys, or you'd get some of the goods that they have to hand out and dress better and have better houses and all that sort of thing, be more civilized. There was an element of that, particularly, I think, in the Dresslerville area. Though not many families could demonstrate that, among a lot of the young people that were still around, there was the idea: go to school, you get a good job, and people will treat you better if you can act like whites, you see.

And, of course, most of the peyotists I knew were cynical about that. "Makes no difference. No matter what you do, you're an Indian. And you better know it, and you better cop to the fact that you're an Indian." And so there was real tension.

Also, there were those who belonged to Christian denominations. There were Catholic, there were Bahai, the Baptist church, which probably had the most attraction at that time.

*Now, were there peyotists who also went to the . . .*

Sure. There were peyotists who would go to both meetings, or there were non-peyotists who would try both. The idea is, you know, a little bit might be good, but more is better.

[laughter] Truly, as elsewhere . . . you certainly remember that from Africa. You're doubling your money, you're increasing your chances. So, yes, there was that, trying various things.

But there was a Baptist minister in Dresslerville, a very nice guy—Reverend Ward I think his name was—and he had that little chapel. I don't know if it's still there, a little chapel, a little shack in Dresslerville. It was the nicest shack in the whole colony.

Before him, there had been someone else whom they'd liked. These were guys who had a mission to do something for the Indians and who held the services and would go to families to visit sick people, would bring in a doctor if it was necessary, helpers of this kind. And people liked them. And Reverend Ward, I really liked him too; he meant well.

*Yes. Well, they were good people.*

Yes, yes. Well, and patronizing as he might have been, nevertheless he did something, and people respected that.

So, he attracted a group, but some of the very people he attracted were also going to the peyotist meetings. There was a lot of confusion, you know, in the minds of people going through cultural transitions of that kind. Where do you go? What am I? What is good for me?

Well, the same thing worked on me. That is, I would get in a lot of discussions with Roy and with Barton and also with Ramsey. Oh, and Leonard Moore, who was a very articulate guy, and his wife. That is, about what the herb, what peyote and the movement, really was.

*Now, were these all Woodfords people you just mentioned?*

Yes, well, not actually living in Woodfords, but who attended the meetings. Ramsey Walker was Woodfords, Roy James and Barton John were Woodfords. Leonard Moore lived down in the Carson colony, but he was a devout peyotist, and more than that saw himself as possibly an inheritor of shamanistic power. That made him a little suspect on the part of the peyotists.

He was supposed to give that up, which was a legacy of the struggle in the 1930s against the shamans and the shamans' struggle against peyotism. But, almost every conversation I had were in mostly friendly meetings, singing meetings that we'd go to. "Prayer meetings," they were referred to. Prayer meetings where people would talk and pray a little and sing a few songs and then chat and then eat and then sing some more and talk. And I learned a great deal, because people would confer about problems and things that were important to them.

So, one of the things that I always found myself involved in was, "Do you think that peyote would be as useful to whites? Why are they interested? Why do some of these people come up here and want to get peyote from us?" Or like George Leite and a number of others who came up either to get it or to bring it as gifts, "What does it mean to them? What good do you think it can do them? Haven't they got their own ways? Haven't they got ways? They've got their own doctors, they've got their own religion, they've got their Bible." And Barton loved to talk about the Bible, that his bible was this little herb. He sees everything he needs to know from that herb. He doesn't need to get a book and turn the pages. A lot of things didn't make sense anyway.

"How can people believe all that kind of thing in there, and how can they even understand it? It's so confusing," Barton would say,

“But I don’t need it. Our bible is this herb here.”

It was really a kind of preaching to me about the meaning of the herb, and he’d write me letters about it. I have letters in which he was, in a sense, explaining how important it was to think right about the herb, not listen to other people, but to use one’s own experience and one’s friends as the guide to that.

Well, I can remember my feeling about all this with Barton was a kind of nostalgia. I would think of my grandfather, who talked just like that about his Lutheran Christian fundamentalist beliefs. I mean, the same kind of explaining to you the importance of being saved, the importance of Jesus and following the way of the Lord. And people who don’t do it, you know, look what’s happening to them. Well, Barton was great at that. He had a whole list of people who had handled the herb wrong or given it up or had not done right by it or had denounced it. And look what had happened to them. And all of them had bad luck, terrible bad luck. [laughter] I mean, their families had been . . . and my friend George being one of the people he talked about, because his family had split up, and the fact that he had such trouble; Omer Stewart also had such trouble.

Even though Omer was considered to be a good guy, nevertheless, he had to go through all these ordeals just to get straightened out. And, “It’s hard, it’s very hard, but you have to think right.” It’s all here in his letter, on and on, and hours would pass at the meetings like this where we would talk about all kinds of matters. But it often would come around to what did I think about it?

*Yes. Would these be at different people’s houses, the meetings?*

Yes.

*And were they regular?*

No, no. Well, they would be called. Somebody would say, “Come on over. We’re going to get together tonight.” That kind of thing. No, they weren’t regular, just it was time to have a prayer session. And these were sort of practice sessions for songs and for praying. And they also were to help you, to make you feel better and solve some problem. Maybe some person would call it.

It wouldn’t be a regular meeting with, you know, drums and the Road Chief and all of that. They’d call a practice session sometimes, and I went through a number of these, and, yes, mostly in Woodfords and Markleeville, once or twice, Antelope Valley. Just where people lived, once even in Dresslerville, very quietly done. There was no loud singing, you know.

It was just to talk, just friends talking together. “We can talk. We can say anything we want to here. Just don’t make too much noise.” And those were some of the most useful times.

*But nobody would take peyote then. That was always kind of . . . ?*

Yes. Oh, they might, but not ritually. Well, maybe, if there was a figure there like Ramsey, who had been a Road Chief, or Franklin, who had peyote. They might, during the singing of prayers, say, “You got some of the herb? I think I need some.” But it wouldn’t be in the formal way it would be done in a full scale meeting, a “tepee meeting,” as they would say, which would be in “the church.”

I have notes, fortunately, a lot of notes, on the kind of things that were talked about and the curiosity about what I thought about disease, about curing, about the mind, what

could the mind do, and prayer, what could prayer do? I felt comfortable in those meetings, because it was like my grandparents, talking to them. [laughter] And I didn't even have to believe. It was all right with them

that I didn't. They saw me as a backslider anyway, but a good guy, you know, and that I might tell them the truth. I might say what I thought instead of lying to them. Those were wonderful meetings.

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## THE WOODFORDS SESSIONS

SO IN THE PROCESS of doing that, I remember it was Earl James who first who said to me, “Warren, you asked about the songs and recording the songs.” I had stopped bringing it up, because there had been a negative reaction. “Oh, no, you can’t do that. It’s dangerous to play with those songs. It spoils the songs. I don’t know. I don’t know.” So, I never brought it up.

But after a while—this was late in the summer—Earl said, “You know, I’m going to have some of the boys up to my house sometime. They might want to hear the songs; they might want to hear their songs. You got one of those machines? You know, one of those record machines?” Well, I didn’t have.

I said, “Well, I’ll bring one up.” And that’s—I think I’ve mentioned already—when I went down to Berkeley. I went to KPFA, the radio station where I had known people, and they were fascinated with the idea of recording some of these songs. And I remember . . . who was it? One of the main people there had one of those big reel-to-reel tape recorders. This was all new stuff which was important radio equipment, and theirs

was in use or had to be used for a series of programs, but he knew some people in San Francisco who had an electronics business and they rented this big damn thing. [laughter] It weighed a ton.

It was an enormous machine but recorded absolutely beautifully. The recordings I have from that machine are the best that I have. They are so clear and perfect on reels. I had them transferred to cassette tapes to save them, but I think the reels are still good.

And so I lugged this darn thing back up to Woodfords. I was going up there about every week and sometimes staying for a number of days at a time during the summer. And this was probably late July or August. I didn’t have to get back to Northwestern until practically October with the quarter system.

So I brought this big thing up, and I was worried because it was so damn big it would just shock everybody, alarm them, you know, big humming like an x-ray machine. [laughter] It’s amazing. I have the model number of that thing, the type it was, somewhere. It was an amazing monstrosity, but it worked. And I was afraid that even plugging it in would

blow out all the lights in the community. But I plugged it in, and it worked!

Earl had about four or five guys up there to have a sing. They were going to sing to-night, and, "Warren has brought his recorder, and if any of you guys want to sing, well, you could."

So I just brought it in and set it up and just left it there. And they were talking and singing, sort of looking sideways at this machine. Who was the first one? I believe it was Franklin Mack. He was a little more daring than the others. In fact, not only daring, he was always getting into trouble. He drank, and you shouldn't drink, and so they were always praying over him to keep him from drinking. And he would ask to be prayed over, but he just couldn't stop.

So it was Franklin said, "Well, let's try now. I don't know about that thing. It looks . . . . Boy, that's a big one, Warren. That's a big one."

Oh, I plugged it in and turned it on, and all these little lights went on and all that. I tell you, it was fascinating. We were all focused on that machine. And I could see that some of them were thinking, "Not me. I'm not going to put my songs in that thing."

But anyway, Franklin sang, and he sang four songs in a cycle. You never sing one song. That's why at the meeting, Barton had said to me, "Sing it four times." And I forgot that at the meeting I also sang not only "Way-faring Stranger" but "I Wondered as I Wandered."

I mean, what an anomaly at a peyote meeting, excepting they loved it. They thought it was good. And the drum went along OK.

But anyway, so Franklin sang, a little wobbly as though he was scared and was watching the machine the whole time he was singing.

He was watching that reel go around. And, you know, he was distracted by that darn machine, what it was going to do to him at any minute. [laughter]

When I think of it, it was really an unusual experience for them. They didn't know about it. *Now* everybody's got a tape recorder, you know. Tape everything. But *then* it was really strange. There was something magical and dangerous about it.

But he did sing and on the second or third song, he got his courage up, and he was really belting it out. Somebody was drumming for him—I forget who—and I was watching the controls to get the drum right and all that. Everybody would watch every time I touched a button, and boy, there was complete silence from these four or five other guys, just watching with intensity.

When it came to the end of that cycle I just said, "Gee, Franklin, that sounded good. Should we try it? Do you want to hear what it's like?"

"Yes, yes. Let's hear if that thing has got my songs right." And so I did, and they were excellent.

Everything came through, and he was very proud of himself. Oh, that got the others interested. So, I think it was Franklin. Franklin was the first. Then there was Roy, then Barton, then Ramsey and Eddie Rube. I think that was the group.

Anyway, so the next one was Barton, and he sang great. They would say he had the real Indian sound, that quavering sound in his voice. But Barton was very worried, too. He kept watching the machine. He'd be singing, and he'd look over to see what that machine was doing.

But his came through well when we played them back. And they were just amazed. "Oh, that's fine. That's good."



And then Roy. Roy was very reluctant. Roy hadn't been to meetings recently, had been somewhat estranged from the local group, and he was probably a little embarrassed. But he sang great, and he sang songs he had learned from Humpy, I guess, and then one that he had dreamed up himself. (Oh, Lawrence Christensen was also there.)

Anyway, when we started playing Roy's back, the tape was blank. That was one of those awful moments in fieldwork. Something had happened. I don't know what I had pressed or done, but there was nothing on the tape.

And I tell you, the feeling in that room was something I'll never forget. I feel it today as I talk about it. I can *feel* that sinking feeling that everybody had, including myself. What had I done?

But to them, it was, "What's that machine doing?" "What did it do with the songs?" See, songs were live things. Songs are alive; they're part of you; they're you. "Roy's songs are gone in there and disappeared."

And somebody at the meeting, I forget who it was, said, "Oh, Roy, that machine don't want *your* songs. It don't want nothing to do with *your* songs," suggesting that they were no good, you know.

I just didn't know what to do, because it really felt . . . I felt like this was the end. They'll never tape again, at least not for me.

And so, I remember saying, "Roy, I think I pressed the wrong button, and I'm very sorry." I didn't know what had happened, but I said, "Let's do it again. Let's try it again."

I remember making a little trial minute of talking into the thing, and it was working. And I said, "Look, it's working now, Roy."

And Roy was sweating. I mean, he was nervous. He was, I think, not only deeply embarrassed, but he was scared. Something

had happened, spiritually. I could really feel it, because I could see the way he was behaving.

And I felt that this is going to end our friendship if I don't square this away. Not that he'll be mad at me, but he'll be afraid of everything, you know. Something's going wrong, something's not right about this whole business. He's being shown up as somebody who's not a good peyotist. The machine knows it. Oh, lord knows what, you know.

So, he didn't want to. He was feeling terrible. I said, "Roy, you can do it. Those are great songs, and I think they ought to be there with the others."

Then finally some of the others said, "Yes, Roy, go on."

But some of them were enjoying his difficulty, because they were getting even with him because he hadn't been a devout, continuing member, and there had been some arguments and fights that he was being too political and involved in the claims case and the tribal council and all those things. And, you know, "Look what it's done to your relationship with the earth," on and on and on and on.

But Roy pulled himself together, and actually, I remember he was like a little kid. He was just sitting there scared. And who was drumming? I think Ramsey was drumming for him. Ramsey started drumming, giving him the opening signature, and Roy started out very frail. In fact, it's on the tape that way. And as he got going, it all came to him, and he was just, oh, beautiful. His songs were . . . I can still hear them. I can hear his songs. One song in particular that has, it goes, see, [singing] "Rickie, rickie, rickie, rickie."

And my son Erik always thought that was referring to him, Rickie. [laughter] "Hey, Rickie, say hello."

And it got stronger and stronger, and he went through a whole cycle and even added a song. Fortunately, it was on the tape. And the *relief!* In fact, it was joy for him, you know, that it was on the tape and clear and good.

And he said, "I kind of sound sick at the beginning."

I says, "Well, you were, Roy, you know. [laughter] You were kind of sick, but you got well quick."

And the others were all saying, "Oh, it's all right. That was pretty good. That came through all right. That's pretty good. That machine liked it the second time, Roy." And, "You must have done some praying, Roy, because that thing's . . . that machine . . ."

*Well, the anthropologist sure did. [laughter]*

Oh boy, was I relieved, was I relieved! So we went through five different cycles. Five guys sang full cycles, and that tape, as far as I'm concerned . . . I edited it myself when I got back to Berkeley and I had two machines, and I learned how to, you know, do work from one reel to the other.

This machine did everything, and it was a studio machine. I don't think I could work it today. It would be an old clunker today.

But I edited out the conversations. I think I still have the original with the background. I hope I do. I think I do. But I edited out all the extraneous stuff and just got the songs, and it was just a beautiful tape.

And that's the one that Moe Asch eventually published at Folkways Records, and the one that Alan Merriam and I used eventually for the article we did on Washoe peyote music.<sup>1</sup> And Alan was . . .

*Is that the one by the Smithsonian? [Ethnic Folkways Library 1972]*

Yes, right. And the radio station was absolutely elated. They told me they'd give me all the tapes I wanted. Would I do some more? They wanted me . . .

*Did they play them on the radio?*

Yes, they did.

*Oh, how wonderful!*

I told them I had to get permission first.

And I said, "Can I play them on the radio?"

And there was a lot of talk. The next time I went up, I asked. "Well, we don't know about that." Of course, I'm sure one or two of them had the idea, "Doesn't anybody get paid for this kind of thing?"

But that didn't come up. And Earl was always the—what would you call it?—the broker in these situations between the white world and the Washoe world. [laughter]

"Well," he says, "maybe it might teach some of those people down there something. They'll see that these poor damned Indians can do something up here." And, "Oh, it won't hurt them to hear the church songs." And little by little, the others agreed. So, anyway, they were played on KPFA.

And they liked them so much that they were willing to give me use of the machine and all the tapes I could use to do some interviews and recordings among the Washoe. Well, I went ahead and did that initial recording, but I didn't want to agree to more. I was, in those days, very careful about what I did, in relation to the field, and I felt that was going too far.

In fact, I even felt a little unsure about having the tape played on the air. I had got permission, but somehow I wondered if I

wasn't, in a sense, exploiting the situation. And the idea of going up with the backing of a radio station to get recordings that then they would be able to use, I felt very unsure about that. I didn't want . . . . Well, in a way, I did anyway. I did use the machine and got some recordings of stories and tales and events that . . . . But I didn't do it for them to use.

And if I'd have been a little bit more developed as an observer at the time, a little more further along, I may have felt more confident about doing something like that. But at that time, I didn't want to do anything to jeopardize my relationship with these people, nor did I want to do anything that I would be unsure about myself, as to the ethics of it or the . . . .

*Did they ever hear it on the radio? Did any of them . . . ?*

No, because it was way down . . . . They heard the tape, which was what was played.

*And when you first brought up recording with them, if you can remember, did they . . . ? At this point, everybody knows that you're there to study the religion, what you're doing.*

The Washoe?

*The Washoe. And do they know that you're affiliated, or do they care what school you're affiliated with?*

Yes, at that time, they knew I had been at the University of California. That's where I was when I first went up, and they still thought of me as a UC student. However, they also knew that I was at Northwestern.

*Was there a lot of discussion about where the tapes would go?*

Not much, but that was certainly on their minds. But, you know, Washoe people that I knew are very reticent about that. Very seldom do you get a point blank question about something they're worried about or concerned about. A lot of politeness, and yet there might be a lot of feeling behind it, you know.

I would bring it up and just say, "Look, I'm doing this because I want a record of my work here, and these songs ought to be recorded."

And then every once in awhile somebody, some wise-guy like Pat [Eagle] or somebody, would say, "Well, they can come here and hear them. They can come up and go to church here, you know."

I said, "Well, yes, but there are a lot of people who aren't going to do that. They might not even be believers in this, but the songs are wonderful. It'd be good to have a record of them, and that's what I'm doing." And I said, "I'd like to be able to put them on deposit in an archive in either a museum or a university so they can be there stored."

And, "Oh, that sounds OK. That's not too bad. But then who will hear them?"

"Well, anybody who's got a good reason to hear them." And then when I got in touch with Moe Asch of Folkways, and he was very interested in having them. This was in the 1950s. I don't remember when they did their first recording of them. It was a few years later. [1972] Nevertheless, I discussed that with them.

*Did you have to get releases in those years? I mean, from the singers?*

You mean like human sources kind of thing?

Yes.

I don't think they were ever heard of in those years. [laughter] No, but you felt [the need for] that. I think that's why there are such institutionalized procedures today, because early anthropologists felt that very strongly, and later anthropologists didn't always have it [this ethos], and so it really became an issue of saving the image of anthropology by making sure that you got . . . Well, also it came out of other fields: psychology and sociology, working with consultants, what your obligation is to them and the intellectual material you had gotten from them. Well, at that time, it was just a built-in concern that I not only dealt fairly with them, but that later on I wouldn't have to apologize for anything that I did. Once that did happen where I had a problem over something like that and learned a very real lesson over these tapes, in fact, much later.

But anyway, there was agreement. I think it was Roy's idea, "Don't use the names. Don't use our names, and we don't want them to be played in association with bad things." I forget [exactly] what it was. I have all that down, but I don't recall. There were certain things that were brought up.

On the other hand, the business of names was not clear. Some people thought it was just as well. "Oh, you know, I like my own songs." But it was Roy who was embarrassed about his own tape—what had happened, but that was not clear. [laughter]

So, later I sent them to Folkways, and they were recorded, and Folkways put them out on a cassette, along with the article that Alan Merriam and I had written, and with a little introduction. I had written Moe Asch.

By the way, Moe Asch, I have a tremendous respect for him. He's a wonderful guy. He did a great service in musicology, a worldwide service—all the material that is in that Folkways [archive]. Young Seeger, Pete Seeger's son or somebody, is now the head of Folkways. But anyway, so, I sent it, and I was shocked to find that on the tape were the names of the singers. And I had told Moe in a letter, "They don't want their names. Number the songs, but please don't put their names."

Moe later, when I talked to him, said that he had not really understood that, or he hadn't read it properly. But I know they had. Somebody had, because in the introduction where they're quoting me saying something about what the people thought about having themselves recorded, it says, ". . . that their names should not be present." Somebody had crossed out "not," ". . . that they *should* be present."

So, I told Moe about this. He was very embarrassed. He was a good guy, had really no . . . It was an oversight on his part, and also, they wanted the names, because it made it more interesting and all that sort of thing.

Nevertheless, that really didn't bother the guys. When I showed them the tape, they were proud of it, and I passed them around.

Later, however—this was in the 1960s—there was a woman, a Paiute woman, who was a member of the peyotist group up in McDermitt who was a friend of the James family. I won't mention her name. She came to hear Omer Stewart's talk about the church. And who else was it? It was Stanley Smart, I guess, and Omer Stewart. Yes, it was a meeting at the university on the Indian movements or something. I forget now what it was.

Anyway, Omer sang. [laughter] We were all embarrassed. He sang a peyote song. A

lot of Washoe peyotists were there. I had told them about it, so a number of people came up from Woodfords, and there must have been fifteen, twenty Washoe people and some Paiute. And it was very embarrassing to me to hear Omer do this, because it was, in a way, inappropriate to do that, this white guy singing peyote songs, which the peyotists would not have done in those circumstances.

*Well, and completely out of context, right?*

Yes, it was in a public meeting, and so this woman was upset by it. She came to me, and she says, "Why did he do that? What right did he have to sing those songs?" And she says, "You know, we don't allow our songs to be made public."

I made the mistake of saying, "Well, I know that there are some Washoe songs and many songs of the Indian Church, already recorded all over the country."

"Oh, I've never seen that."

And I said, "Well, there's one good one that some people in Woodfords made, and it's a very good tape."

"Oh, I never heard that," she said, and she started a ruckus about that. It's a long story. I don't want to go into it here, but it's part of this whole mess where one of my good friend's relatives sued me and got a lawyer. I kept a fairly good record of that. I was devastated, of course. I was accused of using the songs without consultation of family and all that sort of thing. This lawyer from California wrote me two or three times telling me about what the family said and what they thought.

And so I went to a lawyer here that I knew and asked him where I stood, what I should do. And he said, "I don't know, maybe just leave it alone." [laughter] "Don't do anything, because there was really no basis for

this, and you have a fairly good background about this in terms of what you've written and said. Just wait and see." And he says, "Possibly there's a member of the family thinking there's a lot of money involved."

Well, a few weeks later, I wrote long letters to the family in which I just pointed out that this is something that I couldn't have done with any intention to make any money. In fact, there had been no money.

Well, apparently, their lawyer had checked, and there was no money. What had there been? I think I received one small royalty check from Folkways that I turned over to the fund that I called the Roy James Memorial Fund that slowly grew into something over a few years, that I eventually used to help publish that book that Ken Carpenter and I did on the narratives of the Washoe peyotists.

*Oh, Straight with the Medicine?*

Yes, *Straight with the Medicine*, and I turned that few hundred dollars over to help defray the expenses of that hand-printed job and gave credit for it in the book. And so I just pointed out that I'd received nothing. And the lawyer checked; the thing just faded away. But it was one of the more horrible times in my life. I remember being utterly ill, sick about that, because I didn't know what to do about it.

You know, if somebody wanted to do this to you, you're always vulnerable. And I was terribly happy when the time came, a few months later, when the thing just subsided. And then I saw these people again. Everything seemed to be all right, because nobody mentioned it.

*So, nobody's talked about it. It was over?*

Nobody did, but I could tell by one or two people I know well in this family that [they felt] maybe it should have never happened. Nevertheless, it did, and it left a scar on me. I felt what a terrible thing to happen. If I am put in the position of having done something to harm these people, I would never forgive myself. Even if I didn't really do it or intend it, the fact that I allowed myself to get into that kind of situation . . . .

I was thinking I should have gotten it in writing, you know. But you don't always get things in writing; there's a lot of verbal understandings and agreements. And I did get those, but it wasn't in writing, so therefore, I'd be over a barrel, you see. And that was one of the spin-offs on the tapes. But those tapes were quite beautiful. They're the old songs that were sung here in the 1950s by the "New Tepee Way" group. And I have a lot of notes on where the songs came from, where they learned them, under what conditions. And Alan Merriam did a very nice job of doing the ethnomusicological analysis, along with what he had done on Flathead music as well. David McAllister, the ethnomusicologist, was very interested in them also and wrote me about them. Alan Lomax and people like that were fascinated by these songs, because there were a few peyotist songs that were from the Midwest and the south that had already been recorded. And there was a little trade in homemade peyote recorded songs among peyotists. Hardly anybody had recorded or had recording machines you know. Ten years later, the market was flooded. I mean, there was a *business* going on in peyote music all through the country, but at that time, it was so new.

*Is that [the flood of activity and interest] because of the 1960s? Are you talking about the drug movement?*

Probably because of the 1960s, yes. That had never occurred to me, yes, undoubtedly because of that context in the 1960s.

So anyway, that [recording the songs], to me, made real in-roads and developed some material that I thought was important. And in talking and writing about it in that one article, and thinking about the songs—getting the songs down, the background of the songs—I was learning a lot about the attitudes and values of the various peyotists groups out here. You know that most of their songs had been learned from others at Fort Hall, from Shoshone peyotists, from eastern peyotists, Texas peyotists. There was this great network of peyotist chapters and organizations, and then there was the affect on non-Indians.

*That could have become a whole study in itself.*

Oh, everything one does could be a study in itself. You can cry your eyes out about the things that you didn't do, you know. [laughter] Oh, yes. And, of course, then there was Slotkin—I wish I could remember his first name—a very strange and interesting man at Chicago who had *become* a peyotist and was one of the elders or one of the leading figures of the Native American Church.<sup>2</sup>

*And you knew him before you went into the field?*

No, no. I got to know of him, and I wrote to him, and he wrote to me. I saw him in Chicago somewhere in the late 1950s. He had written me a note saying that he would be available, and I went to visit him.

I remember seeing him. He was a very strange guy and very much an outsider. I don't know too much about his professional work, but he was thought to be an oddball. He was admired by the Indians of the Native

American Church, because he had done a lot of—what would you call it?—brokerage for the various groups in relations between their communities and whites. And he was seen to be devout.

I kind of liked him, but he was a strange guy. I wish I knew more about him now. I used to know, but I have forgotten a lot about him.

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## Notes

1. Alan Merriam and Warren d'Azevedo, "Washo Peyote Songs," *American Anthropologist* 59 (1957): 615-641.
2. J. Sydney Slotkin, *The Peyote Religion: A Study in Indian-White Relations* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1956).





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## THE WASHOE LAND CLAIMS CASE

**A**ND SO AT THE same time I was getting very interested in doing work on Washoe territory because of the claims case matter. I was really being pushed by friends—Roy James and Earl James, Donald Wade and others—because at this time . . . . See, after the tribal council was formed in 1936, it had pretty well been dominated by two or three families in Dresslerville, old families. I won't mention their names, but they're still well-known families. And the Woodfords people or the outside people were not really that well represented.

However, during a kind of slack period involving, also, a lot of factionalism in Dresslerville between these families—accusations of corruption and taking money, the kind of thing that is still going on, and drunkenness of one or two of the leaders—the tribal council had fallen apart and had become ineffectual. Into this breach came the peyotists, and Earl James was elected in this sort of slump period to chairmanship of the tribal council. And most of the council became

made up of peyotists from Woodfords or peyotist sympathizers, except for one or two.

So there was a period there in the 1950s when the peyotists were, in a sense, representing the tribe. And what I was seeing was a period when the peyotists had gotten a degree of prestige and were looked upon as good people, the people that didn't drink. In fact, by whites they [were the Indians who] didn't drink, they didn't cause trouble in the towns, and as far as anybody knew, they didn't beat their wives, all that sort of thing. That they were good family people, and they were associated with Woodfords and that good old frontier community.

In thinking of the ecology of the area, I mentioned earlier the ranching thing in Antelope Valley and the break-up of the big ranches and the semi-urbanization of Carson Valley and Woodfords becoming really sort of the ideal mountain retreat area for the Washoe. Some other Washoe families moved up there, because they liked the air, they liked the quiet, they liked the sense of community up there, the water, all that water running

through in Woodfords, the Carson River; and the hunting was good and fishing was good. So, in a sense, the story [about Woodfords Washoe] now turned around. They represented the good Indians in the area, and there even was less criticism of them by the Dresslerville people. It still was, you know, "They're wild people, and they're not really Washoe. They're Miwoks," and all that. Nevertheless, they were respected or became more respected.

And the meetings weren't being held nearby. [laughter] They were *up there*; they kept their business out of the way. So, those factors made . . . .

*So, they didn't make peyote an issue?*

[laughter] In an indirect way. They were peyotists, but they weren't proselytizers. Ben Lancaster was perhaps, but you just did your own thing, and if people wanted to come, they came.

But no, they kept that to themselves excepting for one thing. Roy James heard about League of North American Indians, and he had corresponded with them. In fact, he had me correspond with them.

I have a letter from Tom Pisau, who had heard from Roy James and Earl James and had then written to me, because they had said that I was their representative—this business of utilizing anything at hand, and I was at hand. [laughter] So I got this letter saying they're so glad that I was interested in helping out the Washoe and helping them form a chapter of the League of North American Indians and that anyway they could help, they would do so. And then he gave me information on various claims cases that were going on. So the League of North American Indians was, in a sense, part of the push and motivation for getting the claims cases

started. So, that's why Roy and Earl were interested in it.

So, then what did Roy do? Roy got Earl to bring before the tribal council the idea that the Washoe should have a chapter, be members of the League of North American Indians. Well, as I have in my notes, and I won't mention names, there was a disagreement.

Some of the council said, "No, we don't want to be messing around with any of those foreign Indians," you know. [laughter] "They're not going to do us any good."

But Earl managed to be persuasive enough so that the majority of the council finally agreed. Well, I understand that the council was whoever happened to be there that day, and on that day, quorum or no quorum, the council accepted the Washoe having a chapter of the League.

Well, that was a great victory, because the League was also friendly to the Native American Church, the peyotist movement. So, this was a real in-road. But that was one for the opposition. "Boy, that League is probably a bunch of those peyote-eaters."

And they answered, "No, no. These are people who are going to help us get some kind of a claim going here and get our lawyer off his duff to do something." They were complaining about Wright not building a case.

*Yes, because actually, the claims case had already been initiated, right?*

Yes, back in 1948 or 1949. Well, even before that, Roy James had gone to see George Wright in Elko at the advice of some Shoshone Indian he knew. And Wright had agreed to do something about it, but I'm not sure . . . I think it was not until the late 1940s, early 1950s that Wright was actually taken on as their lawyer.

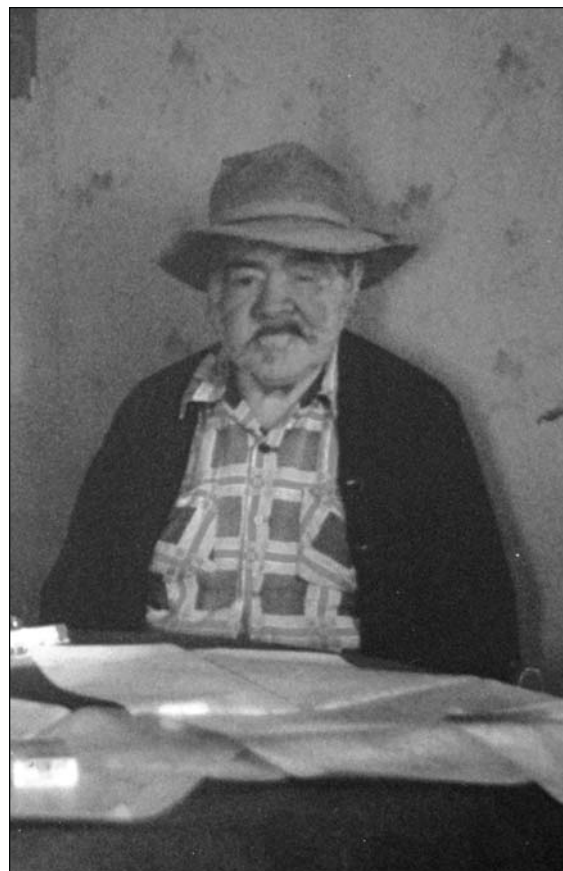
But Wright had already begun. When I saw the lawyers for the California case when I was down at Berkeley during that same period, they didn't even know the Washoe had entered a case until they checked their records and saw that Wright had entered the case.

So they were not really that united in their operation. Anyway, the Jameses saw this, the League, as a way to get Wright straightened out and busy on the case, and to get me involved and I was. I remember writing lots of letters for them to various places to get information and going to libraries and going to the county and state offices in Carson City to get material on Pine Nut [Mountain allotment] lands and territory.

Nevertheless, that activity at that time was with the Woodfords peyotists—Ronald, Roy's son, being the secretary for the council, and Donald Wade was on the council, all people from up in Fredericksburg and Woodfords and that area and Markleeville. Leonard Moore was on the council, too. I had forgotten that. It created a whole new base. In fact, it made it possible for me, without feeling uncomfortable, to work with people in Dresslerville. That's when I began to see Hank Pete and others down there who were sort of old-time people.

*Oh, I see. Sure. Because as that group gained credibility, you could . . . .*

Yes, the group that Freed had worked with began to see me as somehow Washoe-oriented rather than Woodfords-oriented. So it was under *those* conditions that I began to seriously work on the territorial boundaries, the distribution of the Washoe historically and currently. I did a lot of work in archives and the literature, finding out where the Washoe had been and finding out how little



*"That's when I began to see Hank Pete and others down there who were sort of old-time people."* Hank Pete, 1955.

the [Indian] agency knew about the distribution of the Washoe in the whole northern area and southern area of the Washoe.

And one thing that I did that summer . . . . Well, [to Kathy d'Azevedo] you were there when I held those meetings on territory in Carson Valley and in Reno with Earl James who was quite a guy. Earl really was an organizer. And, you know, we'd worked out that we should invite a lot of the old timers from the south, the *hángaletti?* and the *pá·wa?lu?*, the valley Washoe, to a meeting to talk about the territorial boundaries. And we'd tape it.

I still have the tapes of those meetings. They're wonderful, and I've had them transcribed.

And this came out of a lot of disagreement of seeing Omer Stewart's line, as they called it, and the line that George Wright was developing, that had taken land away from the Washoe, and it was all wrong. They were being imposed upon, and they were very angry about it. Something had to be done; land was being taken away from them again!

In fact, this was all like a physicist talking about space and time, because the Washoe territory was a very ambiguous entity. However, there was an awful lot of material that had not been entered into the record, and that Omer, for his own reasons, was ignoring because he was also on the Northern Paiute case. And the California case had already given a lot of land over the crest of the Sierras to the Miwok and Maidu, et cetera.

Omer was seen as extending as far as he could the Northern Paiute claims up through the Pine Nut Hills when the Washoe were saying Virginia City had been their old stamping ground. And then Honey Lake and Antelope Valley: "Look, they've taken all that away from us." You know, all good beefs. These were important things that should have been taken more seriously in the claims case negotiations.

So, I got very busy on this and called a fairly large meeting in Carson Colony. I forget whose house it was. No, no, in Reno; the first one was in Reno, on the northern Washoe, at Connie Hunter's house in the Reno-Sparks community.

Connie Hunter is the only one that had a house—he's the father of the present BIA director, Robert Hunter. And, oh gosh, about forty, fifty people turned up and just filled this little house. And for about three or four hours, we recorded the comments of a lot of these people about where they had been,

where their people had told them the Washoe had lived and made use of land.

They pretty well established that, in their view, their lands included all southern Honey Lake, all of Sierra Valley and even beyond the crest of the Sierra over into the Portola area where the Maidu were—intermixed with the Maidu. And that, yes, there had been joint-use lands in western Sierra Valley and certainly in Honey Lake valley, but Long Valley was all Washoe, and Antelope Valley, certainly. Yes, the Paiutes were there at that time, but also the Washoe had established long-term residence in the area, and even in Little Antelope Valley to the west, that was all Washoe. Their view was that the Washoe could and should claim not only all of Tahoe, but lands, as Barrett had shown in his map, all the way down to Placerville and down to Auburn where they had gone regularly. The Miwok accepted the fact that that was Washoe gathering territory, all the way down there.

So, you notice that the map that I put in the handbook [d'Azevedo 1986] had that little jag down there into California, which Omer had left off in the claims case. And I could see Omer's position. He just wanted to settle the damn thing for the Washoe, even if they had to compromise and all that sort of thing. There were too many other cases going on, and who are the Washoe anyway to be pushing all the other tribes that had already established their boundaries?

Well, at that time, I agreed that the Washoe should push, and so we had a meeting in Reno at Hunter's house. I have that transcribed, and oh, there's a lot of stuff that is useful.

*What was the role or the position of the BIA in all of this?*

The same as it is today—[laughter] helpful at times, but most of the time, there was nothing. They didn't expect anything out of the BIA.

*Did they have information that was of any value? I mean, had they kept records and archives?*

I have some letters that I wrote to Burton Ladd and a couple of the earlier [officials] asking them for information, and they're telling me that it would take too long to go through all the records.

*I was just trying to get whether there was any kind of mandate, expressed or otherwise, within the government to have the BIA participate in helping the Indians settle the lands claim case.*

I'm sorry there, Penny.

*It's all right. We were talking about how unhelpful . . .*

No. Well, I don't even want to say unhelpful. It was that they really were not very effective.

*And they were non-players, almost, right?*

Mostly non-players, and their role wasn't really to help in the land claims case. They really dealt with basic problems like organizing or keeping records of the use of the tribal lands or the Pine Nut lands for sheep grazing; anything that the federal government had to do with the area had to go through them. They would organize the stipends that went to certain families and all that and some of the health centers and other problems. I might be being unfair, but I just don't recall a great deal of input, nor that the Washoe

had any particular expectations of help from the BIA.

There was always tension about the BIA, and I don't know how much of it was warranted or not. I have opinions about it, but I wouldn't want to back them up right now. Anyway, it was in that period that we did what I considered a major work on territory.

*Were there records that you could access through the BIA on territorial claims?*

Oh yes. There was a lot of material there. Some of it had been destroyed. The wonderful old records of the allotments, which were done on . . . . What were they on? There were some old allotment records that were signed by finger and hand [prints], crosses and things like that, which I think they burned, they threw out. But there were some typed records of those. There were maps of the Pine Nut allotments. There were also a lot of birth and death records, a lot of good stuff. But once it was done, it was just sort of filed away in the background. Nobody knew much about it. And I tried going through some of it. It was just too confusing. I didn't know how to do it. They had all these boxes stowed in back rooms. I understand it's not so different today. But now when you go to get some of those records, it's all been sent down to San Bruno.

And I imagine there's a lot of stuff there. I've gone down for a couple of other specific things, but there's a lot of material there that would really be worth going through. Oh, they even have records of railroad travel by the Washoe, the free chits that they . . . .

*Really!*

Well, the railroad companies sometimes gave free trips, for a while. And there were

records of that, you know, the little slips that said that so-and-so should be allowed to go from Reno to Sacramento and all that kind of thing. All kinds of odd and wonderful things as well as agents' reports, things of that sort.

But as I said, it wasn't easily accessible. There was one very nice guy, Burton Ladd, that we got to know rather well. He was a kind man, very well-meaning, but he was totally swamped by the situation. And he would just sort of throw up his arms and say, "Well, what can I tell you? We don't know where anything is," and that sort of thing. And also, a lot of reluctance to let people mess around with their files, you know. But he wasn't [that way]. He would have done it if he could have, and he was very friendly to the Washoe, but there really wasn't much they did or could do.

All right, so then we had the Reno meeting, which was very productive. As I said, there was a lot of stuff that wasn't useful, but there was, here and there, names of places and incidents where Washoe had lived in areas that they considered theirs and families considered their homeland.

*Were you doing any place-name collecting at this point?*

Oh, yes. I was doing that too, sure. That was part of it, getting names for these places, and to what degree they were able to give them. A lot of my place-name list, that manuscript [1956], came from these meetings.

And then we held another meeting down in Woodfords. Was it at Woodfords? Oh, I guess it was at Dresslerville, in the Dresslerville meeting hall. And that was crowded and full of people with southern Washoe [connections], people from

Woodfords, from Antelope Valley, from the *pá·wa?lu?*, the valley areas. And that went on for, gosh, a whole evening till eleven or twelve o'clock. And it was a very long session and a lot of stuff.

*So, people were really involved.*

Well, people were very interested in this, that they could do something, they could say something. And not everybody had anything to say, but they wanted to hear what others had to say, you know.

*So, was your role as moderator for this?*

No, Earl moderated.

*And how visible were you in this process?*

I was always introduced, and people knew who I was. I was always introduced by Earl as the guy who was helping on the land claims case, the guy who was helping get this territorial matter settled. Everybody knew that. And it was my recorder, you know, and I was making the tapes and all that sort of thing. But no, that was all.

*But the meetings themselves were run as council meetings?*

As an action of the council, by Earl James as the chairman there.

*So, it would be open as a . . . .*

To anybody.

*Yes. But I'm just trying to get a feel for the process of the meeting, how it was organized and if there was an agenda.*

Organized as a public discussion meeting. The problem was laid out.

*Right. By Earl?*

By Earl. He asked me to say a few words and one or two others to say a few words. And then anybody could come up, and if you've got anything to say about territory, where the boundaries are, where the Washoe were . . . . Oh yes, there was a big map that I had brought.

We had an enormous map, and we had the various lines that had been drawn—in fact, I think I have a copy of that. The copy that I gave to the tribe is gone, [laughter] of course. All the lines [were drawn in] in different colors of the various scholars for the various issues that had faced the Washoe. Well, there are about ten or fifteen different lines, in fact it's a beautiful picture, actually. And, you know, we explained, "This is what has been said. We think it's like this."

And we had drawn, myself and a group, a tentative line of the full Washoe 9,000 square miles of territory. And, we asked, "What do you think?" And many people got up and made points about what was wrong with the lines and where the Washoe had been.

So, I was really now deep in land territory and distribution, Washoe distribution, and also the ethnohistorical aspects of changing attitudes about land and all that. So, I had this now, I had this tentative map of what had come out of these meetings in relationship to the earlier lines and the claims lines as they had been set by Stewart. And there was a lot of contention when George Wright came out and had two barbecue meetings with the Washoe, and asked them what they thought about territory. [laughter]

Their view was he had completely ignored them and did his own line that had nothing to do with what they had said. Well, of course, I talked to Wright, and he said that was Tommy-rot. He had heard that, and it was agreed upon at the barbecue. Well, it may have been, but it wasn't what people finally wanted, and he hadn't that much connection with them. So, their view was he had imposed it on them.

So, when I was down at Berkeley after that particular trip sometime in August, I guess, I went up to the department to see Kroeber and Heizer. And I saw Heizer. Heizer was very nice, and I got along well with him. Some people didn't.

In fact, when I saw him this time, he said, "Well, you've got to see Al—Al Kroeber—about this. You've got to go see him, and you've got to take this material to him." He says, "I can't really tell you about the meaning here except it's important that they know about what the Washoe think about this. And the Washoe have been pretty well ignored in the whole case, as far as I can see."

And, of course, Heizer was the one who had said to myself and a student of mine there was no use working among the Washoe, there were none left! [laughter] But anyway, I had made an appointment to go see Kroeber at his home on Arch Street, a beautiful old Maybeck house up on the hill, an old shingled house, where he and Nora had lived.

And so I made an appointment. I went up there, but he obviously had totally forgotten about it.

It was a beautiful old house with a side that had a veranda and a little rock garden near the entrance of the house and a picnic table in a kind of a gazebo. And so I sat there, and somebody came to the door. He had a big party or gathering going on . . . inside the house—some friends were over.

So I just said, "I'm d'Azevedo, I didn't know he was having a party. I just want to talk to Kroeber."

"Oh, really? Really? Well, gee, he's pretty busy right now. I'll go up and tell him. I'll go up and tell him." I had my arms full of maps and a couple of reports and books. You know, typical graduate student. I just waited a few minutes and here comes the old man down the stairs. He comes up to me and says, "Well now, what can I do for you? What's this all about? What's this all about?"

And I said, "Well, I've been working with the Washoe, as you know, and I have some material which Bob Heizer said . . . Dr. Heizer said this might be of interest to you, too, because you're working on the case."

"You know, I got no time for that. I really don't. You can see I've got people here and all that." He said, "What do you have there under your arm?"

I said, "I've got some maps." And he stopped. [laughter] I'll never forget that. He stopped—this little guy, little old man with this white beard—and he said, "Well, I haven't got any time for books, I haven't got any time for manuscripts, I've got no time for talk, but I do have time for maps." [laughter] "Lay them out!"

And so, we laid out the maps. For an hour and a half, he kept his guests waiting while he pored over my maps, you know. And I was pretty well informed and versed at that time on the topography of the area and the Washoe view and also the literature of the surrounding groups. And he was terribly curious. He wanted to know about every damn little stream and valley and things like that.

And it was obviously different from what they were doing in the California case and had already done. And the Northern Paiute case hadn't been developed yet, and he says,

"Now, this is very important." He said, "You should go now, and you should work this up into a map and give it to Omer and give it to this man Wright, George Wright. And I want to see it, too."

I did that, by the way. I sent rough copies to these guys. But he said, "You know," he says, "the other cases are pretty well far along now. It'd be very hard to backtrack. The Washoe may be just out of luck on some of these things."

And I says, "Well, maybe they are, but they want to know what the facts are." I remember, I said, "You know, that may be the case, but they want to know what their territory really was, really is."

And he stopped and I remember him looking at me, he says, "Well, you've got me there." He says, "It's true. We get into this business here, we start pushing for solutions, pushing for ending the thing and getting some kind of arrangement and map and settling it with the government." He says, "You're right. These people have a right to know where they actually were." He says, "Fine. Keep it up."

I'll never forget that. It was a wonderful little session I had with him then. And then he went toddling off and he says, "Keep in touch. Keep in touch," as he went up the stairs. "Keep in touch."

What I had really gone there for, I wanted his support in doing something about this case. But he wasn't going to give me that, because he was too involved politically himself. But he was encouraging.

*And he also recognized the difference between the political solutions and the historic reality.*

Yes, the pragmatic solutions that were going to be taking place in terms of the suits against the government and compensations



on the one hand, and the difficulty of getting *anything* at that time, and the fact that people had a right to know what the facts really were. [laughter]

*Well, but that's wonderful when you said that, that regardless of the political end of it these people want to know where they were. [laughter]*

Regardless of the claims case people really want to know what their heritage was.

Anyway, so we went back up to Woodfords. That was during the summer, yes, because I still was planning to go back to Northwestern in the fall. We camped. That was one thing that was really pleasant; when we'd go up, we always stayed at the Crystal Springs Campground in Woodfords. It was a beautiful little campground just outside of Woodfords. Oh, sometimes we'd stay up at

the Sorensen's Resort, up at Hope Valley about ten miles up the river.

It was, in those days, a beautiful sort of untouched country. And Sorensen's Resort was a broken down old resort, very inexpensive. Now it's a very fancy place. I don't think we could afford to stay there. But in those days, these old broken down cabins you could get for about, I don't know, a dollar a day or something of that kind.

The kids loved it, because they could use a rowboat on the river. And down at the Crystal Springs Campground, we were within walking distance of Roy James's family cabin, and we could be visited by all of our Woodfords Washoe friends.

I remember one time—I don't know if I mentioned this, but Kathy's sister Shirley was with us and her daughter Christy. I was working with Roy in our camp, and we'd used the



The d'Azevedo camp at Crystal Springs Campground, Woodfords, California, in 1954.



*"The kids loved it, because they could use a rowboat on the river."* Anya at Crystal Springs Campground.

picnic table to put my recorder on while we talked.

And Roy loved it. He loved to come up to that camp, because it's actually on the spot where some of his family had once had their *gális d'ángal* ["winter house"], their early historical camp. It was a very extremely beautiful little area there. So, he'd enjoy it to come up there on warm summer afternoons in the mountains.

And I learned something about Washoe men under these conditions. He was extremely curious about the arrangement of our camp. [laughter] We had two tents. We had one tent where Kathy and I slept, and also when Shirley was there, which was only for a few days, we had a little sleeping bag for her, over on the side of this large tent. And then we had a tent for the kids.

*Was this one of those big canvas wall-tent things?*

I don't think it was that big. It was a fairly good sized tent and then a small sort of pup tent for the kids. And he kept looking. He was so distracted, I noticed it. He just kept looking around the camp, looking at how we cooked and, you know, our campfire and our pots and pans and things of that sort. But mainly, he was looking at the tents. And he said to me, "Where does Christy sleep?" That was my niece.

"With the kids," because Erik and Anya were there.

And, "Oh, oh, oh. Oh, that's nice. They must enjoy that. They get a good breeze." Then he asked the question he really wanted to. "Well, where does Shirley sleep?"

"Well, right now she's visiting with us, and she's sleeping in a sleeping bag in our tent, for the two or three days she's here."

"Oh, well, so if she comes up again, she'll sleep there too?" And I could feel that this was an intense matter for him, intensely important matter, because he kept at it. He'd come back to it during the day. Next time he came, "Did Shirley sleep well?" [laughter]

And I began to realize . . . later, it became clearer to me as I knew more about kinship and family relations, things of that kind, that sisters-in-law, of course, are possible future wives or even it's possible to have affairs with them on the side. It depends on what's going on. And sisters-in-law have great sexual connotation—the idea of sisters-in-law. And there was Roy, acting it all out for me with peaked interest.

And in fact, every time I'd come up from being away, he would say, "How is Shirley? How is she doing? Do you see Shirley much?" And he would go on and on, about Shirley.



*Left to right: Kathy d'Azevedo, Maisie James, and Kathy's sister, Shirley.*

Finally, it became a joke, because I began to laugh about it and say, "Hey, Roy, you know, she's Kathy's sister, and she's been married. She has a child. I have no particular interest in her."

"Well, she's a pretty woman. She's a nice looking woman." [laughter] "She has a fine daughter there."

"Yes, oh yes," I said, "That's true." And so, that went on almost . . . . In fact, as long as I knew Roy, he would bring up Shirley. That was one of the things he associates with first knowing us, was Shirley visiting us.

And, of course, I'd hear this from other Washoe men too, like, "Oh, Kathy's sister's up here," because Roy would spread the word around, you know. [laughter] So anyway, that, to me, was a very pleasant time, coming back up again to Woodfords and staying there for, I guess, a month or two before I went back to Northwestern.

*Well, that was one of the points that you made about the nature of your relationship with the Washoe that you knew at this time, this exchange and curiosity about your life, and certainly by being camped there they had the opportunity to ask.*

That's all through all my fieldwork, and I'm sure other anthropologists experience this, too. I don't know if all anthropologists are necessarily sensitive to that fact, that others are as interested in you as you are in them. I think I have known colleagues who put that aside, who haven't even recognized that, because their interest is in getting information, the one-way street. And I would say, you know, I have known . . . most anthropologists comment on that, that sometimes your work is diverted by people possibly pressing you for information about yourself and your own family.

You start talking about kinship, and it's not long before somebody's going to ask you, "Well, what about you, you know? Who's this person related to you? What's the name of your parents? And who are your wife's people, and what do they do?" and all that.

And you get it back and forth. Well, I used to respond to that. I always talked very freely.

*Well, in those years, there was an expectation in anthropology and fieldwork, though, that you would live among and be close enough to your "informants" that you had an opportunity for that kind of exchange. I mean, that's not true anymore.*

The old participant-observation thing? I don't know, because I think any fieldwork requires that.

Yes. *There's more immersion . . . .*

I don't know what you mean. Do you mean . . . ?

*Well, what I'm saying is that . . . .*

You're closer to it than I am. [laughter]

*Well, I'm asking if it's true that the expectation in doing anthropology was that you would be living in the community that you study and that there be this . . . ?*

That was considered preferable and ideal. That was participant-observation. You weren't always able to do it. And it didn't mean that you couldn't do the fieldwork unless you could. However, when you could, it was considered to be an optimal kind of situation. You were living among the people.

Those years that we spent going among the Washoe and living close with them, visiting, eating in their houses . . . . Oh, and families.

*Well, your children . . . .*

Now I knew some unmarried anthropologists or anthropologists without children who came up, and their experience was different. It was not their fault. It's just that they didn't have the same kind of interreactions going on. Now, I don't mean that to do good fieldwork you have to have that, because some of these people I'm thinking of did excellent work and were very good observers, but there's another level of awareness that takes place when you're a group among another people and you're a family.

I mean, the fact that we are constantly negotiating relations between our kids and other kids, and that in doing that, we were dealing with the adults of the family, learning an awful lot about expectations of child-rearing. And attitudes about children is something that I and Kathy learned; oh yes, that was one of the first things that I was aware of, how laid back and tolerant the Washoe were of their children. In fact, Kathy and I used to discuss this. Seldom did you ever see anybody hit a child. Now it happened, but it was always a scandal when it happened, and it created great enmities, and children always remembered that as something that a bad parent or bad adult did.

Because usually they would say, "You talk to the children. You talk to them." You didn't get angry at them, or you didn't call them names. In other words, you didn't violate the child's sense of identity and personhood.

A very important idea was that you didn't intrude upon the privacy of the child. Oh, I remember a couple of times bringing up gifts

when we'd come up, you know, for the various kids, and I always thought, "Well, I should give it to the parent." And I remember with the two or three special people that I knew, I said, "Here is something for Tommy," or, "Here is something for Butch."

And almost invariably, they'd say, "Well, give it to *him*," or, "Give it to *her*."

I mean, they're the child. "Would they like this?"

"Ask them! Ask."

And this is something that we picked up very personally, intimately, and began to feel this as we were dealing with people, that you never ask one person about what another person wanted or did. You asked that person.

The Washoe are very reticent about one another; no matter how deep the conflicts and squabbles were within a kin group or between kin groups, you never got people to talk openly about it. It was always by innuendo and indirection.

Now, I've noticed . . . well, then too, but more now, people do talk and gossip a lot. People will tell you stories about others in a way that never would have happened in those days when we first went up there. Now and then, but they were people considered to be a little strange anyway. You'd get a person who had something against another person who would tell you about it, but that was rare. Usually it was by innuendo.

"Well, I don't know. Ask so-and-so. They know about that. No, I don't know too much about that guy (or her), but, you know, you can ask so-and-so. Maybe they know." [laughter]

I won't mention his name, but there was one man there that I dealt with a great deal who was a very good consultant on peyotist ritual, was a leader. We'd visit him and his wife. But people would make little sly remarks

about them like, "Well, those people have a little trouble there. They've got some kind of trouble there."

Well, it turned out, I learned later, that they were close cousins, first cousins, and they had married. And there was this feeling that there was something wrong up there. And by the way, it was a good marriage, good relationship. They really loved each other. They were very tender with one another and intimate in ways that wasn't necessarily the Washoe way of expressing regard.

So it turned out that there was something a little wrong about their marriage, but nobody ever said what it was. "Well, you know, they got a little trouble up there. Yes, I don't know what it is. Ask them. Ask them."

So, all these little things you get, I think a lot of it comes from being a family among families.

*Well, the nuances of relationship and communication, I think you get a richer . . .*

Well, I don't like to stress that, because I know some individuals who have gone alone, you know, worked alone and gotten a great deal of material and were very observant and very sensitive to these things. All I'm saying, it makes it easier for some of us to learn these things under conditions where there is more than one person, where you are a family or you're with a wife or somebody else as a recognizable kin group. Things come out that might not ordinarily come out. You observe a wider range of behaviors. And in a way, for me, I learned a lot faster. I think I would have missed a lot of this.

Kathy was extremely observant. She knew a number of the Washoe women, and they liked her, she liked them, and I think women do more talking than men about personal things and establish an intimacy

quicker than men do with other men. It has to do with kids.

In fact, in both fieldwork areas—among the Washoe and with the Gola in Liberia—I noticed that Kathy had access to material that I would not have had, certainly without a great deal more understanding and dexterity than I had. But she was able to work with women and talk with women very freely and enjoy it. She enjoyed these relationships. And women talked more freely with her about their interests than they would ever have talked to me and probably even to their husbands. You know, there was this kind of female connection.

Now, we used to joke about that. Some colleague of mine, some fellow student of mine once, we used to joke about that women had no culture, that women transcend culture. [laughter] That anywhere in the world, women somehow are able to make connections. Because of children, child birth, domesticity, women are more open with women than men are with men. Men are all tied up with political concerns and status concerns and all that sort of thing, and it's a different kind of process, talking to men across cultures than women talking to women, or certainly men talking to women.

I mean, when I would talk to a Washoe woman or even a Gola woman, I just knew that there were vast areas of expressiveness that were not coming across to me that I'd have to guess at. And I think many old time anthropologists just guessed about women, or they lumped them into the culture. [laughter] The men expressed the culture, and women were just the attendants. They were the extension of the male perspective.

Very few anthropologists, the old male anthropologists, wrote extensively about women in cultures. In the first place, because

it was difficult to do that, and in many cases, they extrapolated.

*Well, and even Ruth Benedict didn't write about women.*

Well, that was the era in which male informants, as they used to call them, consultants, were the ones you saw, because they were the dominant members of the culture, and therefore you went to them first, and you had to know them and talk to them even to have access to the women, to their wives. And Benedict was brought up in that tradition. I don't recall. Did she do any work with women?

*I don't recall. I could be wrong, but . . . .*

She must have. Anyway, if what you say is true, it's quite understandable. That was the era in which that's the way you worked.

Anyway, this joke that we had somewhere—probably at Northwestern among the students—this joke that women had no culture. And we loved it. [laughter] Kathy and I would play around with it. If anything, if they have a culture, they transcend culture, they're multi-cultural.

*Well, it's funny, but it's also an intriguing observation, because the other side of that same coin is that women are also sometimes described as the culture bearers, because somehow they've been able to retain important attributes of their cultural identity in ways that men are not able to when they come in contact and in conflict with a dominant culture.*

Well, essentially, they reproduce culture out of the relationship they have with their children, which, by the way, in many cul-

tures, at least the two I worked in, men note that. And there is a kind of . . . I won't say competition or not a jealousy but sometimes a resentment about women's intimacy with children and their role in instilling ideas.

Well, among the Gola, this was very real. I mean, you dragged the male child away from his mother at the age of six or seven and put him in the secret association to get him *away* from women and the mothers, because otherwise, they wouldn't become men. They would be too feminized. To make men out of them, you had to drag them away from their mothers.

Also, the women were untrustworthy. The women were much more interested in maintaining relationships with their own families than with their husband's families, that women were not loyal to. Among the Washoe that wasn't such a problem, because they were not patrilineal, and there was a much more open relationship between affines in families, and the sources of friction were something else other than competition among families. But in many societies, the idea was that women overwhelmed their children, their male children in particular, and that they must be removed from them in order for men to have a chance to deal with them and set them straight.

Then there is the problem of men anthropologists talking to women in cultures. You can do it if you know how. I remember two or three times in all my fieldwork where I had that kind of direct connection with a woman.

Once in Africa an older woman, related to my interpreter and close associate, talked freely with me about very, very arcane, obscure elements of secret associations of women's societies in a way that I even didn't get from some of the men. She was extremely open with me, because I think she was a

woman of power. She was a woman who was older and felt she was beyond all these little restrictions that went with being most women. And that's one of the few times I can remember having that kind of information flow between myself and a woman consultant in a culture that I was working in.

With the Washoe, I had this experience only once or twice. In one case, a very old woman was extremely cautious with me but nevertheless was willing to discuss these things and herself and discuss women. And in another case, a younger woman who was something of a dissident, a rebellious young woman who had some western education and was a little irritated by having to live under the conditions she did within the reservation community. And out of a kind of pique, she would say all kinds of things about women and their role and their relationships with men. And it was only those rare occasions.

Kathy would get this all the time. Kathy was able to just absorb enormous amounts of the reality of relationships through women.

Men don't talk about these things easily, and even rarely with men did you get much discussion of sexuality. You would have done that on a joking level and on the level of bravado, bragging about exploits and things of that kind. But in terms of what really goes on between men and women and their relationships, there was quite a bit of restriction or reticence, as I can recall, except with a very few, and those are, of course, your key consultants, the ones who *will* talk about these things or who are able to.

Then you wonder, as all anthropologists, I'm sure, in the past have: are those people, in a sense, typical? Do they represent the general view, or have you got some aberrant kinds of persons who are unusual, who are not representative? On the other hand, they are

members of the culture, so it's important what they have, but you have to get a wide range of people and mainly note the reticence of the majority.

You have to ask, "Are they being reticent with me because I'm an outsider?" But you usually find that people are less restrictive to outsiders than they are to insiders. [laughter] Nevertheless, are they giving you information in a different way because you're an outsider, or is this the way they think among themselves?

All those questions that occur to you are problems of analysis, problems of wondering what you got. You also have to trust your insights to a considerable degree. Do you feel strongly that this is the way it is? Anyway, all this was going on that first year or two when we were working with the Washoe.

And our kids were a great help—not purposely, they just were. Their relationships with Washoe kids were wonderful. They would run all over that Woodfords area with a gang of five or six boys that Erik ran around with and some girls. They were at the age when girls and boys did sort of play together and run around together. And there were two or three families that we knew with a lot of kids, and our kids fit right in, and they had a marvelous time.

I felt good about that, because I think they enjoyed . . . they still do. They look back on that period in their lives with great warmth.

On the other hand, that wonderfully real thing takes place with adolescence as people get older—they drift apart in their cultural differences. They had these very close friends who they wrote to back and forth for a while when they were six, seven, eight years of age, and then as they got in their teens, they stopped. There wasn't that kind of connection anymore—not because they had any bad

feeling about it, but it was strangeness. They were no longer able to fit the other world into the world that they were living in.

And, in fact, from the Washoe side, the Washoe young people that I knew then and our kids knew were more interested in having connections with Anya and Erik than Anya and Erik were with them. In a way, our kids, as they grew older, I think felt a little embarrassed that they didn't have continuous relations with them, that they went off and did other things, they were living a different life. And I think it was a kind of embarrassment of change. Whereas they had been sort of on an equal level at one time, there was now a difference in lifestyle, a difference in income, a difference in goals, all that sort of thing.

*But the basis for that relationship would have been less innocent coming from Anya and Erik. I mean, they were less innocent of the very real differences, perhaps. I don't know.*

You mean, they were innocent of . . . ?

*I mean, they were more aware of the gap.*

As they grew older.

*Yes, than perhaps the Washoe children were.*

At the ages when we were living there, both groups accepted one another fully. I mean, that's what kids do. It's a marvelous thing to see. It's kind of beautiful. Mutual identity, you know—they identify with one another.

And I think I mentioned that Erik and Anya would go to girl's [puberty] dances, not often, but now and then, and stay up all night. They were half asleep when they would go to school. And I don't know who had told



me—Kathy doesn't remember this, but maybe it was Anya who told me—that the teachers would say, "Oh, you're staying up with those Indian kids, and you're sleeping just like them, and you're not going to learn anything."

I'm not sure who told me that. Kathy doesn't remember this. She denies it happened, but I know it happened. [laughter]

But, you know, there was this identity. And then as you grow older, doing different things and not living close together, they grow apart. And then there is a difficulty and kind of a resistance because of problematic connection rather than a pleasurable one.

So, anyway, all right. When I got back, the tribal council had now become dominated, as I think I've mentioned before by Woodfords people. And my friend Earl James who was the chairman of the tribal council had taken over from somebody who represented a very important old family that had had the chairmanship since its inception back to 1935. That family represented, really, the valley people in Dresslerville, and there were some scandals, the usual scandal that takes place in tribal councils about money. And he was deposed, and they elected Earl James from Woodfords.

Well, within, of course, a few months, there were three or four major peyotists on the tribal council, and then for a period of two, three, or four elections, this was the case. There was this interesting period where the Woodfords people dominated the tribal council, partly because they were the ones that were pushing the claim.

They were much more politically involved in the claims case than many of the people down in Dresslerville who sort of let the lawyer carry the day. They were always

complaining about the lawyer, [George] Wright, and yet at the same time didn't do anything about it, whereas the Woodfords group had organized.

They had a Woodfords council, and they were writing letters. And they were using me as a kind of clerk to write their letters and search for information and all that sort of thing. They were always asking me to bring stuff up [from Berkeley] from the libraries on the Washoe case and things of that kind and to write to the lawyer asking why he wasn't doing anything and demanding larger . . . you know, his territorial line was much too restrictive, and they had more land, and the usual complaints. I mean, it was one constant grouching about the claims case, which I think there was good reason to do, but I found myself very much involved in this. [laughter]

During this period, that's when Earl James initiated me, in a sense, into the League of North American Indians. And Tom Pisau, who was the secretary of the League of North American Indians in Chicago at that time, wrote me a long letter saying that Earl James of the Washoe Tribe had now appointed me as an honorary member of the Washoe Tribe. Therefore, I was a member of the League of the North American Indians, and he welcomed me to that, et cetera, et cetera. At the same time, I was very proud of that. I enjoyed it immensely. I still have that card. I never show it, because I'm sure the modern Washoe would say, "What crazy kind of thing is this? You ain't no member of the Washoe."

Well, maybe not. Maybe they would view it as a kind of symbolic gesture of good will. [laughter] Nevertheless, Earl made me an honorary member of the Washoe tribe in 1954, 1955.



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 THE PEYOTIST MOVEMENT
 

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**A**T THE SAME time that I was working with the Washoe on the territorial issue, I was writing people like Slotkin in Chicago about the Native American Church, in which Slotkin, as an anthropologist, had become an activist. I don't know too much about him, excepting he was considered by the Indian people that I knew to be one of those few white men who understood what was going on.

*Now, had he been out in Washoe country, or was he just a member of the church?*

No. He was a member of the church in the East, in Illinois, Indiana, in that area. I forget what tribes. There were sort of a key group of tribes that were involved in the Native American Church and its origin, as a political organization as well as a religious organization.

*And they were influential in the League of American Indians?*

They were connected. I don't know exactly what the relationship was, but they

knew each other. And Slotkin was admired as a very unusual white man, and here he was an anthropologist.

*Was he a student or a professor at Chicago?*

He taught. He was in the department of social science. His area of interest was psychological anthropology, I think. I have to get more information on that. I just had these brief contacts with him through correspondence, and they were always very polite.

He invited me to come and see him in Chicago, which I did. Later on in the next year, I went and visited him and had a very pleasant, strange few hours with him in his office. And I felt, "Here's a guy who'd really become a peyotist."

I think he was probably a believer. Unlike Omer Stewart, who was a great respecter of peyotism and participant, but I don't think Omer was a believer in that sense. I think Slotkin was.

He wasn't a very enthusiastic person. He was kind of a quiet person, and I felt he was a little critical of me, because I was probing. Did I really mean it? I'd gone to meetings and

all that, and did I really understand how important this was to the people I was working with? I tried to assure him I really did, and that's why I was interested.

But there was this little tension about somehow or other I was one of those people, one of those investigators and searchers for data rather than really feeling the issue, which isn't quite true, because I think I did. I did understand that. One of the reasons why I didn't go in deeper was I didn't want to be dishonest about becoming a member, a part of the movement.

*Well, that's one thing, actually, that I was going to ask you. There is this sense—and it's not anything anyone's told me, it's maybe just an opinion I have—but you have a great deal more material that you could have written about, had you chosen, as “an anthropologist” about the Native American Church, but you chose to be a little more reticent about that topic.*

Oh, that's very complimentary of you, Penny, but I have to disagree to be honest.

*You don't think . . . ?*

No, part of this, just sheer laziness. [laughter] No, I have lots of stuff that I haven't published, Penny, and it isn't necessarily that I . . . . No, there are very few things that I have that I feel would not be proper to publish, some of my African material, but not enough to give me a rationalization for not having published more. No, much of it is that I just have not published it.

*Your honesty is admirable. [laughter]*

I haven't written it up, and that bothers me a lot sometimes. I have a lot of material I haven't written up, or that I partly wrote up.

For example, that article on song that I wrote up with Alan Merriam about the differences in the Washoe peyotist area.<sup>1</sup> But I have a mass of material on the differences in terms just of the ritual and the paraphernalia of these different groups and their history, what they relate their belief system to.

I don't think I would have published that then, but I certainly could have since, when I had more distance from the situation and the people that I had worked with had become more open than they were when I first worked with them. Even when I wrote about the songs and published those songs through Moe Asch at Folkways Records, there was some disagreement about the fact that I had done that. Even that, so some of that material would not have been appropriate for me to write about and publish then. However, I certainly could have done it later, and I just haven't done it—masses of my fieldwork material that I haven't done, Penny. I can't rationalize it as an ethical matter.

*But at the time, it was?*

At the time, I was not only careful, I felt respect for the feelings of the people I worked with. I was so close to them, I knew how they would react.

*Because Straight With The Medicine<sup>2</sup> is really a poetic . . . . I mean, it's a very anonymous work in terms of your role as an anthropologist, don't you think?*

Maybe. I don't know. Kind of thing that Radin would have done. And also you notice that not a name is mentioned in the whole thing, which from the point of view of anthropological research is a problem for some people who ask me, “Would you please tell me who those people are?”

In fact, when Jim Downs was in the field doing his fieldwork, he wrote to me. I have a letter in which he said, “Hey, I read that article you did on the songs.” And he says, “You know, these wonderful quotes from these people, would you tell me who they are so I can go work with them?”

And that’s exactly what I didn’t want to happen. I didn’t want somebody going and saying, “Look, I understand you’re the guy who said this.”

*In Straight with the Medicine, and the people whose voices are represented there . . .*

They’re the same people. They’re the same people.

*. . . did they have copies of the book and like it?*

Yes. Well, you don’t get from the Washoe people of the time that I was working there, much positive statement about anything that you do. I mean, people don’t praise one another. If they like something, you have to listen very carefully to all the innuendos. Like, “Well, that’s not bad. There’s nothing bad there.” You know, something like that might be a great compliment.

No, I have given that out to certain friends that I had. Later, I have done this, and I know that it was passed around and read avidly, but they don’t have much to tell me about it. “Oh, that’s OK, Warren. Yes, it’s OK. Yes, yes, you did your best. Yes.” [laughter]

You know, you’ve heard that. Very seldom any direct compliment, like, “That was a good thing to do,” except once.

One old guy was in the hospital, and I went to see him, and I said, “I hope you didn’t mind the way I told your story.”

“Eh,” he says, “no, that was good. That was good, Warren. Thank you, Warren. Thank you, Warren.” That’s the only time I ever remember being thanked for something that I did like that from anybody. [laughter] Among the Washoe, you don’t do that.

I don’t fully understand that kind of reticence, whether it’s negativity or just a matter of good form or style. I don’t really get it, the holding back of praise.

Except in peyote meetings, there was the anomaly. During prayers and during the height of the peyote session, there’s a lot of thank you, good will, “That’s good, fine, you did well, that’s a good thing,” during the meetings. It’s part of the curing idea, the idea of doing away with bad feeling.

See, I think there is a lot of bad feeling among groups like this, a lot of resentments, deep unexpressed hostilities that used to be worked out through shamanism or through all sorts of magical procedures, things of that kind, or going away, getting away from the group. But, you know, these small damned post-reservation communities are awful places for people like this who once were in an open, spread out space—being crowded together where at one time you put your cabin or your *gális dāngal* [winter house] far enough from other families so that they wouldn’t hear you. It was very important that people don’t gossip and talk about you and what’s going on, and here they are within ten feet of each other, crowded all along a little strip of land.

It’s very hard, and a lot of hostility, I think, develops under those conditions. And yet, I don’t think that’s the whole story. There’s also a kind of a protocol about praise. Because praise . . . if you talk too much about the good things, it’s going to bring something bad; it’s going to bring its opposite. You don’t do that. You just let it go. You let it go.

But that one time, I remember I was very pleased. "Hey, Warren, that was good. Thank you, thank you. That was good." Only time I heard anything like that from anybody. [laughter] Usually if you press, "That's all right. Yes, it was all right. Yes, yes, OK. It's all right."

So, the kind of material I had, I was interested in the history of the movement in this area and the conflict between the valley people and the mountain people and the early Ben Lancaster groups and the other groups. And by the way, Omer Stewart had preceded me, of course, in that. He had done quite a bit of work on . . . . In fact, the two or three boxes of field materials that he turned over to me and that I had put in Special Collections of his interviews with peyotists back in the 1930s are wonderful material. There's so much there that has not been utilized.

I went through and checked on people that I knew in reference to the kind of material I was getting from them after Stewart had worked with them, and Stewart's material is so rich. He was a very good interviewer; he got a lot of material.

However, I don't think he knew what to do with it. I don't think he made full use of it, because that little work, that monograph he did on Washoe-Paiute peyotism [Stewart 1944] was very superficial as against this marvelous background material that he had gotten, much more in-depth and detailed interviews than I ever got. It took a great deal of patience, and he did this without recording, and he did this by hand, you know, without a tape recorder.

Anyway, I started with a list of peyotists that he had gotten, two hundred or some peyotists. I checked out who was still active, who was inactive, what their relationship with the movement was. I did a lot of this kind of change material, this transitional

material, which is very important. I haven't done anything with it, but it's very useful, the changes in ritual and why. People's views about why fans were used under what circumstances, what kinds of feathers were used, what the scheduling of the ritual in the tepee was, how that changed, and how significant and meaningful it was to change one way as against another, and how this created the differences between the three groups. And the kinds of proselytizers that each of the leaders here among the Washoe had had from other tribes, particularly two or three men up in Fort Hall and Owyhee in the north, and then a number of very important leaders in Oklahoma who had influenced some of the Washoe who had become leaders in this area, like Ben Lancaster who had been to Oklahoma. These connections made a big difference in ritual and identity of the group, but there was more that I was interested in.

Omer Stewart and Edgar Siskin had quite different views about how peyotism had started in this area and why. Omer's view was that it was the matter of the personality of certain key figures who had come into the area, like Ben Lancaster, and before him, there had been two or three—Okio and a number of others who had been through here, who, because of certain attributes of their personalities, had been influential and attracted people. Omer's theory was that this was the basis of the movement starting in this area.

Siskin had quite a different view, and I happen to think that it was more like what really happened. He saw it as a matter of the sociopolitical situation in the area at the time, the economic conditions of the Washoe and the Paiute people at a given time, and aboriginal tradition. Siskin put a lot of weight on the decline of shamanism in the 1930s and the rebellion against shamanism, led

partly by white missionaries and officials. The Washoe not only opposed shamanism for those reasons, but because of the power that shamans had financially—that they'd actually begun to charge such exorbitant fees that they were in some cases bankrupting families. And people were afraid of them, terribly afraid of them.

Siskin, I think, makes a very good case that, at that particular moment, peyotism and Lancaster happened to have come, but it could have been anybody else. Peyotism was the answer to this and offered a way to remove yourself from the power of the shamans by denying their power or refusing to accept their power, by latching onto another orientation to a spiritual world. Partly Christian, except the Washoe never really developed the Christian symbolism that was imbedded in the early peyotist movement with Jesus Christ as one of the major figures along with the Earth and along with peyote. Like that wonderful story about the sacrament, at the last supper, that the bread was really peyote Jesus was passing around.

But that wasn't really a very important part of the Washoe tradition. The Washoe tradition was really that the herb itself was a power that could release you from any obligations or from any fear of other powers. And I think Siskin made a good point of this, and I think that's true. Peyotism came at the right time; the political and economic situation was just right.

Now as against the Ghost Dance, back at the turn of the century and before. Cora Du Bois (1939) worked on the Ghost Dance, and La Barre (1938; 1947; 1960) also did some work. But you know, Cora Du Bois's claimed that the Washoe were coming to Ghost Dance ceremonies in the northern part of their territory where Wovoka and some of his neophytes were holding meetings. Yet

every old Washoe I ever talked to would discount that saying, "Course. We're curious. Everybody would go. We'd go first of all because there was food." [laughter] "Washoe are always standing there in the chow line," they would say. You know, "Oh, sure, we were there. It was interesting, a guy dancing. We always thought it was kind of silly, kind of foolish."

So, I don't think the Ghost Dance hit the Washoe at the right time. In the early historical period the Washoe, bad off as they were, were identifying with whites at the Indian Agency and the Stewart Indian School. The so-called colony reservations were under a real dependency situation with the government. And the old people were getting a certain amount of stipends. And the whole orientation was to dress like whites and do as much like whites as possible. Nevertheless, there was a period in which they were sort of left alone, and many had jobs on the ranches and construction gangs.

There was a little money, and it probably was a better period than between, say, the First World War and the 1960s or 1970s before the end of the claims case, a period in which there was real poverty and real deprivation. Also, young people leaving and going away. Tribal organization was nil at the time of the Ghost Dance, and the Ghost Dance had been to the old Washoe that I talked to, in a sense, something to be ashamed to be a part of; the whites looked down on it.

By the way, the fact that white doctors and officials looked down on shamanism and on tribal ritual, things like the girls' dance and curing ceremonies, et cetera, had a lot to do with the reaction against the shamans. The peyotists then got the same thing. They were looked upon as purveyors of drugs and orgies and things. But the Washoe ignored the Ghost Dance in the same way they tried

to ignore the peyotists during the 1930s, except it *was* an important movement involving hundreds of Washoe and Paiutes, but only for a short period of time. Then there was a very successful campaign against it by Washoe leaders, ex-shamans, white doctors and officials, and in the late 1930s, when Siskin and Omer were doing their work, this was the period of the decline of peyotism.

So, the Washoe were not people who picked up in a revivalistic sense new religions. And I don't think peyotism among the Washoe was just a revivalist religion in the sense that Norbeck<sup>3</sup> would talk about it. It was much more a reaction to the things that whites were against, you see. Thinking that because peyotism was against alcohol, and because the word Jesus appears in some of the ritual now and then, and because they thought of living good lives, they were going to be admired.

But they weren't. They were attacked in the same way that the Ghost Dance was, as heathen, orgiastic, drug users, you see. So, it was very complex, and it certainly wasn't merely a matter of personalities, though Lancaster had a very powerful personality, and so did some of the other leaders.

*It also seemed a way to embrace part of the white world but still maintain an Indian identity.*

Right. That's exactly what later peyotists said. What they were doing was trying to improve the Indian condition. You know, alcoholism was a terrible problem. "Whites didn't like drunken Indians," you'd hear that. "Well, here, we're not drinking, and they still say we're hop-heads, we're smoking the peyote," and all that sort of thing.

And there was consternation among older peyotists that I knew. "We should be

admired for the fact that we're living good lives and our families are not a bunch of drunken, fighting bums like down there in the valley," particularly up in Woodfords where they lived the Indian way and all that. On the other hand, they also saw themselves as more civilized, that they were living a better lifestyle and all.

So, there was a kind of confusion about why there was so much reaction against peyotism. The Washoe are not political fighters. They don't deal that way. But Earl James who had spent a lot of his time away, out of Nevada down in California, and whose father had been sort of a leading Washoe figure up at Lake Tahoe, he came back to Washoe. And his brother Roy, who was a much more localized Washoe guy, had been a peyotist leader.

Earl's view was you got to put up a fight. And I remember he and I went before the legislature a few years later to call for legislation to allow peyote to be seen as a sacrament and be taken off the books as an illegal substance. Earl was one of the few guys who had a political orientation.

The earlier one was Richard Barrington up in Loyalton, who was a Washoe man who had come a long way. He ran a lumber mill up there, and he was the sort of Washoe who was always referred to as, "This is what the Washoe can do, you know, if they get some education and they work hard."

Earl saw himself in that mold as that kind of a leader. And I would say up until Bob Frank was elected in the 1970s and 1980s, that Earl was probably more of a Washoe political figure than anybody around him at the time who were so rural in their orientation, so localized and family-oriented that they were constantly squabbling about family matters, as people still do today. But a few emerge among them with a political con-



sciousness that allow them to organize a program.

*What effect did the peyotist movement have on the demise of the girls' dance and the pine nut dance?*

It didn't. The real break-up of the old traditional ceremonial life really began with whites. I mean, the BIA, that guy—Jenkins, I think his name was—in the 1920s who carried on a campaign against all Washoe ceremonial life as being heathen, as being dangerous, as keeping them from development, et cetera. There was a lot of propaganda throughout the region that came from official whites and the government in that period—this is before Collier and others—when this was considered aboriginal retrogression.

*So, there was nothing mutually exclusive about someone who embraced the peyote movement? They still would have girls' dances and . . .*

Yes, the peyotists thought the girls' dance was a very important thing and kept these traditions alive. They always held a girls' dance for their young women. This was one of the good things, good Indian things, the Indian way. It was for a good purpose, you see.

But any shamanism, oh, that was verboten! Shamanism was worse than drinking. Any magic, any working with powers . . .

*So the people that organized the pine nut dance, for instance, and sang the songs didn't have any affiliation with the shamans? I mean, I somehow thought that the shamans were active . . .*



*"Clara Frank led many pine nut dances."* Clara Frank in 1955.

In the old days, yes. Shamans were called in to make good medicine, and sometimes shamans might lead the prayers.

*So who would do that during this transition?*

Older people, the elders. Clara Frank led many pine nut dances for the few that were held in the 1940s and 1950s, and Hank Pete. Who were some of the others? Oh, Mike Holbrook once or twice.

*And now, these were just respected elders. They were not shamans?*

Respected elders who were considered to be good people who also had certain powers. There are different kinds of powers. There are good powers and the credentials for that was to have lived a good life and have a good family and people liked you and you were generous and a good person. Then you had good power. But any kind of working with old powers, the old shamanistic powers, the peyotists were not only opposed but looked upon it as a deep danger for the group. You just don't do it. They wouldn't even talk about it, the old powers. Oh, they would say about somebody, "He thinks he's a man of power." That would indicate, "This guy plays with shamanistic procedures, and he's dangerous."

Or even during some of the meetings and sessions I went to, somebody would pray in a certain way and bring up something that gave the impression they were calling upon powers other than the peyote. Oh, they didn't even like to talk about waterbabies. Well, they talk about waterbabies, but waterbaby power was something for shamans. You don't *play with that*. Yes, there are waterbabies, and they've got powers, but you don't manipulate this. It's the idea of manipulating the

powers or claiming to have them that is something that is against peyotism.

*So, you could make waterbaby power sort of benign or you just acknowledge it's there?*

Yes. Well, not really as benign. You acknowledge it's there and that you are respectful of it, but you don't play with it. You don't claim to be connected with those waterbabies.

Well, now and then . . . I knew one peyotist, it was said of him that he had lightning power. He had *wegeléyu*, and there was a little suspicion about him. In fact, he's in *Straight With The Medicine*. He's the one who claimed to have gotten his songs in the valley with the lightning coming down, and that was considered a little on the edge; you don't mention that.

So, to answer your question, the peyotists were not opposed to older traditional practices. The traditional practices that were for the community for the good of all, that were meant to respect nature, bring out harvests, increase the productivity of the environment, all those things, those old Washoe things were good. Old Washoe ways about the family and all those things are good, but powers, shamanism, witches, ghosts, all those things . . . .

*And doctors are in the same category?*

Yes, a person who would claim to be a doctor, who claims to have a power, a *wegeléyu* other than . . . . You could refer to the herb as the *wegeléyu*, as the power, but it's the only one. It is the single . . . it's a monotheism.

And you can toss Jesus in there too, if you want, [laughter] but the herb itself, peyote is the only one. It is *the one*. In fact, that's

said over and over again in the songs. It is the one. The herb is the one. That's it.

So, no, there was no conflict with the older traditions except shamanism. That was where the change was. The cultural reaction, the political reaction against shamanism made perfect soil for the development of peyotism.

So, those are the things I was interested in when I was there. I did a lot of work on those questions.

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#### Notes

1. Alan Merriam and Warren d'Azevedo, "Washo Peyote Songs," *American Anthropologist* 59 (1957): 615-641.
2. Warren d'Azevedo, *Straight With the Medicine* (Reno: Black Rock Press, 1978). This book was reprinted by Heydey Books of Berkeley in 1985.
3. Edward Norbeck, *Religion in Primitive Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961).



## THE CONFERENCE

AT THE END of that summer, of course, we headed back toward Northwestern. And I got a letter from Herskovits—in fact, I found it just the other day—saying, “You are cordially invited to attend the official university reception for the honorable William V. S. Tubman, President of the Republic of Liberia.” [laughter]

The one thing about Herskovits that I remember, he worked very assiduously on any of the programs of the students, particularly ones that were ready to go to field. And he would do this without even being asked. You’d find out in his seminars and in things that were going on and receptions that would take place at the department or at the Program of African Studies. There would be people that some of his students were going to be meeting when they went in the field. He was preparing this ground for them.

Well, sure enough, what does this old guy do? In fact, Herskovits had been through Liberia earlier, and he thought he knew all about it, but he’d only been there a few days. He had met Tubman. So, here he was, he

had invited Tubman, who was coming to the United States, to Northwestern. And I get this special invitation to meet the president Monday, October 25th. [laughter] And I get this before I leave for the east.

Well, this was a shock. In the first place, I was writing my dissertation proposal on the Gola at this time. And, already, it had been decided and approved by him. However, he was a little leery of my interests in the Gola because of the fact that I had talked about them as being this defiant, rebellious group in Liberia. Nobody had written about them, and I wanted to know more about them. He was very suspicious about my motives. He kept asking me why not some other kind of group and all that.

But anyway, so here the President of Liberia was going to be coming to Northwestern. Well, it turned out that the president didn’t come. He sent . . . not the ambassador. He probably sent, I think, the New York consul. A group came in his stead. I don’t know the reasons why he himself didn’t come. Something had changed in his sched-

ule, but I remember he wrote a long and very flowery letter to Herskovits, apologizing and all that.

But anyway, for two or three weeks, everything was focused when I got back to Northwestern on the coming visit. And there was a friend of mine, a Liberian, who was another of Herskovits's students. Augustus Caine, who was a Vai man, a very intelligent young guy who later wrote very interesting pieces on secret societies. He was from Vai country and connected with Zuki Kandakai and a number of other people I met later in the field.

So Augustus—"Gus"—and I were the key people for this reception. I thought, "Well, there should be some gift, something to give to these people." And Herskovits didn't know what to do. I said, "Well, why don't we give him this rare volume about Yehudi Ashmun, who established the first Liberian colony, representing the American Colonization Society?"

It was a very rare book at the time. I think it's available now in reprint, but then it was very hard to find.<sup>1</sup> And I got a copy out of the Northwestern library, a very bad photocopy of it. It was really very badly done. But I had it done on vellum, and Herskovits had some antelope hide, antelope leather, and so, we had this bound. [laughter] And that was our gift. It was good enough, you know, though when I come to think of that beautiful African leather over this badly photocopied book . . . [laughter]

And, of course, that was accepted by these people, and we met, and we were photographed and all that. Herskovits was very, very proud of the situation, that he actually had Liberian officials come to Northwestern, you know. And they drove up in a cortege with limousines and all that. There was somebody else with the consul—it couldn't have

been the ambassador, but some important Liberian figure. I have pictures of him, and I've forgotten who they were. And so, Gus and I had quite a day.

All right, so that took place. This was in the fall, and I had course work to do. I was also Herskovits's research assistant. I got a little stipend, which we certainly needed.

I think I have written about this elsewhere, how I had to deal with his voluminous correspondence from all over the world. And he'd answer every damn letter, particularly from his students. I didn't have to take dictation, fortunately—I wouldn't have been able to—but I had to address things and send them out and also file them in the morning in the different categories.

Then you also had to make time for him to blast the newspapers about either some comment on Africa that had been made or some civil rights problem. He was always onto some kind of discrimination problem, locally, that he always commented on. He would have these letters, great diatribes sent to the papers.

But anyway, I was getting ready now to write up a proposal to the Ford Foundation on the Gola, based on an acculturation study. I put it in that framework, because that's the only thing Herskovits would approve. I really would have liked to . . . I had my own ideas, some kind of structural-functionalist notions as a basis for analysis after his courses. I had written a paper for him really as a basis for my Ford Foundation proposal, and Herskovits struck out all of what he considered to be the jargon of structural-functionalism. I was going to deal with conditions, means, and ends, and I shifted to an acculturative framework having to do with ethnohistory and the continuity of Gola identity and culture in the development of the Liberian nation, and the differences between them and surrounding

groups that had gone along with the nationalization process much more directly. The Gola had resisted right up until the 1920s and 1930s in becoming part of the Liberian political structure. So, I put that down, but Herskovits also had insisted that I put down general ethnography, that I study the *whole* culture because nobody had. So it was kind of a messy proposal, because it had all kinds of subtexts. [laughter] Nevertheless, I wrote it up and sent it in. Myself and Art Tuden applied to the Ford Foundation. He had a project in the Congo. He was going to work in southern equatorial Africa.

Oh, then of course, I decided to go to the Detroit AAA [1954 American Anthropological Association] meetings, in December of that year. So, I was struggling to write a paper for those meetings.

In those days, the meetings were small. I have the program. You know, twenty papers, thirty papers, and two type-written pages would be the whole program of the AAA. And, you know, there might be two hundred anthropologists there all meeting in one room all listening to the same papers.

So my paper was accepted. I have it here: "Some Recent Developments on the Spread of the Native American Church Among the Washoe." I had no idea how I could condense everything that I wanted to say into a fifteen- or twenty-minute paper. I still have that trouble, but then, it was an enormous problem. [laughter] And so I focused on the development of these three strands, the three sub-movements among the Washoe and the sources of them, and then on the conditions that made for acceptance, why I thought peyotism had been accepted among the Washoe when the Ghost Dance had not, et cetera, et cetera. And using people like, oh, again Omer Stewart, Siskin, and La Barre, and in the back of my mind, taking on Cora

Du Bois, of course, setting up sort of a structural situation, the conditions under which change was accepted.

OK, so the time approached. Here I was taking courses and all kind of things were happening, and the time approached to go to these meetings. Well, I won't tell you a lie, because Kathy will tell you anyway. [laughter]

I remember sitting up two or three nights in a row and trying to put this short little paper together. I must have written twenty versions of it. Nothing was right, because in a way, I was scared to death. I had no idea what I was . . . . Here, I was going to be among the senior people of the field that were going to be sitting there listening to this pipsqueak coming in talking. I wasn't sure even how to speak, how to present such a paper, and nobody else seemed to have any idea how to do it either. [laughter] I was the only one in the department who was going to be reading a paper, aside from Herskovits, and I think Alan Merriam, who was already teaching and all that.

*But you were the only student?*

I think I was the most junior student giving a paper, and so I really felt under the gun. And I remember I got onto Dexedrine. For some reason I was able to get a hold of it. It was prescribed for something, and I found that it would keep me awake all night. I could just sit up for hours, and my head was clear and everything. It was magnificent! An amazing experience. In fact, I can see how somebody could become addicted, but I learned the hard way that it wasn't a good idea.

And so I would say for at least a week ahead of time I was staying up revising, re-writing. I even still have some of the graphs,

some of the drawings that I made, with arrows and tables and everything, trying to get extremely scientific with my data. I think all of it was hogwash when I look back on it. What I had in mind was perfectly good and worthwhile, but I wanted to make sure it was presented in a proper way. [laughter]

So I remember Norm Scotch drove the car, and the four of us [Norm Scotch and two other graduate students with d'Azevedo] were going down to the meetings in Detroit, driving down for hours. I forget how long it took, but it was quite a while to go to Detroit. I had my little typewriter on my lap. I was still typing the goddamn paper again, another draft of it, and I remember Norm and the others were really disgusted with me. I was annoying everybody.

By the way, I misspoke about students. There were other students, most of them senior students who had already gone

through the program ahead of us, students of Herskovits who gave papers at that meeting.

In fact, that meeting that I'll speak of in a moment was dominated by Herskovits and his people, certain colleagues of his in African studies. There was a whole session on African materials and a symposium on Africa with James Christensen, one of Herskovits's students running the panel; and Herskovits himself on African-American studies, and then a number of his former students scattered around giving papers. It was I guess because of proximity to Northwestern. It was amazing how many people that Herskovits had worked with or trained were at that meeting. But I think I was the only one on my level giving a paper and was currently a grad student.

So, anyway, here I was loaded with Dexadrine tooling down the road to Detroit with a disgruntled group of fellow students



Warren d'Azevedo and Norm Scotch.



who wished that I would just drop dead. They either wanted to sleep or think of something else instead of the meeting, and that's all I could think of. And I wasn't talking, I was just in a catatonic state.

We got to Detroit, got to a hotel. The meetings were at the University of Michigan at the Rockman Center, and when we got to our hotel, I went immediately to my room, took out my typewriter, and began turning out other drafts of this damn paper. I have a few of those. I have to look at them again, because I don't think I made many changes, except nothing was quite right. It just wasn't right. And when I tried to read it aloud, the Dexadrine had already taken effect. My mouth felt as though I had gotten a shot for dental work, you know, where your tongue was thick and I was very thirsty, and I felt that I was partially paralyzed, but I could still type. And I think my paper was the next morning.

*Thank goodness! You would have been dead!*

Oh, truly. And I didn't go to the first sessions of the meeting. I stayed up in my room. When I come to think of it, it was totally pathological. It was . . . .

*It was the Dexadrine.*

Well, taking the Dexadrine was pathological to the extent that I was doing it. And I began to realize that I had run to the end of its effect, that I now was getting the other effect. [laughter]

In a little while, I was going to be dead. [laughter] And all that alertness and that wonderful clarity was gone.

Sheer, horrible misery. I'm not exaggerating. It was just like this. Every now and then, the images of that time come back to

me in a kind of horror, and I dream about them. [laughter]

And so, I was up all that night. I think I finally, about four in the morning, laid down and slept for . . . or whatever I did for two or three hours, woke up not feeling very refreshed, looked at the mess on the table next to my typewriter, and it was late. I looked at my watch, I had about ten minutes to get to the meetings, and I grabbed all the stuff and just thrust it into a bag and headed off. [laughter]

And I remember I was wobbly. It's a strange thing. By the way, I never took Dexadrine again. I must say that. I *never* . . . . In fact, I had a colleague who overdosed on Dexadrine—this is much later in time. And she finally did herself in.

Anything like that is dangerous stuff, but because of its initial effects, it's just magnificent. You know, you're fine. And I've never been one to deal with drugs of any kind anyway, but this was one of those times. Once or twice during exams and things like that, I remember taking it—not later, before that—and it had always been very effective in small amounts. But here I was really overdosing, OD'ing on Dexadrine.

So, I was running into the auditorium, and here was what seemed to be a cavernous, large auditorium. There couldn't have been more than 200, 150 people there, all the anthropologists that existed at the time were there. [laughter]

*[laughter] Who spoke English.*

Well, some who didn't. And as I came in, there was . . . oh, I remember now, it was Omer Stewart's session. And the title of it was "Nativistic Movements," I think. Anyway, he was the chairman. He was the one that invited me. He asked me to come. And

who else was on the panel? There was Fred Voget, who had done a great deal of work in acculturation and change. And Mel Spiro, who had been one of Herskovits's early students, a man that I admired greatly, had done some beautiful work and still does—this guy is productive as hell. He did a paper called "Religion in an Anti-religious Community," and I think that's while he was working in Israel. Also, Anthony Wallace, whose work was part of the references that I'd used in my paper. And here, these guys were on the panel with me. And as I walked in, Voget was in the middle of his paper. And I just ran in, sat down in the first few rows, totally oblivious of anything except that I was surrounded by faces. There were all kinds of faces, and they were all looking up at the podium, and I realized that in a few minutes I was going to be up there.

And I was bleary. It was terrible. I only had about three minutes, four minutes, the paper was over, and Omer announces me. So, I literally stumbled up to the podium. I don't think I'm exaggerating. I like a good story, but this was probably worse than what I'd say; at least it's what I felt.

And I got up there, and I spread my paper out on the podium. Here was this mess. I was looking at my typing, you know, a little smudged, and I was having a hard time seeing with bleary eyes. And I thought it was my glasses, but they were fairly clear. [laughter] It was the damn Dexadrine.

And I started reading my paper. I remember the effort that it took for me to form words. I mean, I felt that my mouth was full of mush, you know, and I had this sinking feeling that was just horrible. And I looked out at the sea of faces. I had never experienced this before, you know, all these people looking at you, and *who they were*.

Oh, my god! There was, you know, George Murdock in the audience and Margaret Mead. Who were some of the others who were in that? David Schneider and George Homans had given—and I had missed it in the morning—the initial statement on American kinship systems. Walter Goldschmidt and then Simon Ottenberg, who was one of Herskovits's students, but who had been there before me, graduated and gotten out. And William Sturtevant was there and Yehudi Cohen. Harry Hoijer was there, Harold Driver. [laughter] All these wonderful old timers. And Emil Haury, Alfred Kidder, [laughter] Bill Schwab—William Schwab, whom I got to know later. Al Wolfe was another of Herskovits's students who had already gotten his degree and was working.

Oh, I see in the program that Norm Scotch also was giving a paper on the study of psychosomatic disease, and this is what later he did among the Washoe. He had done a little study on the Washoe on hypertension. He was already in medical anthropology. So, Norm was another one of the students at my same level.

He drove us down, and I made him nervous. I was so concerned, it threw him into a state, and he was saying that he was never going to go to a meeting with me again. [laughter] Because he had been very calm about the whole thing, and I was terribly worried about it.

*Did Herskovits play any role? Did he want to see this paper and . . . ? I mean, did he have any concern that you were representing . . . ?*

I think he knew what we were doing, but I don't think he passed on it or anything like that at that time, no. I don't recall that. I

don't know that I even showed it to him—well, I didn't have it done. [laughter] It would never have been in shape to show him before the meeting.

So, anyway, I stumbled through fifteen or twenty minutes, finished my paper. In fact, I left some of it out because it was too long. And I stopped with this feeling, "Kill me now," you know, "this is the end of my life. I'm through!" And, of course, there was applause, and I looked out and saw people clapping and all that.

And it was just a normal paper. They didn't know how I spoke usually. They figured, "This is the way that character speaks." [laughter] They were listening to the content. Apparently, it was all right.

And I must say I stumbled down to my seat, I sat there in a daze realizing that I didn't know what was going on. I heard nothing of the rest of the session. I didn't hear Spiro's paper, but I read it later, and it was very good. Or Tony Wallace, as well.

But all I wanted to do was get out, back to my room and sleep. Well, the session was over in a half hour or so, and I was half dead. I was getting ready to go, people were getting up. And some young fellow came over to me, and he said, "Margaret Mead wants you to come to lunch with us. She's having a group get-together. She was very interested in your paper, and she would like very much to have you join our group." You can imagine.

I just had to say, "I really can't. I'm not feeling well, and I have another appointment."

And I got up and stumbled out. Later on, I saw Margaret a few years later at the museum with Elston, and I told her this, and she said, "Well, that's too bad. It was an interesting paper, you know, and it would have

been nice to have a little chat with you," all that sort of thing. I think she had even forgotten the instance, you know.

So, I went back to my room and slept. That was my first paper. [laughter]

But the people there! What I learned was that that was the meeting of the American Anthropological Association, together with the Association of Physical Anthropologists, the American Ethnological Society, Central States Anthropological Society, Society for American Archaeology, and Society for Applied Anthropology, all of them. Seventy-four papers in two days and fifteen sessions, and the program was on two small printed pages. That was it in those days.

*And when was that? Nineteen fifty-four, right?*

That was 1954. Now, that doesn't mean that all anthropologists were there, but meetings at that time were at the most 150, 200 anthropologists. So, they could meet in one room.

*Well, the expectation was that you could stay current with what was going on in the field by going to these meetings.*

Well, that was the idea.

*And you can't now.*

And, you know, initial studies were being presented here that were published later, like George Murdock, who was working on his world atlas, and at the meeting, he was talking about comparative data and things of that kind that was part of the work that he was doing. Tony Wallace's book came out later on religions and syncretism, the acculturation process of religion, all that. These

were sort of initial things. Oh, and Dave Schneider's work on American kinship. This was the first run of it, you see, along with Holman's. So, yes, these meetings were rich stuff, and you tried to go to everything. Of course, I didn't get to anything. The meeting was over the next day, and I felt . . . Oh, Julian Steward was there. Did I mention him with Bob Murphy? They did a paper on the Mundurucu, which Bob Murphy wrote a book on later, comparing them to the Algonkians, the parallel process of acculturation. Acculturation was very much the thing.

But in the midst of this, what interests me now as I look back: there were two sessions that were based on Herskovits's work and his people. One was a symposium on Africa, "Stability, and Change: Patterns of Prestige and Leadership." That was chaired by Christensen. And then there was a session chaired by Herskovits on the New World Negro with people like George Simpson, Cohen, Tom Price, Harold Hickerson, Miro Romanov, which were students of Herskovits. And all scattered through the rest of the sessions were a number of Herskovits's students and close colleagues.

So, there was a very strong Northwestern presence there at a time when Herskovits wasn't particularly the most admired and liked person in the field, and with material that wasn't considered to be central to interests at that time. So, that, to me, was rather important.

OK, so that was the meeting! [laughter]

I've taken a little time with it, because it was my first major anthropological meeting, and it was not only my first annual meeting, but my first paper. I haven't told anyone until now the story about what a mess I was, but the paper was all right. [laughter] The paper came through anyway.

*Now did you ever do something more with that paper later? I mean, did you ever consider it for publication or for more work?*

No. I have a lot of things like that. I got papers coming out of my ears that I haven't published. And that would be one of those, worked into other work that I did, the ideas were worked into other work. No, I would say I'd fit in that category of anthropologists, scholars who I have more unpublished work than published work, sometimes all ready to publish, but just never got around to it.

*I just want to take a moment and talk a little bit about the process of writing a paper in terms of the surprises. I mean, you've already spoken about what a difficult time you were having, which at least 50 percent, we have to say, was your state of mind with the Dexadrine.*

Well, I had a state of mind that caused me to take the Dexadrine.

*Right. But actually, I wanted to ask you about if there were any surprises in that paper or in general, in your experience in writing papers, are you frequently surprised by the outcome, or are you in control of the data?*

Well, to an extent you're in control. In fact, a good part of my scholarly work has been in presentation papers. I have a long list of papers that I've presented all over the country. Most of those I have on file. Some of them are unfinished and just in rough-draft form which were read in meetings or when I was invited some place to lecture. And a good part of my data is in those papers. Sometimes, they get coalesced into a published paper or published work.

But yes, while you start writing . . . You know that, you start writing in terms of one

framework, and as you're writing, you find that it's changing and that you learn things about your own material as you're writing. And that's the importance, I think, of writing. You look at it, it doesn't quite jell, things don't come together. You have a feeling, there is an insight one has about the form of the paper, whether or not it presents the material, analyzes it, and comes to some sort of reasonable conclusions that can be drawn from what's been presented. And often, while doing that, you find you get a new take on your material, and you shift ground, or you sort of shift the emphases. I think that happens all the time.

Very few papers that I've done just came out as I sat down. I consider them good papers, because things had already taken shape in a very real way beforehand, and you knew really what you wanted to say very clearly.

It's a difference between knowing what you want to say and knowing how to say it. And sometimes revisions are necessary, because you don't like the way it was presented. You feel it's misleading or that the emphasis is wrong or that you've overstated or understated something.

But there have been a few papers, and I think everybody has that experience, where it wasn't that way. It just came out as you meant it to be.

I did one on Gola historical perspective that I felt was that way, which was a fairly long paper. It was called "Uses of the Past in Gola Discourse." I think I wrote that in two or three sittings. And it just came off the typewriter, because somehow or other, something had hit me as being very relevant and very meaningful in my material. And I sat down at the moment when the clarity was there.

I wish it'd happen more often. I don't know, maybe there are some people it hap-

pens to all the time. And I envy them. [laughter] That's great. Is that what you meant?

*Yes, exactly, because I think a key point you made was that the difference between knowing what you want to say and how to say it is one problem. And sometimes, when you're trying to find the best way to communicate a central truth that you think you want to communicate . . . you're just trying to find the best way to express yourself, sometimes I think the discovery process is that what you're trying to say isn't valid, and something else happens. I mean, this truly can be a creative process.*

Well, I think that may happen more often than one realizes. I think somehow when it's happening, you don't think of it that way.

There's the process of analyzing and thinking things through that's always changing anyway. So I think if one reflects and finds a slightly different direction or emphasis while you're working on a piece, it doesn't strike one as having discounted what one did before so much as seeing a new direction for it or seeing it in a slightly different way and then handling it that way. I don't recall ever feeling that something I'd written was wrong. Maybe I should have, but I mean . . . . [laughter]

*No, I'm thinking more along your lines on that . . . .*

Yes, I take that back. Oh, I've looked at some stuff that I did a long time ago and felt that I overstated it or that I was probably stretching the data or something of that kind, but I've never felt it was that serious. I've never felt it so bad that I wished I could rewrite the whole damn thing or something of that kind. I just would think about the next

time I'm doing something like that, I would sort of correct that or shift the emphasis.

That happened a lot in my Gola material, because I started out with one set view of preconceptions and views and gathered my data with one perspective, and then later on gathered new material that gave me another way of looking at what I'd done before and seeing what I had done before as being inadequate or immature or not right. That never worried me too much. I just went ahead and did the next thing and did it the way it should be and sometimes would make a footnote: "This is slightly different than something that I wrote before et cetera, et cetera, for these reasons." I never thought I had to do that very often.

No, I think what comes out is what you see at the time and is valid at the time and meaningful. And it's only where you misstate something, facts, where the facts are wrong that I would be worried about something that I wrote. And I haven't done much of that. I haven't written enough to feel that I've done much factual distortion.

*Well, I think the other thing that can happen is that you find yourself—I'm not suggesting you have done this—people find themselves defending a position for the sake of defending themselves, and . . .*

Yes, I know what you mean. But see, I guess it's a note to what I've been saying; I haven't written enough. I am not one of these people who turn out a great deal. I usually think a long time. It takes me a long time. I'm a slow writer of this kind of material, scholarly material. I think about it a long time, I work it over, I have a lot of notes and background. I've thought sometimes about it every which way so that by the time I finish something I feel fairly confident about it.

I don't feel that there's much that I have to change. Now, if I were a facile writer like some people that I know . . . I admire some of them, they can turn out things very quickly. Their heads are spinning all the time with ideas, they're eloquent, verbal, they have a lot of ease with expression, and things flow out easily. I think people like that often might have to look back and say, "Gee, I wouldn't have said it that way. I would have said it some other way." Not always, but I think that happens.

I seldom have that feeling that I would take back something I wrote, because I usually really felt strongly that I was on the right track when I was doing it, because I'm slow, it took me a long time. So, I guess that's my answer. I haven't written enough to feel that there's a great body of apocrypha out there that I wish [laughter] I could revise, or even details.

*As a footnote to the business that writing comes easy to some people, one of my favorite quotes . . .*

I respect that. I wish I had it.

*. . . is William Faulkner was asked once how he felt when the writing was going well, and he said, "Well, when it's really happening, when it's really flowing, I feel like a one-armed carpenter building a chicken coop in a hurricane." [laughter]*

Gee, that's beautiful. [laughter] Well, I've never felt quite that stretched.

No, when I was writing fiction, that kind of work when I was much younger, short stories, there were times when you had this kind of elation and could write very quickly certain sections of things that had a poetic flow that came easily and came down exactly as

you felt it, and the words were right. And that's something that goes on with certain kinds of creative work, creative literature, which I have a great respect for too.

It seldom has happened in my scholarly work. I have felt good sometimes and written easily when I've done a lot of preliminary work, and somehow I feel I'm putting it down right, that it's the way I want it to be and it has a certain elegance.

*You know that review you wrote about the book Elephant?*

Oh, yes.

*Was that easy? I'm just curious.*

It wasn't easy, but it was fun.

*It was fun to read, and it seemed . . .*

It was fun to write. That happens now and then, but not all of one's work is fun. I mean, I sometimes agree with Faulkner at times. But no, there are few times in work that I've done and papers that I have written where I feel very good about . . . it comes right and all that. But there are other times that are just hard work and you have the feeling it should be better, that you haven't put it down the way you really want to get it down and all that. Yes, I think everybody feels this to some degree.

*There's also the responsibility of speaking for other people [in anthropological writing]. I don't know. I don't want to make too big a deal of it, but somehow there's something in anthropology in the profession that makes it a little different; you really are speaking for other people.*

Well, you are. There are two aspects: speaking for other people and for yourself. And both of those are pregnant with possibilities and difficulties. Speaking for others, yes, I think every anthropologist who feels and thinks about what they're doing seriously has that feeling, "Have I really done justice to the world that I was in, that I came from, and that I saw?" And, "Am I playing with it? Am I elaborating it because of something in me?" which you know you're doing to some extent.

That's inevitable. It's inevitable that you're doing that, because you are a creature of your own culture and of your own background. On the other hand, one is aware of that danger all the time.

Yes, "Is this accurate in terms of how . . . ?" You never know the true reality, but is it accurate enough to represent how you think that situation was that these people that you worked with were living in and how they could have felt or could have reacted? I did that.

I had a special occasion to feel that strongly when I was doing some work on Liberian artistry, because I was using material that I had gotten mainly from two or three carvers that I knew very well, and that I had a lot of respect for, a lot of identity with them about what they were doing. And I had to worry all the time whether I was not over-identifying and, in a sense, imposing a lot of my own anticipations on them. Was I representing a reality, that other reality?

And I think one gets very humble about that. You know you can't do it totally, and you know that you have . . . There's where yourself comes in, you know, your feelings, your sense of your own integrity. That is, to the degree that you've thought about that and then go ahead and do it, you have to have a

certain trust that you've done the best you can, as the way that you would do it. And the fact that you elaborate a bit, the fact that it's colored a bit by yourself and the world that you're from is OK as long as you know it and as long as it somehow comes out of the work itself, out of the writing itself that anybody reading it can, in a sense, know that or guess that.

But when I was doing the work on the carvers, I remember particularly one carver, Vane Hime, that I got to know very well—in fact, I still know him. I had this feeling, “Am I doing justice to this person, or am I distorting who he really is as a person? Am I romanticizing him?”

This is the thing you worry about most, particularly if you've been interested in the arts and humanities in your own culture. You wonder how much of that is flowing through you in your observations of others. And by the way, I had to deal on the level of answering critiques about that, and I think I'm fairly sound on that level.

I do believe that one does make identifications of people in other quite alien cultures that tell you that there are things happening there that are familiar and similar to things that you've seen in your own culture. I believe that. But you have to be awfully careful about that sort of thing, because you can overstate it or have faith in some kind of universal human experience that may prove not to be the way it is.

*Right. But that's almost the point of anthropology, really, is to distinguish those two extremes: the universals and the differences.*

To the extent you can.

*I mean, in a very simple-minded way.*

Yes. And that's why I worry a little about what's going on now in the contemporary scene, the so-called post-modern wave that's taking place. And I don't like to be cynical about that, because there's a lot of very good work coming out that I really respect. On the other hand, there's also a lot of crap. I mean, the kind of crap that we're talking about where people have not thought through all that or who don't care; they don't care to what degree they distort the other reality in order to make a point of their own.

*Right. It's a platform for those . . . .*

Yes, a platform for the self, or lord knows what else, and you don't always detect it. I mean, you can feel suspicious as you're reading something, there's something not right here, that this is a kind of self-aggrandizing grand-standing that the person is doing. Also, a kind of romantic detour that the person is going through, or just sheer distortion. Sheer fiction parading as scientific observation or scholarly observation.

It doesn't even have to be scientific. Just honest observation. Observation that tries to define and describe what is out there rather than what's inside Warren, which are really two different things, you know. [laughter]

So, yes, all that's involved in writing [anthropology]. And I don't think that I'm a paragon of virtue about that, but I worry about it, and I've thought about it, and I've had a tremendous amount of concern about it in everything that I write.

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#### Note

1. Ralph R. Gurley, *The Life of Yehudi Ashmun* (1835).



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## GETTING GRANTS AND PASSPORTS

SO, WE'RE COMING back from the meeting to home base in Evanston. And this is in the spring of 1955, and I'm taking courses.

My main interest at this time was with David Apter. I really had a lot of admiration for him at the time. He was a Parsonian, a dyed-in-the-wool Parsonian structural-functionalist, a political scientist, but was very . . . .

*Was he at . . . ?*

He was at Northwestern. And he was able to stimulate a tremendous amount of work and thinking on the part of the students. So, three or four of us from Herskovits's department were taking his courses. And gosh, we just spent hours and hours *every* day discussing this material and trying to see how it applied to the work that we were going to do. And I remember that some of this was reflected in my work on the Washoe and in that paper. [laughter]

In fact, my problem was how to be structural, at that time, when I really wasn't very

adept at these things, how to structure my work with the Washoe, because it had been so unstructured. You know, I was essentially doing shotgun-against-the-red-barn ethnography. And I was trying to think this thing through in terms of conditions and means and ends and put it in some kind of formal framework which would fit some of these ideas that were going around. And, of course, I was making hash out of everything. Nevertheless, it was a very good experience, very useful.

But anyway, we would sit around discussing these ideas. Also at that time, we continued going down [to the University of Chicago] and listening in on Fred Eggan's lectures and getting a lot of the British social anthropology and Radcliffe-Brownian concepts floating through Chicago at that time. The University of Chicago wasn't far, and we would drive down there easily.

And poor old Herskovits, I think he felt that he was surrounded by heretics, you know. Yet he not only tolerated, he sort of gave in. But when we wrote anything that gave the slightest glimmer of any of this terrible

jargonistic thing that was happening in anthropology, boy, the red slashes would go through: "Do you need that terminology? Do you have to say . . . ? Can't you just say culture? What do you mean society in this case?"

Well, of course, he and I fought about the concepts of society versus culture all the way through my orals later on. And as I look back, I feel a little sorry about it, because I was very mean. Students can be very mean.

I remember seeing at a meeting years later where Edmund Leach and Gregory Bateson and a number of others . . . . Oh, who were some of those people? Well, Firth had organized it. But I remember these guys, all colleagues of his, and the British style was so mean and cutting, satirical, undermining. I felt so sorry for old Leach. But he'd grown up in that culture. He knew what to do about it. [laughter] He sat through it. But I was agonizing over it. I thought it was so terrible, so unkind.

Well, in a way, we were that way with Herskovits. There were a number of us who were exercising our own wings, and he was the guy to argue with. But at least he'd argue.

He'd sit there, red-faced in seminars. And, you know, I thought he was going to have apoplexy. And then he would calm down and say, "Very interesting. Very interesting. Now, can you write it up and demonstrate it?" And then he'd give you a task. [laughter] He got even with you. You had to write a paper.

I respect that. And he was very good at discourse with students, anyway. Apparently, he bothered a lot of his colleagues, but he would argue, he would take you on. He was a little bantam cock. He would take you on.

And you might even think what he said was ridiculous, and he'd hang onto it like a dog with a bone, but if you stuck by your guns, he would sort of settle down and say, "Well,

that's very interesting. Well, we'll have to think about that. I would like to have you turn that into a paper," [laughter] "in which you defend this position, because I think all of us should be rewarded with the results of your thinking this thing through."

Oh, he was wonderful at that. We used to be furious with him, but when I look back, he was wonderful, because in that small, little department, somewhat isolated, it was important to have this kind of openness.

And our connection with other . . . . When Ed Dozier, who had worked with Eggan, came into the department, we had somebody in the department we could work with. And we had David Apter in political science. And so it was lively.

*Well now, there were structuralists who were working in Africa, but were there any structuralists, colleagues of Herskovits, who were working with American Negroes?*

Gee, that's a good question. I really don't think so.



*"When Ed Dozier . . . came into the department, we had somebody in the department we could work with." Ed Dozier (right) with his wife, Marianne.*

So, he pretty much had that . . . ?

Well, you know, he had the Boasian tradition of basic ethnographic fieldwork, dealing with acculturation and change and cultural focus, his favorite line, his favorite concept. No, structural-functionalism was this new-wave thing that was coming in out of England—Radcliffe-Brown. And structuralism, per se, Lévi-Straussian structuralism was another line that at that time was still much concerned with symbolism and . . . . Oh, there are people like Victor Turner and others, you know. There were all these different lines that didn't necessarily either intersect or merge. That happened later.

*I just wondered if Herskovits had had to encounter any of this in the field of working in American black history.*

When he did, I'm sure he . . . he would try to root it out, root and branch, you know. [laughter] No, I don't think so. Well, there was, let me see, [Meyer] Fortes, a British anthropologist, but Herskovits found his kind of structural-functionalism congenial. He understood it. It focused on kinship and basic social organization, and Herskovits was able to follow that. He liked Fortes, and Fortes liked him, so that was all right.

But no, structural-functionalism didn't intrude in his field. It did in Africa, because I think that part of his rather narrow Boasian orientation had to do with his feeling of differentiating himself from the British social structuralists in Africa. Yes, I haven't thought that through very much, but I think that there is an element of it there . . . and his relativism—not only his, but Boasian relativism.

And I don't want to go into that. I get a little irritated when I hear Herskovits used

as an example of an arch-relativist, you know, and how relativism was part of the decay of theory in American anthropology and also in social science. There are so many different levels theoretically, of "relativism"—everything from Einsteinian theory to . . . .

*That's even relative.*

Yes. You know, all the way down the line. Herskovits, although he would sometimes talk as though he was developing a theory, anthropology for him was a very practical thing, and at that time, also useful. It was his battle against ethnocentrism. It was a matter of being alert to cross-cultural differences and your own role from a dominant culture observing another culture. And as far as I'm concerned, it was ethically valuable and very important on the level of an introduction to anthropological thought and thinking and the field. Being always cautious about your first responses to things. I mean, to be not only cautious but suspicious of your own reactions.

And he was very good at pointing those things out, and that's where it was; that's where his relativism really was. If you asked him big questions, like, "Well, what about Hitler?" you know . . . .

"So German culture . . . ." All that kind of junk that goes on in discourse. He always had an answer, but that wasn't his interest, that big level of ethics and morality.

In fact, he used to say that it wasn't a moral issue, it was a practical issue. It had to do with clearing your mind for observation of other cultures, that you didn't allow your first impressions to be your gauge of what was going on, because you could be sure that it would be wrong. You know, that's relativism. Hell, I used that kind of thing in teaching classes all my life. It's true.

And anything that causes one to be suspicious of one's self in encounters with members of other cultures is a very important thing, particularly for an investigator or a scholar. It's the first step in enlightenment.

And to withhold judgment—he used to talk about that all the time, withholding judgment. I don't remember he ever said that all cultures were equal or that all ethical systems were equally valuable, because that wasn't his concern! His concern was you must not start out by thinking they are, you must discover it. You must discover it by arduous, deep, in-depth understanding of another people, another culture, before you start evaluating them comparatively. At least that's what I got from what he said. I still think that's very good.

Yes, he made a lot of stupid comments. I mean, everybody does. When he would get in an argument, he would get wrought up and make indefensible relativistic arguments. But that wasn't what he conveyed to students. He conveyed, really, a very practical fieldworking investigatory kind of relativism having to do with watching yourself and not judging other people until you know something about them. I can't remember the line, it was something about, "Don't judge lest you be judged." He had a wonderful take on that, something to do with relativism. "Just remember, you're being judged too, and how do you want to be judged? By this person's cultural orientation and bias or by what you really are and what . . . ?" You see?

Yes.

So, there you go. Anyway, back to Northwestern. Now, when I got back, a lot of things were going on. Not only this course work that I am talking about, but all over the country. My god, there were articles daily in the pa-

pers about the McCarthy hearings, and on the little television set we had there in Anthro House, a little black and white set that we'd all sit around in the evenings to watch the McCarthy hearings.

There was a kind of paranoia alive in the country at that time. People were really feeling . . . I think anybody who was a liberal felt scary. You know, we used to think of the alien and sedition acts. [laughter] There was something going on that gave one the feeling that one was part of the heresy, that you were considered to be part of the heresy.

*Well, what was it, the Committee on UnAmerican Activities? I mean, just the term is something I think in today's context people would go nuts!*

UnAmerican activities!

*That's impossible.*

I would hope they would. I'm beginning to wonder at times whether that's really the case, whether or not there can't be a resurgence . . .

*But when you just think about it, though, "the Committee on UnAmerican Activities," what in the world is that?*

Well, that's what it was. [laughter] They searched for unAmerican activities, and they found them everywhere.

So we used to watch this and talk about it a lot. And I think all over the country, people like us, students either liberal or not liberal, whatever . . . In fact, students have to be liberals, you know. [laughter]

*No, they don't. That's the other thing. [laughter]*

Well, I mean, liberals from the point of view of the rest of the culture. They're liberal in a sense that they're thinking, they're tossing ideas around, they're wondering about things.

And I think all over the country people were glued to the newspapers and to the television set on these hearings. It was *the* thing. It makes the Clinton hearings, the Starr chamber hearings look like a cute little side show. I mean, it was a daily fare.

Then the papers were full of passport problems, too. Well-known figures were not able to go abroad, or if they'd gone abroad, couldn't come back. This was in the spring.

Art Tuden and myself and two or three others were putting in for grants for fieldwork. And I remember thinking about this quite a bit, you know. My god, is there really a passport problem even for somebody like me? I remember Art thinking about that, though his background wasn't anything more than being an activist in a number of different events that had taken place.

And also, that was the period when Eisenhower had declared the ending of segregation in southern schools. There was an awakening going on while this onslaught was taking place. I can't help but feel it was connected, because I'm a conspiratorialist I guess. I do believe that somehow all these things are connected.

Here was the beginnings of the Civil Rights movement back there in the early 1950s that later in the 1960s and 1970s really took off. And along with it was the attack against anything that was progressive, that was liberal. And people were being accused of . . . .

*Did you talk at all with any of your colleagues and friends about your involvement with the*

*Communist Party? Was it something you talked about?*

Well, I don't know at that time how . . . . Well, yes, my close friends. I talked very freely with them. I don't want to name who they are, but yes, I would say people I knew well at school. However, it didn't mean much to them, and I didn't talk necessarily about being a member of the party so much as just having been to sea and that I'd been in trade unions and all that.

*Well, about the strikes, did you talk about the strikes or your . . . ?*

Oh, yes. But I think being a member of the party wasn't something that I would have just thrown out, but I think people I knew well knew that.

*Yes. I was just wondering if it was a cause of any curiosity among any of your friends at Northwestern.*

I think so, but you know how it is when you know people. People don't make a big thing out of something like that. [laughter] They hear it, and, "That's interesting," and all that. But I don't remember it being a problem up there.

*Or anybody being particularly curious, like, "What was it like?"*

Maybe. If so, I don't remember. I'm sure people that I knew well and talked to when those kinds of conversations came up . . . well, we were all curious about one another. Certainly Kathy and I, we talked about that.

Anyway, I applied to the Ford Foundation, to the Social Science Research Council,

and to the National Science Foundation for grants to go to Liberia. And then, of course, you're so busy you forget about these things. It was some time in January where I did that.

And oh yes, in the meantime, I remember a person that I had a great admiration for, a student, I think, in political science—Eduardo Mondlane. He was a Mozambiquen who was married to, I believe—at least had a close association with—a young white student, a beautiful young girl named Janet Rae.<sup>1</sup>

And by the way, any notion that Herskovits had problems about these kinds of relationships is crazy, because three or four of his students had mixed marriages. And Anthro House was wide open in a period when that little house was considered to be a den of iniquity, you know. Blacks were coming and going, and Indians, and lord knows what, with mixed couples and mixed marriages taking place.

Well, that house, which was a wonderful place, was a meeting place for all these people, and Eduardo and Janet would come along frequently, and we got to know them very well. He used to kid me. You know, here I was a good Portuguese man, why in the hell don't I speak Portuguese? And he offered to teach me Portuguese if I would come back to Mozambique with him and join his guerilla group. [laughter] Because that was his goal, to go back to Mozambique in the anti-Portuguese movement that was taking place. This was well before independence. You see, independence was not achieved until the 1970s [September 16, 1975].

So, anyway, I had great admiration for him, because in the first place, he was my link to rebellion and activism. Here was a guy who had a sound basis in an anti-colonial movement who was deeply committed, who saw Mozambiquen culture as distorted by the Portuguese colonial influencing

period, and who, in a sense, was devoting his life to the anti-colonial struggle and was planning to go back and form a guerilla band. I remember thinking how wonderful it was to have those kinds of roots. This guy had a true commitment to a culture, a true commitment to his people.

He wasn't a firebrand. He was a very well-spoken guy. Spoke English beautifully, eloquently. Of course he spoke Portuguese very well and two or three local indigenous languages, and he was studying political science, history, and economics. He also saw himself as being a figure in later government.

A number of people came through Northwestern at that time of that sort. In fact, Augustus Caine, my friend, saw himself as tooling for a position and eventually got it after the coup when he had very important positions in Liberia.

So, here was Eduardo, a big, strapping, very black man. In fact, shining black. There is a type of African you often see among Mandingo and other Sudanic peoples, he was that kind of black. And well spoken and fiery and clear. I really liked him.

*Was he your age?*

Oh, let's see. Eduardo . . . Well, I was older than everybody else there at least by five or six years. I'd say Eduardo might have been just a little older than the rest of us. But I'm not sure.<sup>2</sup>

*I just wondered, because frequently people who have come a long way to get there and have those kinds of aspirations tend to be more mature.*

Well, he had been to school in England and had been around to two or three universities in the states, typical early African intellectual experience. He came to North-

western but not involved directly with Herskovits. He was in political science, but the African program interested him.

Eduardo, I think of him in a way as a kind of role model—that type of guy. Here he was a left-winger, and although he was something of a Marxist, that wasn't his main concern. He had a theory of what had happened in the colonial world and Africa, and he had a class-conscious orientation, et cetera. I found him convivial. He and I were able to talk a great deal, and he was always kidding me about how he wanted me to go back, but I had to learn Portuguese. [laughter]

I told him that was very hard to do. I was having a hard enough time with German, practicing my German for my exams, something I should have taken on earlier.

So, Eduardo went back to Mozambique, and we lost track of him. And now and then there were some letters back and forth. But he became the leader of FRELIMO for the next ten or fifteen years. FRELIMO was the unified anti-Portuguese guerilla front in Mozambique.

*It was a very early guerilla movement, wasn't it? I mean, a very early anti-colonial movement?*

Yes, well, it was based on resistance that had been going on in the 1950s. He went back and took part in what he knew was already going on and became a leader. In fact, he became the president, I think, of the FRELIMO free state in the north in the—what was it?—province of Tete or something in the forests of northern Mozambique.

That's where the movement really jelled. It gave the Portuguese a hell of a time. In fact, it really laid the basis for independence. But a lot of people were killed.

The last I heard of him . . . . We lost correspondence. I don't know if anybody . . . . Herskovits would hear from him now and then too. But then in the 1960s, we lost track of him again. But he was there. I think Herskovits may have seen him on a trip to Africa. I'm not sure. He would have been hard to see, because he was an underground leader.

And then he was writing a book. I'm so happy to have a copy of that thing, *The Struggle for Mozambique*. In 1967, 1968, this book came out. I remember getting a copy of it, and I wrote over there thinking, "I've got to get a hold of this guy." And I didn't have any address. I wrote to Penguin Publishers finally, you know, to have word sent out to Mozambique. And that year, 1969, he was assassinated!

And in 1969, where was I? In 1969 I was here at UNR, yes, on my way back to Africa. And I remember it hit me as hard as though it were some close friend who had died, even though it had been such a long absence. I had a tremendous respect for him. I felt that he was an ideal type of human being, you know, clear, knew what he wanted to do, was able to do it.

*So you knew Eduardo during the time that you were at Northwestern?*

Well, just the spring of 1955 when all the paranoia was going on in this country. And I think in a way I saw him as an island in the middle of an ocean, as something solid and permanent and real being done in the world.

And if that was left-wing or communist, fine; I was all for it. And how wonderful it was that people like that could exist. Here he was right in the middle of the United States with all this going on, and here was

this man who was going to lead a revolt against the Portuguese, a revolution against the Portuguese, an anti-colonial struggle. [laughter] That, to me, was very wonderful.

When I learned later about his death, it really hit me. I still feel sadly about it, because there was something quite wonderful about him. I don't think I have created this image of him. I think he really *was* a rather remarkable and wonderful person.

Oh, in fact, I suppose some of my romanticism about Paul Robeson and people of that kind—images of Robeson as a leader and a firebrand whom I had known earlier in life, in a way—maybe affected my view. But in his own right, Mondlane had tremendous personal charisma. Not charismatic—no, he just had a lot of integrity. You just felt that everything that he was doing came out of a great deal of personal integrity that was what he not only believed but what he committed himself to. And he wasn't a preacher; he wasn't a proselytizer. You could disagree with him. He saw his time in the States and abroad as picking up fuel, ammunition for the job to be done [in Mozambique].

*No, that's heady stuff, particularly when you are in an academic atmosphere and with the McCarthy hearings going on, to have somebody actually acquiring tools that they're going to . . . .*  
[laughter]

Oh yes. Well, when all of us were watching the McCarthy hearings, he'd say things like, "You people have a real problem." [laughter] "What are you going to do? What are you going to do about it? You've got a *real* problem here." Oh, those wonderful conversations!

*How wonderful to have that international perspective, because most people have to go abroad*

*themselves to hear people from other cultures react to the American scene.*

Right. And then I was thinking about Herskovits. Herskovits liked Mondlane very much. He admired him. And he was a good student, a very bright guy, very intelligent. But Herskovits was also leery of his political orientation and his activism, because there were a number of things that this touched upon: Herskovits's notion of ethical neutrality, of aloofness from direct involvement in current events, if you're in the field particularly, that you were an observer and you're not an *agent* of culture change.

He used to use that; that was one of the worst insults he'd give somebody was that they thought they were an agent of culture change. "There's two things. You're either an agent of culture change, or you're an anthropologist and an observer." [laughter] And that's why he hated applied anthropology. That was his great anathema.

So, on the other hand, Herskovits really liked this guy. But here, right in the middle of his little group of his students and his colleagues, was this revolutionary, and a black revolutionary at that, an African revolutionary.

Herskovits handled it very well. He didn't say anything about it, but I could tell that this was a problem for him, and he would ask me a lot about Mondlane, because he was worried about me. And when I come to think of it, it wasn't that Herskovits had any disagreement with the orientation of Mondlane's goals and beliefs, but he saw it as a distraction from the job to be done by the scholar-anthropologist, the scientist. You see, it was something else, it was another world.

So, when Herskovits asked me, I always felt under the gun, that he was trying to see to what extent I might do something like that



if I went into the field. Well, I wanted to be like that, you know, but I must admit that I had no such views; I didn't have any notion that I could ever lead anything in another country. [laughter] I couldn't even lead anything in my own. But anyway, that was, to me, an interesting episode in that period, because it was happening when all this other McCarthy stuff was going on.

Two months later or so—I guess it was March or April—letters came one after another to Anthro House from the Ford Foundation. Art got his first. And I thought, “Well, they're not going to send more than one. I didn't get mine.” The next day, I get mine. And we both had gotten grants to go to Africa. And, oh, there was a terrific celebration. We were “Drunken House” there for two or three days. [laughter] It was elation.

Herskovits was terribly happy because, to him, it was so important to get his people over to Africa. So, you know, he had all this going. That's part of the reason he was so concerned about politics, the political intrusion that might take place, because these foundations were very sensitive to what was going on in the country and who they'd give grants to. And I must say Herskovits handled that with great aplomb. He never laid it on us. It just stands to reason that he would be very concerned about that.

So we got our grants, and after the celebrations, I began to think, “Wow! What the hell does this mean?” Here was this onslaught coming from the press and everywhere else. And a friend of mine, a physicist that I had known at Cal . . . very close friend of Kathy and mine, he and his wife. He was a member of the American Scientist Federation or something of that kind, and he sent me materials on passport problems that scientists were having getting overseas and asked me to sign

a petition, you know, on behalf of somebody trying to get over.

He knew my views, and I signed it and sent it back to him. A few weeks later, the state department knew that—they knew that I had signed that petition. It was just awful, for apparently it was considered a left-wing organization, this group of physicists and social scientists.

So, anyway, the question was, what are we going to do? And I remember Kathy and I spent many days mulling this over. Should I just turn the grant down and decide to go to the Washoe and tell Herskovits I decided I can't go [to Liberia]? Or should I go and level with him and, you know, about [the Communist Party]. He knew something about my trade-union background, but he would have denied it in his head anyway unless somebody hit him with a club about it. He was a great denier. He liked to think of the good, you know. [laughter]

*And in those days, that was heavy-duty stuff.*

Yes. That meant your life, your career.

Yes, *Well, you couldn't teach school.*

Oh, no. No, you couldn't get . . . In fact, my seamen friends were not getting jobs anywhere. The waterfront had been completely closed down for anybody who had been a liberal or a left-winger, or certainly a member of the party. And that was true all over the country. I have some letters I wrote to two or three of my friends on the West Coast. And those letters, by the way, were known about. I tell you, the spies were . . . [laughter] You knew you were surrounded by FBI spies of all kinds. It was a terrible period and particularly for people who had a background.

I didn't know how serious mine was thought to be, you know. I mean, you don't know how you fit in the hierarchy of dangers. So, that's what Kathy and I talked about.

And I think that she felt—and I agreed—that I should just go see Herskovits and tell him. Here's the thing, you know: it would be stupid to say that you're going to turn the grant down because you want to work with some other group. That would be silly; and it would be dishonest, in a way.

So, I remember going to Herskovits. I've written about this, so I'll try to do it quickly. I went to see him, and I remember feeling terribly guilty. I felt lousy. I just felt like I had done him a disservice. He was running a program here, and I agreed with its goals and what he was doing. What a massive amount of work and sweat it had taken on his part to build this program. And here were all my fellow students as well, and mentors. I had now put myself in a position of possibly jeopardizing all that and bringing some kind of stain on the department politically or from the point of view of getting grants. And it was a terrible issue. Kathy and I thought about it every which way, and there seemed to be no other way but to level.

So, I remember going into his office, and I had an awful time starting. He knew something was up. He was a funny little man. Here's this small, little guy, little old funny guy, with this shiny little face and this pince nez [laughter] looking at me, you know, like, "So? So?"

And so I just blurted it all out and said, "You know, I'm concerned about getting a passport."

"What? What do you mean you're concerned? Why should you be concerned about getting a passport? You haven't done anything more than marching in some parades"—you know, you would have had to hear this man

talk—"march in a few parades and carry a few banners with a few slogans. That's not enough." [laughter]

I had to tell him that it was much more than that. And I told him I had been a member of the Communist Party for a number of years while I was going to sea as well, been involved in a number of labor events and issues and that this was undoubtedly on record some place, and that I didn't want to apply for a passport without letting him know about all this and seeking his advice, because my own feeling was that maybe I should not do so.

I'll never forget the way he looked at me. He put both of his hands and little fat arms on his desk, you know, and he looked at me. He says, "Warren d'Azevedo, do you want to be an anthropologist?"

I said, "Well, of course."

He says, "Then you apply for that damn passport *now*."

And, you know, terrific courage, that little guy. Now, I'm sure he said that without thinking, because I know that for days afterwards there were certain people he knew to whom he expressed a tremendous amount of concern about this. It was shock, it had shocked him. But his natural response—gutsy little bantam cock response—was, "Screw them! You've done your work. You got this damn grant. You want to go Africa, then you apply for that passport."

So, I had to go on that, in my own view, as his go-ahead, though it didn't relieve me of the sense of guilt, because there still was the possibility there would be a flap about this, and I hated the idea of being the cause of any kind of difficulty for that program or where *he* would have to defend himself.

I later found in my freedom of information papers that Herskovits was being observed too, and there were things in his

file that had gotten into my file, because I was working with him, indicating that he had been part of this organization in Chicago, over a housing struggle, and this and that and the other. You know, here was a person who could easily get targeted because of his African-American interests. He'd been targeted as not only dangerous, but a person who shouldn't even be teaching because he had made trouble for people at the university—it was happening all over. Well, I felt this as a terrific burden and had every reason to feel so. And I'm prone to feeling guilty about things like that anyway, and I was very guilty about it. But I felt I really had to do it, that not to go ahead was some kind of backing out of the struggle and that as long as he didn't feel that I shouldn't, then I felt I had an obligation to do it.

At that point, I really didn't care whether I got to Africa or not. I felt so mixed up by this and so ambivalent. You know, I thought, "Gee, how nice it would be to go to work with the Washoe [laughter] and continue my work there, and Kathy could be back on the West Coast that she loves and the kids wouldn't have to face this big thing." And so, I really could have withdrawn easily, more easily than going ahead, because that, to me, was a rocky . . . .

*Well, the path of least resistance would have been . . . .*

Yes. Going ahead was a rocky road, a very rocky road. And so, Herskovits had gone ahead and checked with the leading legal firm in Washington, Cleary, Gottlieb, Friendly, and Ball. Ball later became somebody important in the Kennedy administration.<sup>3</sup>

And, oh, I'm jumping the gun here. We didn't do that yet. I applied for the passport

and waited until—jeez, when was it?—April, I guess, and wired Francis Knight at the State Department, saying, "Why haven't I heard?" And finally I got this cryptic message of, "We cannot . . ." I have it some place, I won't go look for it. "We cannot agree to issuing you a passport, because we have every reason to believe that you have been and are presently an active member of the Communist Party." They zinged right in. And that was it, so the question was: what do I do? And I suppose it was appeal. I had to appeal. I think it said, "You can appeal this," or something.

There were only two ways to go—go to court or make an internal appeal or something. That's when Herskovits found this lawyer. He happened to know some of the people in this law firm, and I went to Washington to see them.

A very impressive office. This was one of the top flight legal firms. [laughter] And I had no money. I wasn't going to be able to pay, but in those days, there was a lot of this gratis stuff going on, because lawyers were interested in the problem. They were interested in the legal problem partly, and they would choose certain kinds of cases with the idea they weren't going to get anything.

And I think I spent \$200 all together. I was asked for that as a kind of a token thing at the end, you know. "This is your bill, \$218," or something. It was just so the books would look as though I paid something.

But they assigned me a young legal consultant named Leon Lipson, a wonderful guy, very quiet, very methodical, serious young guy. And he obviously was assigned to this as an interesting case. In fact, I learned later he was going to write it up. I don't know if he ever did.

It was one of the cases that they were taking on this kind of a basis. I didn't know all

this at the time. All I knew was I was wandering around in a daze about what the hell I was doing.

The first thing was that decided when I saw him was that we should appeal. So, he issued an appeal that went to Francis Knight. The response we got was that a meeting would be set up in Washington where I'd go and see some officials in the State Department.

So, I went with Leon, this must have been late April, early May. And we went to the state department and sat down with this . . . I would consider him a dolt, I have his name some place, a really fuddy-duddy bureaucrat. When I come to think of it, my disgust wells up. I mean, this man had no interest at all in doing anything positive about it. He was just carrying out his task, which was to see me and to get rid of me, I think.

Well, fortunately Leon didn't let that happen. He was very good. He said, "We are here to get information about why this man has been refused his passport. And we have a right to have in writing reasons spelled out more than in this brief first statement, which we're saying is not true. He is not now a member of the Communist Party."

"Well, well . . .," and this guy, you know, buzzed around and finally went out and came back with a stack of papers.

Then I remember Leon saying, "Can I see those?" This was my state department file. And Leon says, "Can I look?"

"Oh, no, you cannot see these!" And this guy sat there turning pages and then making remarks like, "Well, here it says that you were arrested for creating a disturbance in East Bay. Here, it says that you were the head of the Third Party movement in the Seamen's Union and that you had a certain kind of a job within the Communist Party," and on and on and on, turning these pages.

And I remember Leon said, "Now just a minute, sir." He says, "You're just turning these pages. I don't even know that you are reading accurately!" [laughter] "I don't know what you're . . . . I mean, we need to have something to respond to in writing."

"Well, I'm sorry. We don't do that. I'm here to show you what the reasons are, and I'm giving them to you. We cannot show you these documents. These documents are not for general distribution."

And then Lipson said something like, "Well then, how can anybody proceed?"

The only thing was that you could go to court. That was it. You could go through the expense of going to court, and that was a great dodge. How could people do that? Very few people were able to do that.

Oh, then the question was what was required for me to get a passport? Well, it turns out that I had known a lot of communists on the West Coast. I should sit down and make a deposition about who they were and what their positions were. In other words, I was to give a list of my associates. I had told Leon, "You know, that is out. I won't name one name. I'll talk about myself, but," I said, "I won't name one name."

And he said, "Warren, do you realize what you're saying?" He says, "You could have a passport tomorrow if you did. And if you don't, it may go on for months or years."

"Well," I said, "What can I do? I'm not going to name names."

And he basically agreed with me, but he was that kind of a young lawyer—wasn't going to let me know his own opinions. He says, "OK." I could sense that's exactly what he hoped I would do, but he had to lay it out—these were my choices. All the way along, he would do things like that and say, "Warren, you know, you could end this tomorrow if you just comply slightly with their demands.

There are people that get passports all the time that just give out a little bit of information.”

And I said, “I can’t do it. Just can’t do it.” And I’m so glad that I didn’t, because in my freedom of information file, I’m so happy years later to read: “He could not get his passport on appeal, because he *refused* to discuss his associates in the Communist Party.” [laughter] And I’m so glad that’s on record, because I felt strongly about that.

Leon and I had some meetings there in Washington at the legal office and talked about strategy. And we decided that the best thing to do would be to make an affidavit; I needed to make an affidavit, which I did. I have a copy of that in which I lay out what I did, what my background was; that I’d never ever denied, I’d never been a secret member of the Communist Party; the fact that I was not now a member and that I had left the party by default, slowly pulled away because I also had certain disagreements with policy, but they weren’t deep at the time. It’s just that my interests in my life changed, and I could no longer feel that I would be an adequate member of the party. And so, that’s that.

I laid this out in a deposition and then demanded to know why, under these conditions as a citizen of the United States, I could not receive a passport. That went in, and we waited and waited and waited. And, of course, that’s when Kathy and I, after talking about it, decided to go to the Washoe.

So in the fall I took a leave from Northwestern and went back to Woodfords and Gardnerville in Nevada to continue with the Washoe. You know, “Dr. Herskovits, I have to have a thesis project. I’ve got to write a thesis, and that’s where I’ve done some work. And I can continue there and do my thesis.”

“Well,” he says, “it would be very unusual to have a thesis on the American Indians in this department, but under these conditions, I can see where it might be a reasonable thing to do.” But he says, “Tell me one thing. Don’t let Kroeber talk you into staying there.” [laughter]

I said, “I don’t know Kroeber that well.”

“Well, he loves to grab onto people and certainly to keep them out of here. He doesn’t want people moving in this department.” He says, “I’m amazed that he didn’t try to stop you from coming here.”

I didn’t tell him that he had said, “What do you want to go there for?” [laughter]

So, we headed back to Nevada, which was wonderful—a great sense of relief. There’s something about coming West after being in the East. Well, of course, Kathy and I were dyed-in-the-wool West Coasters. You lose sight of that fact of how meaningful an ecology is to you. Coming out of the Midwest, where I’ve always felt I would never want to live for long—even in Chicago or Evanston and through the Midwest, which was all beautiful and interesting and all that, but then the Rockies and over into the Great Basin, there’s something special about that with California on the other end. There’s a sense of freedom and openness and home. There’s nothing else quite like it. Of course, for Kathy, it’s the only place to live.

So, we went first to California and stayed for a week or two with our families and then went back up to Gardnerville, got the kids in school. That was in the fall term. I think we must have left early June, I guess. Got the kids into school in Gardnerville and a little apartment above an old Nevada house right in the middle of Gardnerville. In fact, the Yparraguirres, a Basque couple, had the

house, and he ran a shoe shop in Gardnerville.

They had this little apartment we used up there, and I continued my work. That's when Bill Jacobsen had begun to do his work, and Stan Freed would come through occasionally.

*Now, you didn't know Bill before at all?*

No. We met Bill, I guess, there in the field. I don't think I knew him at Cal. Later on I did. We would see each other, but I think we met him there, or he had corresponded with us while we were in the field. And Stan was coming in and finishing up some of his work, 1955, yes.

And I did an intense amount of work for the next six, seven, eight months. I wound up a lot of my work on distribution and territory, and peyotism. I have some very good data on the changes in the peyotist groups, all unpublished—you asked about that—not masses, but some very good stuff. Did a lot of interviewing, particularly ethnohistorical interviewing on the past and the development of the Washoe colonies in Nevada, Washoe attitudes about the changes in their social life, the history of the Washoe tribal councils and various people in them and their kinship relations.

It was a very heady time; it was very good. I can remember things like Franklin Mack going hunting. That's when sage hens were all over the place, like quail are here, and we'd get sage hen every week or so, two or three sage hens already plucked and ready, and we'd stew them. And they were delicious. Sage hen is a wonderful bird. And people would bring us pine nuts.

We had a very good relationship with the valley Washoe as well. We got to know

the Wyatts—the big Wyatt family—the Smokeys, and the Keizers, Delanie Keizer. And I was working with Hank Pete, this elder Washoe in Dresslerville, and Bertha and Mike Holbrook. This sort of balanced the work that I had done up in Woodfords with the peyotist families. So I was getting this feeling for a larger Washoe community.

I made many trips, up to Loyalton and Sierra Valley and Honey Lake and down into Antelope Valley and all through the mountains with various people, taking notes on place names and things of that kind. It was very good. To me, it was an ideal Western ethnographic trip, you know.

*Now, was your orientation in ethnohistory? How unusual, was that a current . . . ? Let's see, what am I trying to ask here? Were people there doing ethnohistory among the Indians?*

Oh, yes. As for me, Herskovits thought of himself as ethnohistorically oriented, Boasian, you know. You must know the history of the people in order to understand the change. But that was a narrower gauge orientation to ethnohistory than one might have today, but yes. And that as against structuralism or structural-functionalism, which was synchronic as against diachronic. We used to argue those concepts all the time—Synchronic approaches, which were on the flat in time, and then diachronic approaches, dealing with the time frame, et cetera. But no, I was interested not because of any theoretical orientation, but there was so little known about Washoe history as such.

*Yes. I was just interested in trying to get a sense of how many other people who were working with American Indians in the 1950s were exploring the ethnohistory of those groups.*

I'm not sure. It was mixed. I think there was a kind of a division in a way. I think that from a certain point of view, there were people who would look upon any kind of historical work as not being real serious scientific anthropological work, where you worked on the . . . in a sense, that anathema of the "ethnographic present." Well, that's not fair to the people who have a structural orientation—the idea that you studied social organization on the flat in great detail, you understood how people were laid out in space, what the behavioral systems were, what the institutions were of the society in great detail.

Now, there were some people who took that very seriously and did just that, and there were others who felt you had to have time depth and who are interested in the historical aspect and time depth. And sometimes this was contentious, you know, whether you did one or the other. But I never took that seriously.

*You never took the division seriously?*

I never took it seriously. However, it was there. And in a sense, sometimes you had to sort of defend yourself about it.

I have a lot of respect for the social structural-functionalist approach, in which you were dealing with social organization as such, as a social system. But I also, with the Washoe, was very interested in that great unknown factor of their development over the historical period, not only in pre-history, which some archaeologists were beginning to work on . . . like Bob Elston later on, who was one of our students here in Nevada, but then Heizer and Elsasser and others who had been working on the Piedmontian pre-history, which I was interested in also. Where had these damn people come from, you know? Then the linguistic problem that Bill

[Jacobsen] was working on, you know, whether or not Washoe was a Hokan language and whether it was Californian in its origin or had been for all time in the Great Basin. Those kind of problems interested me as pre-history, but also the historical, contact situation—a very unusual contact situation where the Washoe, a small group, had been overrun within a decade, within ten years!

The whole area had been taken over by whites, ranches, mines, and the Washoe were displaced and had become dependents almost immediately. Whereas the Paiute just a few miles away, because their land was not immediately desirable—Pyramid Lake all the way to Walker Lake out there in the desert—were left alone and were able to develop horse riding, horses, and cattle and were able to adjust to change and to remain a kind of autonomous group for a longer period. But the Washoe were overrun.

That fascinated me. It was an acculturative situation I thought was significant and to some degree unusual, in that they hadn't been wiped out. Although in the 1950s when we first came here, by god, people talked about the Washoe as if they were about to be extinguished. They were in the process of . . . "In a few years, you won't see any Washoe."

*Well, because I think in those days, too—and maybe that's not a factor of the times—but it's almost if you aren't a political entity, you don't exist.*

Yes, and they weren't a political entity. The so-called reservation wasn't a reservation. They had a colony or two colonies, and on the books, there were only six hundred of them. There probably were fifteen hundred of them, aboriginally, even by Kroeber's figures. There might have been two thousand.

But as [Jim] Downs says, and I agree with him, there could have been many more. They inhabited a verdant area, and there could have been a lot more Washoe in a wide distribution of groups in aboriginal times.

But anyway, that problem fascinated me. How did this group, slated for extinction . . . but they were hanging on, they were still here. And at the time, I was wondering whether they would last another ten, fifteen, twenty years. The youth was leaving, you know, and the tribe as a culture seemed to be declining and going out like a candle. And the fact that they had lasted at all intrigued me.

In fact, when I come to think of it, it's like the Gola in Liberia, a much larger tribe fighting assimilation by the American-Liberian colonists for 150 years. And here are the Washoe managing to hang on. This idea of tenacity (Herskovits's favorite word, the "tenacity" of culture), the continuity, the strength of that cultural impetus was still here. And as much as there had been decay, the cultural traditions held them together—what little they had like the girls' dances, like the pine nut harvest, like the shamans, for a period of time at least, and then later peyotism. These gave a kind of core to this identity. And so the whole idea of the role of beliefs in continuity and acculturation interested me.

So, all those things are what I would have eventually developed into a thesis, I suppose, on the Washoe. I have an unpublished manuscript on Washoe socialization and history that came out of some of that early work.

In fact, that Handbook piece pretty much reflects the kind of views that I developed about the Washoe as a people and hit some of what I thought were misconceptions about their organization—that they had not been this scrounging, hunting-gathering group

crawling around on their hands and knees over the Piedmont, but that they had been fairly well organized hunting-gathering-fishing groups, living in communities. They had this seasonal type of organization where there was a winter community and then summer mobility with gathering and fishing and hunting. And living fairly well. I saw no signs in any of the material that I could put together of pre-white starvation among the Washoe. That was all during the historical period, with changes in their economy. They had a pretty good area.

Another interesting thing: I used to argue with Jim [Downs] about this when he started doing work up here, and he used to always compare the Washoe—the non-agricultural, non-equestrian Washoe—with the Paiute and how the Washoe Ranch never could get off the ground, and how the Washoe weren't interested in cattle and things of that kind. And we used to have these intensive arguments about why Washoe were one way and the Paiute were another. And my view, I used to say, "I don't think people had to be agriculturalists or have domestic animals in order to do very well in a highly productive area," which this was, compared to what the Paiute had, which probably made the Paiute more adaptable to these new intrusions, like the horse and the domestication of animals. But on the other hand, the thing that really puzzled me . . . Jim and I would not argue about it but wonder how in the hell they were able to hold this very attractive territory.

*Yes, if they weren't as well organized.*

Here they were in probably the most verdant, productive natural territory in the region. And how did they keep out all . . . ? Well, my view now is that they didn't. They just gave way. People would go through.



Paiute would come in here and hunt, fish, travel through over Tahoe, over to California and back through the Pine Nut Mountains. And seldom were there fracasas about this, except if their subsistence base—necessary base—were interfered with, like the Pine Nut Range during the fall period of harvesting. If fishing was not good or if there were certain subsistence items that were running short, then there would be fracasas. But otherwise, I think the Washoe gave way.

When the whites came they didn't even know the Washoe were here, because they were hiding. You know, they had their little *gális dǎngal* and their little *gádu* all over the grassland areas that used to be in these valleys, and as Hudson in 1902 said, "It's hard to find a Washoe encampment, because they hid."

*Yes, in 1902.*

Well, sure, earlier, Fremont and others coming through this area, hardly mentioned any Indians, because the Washoe just . . . . I think they did that with one another and with other Indian groups coming through. Unless these people interfered with *their* access to resources, they left them alone. So, that may be one reason why the Washoe managed to hold it.

But on the other hand, they were pretty feisty aboriginally, apparently. At least from the point of view of their legends, and surrounding groups looked upon them as tough and war-like.

*Well, I think there was a lot of opportunity because of the extent of the territory and all of that to have . . . . I love the term you use "ventilated," that the territory was "ventilated with corridors of interchange." [d' Azevedo 1966] It's a wonderful way to look at it.*

Yes, and I think that might be part of the answer. There has to be others, but that's part of it. A small group. And maybe they were more war-like than we realize at one time. They like to think that they were, but you don't get that picture in the early historical period. They sort of gave in pretty quickly.

Now, while all this was going on, I was also corresponding with Leon Lipson, who was at Yale at the time. I think he was at Yale or in Washington. But I was sending around getting affidavits from people, and I should give a list of who I got affidavits from.

*Oh, yes. Are these like character references or just . . . ?*

Yes, affidavits about me, because that's one of the things that the State Department people said: "Well, if you're going to appeal this and you really think that you can do anything with this, we need to have some statements by people that he knows." Herskovits was one of the first. He wrote a wonderful affidavit, one that I find a little embarrassing, because he goes much too far in the other direction, you'd think I was a right-winger, I was so good, you know. [laughter] "How could he have any time to do anything political when I was working in this department, he had so much to do?" And on and on, but it was very good positive letter. Bill Bascom wrote one. So did Tuden, as a fellow student, and also the dean of Arts and Sciences—oh, what was his name?—Payson Wild.<sup>4</sup> I mean, it's interesting that in the academic world, people are willing to put themselves out.

Now, I'll go on. Of course my father and my brother wrote. My father, it almost brings tears to my eyes when I see this . . . . He didn't like what I was doing. He liked the fact that I was in school, but what I had been

politically was a real problem for him. We'd had real difficulties about that, but he wrote a very positive, feeling, supportive letter. And my bro . . . .

*Did you learn something about yourself from the letters, from these affidavits?*

In a way, but really these are all sort of formal things that people do for a purpose.

*I just wondered if you had any surprises.*

No. Well, in a moment. But, oh, a number of acquaintances like the Merrills, Dave Apter wrote one. There were a number of people like that, and what really surprised me is how they came through. People came through right away.

Now, with my father, my brother in a letter to me related that my father was worried about himself doing that, because I heard that he had been called a left-winger in Modesto, because he had not belonged to the American Medical Association because he thought it was a bunch of big shot bureaucrats, and he was part of the Physicians and Surgeons, a smaller group, and because he had been involved in just some charitable work around town, there was some reason for him to think, my brother said, that he might be looked upon as a little too far left, in a small rural town, you see. But he did it.

And then the surprises were the three or four people who had excuses for not doing so—one person because they needed their job badly and they had children to bring up, and they didn't want to take any chances, and they were so sorry, they hoped I would understand. That kind of thing. Or someone else in the field who said that the whole question was too close to work that they were doing

and they just thought it was not a good idea to get involved. And it's interesting. It came from sources you wouldn't expect. Yes, there were surprises.

And I still don't blame those people, because I'll tell you, the times were rough. They were rough. And at the time, I didn't have any bad feeling about people who refused. I just felt they had good reasons. However, some really didn't, but I felt that way at the time.

So, anyway, all these affidavits were coming in, and Leon submitted them to the State Department. But we got no response, absolutely no response from the State Department for those months through December, I guess it was. Yes, all the way to December.

Oh, yes, Herskovits and the department sent us a \$250 grant for fieldwork, \$250. In those days, that's what grants were from departments. Stan Freed got \$150 to go do his work on kinship with the Washoe—Kroeber's \$150. He said it was enough for him to buy, in those days, a Model T Ford. So, off he went.

So, anyway, then in December . . . I don't have my file of correspondence with Leon Lipson, because he asked for it when all this was over for their files back there. I wish I had it, because of all these discussions that were going on.

*Back where?*

At the legal firm, Cleary, Gottlieb Steen, and Hamilton. Or Leon himself, who probably was thinking of writing it up some time. Years later I asked him if I could get copies of it, and something happened where it just didn't take place.

*I wonder if that stuff is somewhere, though.*

It probably is, and he's still living, I think. Now and then, I contact him, or he contacts me. I send him articles now and then. Well, it's been three or four years since I did it the last time, but I used to send him stuff that I wrote just as, you know, "See, you got me this far, thank you." He may still have the letters. I don't know, but anyway, I wish I had them, because a lot of the strategy of what we were doing was discussed.

And all through that period, he kept presenting to me the possibility that I could shorten this thing in a moment. "You could save yourself a lot of time by one letter, by one affidavit in which you agree to cooperate to some degree."

And so, it just went on and on, and I had no intention of doing that. And he didn't plague me with it, but he always, as a lawyer, I guess, was presenting me with, "Here is what you can do."

And so all of a sudden—when was it?—in December of 1955, the word came through. I don't know how we got word—He got it, I guess, or the firm got it—that the passport had been granted. And there was no explanation at all, just, "Here it is." Well, we learned later that the reasons were that not only had there been a number of cases and suits against the State Department, but that wasn't the real reason, because they had the power on their side, but they could not find enough evidence to support their position. Not that they didn't believe they were right, but they couldn't get enough material to support their position. That was, I think, indicated in my freedom of information file.

*Because at the time, you never did know exactly why, you just thought maybe they'd lost interest?*

Well, later on, I knew. When I saw my file, my god, there was stuff in there that made

me look like, you know, "Hankle, go get your gun. Yeagle, go get your knife. We're going to nationalize Morgan Feller's wife." I mean, bomb throwing. Their view of the Left and communists was so weird, so distorted. Oh god, you know, what a world we'd live in if that had gone on! And it may come back again. I mean, because reason and logic and data made no difference. It was attitude and opinion, and backed by not only the government, but backed by popular feeling that had been riled up, you see.

So, later on, I . . . we realized they had all this material on me, but it was the kind where they would have to explain where they got it. And when I got my stuff, the things that were blacked out, people's names of informants that had given . . . . In some places, I could guess who the people had been. But oh, pages and pages of stuff blacked out.

One place they missed it. There was a letter from somebody who had said that they should be very careful about me, letting me go to Africa, because I was a dyed-in-the-wool communist and was capable of undermining American policy abroad and that my wife was worse. She was the one who had recruited me; Kathy had recruited me in high school. [laughter]

They had this retyped up as part of their . . . . You know, those files are fascinating studies of inquisitions, of the distortions of inquisitions.

*When did you get it? When did you get your file?*

Oh, gosh, this was late. This was in the 1960s I guess. The 1960s, early 1970s. I decided, based on some problem I had in getting a grant, I decided I'd better . . . .

*Oh. This makes a credit check look like a . . . .*

Yes, right. So, anyway the letter said Kathy had recruited me, and she was a dyed-in-the-wool communist and recruited me in high school. Well, we didn't know each other in high school, and Kathy had always dragged her feet on this. You know, she tolerated what I had been, but she herself, although probably her views are similar to mine, she just is not an activist, and she would not go as far. So, this was really the unkindest cut of all, that Kathleen had recruited *me* into the Communist Party.

Well, here's a hand-written letter that was photographed, and the name had been blocked out. But I was able to work out with my brother that it was a friend of my mother's—a poor old lady named Elizabeth Deacon, I think her name was, who had been very, very right-wing. Oh, she was more than right-wing. She was the daughter of the American right-wing, you know. A well-to-do woman, and she and my mother had a friendship. She had been very nice to my mother, and my mother liked her and admired her. And this was a letter to my mother based on her concerns about my mother's position of having a son who did these terrible things, and who wouldn't have wanted him to marry that woman [Kathy] anyway. That was the sad thing about it. My mother probably was easily lead to believe by this woman that Kathy had done this. You know, here your son marries a woman who . . . . And how could he be this way coming from a nice family that's so religious? It had to come from the outside, and Kathy's family not being deeply religious and all that sort of thing . . . .

It was kind of sad, but here we knew someone who had been . . . . And my brother was thunderstruck that this woman could have done this. Here it was in my file.

And so, there could be hundreds of things like that in one's file, just hearsay, statements coming in, things about myself that sometimes I wished had been true. I mean, I'd been a great leader, I had led the Communist Party on the West Coast, I was a big shot. My god, I mean, there were crazy things like that. But because somebody had fed in that kind of crap . . . paid or whatever informants, squealers of some sort, who made these things up because it sounded good and it gave them a certain panache with these FBI people.

OK. There we were, suddenly free to do what we pleased. Well, we knew we had to go to Africa. So in December, we head back, pick baggage, everything up, made one visit on the West Coast to our families, said goodbye to our Washoe friends, picked up a little trailer to the back of our car and headed for Northwestern. And in four weeks, we had to get ready.

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#### Notes

1. He and Janet Rae were married.
2. Eduardo Mondlane was born in 1920, the same year as d'Azevedo.
3. George Wildman Ball was under Secretary of State 1961-1966 for both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Ball was with the legal firm Cleary Gottlieb, Steen, and Hamilton in Washington D.C., 1946-1961.
4. Payson Wild was vice-president and dean of faculties at Northwestern, 1949-1969

## A GREAT ADVENTURE

**W**E GOT BACK to Northwestern in January, and we left, oh, the end of February—two months. If it hadn't been for Marianne and Ed Dozier, we would have never made it. They let us stay in their house. Marianne worked right along with Kathy in buying things, and we had about, I don't know, sixteen trunks, heavy-weather tropical trunks. Small ones, but there's a lot of them, because we had no idea where we were going; we had no idea what kind of way we'd be living. We knew we weren't going to live in a city. We were going to be living in the country, so we had mosquito nettings, we had everything that one might want under those conditions. And we didn't even know what that was, but we knew the kind of things we had to have for the kids.

*Was there a list that you got from the school or . . . ?*

Oh, no. We talked around and got advice from people who had been over and all that, lived under similar conditions. And I

think Ford had people who lived in West Africa, and they had some lists of things. But those didn't turn out to be so useful except their obvious items. But it was all your personal stuff and things like, you know, how much stuff was Kathy going to take for herself—soaps and lotions and clothes and things like that.

*Well, female hygiene things.*

All that. [laughter] All that. And the kids, you know, what would they need for all that period? And in schooling, we'd have to take some books and things like paper and pencils and all that, which, by the way, every bit became useable. If we couldn't use it, we could certainly trade for other things with it. I mean, there was nothing like that there.

And so, anyway, Marianne with Kathy's help and all of us got ourselves packed. And we got a reservation on a Farrell Lines ship out of New Orleans to West Africa. I think it was going to Dakar, Conakry, and Monrovia. And in those days, that took about three weeks to get across. That's the way you

went. Flights, you could take, but it was terribly expensive. We paid \$350 per person for that trip across. Can you imagine that? These days, it would be \$2000, \$3000, and flying, you know, at least one way. But we thought that was terribly expensive.

And Herskovits was in his glory, telling me absolutely useless things to take. One of them was a tuxedo! I had to have a tuxedo. That became, around Anthro House, one of the biggest laughs of all time. Herskovits is at it again, you know, Herky rides again. [laughter] But I just was not going to do it, not at all. I just said, "Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes." But he kept reminding me. It was one of the thousand other things. Irons—how do you iron things and all that? Well, we learned later we could get these charcoal irons at the markets. But we had a little iron and all that.

And Frances Herskovits was in on this. Everybody was helping this family. It was the first family Ford Foundation had ever had go into the field in Africa, and this would be the first couple with children. So, there was kind of cause célèbre involved with it.

And so, we're all packed, we're exhausted, absolutely exhausted. This is February in Evanston. It's still cold. What we needed was sleep. Kathy was at her wit's end, the kids were crabby, and I was scared and irritable. And Kathy and I were even fighting, you know, the usual arguments and all that. And so, it was the day before we were going, and I went to say goodbye to Herskovits, he says, "You got your tuxedo?" [laughter] I thought he was crazy!

And he made me. He said, "You must do it. I have been there. I know. *You* get a tuxedo, because you won't be able to afford to buy one over there no matter what, unless you borrow one from some official. You've got to have one."

And so, I promised to do it, and I went down to a thrift store in downtown Evanston, a little broken down thrift store and said, "You got a tuxedo?" [laughter] They held up this ratty thing with pinched pant legs and all that and great big lapels. It had obviously been a zoot suit, you know, for some orchestra leader. "Ten bucks."

"OK, give it to me. Wrap it up." I stuck that in my luggage.

And so, off we went. And, of course, the biggest spat that Kathy and I had the whole first part of that trip was that I was so slow in getting things together and taking so much time with the little chores that I had to do. When we got in the Dozier's car . . . oh, we had sent most our stuff by truck down to the train station in Chicago, and as we were going we had a flat tire, and I had to change it. I think it was Ed Dozier's car.

Kathy was furious, because we weren't going to meet our train. And this was, to her, the worst crime I could have committed—not doing my chores early enough so that we'd be there on time. The kids were tired, everything was chugging along. We get to the station, and of course, the train had gone, and we had to sit there for hours waiting for the next train.

Kathy wouldn't speak to me. She went into the women's lounge where there was a cot, and she stayed there for two or three hours and wouldn't talk to me. [laughter] So the kids would go back and forth between her and me. It was *terrible*. I really did goof. In those days I was always on the verge of missing planes. So, this was a very inauspicious beginning for a great adventure.

We finally got on a train, and I had had time to make sure that all of our baggage and, I don't know, twenty-two, twenty-three airtight, moisture-proof little trunks were on the

train. That was a problem, because nobody knew quite how to handle so much from a single individual. So it went into the baggage car, and I was worried about the way they were marking them, that they were going to be lost or mixed up. I was very anxious, of course. It was an awful time. Kathy was still mad at me.

And so, we got on the train and got going, and somehow or other that lifts the atmosphere. We're actually there and together. Finally, Kathy and I were able to speak to each other—I was able to speak to her. [laughter] And that scenery, south of Chicago and heading towards New Orleans . . . . The kids were in very good shape, actually enjoying the whole thing, tired as they were, and I think probably glad that their parents were able to speak to each other. [laughter]

[laughter] *What time of year was this again?*

March, yes, end of March. I'm not certain. Oh, one of the reasons why I guess all of us were not only anxious and tired, but not feeling well, we had taken every shot that the medical profession had. And in those days, nobody knew quite what to do for us. Nobody really knew much about the west coast of Liberia, and the doctors we had were sort of spacey about the whole thing and read some brochures. Even the state department was very uninformed. All they told you was how you had to be extremely careful about water.

And they told us to take things that we couldn't possibly take into the interior of Liberia, because in their view, they were used to telling people going to the Embassy and working on projects in Monrovia. At the other end were nice, four bedroom houses to put people up in and hot and cold running water and refrigerators and houseboys and all

that sort of thing. One of the bits of advice was about bringing games, we should bring checkers and cards, because the main entertainment was just among the houses of the [diplomatic] staffs, who would hold little parties and socials. [laughter]

Well, you know, you'd get sick to your stomach, because you're scared to death. You're not going there. You're going somewhere else.

And in those days, Aralen was the malaria prophylaxis, and we must have had a ton of that, and we had started taking it. So, we were just feeling actually physically not too sharp.

We had shots for tetanus, typhoid, yellow fever, there were others that I don't remember. And for some of these, you had a reaction—the kids did. You know, they didn't feel too good. And then we were worried that there should have been others, because we were hearing horror stories from people who had come back from Africa, other parts of Africa, always saying the west coast was worse.

It turned out not to be quite that way. But when people don't know much about an area, you get these hysterical rumors—that we had to watch out for Guinea worm and the kids must never go barefoot or they were going to get terrible things from the water and from the mud. And the mosquitoes were the worst kind in West Africa and on and on and on, and the bugs were enormous, of course.

I never did get along very well with insects, large ones in particular. I have to say, to begin with, that Africa cured me of whatever phobic problems I had—arachnophobia and others—because everything was so large that nothing in this country can ever bother me again. [laughter]

But we heard these stories ahead of time, and you know, I had visions of fighting off enormous tarantulas . . . [laughter] nightmares. But all of this was going on at once, and it was a kind of a heavy time for a family, particularly when we heard we were the only family that the Ford Foundation had sent over to Africa. And the Herskovitses were so concerned, and our friends were writing letters and advising us about things that were utterly useless, things that we knew about.

And so, here we were, you know, off to see the wizard. [laughter] It was quite wild. And I had a chance to do a lot of reflection on what the hell I was going to do. I had a thesis proposal on the Gola, and I had two papers on the Gola, which were all structural-functional and utterly ridiculous and meaningless, that had been part of my planning and picking a problem, a program of work.

Probably my best advice had come from Bill Bascom, straight-forward ethnographic field research type of approaches. And then I had this sort of grandiose basic program, for which I'd gotten the grant, on a study of a tribe's resistance to acculturation and change and the impact of the black colonial government, compared with the reaction of other surrounding tribes. So, it was a very complex problem, about which I knew nothing. There just wasn't much literature.

I had to extrapolate from Kenneth Little's work on the Mende, and an older work that had been done on the Kpelle, on the Vai, and a few other groups. I had some idea of the type of group the Gola might be, but they were, again, special and unique within this western providence of Liberia—the old western providences, they called it those days, and now it's Bomi county, [Grand] Cape Mount county.

So, my head was spinning with, "What have I wrought? What am I getting into?" And I didn't know how we were going to live.

We had all of this stuff that was an accumulation of advice from dozens of people so that we had ten times more than we were going to need, and I felt a little embarrassed about what we had. I wasn't embarrassed later on. I was very happy to have it. Everything was useful; if we couldn't use it, somebody could. But at this point, I just didn't know, and I thought, "What am I doing? It's like I'm going on a safari." And people had told us we needed even more—we need this and we needed that. My god, I don't have a list, but we made list after list.

So, all this was going through my head. And I didn't want Kathy to be any more anxious than she was, and so I kept a lot of my worries to myself. But I was fraught. [laughter] It was a major task. I mean, this was my first major . . . .

*And you knew when you went that you were going to be there for two years?*

Yes. Well, eighteen months, and I would stay on a bit longer.

*But you knew at the get-go that it was going to be that long?*

Yes, I had funds . . . . Well, let's see. How did Ford do that? I think I had funds for twelve months with an extension of six months, and then I stayed a little longer. We'll go into that later, running out of money and not pacing myself properly; I remember thinking I had enough, which you *never* do.

Anyway, yes, we knew we were going to be there for an extended period. And in those days, that *was* an extended period in one



place. I took the Ford grant. I think I got an SSRC grant too and . . .

*What's that, SSRC?*

Social Science Research Council. And there was one other. I think all of them came through, but I took the one that had the most funds. [laughter]

Then everybody told me it was not enough, though it seemed, sizable to me. God, it was \$11,000! Today, it wouldn't even get you started for a trip of that kind. But you know, to us, to me, that was an enormous sum.

*Yes. Well, in those years, I think it was.*

It was, but it wasn't too much for where we were going, yet it was a good sized grant.

We had a chance [on the train] to read some letters that we had gotten before we left from our friends. Long letter from Art Tuden, who was interim at Princeton on his way to Rhodesia where he was going to do his fieldwork. He had gotten a Ford grant as well. He hated Princeton, as I remember, couldn't wait to get out and get into the field. He was going on a rather rugged field trip, taking camping equipment, so he was going into the interior of Rhodesia working with the Bahila, I believe.

And there were others. Paula Hirsh was in Uganda. She had been a fellow student. She had already gone over. Surajit Sinha wrote to us. He was at Chicago, I think, as a research assistant and was planning to return to India and do investigations there. He later became an important figure in whatever department of ethnography the Indian government has. So, we heard from him, and everybody wrote as though they'd never see

us again. [laughter] At least it seemed that way to us. We had the feeling that, you know, "My god, where are we going?" It was like over the edge of the world, and I was embarrassed feeling that way, so I didn't talk about it.

I was embarrassed feeling worried, you know. I thought, "Everybody's done this. This is the thing to do." I didn't realize it *was* a rather unique field trip. It wasn't just the ordinary trip to Africa and then back.

Herskovits was in a state of elation because three or four of his students had gotten grants, and they were going to Africa, so he was flying high. And he wasn't the kind that liked to listen to complaints or worries. I mean, you don't worry. Old Mel Herskovits was always on the upper. You went ahead, and you did your job, and you didn't talk about problems, personal problems. You talked about field problems, you talked about research problems, and you didn't get much help on that level either, as I remember.

But we got a letter from him and Frances Herskovits, who was worried about the kids and again advising us what to do about their schooling and all of that. And then we had letters from our families.

All these, this is just too much. You know, there's something about taking off and you have the feeling, "What the heck's going on? What am I doing? I'm leaving the world." These people felt that we were leaving the world or seemed to. [laughter]

I had a very fine letter from my father. I was thinking, "My god, the trouble I've had thinking about him, my attitude about him," I was sort of blaming myself, that I was really responsible for that, because he wrote uncharacteristically nice letters and full. One of them, I remember, was wonderful. We laughed about it, about my grandmother—

my Swedish grandmother—living with them. And he was now married, of course, to my aunt, my mother's sister.

And he told us about how she would sit in front of the television set all through the shows of Liberace particularly. She loved Liberace, she was madly in love with him. Here she was a woman in her eighties, I guess. And she really didn't understand what a television set was. You couldn't take her to the movies, because she was part of it. I remember the family, years before that, had taken her to see *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, or something like that, about the crucifixion of Jesus. They took her, and she fell down weeping in the aisle, crawling on her hands and knees praying for them to save the Lord. Because she was there, she was in it, she was one of the crowd. Well, they would never take her to the movies again, because to her it was all real; it was happening right there in front of her. And so, the same with televisions. Television, the people were looking at her, and they were there, and she would sometimes speak to them.

She knew that they were busy and they couldn't really carry on a conversation. But with Liberace, it was too much. She knew he was looking at her and that he was interested in her, and if other people were sitting around in the room, she would say, "I don't know why he's not looking at you people. It's very impolite. He shouldn't do that. He's only talking to me." So, here, my father's writing this very witty, wonderful letter, which we enjoyed. The upshot of that was that she had heard Liberace was too close to his mother, that his mother decided everything for him. And she felt he needed to get away from his mother, and she was prepared to marry him. She really wanted to. [laughter]

This was just like her willingness to marry my father after my mother died. Oh, this

wonderful old lady who had been a peasant on Swedish farms and had bundled. You know what bundling is?

No.

Well, bundling is the Scandinavian custom where on winter nights, they had parties, and all the young people would be together. And they couldn't go home in the snow, and they'd all sleep in the top of the barns, and they called that "bundling" with a board between the girls and the boys. Each couple had a high board between them so that they couldn't get at each other.

And she would always giggle about these parties. But she was very devout Christian, so she's very careful not to go into why people were bundled with a board except that she said they had such a good time. [laughter]

And so, you know, that letter brought all that back. It was sort of a human touch in this wild thing that we were involved in. And, oh, we had letters from . . .

*Now are these letters that you're reading aboard ship or you're just talking about your . . . ?*

No, on the train. We hadn't had a chance to read anything, so I took a bundle of these letters that we had received, and we were reading them. Some of them were awful and we didn't read those, but some were wonderful. And this one from my father, we enjoyed enormously. And my brother wrote and I had a couple of letters from seamen friends and shipmates, and people from the waterfront.

*You know, I forget, and I think people take for granted now it's the kind of interchange that today would probably take place on a telephone . . .*

And the Internet.

. . . and on the Internet. And some people still write notes, but we expect to get that kind of feedback on the phone.

Oh, yes. Yes, you had letters in those days. A phone was too expensive. You didn't phone unless it was an emergency—no, always letters. And people are always complaining, "You haven't written. I wrote you two months ago, and I haven't heard from you. Why don't you write?" You know, that sort of thing, because that was the way you got information or by people coming through visiting, you'd get rumors. And then you'd get a letter saying, "We talked to so-and-so who told me you were doing this and that and the other thing. Why haven't we heard from you?"

And, oh, I had letters from [David] Mandelbaum, congratulating us.

*Oh, really! That's wonderful.*

Yes, it was wonderful. He was a wonderful guy. And my old professor Eberhard, you know, who said he remembered that I had written those papers in his classes, and now there I was on my way to Liberia. Those kind of wonderful little things that you appreciate when they happen. Bob Heizer wrote me because I had been corresponding with him about the Washoe work and said, "Well, you'll have to get back here when you come back. You have to keep this thing [Washoe work] going."

So, you know, all that interchange was going on. Oh, and Pete Hammond, who was a fellow student, he was in Upper Volta working with the Mossi; he'd already gone. So, Herskovits had a lot of people placed over in Africa. It was for him, a great year, those two or three years. There were a lot of students coming back from fieldwork and a lot going out.

*It must have felt really productive to him.*

Yes. Yes, he felt that the program was paying off, things were really happening. And they were. It was something. So when I had the passport problem and I finally got the passport, to him, this was the final proof of the pudding. The program had vitality.

And in fact, he had every reason to take a lot of credit for that, because he had gotten the legal advice and things of that sort. But he had been very worried, I understand. He told a couple of people that it had been a trying time worrying about what was going to happen. He had also decided that if I didn't go, he was going to find funds for me to do some fieldwork with the Washoe, which was an extremely fine gesture. Now, he didn't tell me, but he told someone else who wrote to me about it.

Oh, and the other thing is I got a letter from Leon Lipson, the lawyer, saying how great it was. "And now," he says, "I'm sure you are interested in what the charges are for these services: \$206."

[laughter] Well, it was a gift, and he said I could pay it in installments as I wished, but now that I had a grant, maybe I could find it a little quicker.

But it wasn't just him. This was this great, very fine law firm that had agreed to this amount. It was just a gift, you know. They had to put something on the books.

So, anyway, on our way down we were slowly getting a little sleep on the train and feeling that things were on their way. Going off to nowhere. And we got to New Orleans and went to a hotel. I don't remember where it was. It was an ordinary little hotel. And there would be a delay, we'd have to be two days waiting for the ship to be ready to go. And I'm calling the Farrell Lines, and they

said, you know, "Well, we'll just have to let you know when."

*Could you take your baggage down early?*

I think the baggage went. I'm not sure. These things are all very dim in my mind. If Kathy were sitting here, she would know some of these things. But no, I think I went down and secured the baggage, but it was in a warehouse and not on the ship yet. But everything seemed to be there.

And so, I came back and decided to call an old friend of mine, Joe Pierce. He was a black guy who I knew while I was on the waterfront. I got to know him at the California Labor School. Very fine guy. Knew him well. And he had a big family in New Orleans and children—he had seven or eight kids. Young guy, very intelligent. I liked him a lot. Very left-wing, but not really politically hip. Well, what else could he be?

He was certainly a liberal, and the California Labor School had really energized him. He'd been sort of an ordinary chap, until he got involved in the Labor School, took courses and he took part in the events. That was a great time in his life.

He and I became great friends, and Kathy and the kids knew him. And then we lost track, because he went back to New Orleans. We'd get letters now and then and sent pictures of his family.

*Was he a student at Cal or the labor . . . ?*

No, no. He was doing some kind of work in San Francisco, but he got attached to the Labor School. I met him there. And, oh, those were the days of the Third Party and other things of that kind going on. So there were a lot of social events where people would come together, and there would be dinners

and barbecues and dances and raffles and stuff of that sort. The Labor School was one of the centers of that.

So, I got to know him pretty well for a year or two, and then he went back to New Orleans. And now and then we'd exchange letters. So, here I was in New Orleans, I thought I'd give Joe a ring. And it was fateful—it was my leaving for Africa on my first field trip and returning from my last trip to sea back in 1949, that had similar overtones.

I got him, and he was delighted to hear from me, but I told him I couldn't really go down. I couldn't find him in New Orleans, could he come to the hotel? And his wife worked and everything, so it couldn't be a family thing. We had no chance for us all to get together.

And so, I don't know, a few hours later, I got a phone call from down on the desk at the hotel. And, "Mr. d'Azevedo, there is a person here to see you."

And I said, "Well, who is it?"

And there was a pause, "A Mr. Pierce."

And I said, "Well, send him up!"

"We can't do that, sir. We are not able to do that."

I said, "Well, why not?" And I was furious. Little by little, it dawned on me, but, you know, there's a great stupidity if you're a liberal left-wing kind of person from the North. And even though you experience something, you just don't believe it. And you forget it; it's out of your mind.

And I said, "Send him up, because we would like to see him, and my family can't come down."

"I'm sorry, sir! We are *unable* to do that!"

So, I said, "Well, then tell him to wait. I'm coming right down." So, I went down. He wasn't in the lobby, he was sitting out on the steps of the hotel.

I said to the woman on the desk, I says, "What's going on? There's a friend of mine that I've known for years, and why isn't he here?"

She says, "We are unable to service people unless they are working here. And you will have to see him outside." And she was so definite and, you know, this stupid man who, we have to set straight, kind of thing. What kind of an animal was I that I didn't understand the rules?

So, I went out and sat on the steps talking to Joe for a while and sort of reminiscing, getting back to where we were. And he had a car, and we got in the car and drove around New Orleans talking for, I don't know, a couple of hours. It just wasn't the time when we could go to his house. His wife worked and all that and we were all . . . Kathy and the kids were worn out.

Kathy came down to see him on the steps of the hotel. It was awful. I remember being so angry, and yet . . . Oh, and I said, "Joe, can't you do something about it? I mean, why don't you just come in with me, and we'll just go up and . . ."

And he said, "Look, Warren, just let's visit. Let's don't have any trouble. Let's just visit. I don't want to have a great big struggle here on the street on the steps of this hotel. Look, it's good to see you, and we should just talk." And we got in his car and drove around.

I was always getting into that. I remember that happened a number of times with me on the waterfront with mixed gangs we'd go around with, and then something would come up, and the white guys would always want to go in and raise hell and do something, and the black guys would say, "For god's sakes, we're supposed to be out here having fun. We're supposed to be having a drink, you know. Just lay off. Forget it. Do this somewhere else. Do it under other conditions."

So, this was exactly the same, and Joe was just saying, "Hey, look, for god's sakes, you're going to have your couple of hours visiting with me in the hoosegow." [laughter]

So, anyway, I saw Joe Pierce. And I'll never forget that. Here I was getting ready to go to Africa, and Joe acted as though he'd never see us again. "Oh, wow, that's quite a trip. Where are you going? What town?"

I said, "Well, we're really going up-country to villages."

"Oh, wow. Gee, take it easy. You guys watch yourselves." You know, his view was that we were really going into wild and barbaric country.

*Yes. Well, in those years, like you say, there was so little information.*

Well, you know, somehow talking to a black friend in those days about Africa was pretty strange, because there wasn't necessarily a friendly, outgoing feeling of Africa. The idea of Africa was important, but somehow Africa itself was a little scary to a lot of American blacks. They had been made to feel that way, you know, to a considerable degree.

*I know that this was a big topic, an area of concern with Peace Corp volunteers, dealing with American blacks going to Africa as volunteers and kind of a backlash, because they were not ready for the reality. The idea was . . .*

They were sometimes hostile to Africans. And Africans in the United States didn't have a very good name. They were considered to be uppity, they were considered to be contemptuous of American blacks. Sometimes they were better educated, the ones that came over and better prepared to get jobs or to move into white society, where they were sometimes lionized, because they were

Africans, where the local American blacks were still on the outs.

*Well, I really hadn't thought of that, but yes.*

Oh, yes. Oh, gosh, I remember stories about some American black posing as an African prince and being wined and dined through the South. [laughter] I mean, there were all kinds of wonderful things like that reported to have happened. But they would see this, that foreign blacks, although they were still blacks and still discriminated against, they were dealt with as exotic figures.

In fact, that goes back to . . . Oh, who was that wonderful black man who went back to Africa? Oh, I wrote about him at one time. I was going to do a special study. He returned to Liberia, the American Colonization Society, because he was going to act as a liaison between the American government and the savannah tribes. And, oh god! Oh, I can't remember his name, you know, but somehow or other, that theme goes through the South, and blacks are aware of it, too.

But also, it's the idea that the cultures are different. There's a strangeness. And they have been brought up in the idea of darkest Africa.

I always felt very humble about taking exception to these views with people I knew like Joe and others, because it's so complex. One couldn't possibly understand it. I realize all of the different forces that were at work in an American black, particularly in an ordinary lower middle-class or working-class black. Their attitude toward Africa had come up through their family lines over the generations as ex-slaves, et cetera, the attitude toward Africa, the attitude toward the United States. The kind of poison that was given them in the historical view of other cultures in Africa in schools and by missionaries, et

cetera, et cetera, and by their churches, you know—the non-Christian pagans, you know, and at least we are Christians. I mean, so many levels that, over time, I was extremely tolerant and very careful and hesitant to make judgments about that. And now and then, I would find myself preaching to somebody that I knew, and then I'd stop, realizing how ridiculous that I'm telling somebody else, like Joe Pierce, how they should feel about things, when what I should really be doing is finding how they feel and why they feel, because it is such a deep and problematic kind of thing.

So, anyway, there was my meeting with my friend Joe. We corresponded for a few years after that, but then I lost track of him. I have no idea. I've always wondered whether I shouldn't try to track him down if he's still living in New Orleans.

So, then the day came, and we got to the ship. We pulled our little tribe together and got in a taxi. [laughter] And we still had a lot of baggage left to take on the ship. We went down to, I think it was, the *Del Sol* of the Farrell Lines. I think that was the name of the ship. At least on the photograph that we have, the life preservers say *Del Sol*. Somebody told me it was the *African Patriot* of the Farrell Lines, but I don't think so. It was the *Del Sol*.

So we got aboard, and I had the feeling, "What am I doing getting back on a ship now?" [laughter] All this *déjà vu*.

*Oh, that must have been amazing.*

Yes, well, on top of everything else, this sense of estrangement, you know, and . . .

*You must have had a sense of, "Oh, boy, if some of the people that I shipped with could see me now." [laughter]*

Well, yes, in a way. But some of the people that I shipped with, their kind were on that ship. Also the idea that here I'm bringing my family to sea this time, and on a freighter! This was an old Farrell Lines freighter that was going to West Africa, loaded with cargo. There was cargo for Dakar and Conakry and Monrovia.

*Conakry, where is that?*

Conakry is south of Dakar, Senegal and Gambia, it's that section of Guinea that comes down to the coast.

So, we finally got on this ship and in our little cabins. It was a very ordinary little ship. It wasn't very sumptuous, and there were twelve passengers all together, I think, including us. And there was a single large room where everybody ate and was sort of the recreation room, et cetera. And then all around were little cabins for passengers (like our fo'c's'les). And so, we got settled on the ship. We didn't leave for a day. We left the next morning.

That was a wonderful feeling, finally. [laughter] Kathy and I remember I was saying to her, "Well, Kathy, we're at least on the ship, and we're heading east across the ocean. We can't do anything about it now. Here we are. We can't get off the train, we can't do anything. We're on this little bouncing cork."

It was a pretty crummy old ship. I remember looking at it with a practical eye, all the rust, and it needed a paint job. And the crew of course, I had an eye for the crew. But I think it was an SIU (Seamen's International Union) AF of L ship out of New Orleans. It was pretty much lily-white or Hispanic. And I don't remember any blacks—even in the stewards' department, I don't think so. And they were a rather sad, crummy lot. I remember trying to get to know some of them.

The messman, who liked Erik and showed Erik all over the ship, was great. He was sort of our . . . yes, he was the messman for the passages, something of a steward for the passengers. Very nice guy. I think he was Honduran or something.

I remember over the next few days trying to get to know some of the crew. And once or twice, I was allowed or invited to come down to the crew's mess. And we talked union and seafaring and all that, but I was very careful not to talk . . . They were all right-wing members of the conservative union and not at all politicalized like the seamen that I had known on the West Coast. And I just felt that I was in . . . well, it was like the SUP, you know. I was back in the old AF of L lily-white unions.

But it was fascinating, and I was able to carry on long conversations with many of them and found out what their problems were. Their problems were the ancient problems of seamen rather than modern problems of politicalization of the unions. [laughter] And there were some Wobblyesque types of characters aboard.

But anyway, we were on the way. And there began our connection with Liberia, because there was a Mr. Williams, whose full name I don't remember, who was a black American, an elderly man, a very fine, dignified old man who wanted to meet part of his family that was in Liberia. They were an old Liberian family and had split off, had gone over during the period of the American Colonization Society colonization of Liberia in the nineteenth century, and others had stayed in the states. But they corresponded, and they were always interested in one another, and so he was going over to visit them.

*How typical is that—families that were split by the colonization?*

Not a lot, but there are certainly a lot of studies of that in the colonization of Liberia, way back.

*And the maintenance and ties to the states, though?*

Oh, yes. Continuing ties to the states, letters. There are two or three books out of letters written back and forth from the Liberians, particularly early letters, which are fascinating. The black colonists writing back to their families about how things are. And some thought it was glorious and some thought it was hell. Oh, yes, that's an old pattern. I can't say how prevalent it was, but there were quite a few. And there were organizations in the states, church-sponsored organizations of aid to Liberia and in connection with Liberia.

However, Liberia didn't have a particularly good name among most blacks. It was considered to be an unsuccessful country. And there was a very complex attitude about Liberia among blacks that I knew. Some had a positive view that was based on the idea of the colonization of Africa by Christian American blacks, by released slaves. They had formed a government, and how wonderful it was. You get that, and then you get the other picture, "Yes, but look at the conditions over there, and it's a dictatorship. They're doing the same thing to the blacks over there that the whites did to the blacks here." You get all these various kinds of reactions.

Mr. Williams, though, was just a nice old gentleman going to see his family. We'd sit and have these conversations for hours. He didn't know anything about Liberia except by mail, and he wanted to go over and see it before he died and see his family.

*Were they in Monrovia, or was he going up-country?*

I think the ones he was going to see were in Monrovia, but some were up-country. They would have been the upper-class Liberians. They may not have been well-to-do, but they would be the "kwi," or the American-Liberian settler descendants.

*"Kwi"—is that a colloquial term?*

*Kwi* is a local colloquialization I guess all through the country. *Kwi* means "strangers from over the sea," and the whites and the black colonists were *kwi*. Anybody who dresses like Europeans or speaks like somebody who has gone to a European westernized school is a *kwi*, and all whites are *kwi* from over the sea. I think I have related that to the term *yun kwi*. The Gola have *yun kwi*, and others have terms for these "water people," people of the water. So it, in the old days, would refer to people who come from the water. During the war, submarines really made an impression on the coastal native people. "Oh, these are the real *kwi*. Look, they go under the water, completely underwater." So, *kwi* is the way it turned out in the vernacular.

Then we met Mrs. Miller—Miriam Miller, Ma Miller—the missionary. She was a Lutheran missionary heading back to her post on the upper Saint Paul River, the *kpollo kpelle* Mission on Dingshu Island. And she was a sturdy lady, I tell you. Every morning, we heard "clunk, clunk, clunk, clunk, clunk." She would make five turns or more around the deck doing her daily constitutional. She was in her sixties, I think.

She really took to the kids right away. They liked her. She was very nice, a sweet





Anya and Erik d'Azevedo with Miriam "Ma" Miller, a Lutheran missionary.

lady, and she and Kathy got along very well. It was very convivial. We were on that ship three weeks, I think.

And she and I got along, but she had me pegged right away for good reason. I was an atheist and a pagan who needed help, who had *not* led his family correctly. And so she would sometimes preach to me, you know.

All missionaries and all that sort of thing I had rebelled against in my family, and so here I was not ready for Ma Miller. But she was very subtle and very smart, and she would just talk about how one gets through life. One needs to have guidance, and one needs to have the Lord, and one should be saved. And I was thinking of my old grandmother, how she had been trying to save me all along. [laughter]

*Here she was aboard ship. [laughter]*

Here she was, reincarnated as Ma Miller in a much more sophisticated form. And I would be polite and just say, "Now, Mrs. Miller, it's not for me. I've got my own philosophy and my own way."

"Well, that will not get you through life. This will not be enough, Warren, I tell you. And you're bringing your children up without the Lord, and this is terrible," and on and on. It was very depressing, you know, because she felt this strongly, but she realized, and she finally left me alone. [laughter] But she still had her eye on me as somebody who was going to have his comeuppance.

Kathy's much better at this than I am, because as a woman with an older woman, she was able to talk about other things. The two of them had a very nice connection. Kathy, who is very secular, has a way of being very polite with people like this.

Sometimes they think that they have her in their grasp, and they don't realize that it would be harder to do a job on Kathy than on me. [laughter]

And she would talk to the kids. They'd come and tell us, "Ma Miller was telling us that we've got to pray every night, pray to the Lord," and all that.

And I always found this difficult, because I had not done this ever. I usually talk to my kids about religion and tell them what I knew and the history and all that, but here was somebody telling them that they ought to pray because, you know, it's very important. So, little by little, it took me all through the next year or so in Africa to work this out, because everywhere the kids went, people prayed. I mean, you prayed before you ate, you prayed after you ate, you prayed before you went to bed, you prayed outside during the day. And, you know, the local Gola and other Liberian kids were praying all the time as a matter of course. Sometimes they might not have the slightest idea what they were doing, except you just did it. That was the thing to do. And Westerners were expected to be like missionaries, you know. They were all missionaries.

*Well, you were somehow incomplete if you couldn't tell somebody what church you belonged to, right?*

Well if you didn't believe in God . . . . "Do you believe in God? Do you believe in the Lord?" And how are you going to answer that honestly?

Well, I learned to say, "I have my own beliefs, and they're very much my own," or something like that, and people, by the way, would be very polite about this. But I was always thought to be a little bit beyond the pale by anybody who was very religious.

*So, how did you handle it with the kids?*

The kids? I told them that rarely I liked to pray. [laughter] I told them I gave them permission. I gave them very unnecessary permission. I said, "It's very good, and I think I know how to pray. And Ma Miller probably knows, certainly better than me, how. Have her tell you how to pray. And then if you feel like you want to do it and you think that it's good, *do* it, and certainly go ahead with it."

I think Erik used to pray, just like he would—the same voice that he would be Zorro or Superman. He would talk to the Lord as though he was talking to Buck Rogers or something of that kind, because it was the same ilk. [laughter]

And I would talk to him about it, you know, how important this was to some people and how they believe this and how my family did. Oh, they had been preached to by my relatives and by my grandparents, and so they knew what that meant.

But they didn't think they were going to get it here, and here they were on a ship going to Africa, and they had this high-powered lady. So, there was the beginning or the introduction. And I, of course, later had tremendous respect for that lady. We were so fortunate to have met her, because she was very helpful to us in very practical ways.

We had no idea what we were going to do when we got off the ship. We had written to people. There were people who knew we were coming, but we didn't know them. And so, it was all a matter of touch-and-go. We were pretty much on our own. She's the one that told us about the hotel that we could stay in for a few days, anyway. She's the one who said that she knew people who might have places for us to stay in Monrovia while we were there. And she had her eye on get-

ting the kids into her little school, which, eventually, she did. [laughter] And regardless of what the effect was on them, it was certainly a good thing that we were able to do that, because the village became impossible after a while.

But anyway, here we were, three weeks or more. We stopped at Dakar. Had a marvelous day in Dakar at the markets, and the kids got a feel for . . . .

*Now, you'd never shipped to Africa before, had you, in the merchant marine? So, this was your first . . . .*

My first trip to Africa.

Yes. So, *Dakar was your . . . .*

My first entry, yes. But Dakar was a pretty sophisticated place compared to where we were going. Nevertheless, it was loaded with Africans and wonderful African activity on the streets and in the markets. And the kids enjoyed it immensely, and they thought, "Oh, maybe we're here. We made it!" Kathy loved Dakar. I was sorry to leave.

*Were you struck by the . . . ? Was it true then that the night life was . . . . By night life, I don't mean night club life, I mean, that there's so much activity at night.*

Yes, but we saw that from a ship. But yes, oh, well, that's true everywhere in Africa; things go on, like the days pretty much.

But I don't remember whether . . . well, the villages, of course, closed down unless there was a play going on or some kind of festival, a singer in town. That goes on all night, but I think Monrovia sort of closed down late. But as I remember, Dakar seemed to be lively all night.

*So, you stayed aboard ship, though.*

Well, yes, because we were only there one day. Then we went back to our ship, and we were at the dock.

*Did you get to see any thing besides the market? I'm just trying to get an idea of your first impression.*

Oh, yes. We were there all day in the markets, wandering around. We went to the mosque, saw the public buildings, a very beautiful, colorful town, Dakar. I can't remember all the things that we did.

Oh, there was a museum there and offices of the French Research Institute. The name escapes me right now. There was somebody I had written a letter to, but they had just published a book on West African trade and French . . . . The name's escaped me, but yes, I went to the museum and the office of this research institute. And the man who had written this survey was there, and I met him, and he showed me through the collection. That's right. They had a wonderful collection of steatite figurines and things of that sort. Oh, all this is in my notes, but I've forgotten it. It just came back to me now.

OK. So back on the ship, and then we stop briefly at Conakry. We got ashore but not really longer than an hour or two. They were mostly loading and unloading. A very busy, industrial sort of a port, at that point. It had connections with the interior to Guinea, and I was very interested in the African types that were on the docks that meant I was getting close to the kind of people that I'd be seeing.

And we were hoping that we'd have to stop at Freetown in Sierra Leone, but we didn't. Oh, we had also passed the Cape Verdes. That's another thing, that was, to me

very good, because we passed by the Cape Verde Islands, and I could see them and I was able to tell the kids that maybe some of their ancestors had come from there, and the Azores were further to the north.

And we saw these marvelous, large basking sharks. I saw one one day, and nobody else had seen it. And I called to a crew member and asked, "Hey, you see that enormous thing?" To me, it looked like a black log and wide-ish kind of a thing and just basking. Enormous! It looked like it was big as the ship. And I got the kids up there to see it as we were leaving. And then behind it were the Cape Verdes—a very romantic moment. I began to feel like was really heading out on a field trip.

*Did you have any resonance with that whole idea that you were retracing some of the slave ship routes?*

Oh, yes, yes. I was loaded with that kind of feeling and viewpoint at that point, because I had done a lot of work in this area. It had been one of my interests. Oh yes, I realized I was with those flat, doldrum seas of the slave trade. Oh yes. And I should have said that the Cape Verdes had that meaning to me, the Portuguese slave people.

One branch of my family that my Portuguese grandmother denied, the Gomeses had come from the Cape Verdes, and she just denied that there was any real connection. [laughter] I met one—that's how I knew—when I was working in Berkeley when I was driving a delivery truck. And I met a Gomes that turned out to be related distantly to a d'Azevedo family from somewhere other in southern California. And we

were putting pieces together, and we decided that we were related.

*Well, that's one thing about oral tradition, as you well know, if there's something about your past you don't like, you can just . . . [laughter]*

Take it out. Anyway, so I told my grandmother Amalia, and she says, "Oh, no, no, no. Warren, there's no Gomes in our family. No Gomes," and she says, "They're the dark Portuguese."

"Yes, I met a very dark, very nice guy."

"Oh, well, not family. No, there's no family connection." I wanted to be sure there was, so . . . [laughter]

Yes, New Orleans to West Africa, all of that was richly elaborated with the stuff that I had worked on and did. And the fact that I was on what appeared to be a lily-white ship was significant to me. Now here I am going to Africa with whities, you know, and we'll see.

We passed Freetown. We could see the coastline of Sierra Leone and the various islands that had been slave depots all along. I mean, one of the main ones was the mouth of the Mano River and the coastline of the Vai country and all that had been great important slave centers. And as we approached Monrovia I could see all of the landmarks that the colonists had talked about—Crown Point and the mouth of the Saint Paul River and the Lofa River. You could see these little inlets as you went down, and all these had tremendous historical importance. So, I really had a feeling that I was coming to something that was a mesmerizing kind of experience, to be this close.

THE SEA WAS hot and glassy. This was the tail-end of the harmattan which comes to the coast in March, April, just before the real heavy rainy season. And it was very hot and humid. Monrovia was just this little town at a distance from Crown Point and the lagoon where the early colonists had landed on Providence Island. You could see it. Just a couple of years before this there had been no docks. It was the war that had created the docks. The Americans had helped with it, but before that, in the early 1940s, you had to go in by canoe on the surf. So, I was thinking this is what we would have been doing, but we were able to slip into this dock.

And this crowd of people . . . and I knew that some of them, they were Kru people, Kru men, a very famous shipping tribe along the coast, a trading tribe. And they were mostly the ones on the dock.

*That's a tribal name?*

The Kru, yes. Well, the word "Kru," there was a big argument about. Did the Kru tribe

get it's name from the British "crew," and did Kru come from the fact that these people had done all the work along the coast?

So, anyway, there they were, the Grebo and Kru, and already, I'd done enough searching of the literature and photographs that I had these stereotypes in my mind of Kru and Grebo and Mende and others, but you know, of course, they're wrong. You can't identify them by sight that way, but I was thinking of these things.

And there were these crowds of dock workers in just breechclouts working like hell in the sun and sweating and pulling the ship in by hand, because you know, there were no tugs. Fifty, sixty guys on a line on the dock pulling, bringing the ship in.

And so we were ready to get off, and Ma Miller was telling us how to get in touch with her. She was going to go up-country right away, and she gave us the name of two or three people in Monrovia. One of them turned out to be extremely important to us. Ruth Hill of the YWCA—and she had a house in Monrovia—and Lucerne Montegue, who edited a little paper called *New Day*. It

was sort of a missionary paper, but it was news that was circulated up-country.

So we had those names, but we didn't know these people. And we got off the ship, and all we knew was that we'd go to this Monrovia City Hotel. And here was our pile of baggage. It was like a house, a mound on the dock! I had no idea how to deal with this.

But as we were waiting, I remember members of the crew came up, and it was very nice. I got to know some of them very well, and they were calling me "shipmate" and things of that kind, because they knew that I had gone to sea. And so that was kind of nice.

But here we were on the docks, and Mr. Williams was heading off. He had been met by some of his family, and he was heading off to town. And I remember Ma Miller said, "Well, what you do now, you find a number of these groups of guys, and they are porters, and they're used to meeting ships. You get one of them, and you find the leader, and you say you want your bags taken to the hotel."

And I said, "Well, how do you know they're all going to get there?"

She says, "You go with them!" [laughter] "Usually," she says, "it's all right, though. These people are watched over pretty carefully by the port authority, and if they take anything, they have to share it with the big boss of the dock anyway, so you can track it down." She says, "They're not going to bother you, because you're a newcomer and will look as though you have enough stuff that you might be important." So, anyway, she says, "You don't have to worry too much."

She says, "Well, I know that man over there. He's a Bella man. I think he's pretty honest." And she says, "He has that little gang over there." There were about six or seven guys. And she says, "Just a moment,"

and she called him, and she says—she even knew his name—"Come here, come here, come here." And she told him that this man here needed help.

"Oh, yes. Oh yes, Ma." He knew her, you know. "Oh yes, Ma. We'll take care of the man. We'll take care of the man."

So, this gang, then, took our stuff on big carts, and they pulled them all the way through Monrovia. [laughter] And I think some of them went by taxi with us. There were all kinds of broken down little taxis, vehicles. But some of them pulled these carts. It wasn't that far from the dock. Well we had to cross that bridge. I'm not sure how that stuff got in, when I come to think of it. I think they loaded it on the carts to take them to a truck. And I told this guy, I says, "Shall I go with you or with my family?"

"Oh," he says, "don't worry." He says, "You're in Liberia now. Everything is fine."

Well, of course, that's utter madness. [laughter] But he turned out to be fine. I was in luck.

*Well, did you get some guidance from Ma Miller on how much to pay for them?*

Well, yes, I had asked about that. And you give something to the headman. You don't pay everybody. You just don't. And I guess I had some idea about the amount. It wasn't exorbitant, but, you know, we had a lot of stuff.

So an hour later, we arrived, Kathy and the kids and me in a taxi with what stuff we could get in the taxi. And we had a nice, affable driver, I remember, in this taxi that I didn't think could make it up the hills. [laughter] But it did, and it spewed black smoke all the way up, but it went, and he didn't seem to be concerned, you know. So off we went.

You know, here we were in a West African town, but we had the feeling . . . well, like we had been told, it was like the old South might have been. These old crumbling tin-roofed mansions and then miles of slums, shacks around those houses, where upper-class people lived. Very poor, poor housing. Hot and humid, a few buildings, a lot of marketing going on in the streets. And yet, it was a country town in those days.

*Were any of the roads paved, the ones going through town?*

There were a few. Most of them were just dirt roads, dirt streets, but there were a few main drags.

*Were there animals wandering around or?*

Here and there. A lot of goats, some sheep, a lot of chickens. Oh, chickens. I mean, *droves* of chickens. And kids were also called chickens.

And so we got to the hotel, which was a little place that looked rather OK run by an Italian family. That place is gone. It's turned, I think, into a brothel now.

But here, we arrived with this enormous amount of stuff, and they had no room. We had sent word. I think we had sent word from the ship; we had written a letter. We had heard about it on the ship and from Conakry had sent a letter to them. So, they had nothing. They were full up. And it was very expensive. It was something like eight dollars a day, which was high. [laughter] But they knew they had to do something for us, so they put us on the roof.

There was sort of a shelter on the roof, a room, really, where they had sometimes held parties and things and then a great open space

on the roof, and they had no place to put our baggage but up there on the roof. And they got tarps. In fact, I even broke out some of our big tarps and put them on top. And that whole end of the roof was just loaded with our baggage. And, of course, it rained at least once a day. [laughter]

It was pretty miserable, and we were up there in this one room. It was a fairly good-sized room, but we had to go down to the bathroom and to the sinks and things on the next floor. But we settled in.

Now what? What were we going to do now? Well, first thing I had to do was go see this woman Ruth Hill to see about staying at her place that we had been told was possible. But in the meantime, the family had to get settled. I don't remember how the kids endured this. I think they were all very tired, but I think they were just so fascinated by everything going on that time passed for them.

*Yes. Well, to them it's this tremendous adventure that they are in no way responsible for.* [laughter]

[laughter] Well, perhaps. I remember that first night there was this great welling sound of people screaming and yelling down on the street below us. And it turns out there was a movie theater under us that went back behind the hotel, and there was a big sort of open tin-roofed amphitheater that was showing *King Kong*. And every time *King Kong* appeared on the screen, the whole audience would run screaming into the streets. Then they'd come creeping back when he was off the screen. And as soon as he's on again, "Ahhhh!"

So, at least we knew what the screaming was about. It was kind of marvelous to watch.

*Well, what did you do about food?*

We ate there at the hotel.

*Oh, I see. So, there was food. Yes.*

And the food was wonderful; it was a good little Italian restaurant . . . or Spanish. I think maybe it was a Spanish group that owned that, and the food was fine. We were delighted with that. And some days they'd serve us up on the roof if we wanted. No, that was fun, we felt pacified by all that.

But next day, we walked the streets to kind of see where we were, what things were like. Oh, and we had to go to the immigration to get our papers stamped and all that. But in the meantime, I ran down Ruth Hill's house on Randall Street, the foot of Randall

Street. You know, when I think of it, when I went last year [1997] to Liberia as a member of the election monitoring team, we stayed half a block away from Ruth Hill's house on Randall Street. We stayed on this last trip at the Santa Teresa Convent, I guess it was, which is at the foot of Randall Street right next to the ocean. And then right up the street, I walked by this old dilapidated, crumbling house set back from the street where Ruth Hill had lived.

*And it was still there?*

Yes. It had been a very nice house in the early days, very much in the West African colonial style.

So I went down and saw Ruth, and she just said, "Fine, you people can stay." We had



*"It had been a very nice house in the early days, very much in the West African colonial style."* Ruth Hill during the time period in which the d'Azevedos were living in her home.



to wait a few days, because they had guests. “Oh, yes, you are welcome to stay in this place.” There were two rooms.

*Now this was her house, not the YWCA?*

No, this was her house. The YWCA was up Broad Street on top of the hill. This was her house. And Lucerne Montague also lived there and their house help, the house boys and some of the young women who lived underneath, which was very much the style in those days. They lived kind of camping underneath the house, and we’d smell the smoke of their cooking in the yard. It was very much a Monrovia house.

But we couldn’t go right away. We were going to have to stay at the Monrovia City Hotel. We had to keep our baggage there, too. But we did eventually, little by little, bring the baggage to a veranda out in back of Ruth’s house watched over by her boys. “*Tifi tifi*,” they’d say, “There are thieves all over the place. You can’t leave anything around.”

The stories about thieves were marvelous. There are the “night men,” night thieves who on rainy nights cover themselves with oil, oil themselves down with palm oil and take off all their clothes. They’re naked, and they can crawl in through windows and little cracks that nobody else could get through. They come in and they steal, and they go out again.

And so, we had to watch out for the *tifi tifi*, thieves. Every now and then at night you’d hear people yelling, “*Tifi, tifi, tifi!*” meaning they’d found a thief or they were chasing a thief. And everybody would run out in the street. If they saw somebody running, they’d all run and capture this thief. “Oh, *tifi, tifi.*” [laughter]

So, we were right in the middle of all this. There was a very large shanty town around

Ruth’s house. There were two or three other houses and some stores—some tailors and vendors of various kinds. Then all behind it was this large shanty town going a quarter of a mile all the way to the beach. So, we were right on the edge of all that, and we had to watch out for people breaking in.

We had our stuff up on the second floor veranda. Little by little, we brought it there, with one of Ruth’s reliable “boys” in charge of watching it and making sure nothing happened. And I’ll tell you, those kids were wonderful. They were *really* responsible. They watched our stuff as though it was gold, you know. And if anything went missing, they were almost suicidal. So, we got our first feel for Monrovia this way.

Oh, we had to go down to immigration. First we had to get our pictures taken. Our own passport pictures were not adequate. You had to go around the corner of the hotel and have your picture taken there in Monrovia and get a very fancy slip with a seal on it saying that yes, indeed, we had been there, we were the ones. It was a notary kind of signature. We are the ones whose pictures these are.

So, then we got in a cab and went down to the Ministry of Immigration. Who should we meet there but John Mitchell, who had been a student of Herskovits, a Liberian, an Americo-Liberian family. We had known that he was in Monrovia, and we were going to look him up, but I didn’t know he was one of the Ministers of Immigration.

So, we walk in there, and there’s John, who had been a fellow student. It was magnificent. It was just terrific. Well, what would have taken us all day and cost us no small amount of dash, which we didn’t understand, happened in ten minutes.

We were accepted into Monrovia by them in ten minutes and invited to their

house for dinner. So, we went over to the Mitchell's house. They had a grand bungalow, you know, really upper-class Liberians.

*So, in a very short time, you really are seeing kind of the spectrum of life.*

Yes. I'd say that first week, we got the impressions of the social structure of Liberia, a sort of thumbnail sketch that was accurate. Of course, I had some feel for it ahead of time. I'd done enough reading about the area.

*Well, the reading must have helped you rapidly interpret what you were seeing.*

Yes, yes. But there it was. I was seeing it.

*Do you want to talk about dash now? Because that's a concept, giving dashes.*

Dashes . . . just tips. And you have to tip for everything. And West Africa is not the only place that's true in the world.

*Right. Well, when you said at the time you didn't understand . . . .*

Well, I didn't know how much, when and how and what was the proper way to do it. And it's very important to know that, because you can be very foolish or you can make trouble for yourself by not knowing what is right, what's the way to do it.

*Well, there's a protocol.*

Yes. And so, at the Ministry of Immigration, it could have been a very rocky road, because almost everybody who signs something or writes your name expects a little gift. And you have to do it in a very special way.

You can't be crude about it. It has to be like, "Oh, you've been so helpful. I want to thank you. Would you just give this to your daughter or your child?" All the sorts of little things that make it into a friendly gift exchange, you know.

And if you don't know what you're doing, you can be treated very badly and sort of ignored, kept waiting for hours. [laughter] And there were Americans there who were, you know, very indignant, righteously indignant about such things, and they had to learn the hard way.

I remember seeing a guy who said, "Look, do I have to pay you to do this? Nobody told me that." The person just stopped and looked at him, turned away, and nobody came to that alcove while he was there.

And somebody said, "You better just sit down. Mr. So-and-so is busy, and he will see you as soon as possible about this." And I'm sure he waited hours or never got it done or had to go and complain to the embassy or something of that kind, which happened all the time. The embassy had all kinds of complaints about obstacles in the way of visitors.

I already had some idea about this. I just didn't know how to do it. And I didn't want to be silly and do foolish things, so it was nice to have some guidance.

Anyway, so, we went over to this wonderful house and saw the servant situation—two or three levels of servants all the way from the house servants to the lawn servants who have the machetes that cut the lawn out in front and those who carry water and those who do the laundry.

*And were they all living on the property?*

Some were living on the property, and some would come every day. This family of

two Americo-Liberians had maybe seven or eight servants, and that meant that they were very well-to-do, you know.

*And what was the food like that you were served?*

We were introduced to rice and soup. We learned to love it, you know, meat and vegetables in palm oil over rice with hot peppers. Oh, god, it was a delight. We've always loved Liberian country food. But also, they had other things that were very much like Southern cooking. A lot of dumplings and roasts.

*Did they eat a lot of goat?*

Not so much in town, but up-country, yes. Lots of goat.

*But in town, was there lots of . . .*

You could get it.

*. . . was there beef available?*

Oh, yes. We used to go to the Family Butchery, it was called. [laughter] There was this big sign, "Family Butchery." And oh, yes, they had cow, they had bull, they had young goat, old goat. They had sheep; you got "young sheep, old sheep."

*Yes, and chicken?*

Oh yes, chicken. Chicken and, more expensive, the guinea fowl, which was something like a turkey.

*And other bush meat? Did you see other bush meat?*

Up-country but not in town. That was rare. In town, if you knew somebody up-coun-

try, they might bring you bush meat in those days, and there were still some animals in the bush in the area we were in. Not today. It's pretty sparse. Monkey heads and monkey paws, always available. [laughter]

So, we were finally in Monrovia, and I had to make the rounds, rounds of seeing officials. Herskovits's admonition—*going through channels*, starting at the top, seeing nobody until you have seen the president of the country. Well, of course, I couldn't hold to that, because there were people that I ran across and wanted to see, like Bai T. Moore, who was a Liberian mythographer.

And I hadn't met him yet, also Jangaba Johnson, who was also part of the renewed Bureau of Folkways, and Oscar Norman, who I had heard about who was a Gola man who had been made the director of the new Bureau of Folkways. Well, these were people that I wanted to see, but I had to be very careful not to see them before I had "gone through channels." So I had asked John Mitchell, and he said, "Well, you can see these people on a social level, but be very careful. Don't have too much to do with them until you've gotten your letter from the old man," you see.

So, we sent our letter the very first day we were there to President Tubman saying, "Warren d'Azevedo and his family are here. We want very much to greet you and have your good word as we come into your country," all this flowery language that we were told to use was exactly what we should have done. [laughter]

And we had to wait for that about a week. We were at Ruth Hill's by that time, and here comes a young fellow in a suit and a tie to the door of Ruth's house and asks for me, "Doctor"—I was *Dr.* d'Azevedo—and handed this green letter. That's what you're waiting for, the green letter from the president's office. "The honorable William

V. S. Tubman requests your presence at his mansion” at such-and-such a time.

So, I had a date to see the president. And what were we doing during that time? Kathy and the kids were wandering around Monrovia pretty much. It’s kind of hard to remember all that, but we were getting used to the sights and the smells. And it was very exciting in many ways, but also exhausting, very exhausting.

We hardly slept at night, because in this shanty town, there were drums and playing and plays going on and singing. The life of the town was going on out there. And preachers of the various tribal sects, cults, and churches wandering up and down the streets singing and praying in their costumes. A very colorful, marvelous town. So much was going on. The Muslims would also have their ceremonies.

*Was there a siesta custom there? I mean, did the town shut down for a couple of hours in the afternoon, and did your kids take naps?*

Yes, it was just that people stopped—I mean, it was just too damn hot. They took long lunch hours. I mean, if you got into an office after 11:30, you wouldn’t see anybody again until 2:30 or 3:00, and then they might return. [laughter] But yes, long periods of rest or doing something else.

*Because I was just thinking that the rhythm for the kids, the rhythm of sleep is different anyway, because I mean, if you’re taking these afternoon . . . .*

Well, you didn’t necessarily nap. You just might do something else. But it’s too hot to do much. We were getting used to that. It was very hard. It was very humid. I think it was always over 80 percent humidity.

*Yes. Just that adjustment, I think that could make you really sleepy.*

And as it began to rain there in March, it was pretty horrendous. I mean, those rains are extreme. They come regularly. You’d get these terribly heavy rains, then the sun would come out, and then the steaming humidity, 90 percent humidity. So, in the day, you didn’t want to do much. And your clothes were always damp.

I can remember the whole time in that first field trip wishing that I could find a piece of paper that actually crinkled. In fact, in Nevada now, I think, “Oh, if I could only have a little humidity so that I can turn pages.” But there, you had no trouble, and everything was wet. The clothes were wet. Everything steamed. Mildew. Mildew everywhere. And so you had to hang clothes out to dry every couple of days. And that’s what your house boys did in the town, hanging out your clothes to air them and dry them in the sun.

*And the iron, too, was as much to dry them as to . . . .*

The charcoal iron. And that was kind of amazing, how wonderfully people could get so much done under those conditions and with the simplest kind of tools the most marvelous things happen. Our clothes were always well-pressed and clean.

Kath, what did you and the kids do that first week or two over in Monrovia? Did you wander around a lot?

Kd: You mean when we were living in the hotel or after we moved to Ruth Hill’s?

Well, that week we were in the hotel and then after we went to Ruth’s.

Kd: Well, I spent a lot of time reorganizing our stuff.

Oh, yes. That was something. There was a lot of it. Opening it up and drying it, drying out the trunks.

Kd: Well, and then repacking and sorting and all that. We had a lot of luggage with us in Ruth's house.

Indeed, you did.

Kd: Yes, I was trying to get that out of the way. What else? We wandered around quite a bit, actually, just looking.

But we didn't do much midday, did we? It was pretty hot.

Kd: No! We slept. It was exhausting.

*We were talking about the night life too. I mean, there was so much activity at night that you couldn't get much sleep . . . [laughter]*

Kd: Well, and there were people living on either side of us outside, you know. They had little shelters where they lived, but most of their living took place outdoors in the courtyards right next to us. And we spent hours watching.

Watching. [laughter] Yes, we learned a lot.

Kd: Yes. It was pretty interesting. You know, wandering around town going to see the sites, the president's mansion and the gardens, and all his weird animal statues. And I just remember feeling so white and so alien. Most people paid no attention to us, but

occasionally, people were very hostile, and I found that pretty upsetting.

Not very often though.

Kd: No, it wasn't a lot.

More today than in those days.

Kd: But, you know, Africans have a pretty aggressive manner, a lot of them, and you had to learn about that.

Yes.

*Just the communication style?*

Kd: Yes.

Feeling white was . . . that was the main thing. So white in this sea of marvelous dark skin.

Kd: It was a very strange feeling. I'll never forget it.

*I just wanted to ask about one of the points we've made earlier, how important your initial impressions are when you're in such a strange place. And you've made the point that you felt so alien. I wanted to get an idea of how important Ruth Hill was to you as a contact.*

Kd: Well, I remember when I was first walking around in the streets, I remember I felt so white, so western, so alien. And I somehow had this mistaken notion that it was rather like the South, you know, the idea that Liberia was a part of the American South. But now I said to myself, "This is *Africa* and no place else."

It was very vivid to me. And Ruth Hill, as I have said, was a Rock of Gibraltar in the

middle of this madness of our lives. And she was wonderful. She was on loan to the Liberian government from the headquarters of the YWCA in New York, and she had been hired to establish a YWCA in Monrovia.

*Yes. And how long had she been there?*

Kd: She had been there probably a year . . .

Yes, a year or two.

Kd: . . . at least before we came, and she was there all in all some five or six years. Quite a long time.

*So, she had come recently enough to be aware of what kind of reactions you were going to . . . ?*

Yes. And she knew everybody.

Kd: She had done a masterful job. She knew all the women in Monrovia and all the honorables' wives, all the government people's wives. She was really quite wonderful.

*Did you have the kind of relationship where you could ask her questions about things that were really puzzling to you?*

Kd: Oh, yes. Anything. She was very open, very easy to talk with.

She used to get up at five o'clock in the morning when it was just barely light. And I, of course, am a very early waker. I would go and talk with Ruth in those early morning hours, or we would just sit quietly and drink our coffee together. And I guess I was still smoking maybe then, too.

I think you were; you had to.

Kd: Yes. I did everything to excess in Liberia. [laughter] Anyway, it was very reassuring to have someone like that.

*And you had said, too, that the whole family was having trouble sleeping, not just because of the activity that was so prevalent, but also because of anxiety?*

Kd: I remember that we all were having trouble sleeping, and waking with wild dreams, very disturbing kind of nights.

We were having "culture shock." [laughter]

Kd: Oh, yes. That's true. Well, yes, I wasn't thinking about it in those terms. [laughter]

Well, I was, because . . .

Kd: It was just happening.

. . . I knew that was going to happen. [laughter]

Kd: And I remember when we got to the village, it was very extreme. I literally could hardly sleep, day and night for the first two or three weeks we were there.

*Well, tell me about the language that Anya and Erik made up.*

Kd: Oh. Well, because I was busy sorting and trying to get things together in the house, all of our belongings were scattered here and there, we spent a lot of time in the house, and Anya and Erik spent a lot of time interacting with the two house boys, who were high school students, I think. They might have been grammar school students.

I'm not sure. But they lived in the back of this house.

It was an old style Liberian house built up on pillars, and there was a walkway, a cement walkway, to this building in the back of the house. The front and the back house were connected, but the house boys lived and did their cooking in the kitchen and had their bedroom back there. And there was a lot of interaction between them and our kids.

I think they gave our kids a very hard time, because they were trying to learn Liberian English and to learn to speak to each other. And being very good Africans, the houseboys took the initiative and, I think, gave our kids quite a hard time. "What's the matter with you? You can't speak English?"

[laughter] It was wonderful.

Kd: And our kids, Anya, I think, devised a scheme that she and her brother would make up their own language to mystify and exclude them, you know.

Kids are great.

Kd: We spent an awful lot of time watching the people all around us. There were straw huts on one side and this open courtyard where this so-called "civilized" family lived and wore Western dress and so forth. On the other side, they were all native-dressed people.

And, of course, *they* woke up at dawn, and you'd hear loud screams and yells and fights and just plain talking. It was not a quiet place.

Just family stuff.

Kd: It was very lively. I mean, the noise was intense, and that was another thing you

had to get used to. People talked at the top of their voices.

All the time.

Kd: Day and night. You know, Africans are the most verbal people I think I've ever known.

And at the top of their voices. Nobody had a modulated voice.

Kd: No. Well, some of the so-called "civilized" people were taught to be very soft-spoken and so forth.

Oh, yes, yes. The *kwi*.

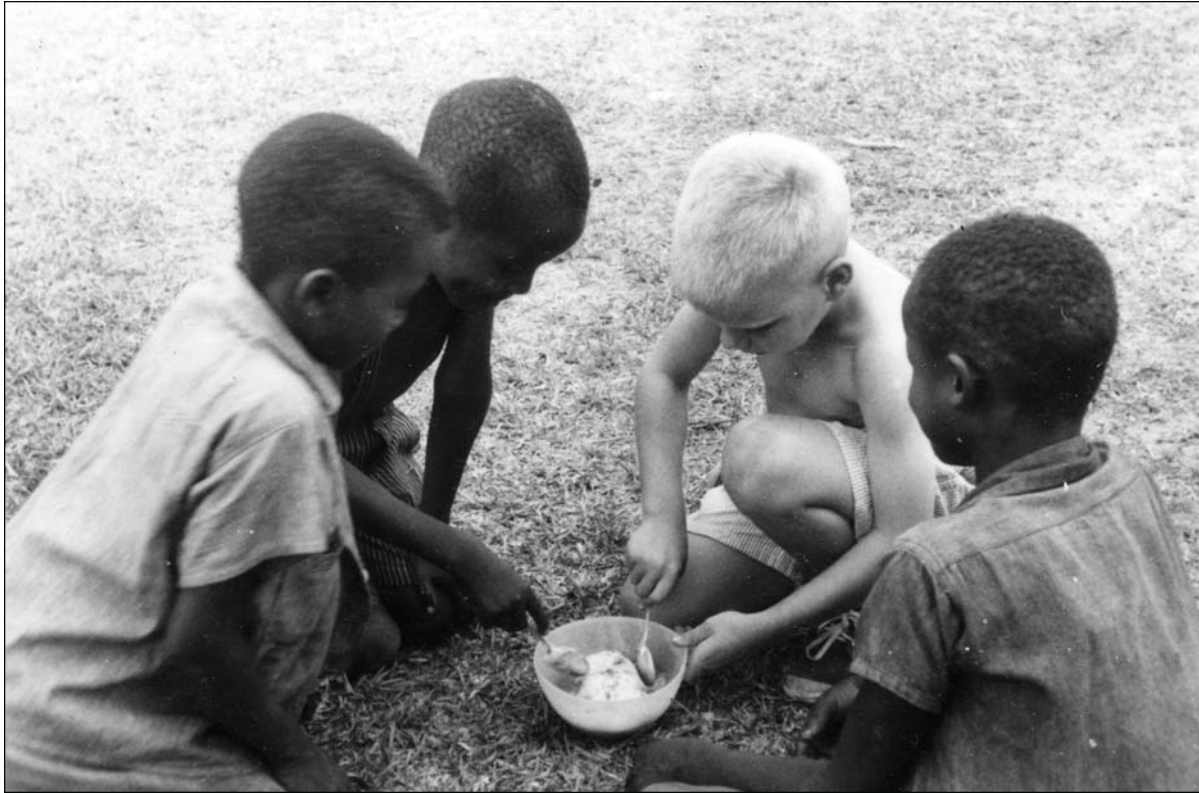
Kd: But they had their moments too. [laughter] But Ruth Hill was really a monument of sanity in the midst of this madness that we felt ourselves in to begin with.

But the kids were very quick. And Erik, he was speaking Liberian patois English very soon.

Kd: They both were.

Erik was adept, very quick. And Anya got it in a different way, but Erik just seemed to absorb it like litmus paper. And he soon began to sound just like a Liberian kid, certainly when we were in the village.

Kd: When we were in the village, I could not tell who was speaking when Erik was outside with the boys. He was indistinguishable from them. It scared me, frankly. And I gained an *enormous* respect for the social context in which learning occurs. It was very indelibly impressed on my mind. We can talk more about that later.



"When we were in the village, I could not tell who was speaking when Erik was outside with the boys." Erik d'Azevedo with friends.

Yes, when we'd hear Erik saying something, like when he was coming into the room, he'd say, "*Ideh, Ideh*. I'm here, I'm here." What are some of the other things that he would say?

Kd: I can't remember.

He could tell stories in Liberian English.

Kd: His intonation was indistinguishable.

*So, it sounds like it was really overwhelming in many ways.*

Kd: Oh, it was. Totally, totally.

*There wasn't any gradual immersion.*

Kd: No. We were just dropped into this sea of totally alien setting.

*Yes. And nothing that you'd been told, really, prepared you, I think, for the degree of . . .*

Kd: Not really.

Not at all. Well, it was quite a bit different for Kathy than for me. I was so involved in getting things set up for work that I really don't think I felt and experienced as richly as Kathy did. I was observing these things, but I was just busy trying to get a program under way. So, you know, listening to this, I realize it was going on, but my head was somewhere else.

Kd: Well, the bureaucratic stumbling blocks were unbelievable. And I wish that I



had kept notes about them all, because they absorb all of your time, all of your money, all of your energy, until you learned how to deal with it. And I don't think we ever did learn very well.

Not completely, but we got pretty good at it. [laughter]

Kd: But you had to learn in order to survive. I don't know quite how to describe it—but it was a very sort of aggressive—I don't mean in a hostile way—but a very demanding kind of an environment.

*I think that's a good way to describe it, demanding.*

Yes, it is.

Kd: And it isn't just because of its strangeness. It's part of the social interaction among Africans themselves which, of course, you are absorbed into.

*It's a very high level of engagement at all times. If I can just interject, I remember feeling like I was sparring.<sup>1</sup> And I don't mean that in a hostile way, but that there was a whole . . . there was a . . . my performance, and how I did had implications that far exceeded whatever exchange was actually taking place. [laughter]*

Kd: Well, and I think you are absolutely right.

Yes. You were being psyched out and evaluated at every moment by the people around you in ways that you were not familiar with, but you knew it was intensive, and that everything you said, did, or moved your body had significance with the people around you. And that's unnerving.

Kd: Well, later on, you know, after I had time to think at least a little bit about it, I realized that coercion and manipulation were major modes of social interaction among people at all levels. And this in the midst of this highly authoritative structure, supposedly. You know, you were trained to be either the master or lord of the world or the dirt under somebody's feet. But you learned to coerce and manipulate and weave your way through to get what you wanted. It was a very difficult culture, even to the people who live in it.

It was hierarchical. You start at the top and demands and coercion went from the top down. You didn't demand and coerce upward. You demanded and coerced downwards. [laughter]

Kd: Well, you learned to manipulate very well.

Oh, yes. That's right. We got very good at manipulation.

*Were you concerned about the effect that this was going to have on the socialization of your own children?*

Kd: I didn't think about that at this point. I was just trying to get through every day.

To some degree, we thought about it.

Kd: Later, in the village, I thought a lot about it.

Well, we thought about it in the beginning, but we couldn't do much about it. We didn't know how. We didn't know what to do. We were sort of stuck in a situation.

*And you said that that Erik and Anya taught these boys some Washoe peyote songs? Is that right?*

Kd: Yes, singing what they remembered of Washoe songs, because they were from a completely mysterious land as far as the boys were concerned.

*[laughter] So they couldn't be judged for their English. That's wonderful.*

They had just come from the Washoe.

Kd: Yes, they had.

And they had to have something to give in return. That's part of the coercion and the pressure; you have to give something from yourself to meet a kind of obligation, a social obligation. Somebody else does something, and you have to do something. And they came up with, [singing Washoe peyotist songs] "Hongo way-o way-i-o, Hongo way-e hey-o." [laughter] And it was very mysterious and very much admired.

Kd: And, of course, they all loved cowboys and Indians. The American cowboy was the favorite hero figure for all little African kids that I met in the village.

It was the films they saw, when they saw films. And, of course, Erik was Roy Rogers, so it was easy. [laughter]

*Yes. Now, getting back to the visit to the president.*

Yes. Well, then I got that letter, the green letter, an appointment to see the president, which on a scale of social events was the top.

You had to start there. So, I dressed up, put on my one jacket and tie and . . .

*Not the tuxedo at this point? [laughter]*

No, not yet. Oh, I even forgot that I had it. But I remembered it later. Oh, wow. *That* event. So, anyway, I went to the executive mansion, the old mansion that had all the stone animals outside and the other figures. It was an amazing place. They had these beautiful rugs, great big marvelous . . . I guess they were Iranian rugs. I don't know, but they were very expensive covered in plastic. So you walked on plastic all the way up to the second floor. You had to be led, and I was taken by two guards with guns.

*Now, it was just you, Kathy . . .*

No. No, just me.

Kd: I wasn't there. This was man's business, not woman's business.

No, the family was not invited. So I just very vaguely recall going up there, and then there was this very large room and way at the end was this little man sitting at a large desk table. My first impression of this was like my first meeting with Herskovits. [laughter] The same little guy at the other end with glasses. And he was a small man, Tubman. I was marched in, literally marched in, and a seat was provided for me. I was told to sit down, and the two guards stood at each side, and there were two at the door—very serious guys with guns and very impressive, which they were meant to be.

I remember the old man looking at me and saying, "Oh, you are Professor d'Azevedo." They always gave you a title

whether you deserved it or not. I was either Doctor or Professor. And, "How is your great teacher? How is Professor Herskovits?"

Herskovits had been everywhere. He had been through there a year before on a tour and had stopped and had a talk with the president. So, here was the old guy there even, ahead of me.

I said he was fine.

And, "Oh, you're so fortunate to have a man of such astute understanding as your mentor, your teacher."

I agreed that was so.

"Now, Professor d'Azevedo, what is your interest in our country? What brings you here? What is your business in our country?"

I heard that everywhere in Liberia. Well, of course, that's not unusual anywhere. "What is your business here?" It's kind of the beginning of a conversation: "State your case."

So, I told him what I wanted to do. I was here to study Liberian history and mainly the Gola people of the Western Providence, their history, and their culture.

"Oh, very interesting. But why the Gola people?"

I said, "Well, because, there's not much written about them, and I found them very curious, because they were here at the very beginning and met the colonists. And they were a problem at the beginning, but they're becoming less of a problem now"—I was feeling my way, because this was a delicate matter—"and because they're one of the larger groups in the Western Providence, and I know of no literature on them. I would like to know something about their culture and their history."

"Well, that is very interesting, but you know," he said, "they are very . . ." What are the words he used? "They are a difficult people. The government has had a lot of

trouble with those people, and I don't know if it's a good idea for you to go there with your family among those people. We do not have that much association with them."

Well, I didn't realize that the year before—I don't know how I missed it—but the Gola were associated with an assassination attempt. I knew about the assassination attempt on Tubman, but not how the Gola were associated.

There had been shots fired at Tubman at the executive pavilion during the celebration of his inaugural ball. S. David Coleman, a descendant of old W. David Coleman, a former president [1898-1902], had been accused of organizing an assassination attempt because his party, which was called the Independent True Whig Party, in a kind of sad little opposition to Tubman's party, had put forward a candidate that had not gotten any votes at all!

And old Edwin Barclay, the past president [1930-1944] and Tubman's predecessor, had admired and supported this opposition group. So, it was a serious thing to the Tubman forces that anybody even dared to do this. It was said that David Coleman had organized this assassination attempt and had fled Monrovia, or left the country, and they had been trying to find him for a year.

He had been finally tracked down near Kle, Liberia, among the Gola, and shot. His mangled body had been brought to Monrovia and dragged through the streets. A dozen people or so had been arrested, accused of conspiracy. Most of them were let go later.

Obviously, there was nothing to this. Later on, up-country, the view was that this was all a put-up—it was a charade in order to strengthen Tubman's hand. The killing of Coleman was useful to him, because he had been a rather forceful opposition leader. It was really demeaning, his body dragged

through the streets, and the family allowed to bury him in one of the corners of a public grave.

This had happened just a few months previous to my arrival. So, when I said I wanted to work among the Gola, now I understand why the old man's ears were pricking up. But I didn't know about that at the time, so it didn't even come up.

But he kept saying, "These are a difficult people. We've had much difficulty with"—I don't think he ever said Gola—"those people." And, "Why would you want to bring your family there?" He said, "My suggestion would be you go to Suehn, and there's a wonderful lady there—Mother Davis, Ma Davis." She was a black missionary, a Baptist missionary in the town of Suehn up in the eastern interior, but it was very much a suburb of Monrovia, on the edge of the Americo-Liberian settlements.

Anyway, I had to agree to go see her. "I have arranged for you to go to see this place, and I wish you well. And anything you need, I'd be happy to give you. Please give your Professor Herskovits my very warmest regards."

*So, he didn't say, "Don't study the Gola," he just said . . .*

No, no. He just . . . it was very clear that's not where I should go; I'll get into that.

But anyway, so then he said that if I would drop by the mansion a few days later, there would be a letter available to me that opened up the interior to me where I could go—a green letter that I showed the paramount chiefs and the town chiefs, the clan chiefs and town chiefs of the various parts of the country, that the president has said it was all right for me to go there. Well, of course, this was the passport to anything, you know. I still

have that thing. Years later it still worked, even after Tubman was dead, it still worked—the green letter. *Way* up in the distant interior separated from Monrovia by hundreds of miles and no communication, when I showed the green letter, oh, everything was fine. I could pass, I could come.

Anyway, so then I left at this point, and I could go and see anybody, and I did. I went and saw Oscar Norman, a wonderful old . . .

*And had you known about Oscar Norman before?*

I'd known about him, but I hadn't yet visited him. I was very careful to follow rigidly what I thought was protocol. And he had been expecting me. "Oh, you've seen the old man."

And I said, "Yes. He wants me to go to Suehn," I said to him. "I want to go further." I didn't know about Kle, really. I wanted to go into real Gola country, way up by Bomi Hills.

"Well, yes, that's where you should go. That's the proper . . . Suehn is an interesting town, but, you know, it's on the edge and it's between the Mandingo people up there and Bopolo and the Gola and the Kpelle up that way. It's all mixed up." And he agreed with me. But he said, "We'll go up that way. Let me take you."

So, he was assigned to me, and I was in wonderful hands. We got a great limousine, a government official car with a driver and with a Liberian flag on top of it. [laughter]

And Kathy was with me, and we drove over these dusty roads up to the northern part of Monrovia, up through a lot of those little towns along the way. Some of the names I have forgotten—early trading towns—then made that turn east up toward Bopolo. I knew these places by the literature, old Bopolo, the

ancient trading center. I was on that road, and I thought how wonderful and romantic it was.

It was a very bumpy road. There were great big ditches, and we had to go through streams and over log bridges in this limousine. Nobody seemed to mind. It was bumping along, but it was air conditioned! [laughter] That was a strange thing. Later I attributed only to officials and to Liberian mining and to Firestone and Goodrich cars air conditioning. And here, my first trip to the interior was in an air conditioned car, which I didn't see again the whole time I was there. [laughter]

And we went up on these old red, dusty roads and through little villages to Suehn. Suehn was a famous place historically. It had been where all the old chiefs of the Gola and the Kpelle and the Mende had fought over this place as a kind of a central trading area for bringing slaves down from the interior and for bringing produce up from the coastal area. I didn't realize it at the time, but it also was the hometown of an old paramount chief, Zuanna Johnson who I was to meet later and who was paramount chief of the area that I eventually worked in. But this was his hometown.

So, Suehn was a very important area. It was a kind of expanded village, with a Baptist church and Ma Davis, the remarkable old black woman who had been a missionary there for years. She was looked upon as "Ma" by everybody. She was, you know, like Ma Miller, the white Lutheran missionary up the Saint Paul River.

I really got a whole new look at some of these indigenous missionaries. Ma Davis was an American black, who had done very well and had a big mission. She had people under her thumb like all these women. They were royalty and tyrants. They had to be. I mean,

they made people do what they were supposed to do.

They were judges. They were not the rulers of the area, but they judged people. They, in a sense, held court. And if somebody had a family problem, they made the decisions what was to be done and saw to it that people did the right thing. [laughter]

She was remarkable. And she was delighted. She wanted an American family to live there. It would be so good for the people to have an American family there. [laughter] The more she talked, the more I realized I could never live there—Christian people at that. And I was thinking, "Oy, vey!" you know.

Then she took us down to look at the house that she had that we could use. It was the most horrible contraption I have ever seen. It was built of corrugated tin. It was rusting and up on stilts, large, with open windows and broken screens and all tin.

We went inside. It was so hot, the sun baking on the tin. And it must have had, you know, ten rooms downstairs and upstairs, and cockroaches running everywhere. And you knew that rats were there at night all through the place, and bats up at the top.

And the guy that took us down said, "You know, we can clean this thing out very nice, and we paint it, and it will be just right for you and your family. And there's an outhouse over there and no running water, but there's a creek over there, and you can have the house boys bring water, fill barrels with water."

Later on we did that on our own, but this was our first look at what we might live in. It was horrendous. You know, to me, I had visions of a nice mud house with a thatched roof and all that, which we did have later. And here we were in this colonial nineteenth century West African tin house of lower

echelon colonials. [laughter] That's really what it was. It was an old Americo-Liberian house. I suppose the most important family in the area had lived there, and they were probably the plantation owners.

The whole thing was so depressing and dismal. I told Oscar, "We can't stay here, Oscar. Where are the people? Can't we get a thatched house out there in the village?"

And he said, "Well, we can talk about it."

Ma Davis said, "Absolutely not. Well, you can't live like that. What about the children? You can't put them in that kind of situation."

And, of course, Oscar was very wry about this. Later on he said to me, "Well, she's an American. She doesn't believe in people living like that unless they're natives." So, anyway, Oscar got the picture.

*Wow, what a bizarre layer upon layer.*

Layer upon layer. And apparently he went to Tubman over the next few days and had a talk with him, got the old man to agree to take us up in the other direction into deep Gola country, which in those days, it seemed, took three to four hours to get to. Now you can do it in forty-five minutes. The roads were just horrible. And Kle was forty-five, fifty miles, but it took two or three hours to get there and you sometimes didn't if you broke an axle or something of that sort.

So, he arranged in the next few days for me to go not just to Kle but up that road, the Bomi Road. It was a road to Sierra Leone. It became a path beyond the town of Bomi, Tubmanberg, as it's called, and the Liberian Mining Company mine, that was the end of the road. Well, it was being oiled when we got there. They had just begun to oil that road.

And there was a railroad train that went up there that carried ore back down from the mines. That was the only contact with that

part of the interior, which was a major Gola area. And the Goodrich Rubber Company had just begun their operation, and they were in a big struggle with the Gola tribe; they were being shot at. Their planters were being shot at by the Gola, just about the time we were going.

Tubman had given Goodrich the go ahead. So, the Gola, now, had not only harbored an assassinator, Coleman, but were interrupting the establishment of the Goodrich plantation.

All that was happening, and yet you wouldn't know going on this little dusty road that there was anything like that happening—with all the deep bush, red dust, and an occasional farm as you went up, and small villages.

*Because this is all slash and burn, right?*

Well, yes, swidden agriculture. But before we could go to Kle and the Bomi Road, while we were in Monrovia, I was waiting at Ruth Hill's house now for other kinds of letters I had to have. I have found I had a letter from the Department of the Interior, and I had to see all these people down the line and get OK's, letters from them.

Once I had the President's letter it was easy, but I had to see these people. I kept getting told, "It's very important they see you, that you come to their office. Even if they don't talk to you, even if you're treated badly, the fact that you were there is important. You are supposed to see them. Sit in their office, wait sometime for hours."

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Note

1. The interviewer had been in Africa in the Peace Corps.

**N**OW I WANTED to ask about Oscar Norman and how he became your first handler, I guess, in introducing you to the Gola. Or did he?

Well, Oscar Norman came to me after I had seen the president, and I'm quite sure that as Assistant Secretary of the Interior he was given the job by Tubman to deal with me, and also the fact that he was Gola. So it was a very interesting connection, and I'm still not clear just what was going on there. The Bureau of Folkways had just been started, and Bai T. Moore, who was a Dei Gola, and Jangaba N. Johnson, who was a Vai, were in the Bureau of Folkways. And, of course, Norman knew them, and I have some idea that in Tubman's view he would turn the problem of what to do with me over to them, which he did.

So Oscar came to see me and agreed that Suehn was not the place to go to and that we would go up the Bomi Road to Kle to see if that was a good place for me to be centered. So I'm not quite sure just what was going on, but it worked out wonderfully for us, because

Oscar Norman was a great guy, and he was quite interested and helpful in what we were doing.

Then the other remarkable thing that took place was that I had a visit from Isaac Karnley, who introduced himself to me as, "I am the great-great-grandson of Kpomomo Kpo, mighty chief of the Kpo clan." He was dressed up in chief finery with an embroidered cap and a gown and stood before me with all the regal posture of a great man, and here he was about a twenty-year-old Gola kid. But he spoke English very well, and Oscar told me that he was respected in his community, because he spoke excellent Gola. So I immediately took him on as my interpreter, and it was the best thing that I could have done.

I look back and think that my whole field trip for the next year and a half—and the next two or three visits that I made to Liberia, really—I owe to Isaac all the material that I got, because he was such an effective interpreter, and he showed me all the protocol of dealing with the elders of the communities, and that was very effective. So



Warren with S. Jangaba M. Johnson, Bai T. Moore, and other members of the Liberian Department of Information and Cultural Affairs.

I got a lot more work done than I would have by myself.

In fact, when I come to think of it, I probably would not have been able to get a lot of the material that I got, because I wouldn't have known how to go about getting it. Isaac told me that, again, and it was like our experiences going through channels. Go through channels. Well, this was *especially* true among the Gola. If you didn't go through channels, you got nowhere.

You had to start with the key figure. If it was a commissioner of the town, you started

with the commissioner, and then you went to the paramount chief. And then only after you'd seen the paramount chief should you be able to talk freely with any of the elders, or anyone in town, for that matter. So if you hadn't done that, you would be treated like a stranger. That is, they'd either be joking with you or give you false information, and then they'd have a great time talking about it after you'd left. You'd have no idea, really, what you were getting.

I learned that very early, which was important. Otherwise, in Liberia, at least—



and I'm sure this is true in other areas of the world, and certainly in Africa—you have to know who you're talking to, and you have to know what their status is with reference to other people in the community. Otherwise, if you don't do that, you're not treating them honorably; you're not giving them the kind of attention that they should have. Once or twice, when I missed doing this, I can remember being insulted, being told by an elder that I wasn't worth talking to, and they turned and walked out on me. [laughter] That would have happened a dozen times had I not had Isaac, who led me through these very intricate protocol aspects of field work.

*And he was in his twenties?*

Yes, he was in his early twenties when I first met him. He was a very smart young fellow—just amazing. I don't know really how he got there. Then later he became a judge, because he went to school, and I remember helping him go to school. He went up through the Liberian educational system very rapidly and then went to the College of Justice and then became a judge.

*Did he know about anthropologists?*

I think only what I told him. He was pretty much a village kid when I first met him, but he had links through people like Oscar Norman and others. He had links to the Americo-Liberian community and to the government, but that was only an aspiration on his part. He wanted to be part of that.

*And it was difficult for Gola people because of the history?*

Up to that point, but about the time I got there, fortunately, there was an attempt



Isaac Karnley in Monrovia attire.

to create some kind of avenue of communication with the Gola, and particularly through the Kpo clan where I was. Zuanna had been friendly to the government, and if it hadn't been for the attempted assassination of Tubman just before I got there and Coleman hiding out in one of the farms of the clan where I was, things would have been just rosy. But Tubman was rather suspicious of the area. So it worked out where—and I'm jumping ahead—the paramount Chief Zuanna was trying to get on the good side of the government after all

this difficulty, and Tubman was trying to find a way to get along with the Gola.

*And you showed up.*

So I became a kind of a pawn in this thing. Also Tubman—who must have also been contacted by the CIA by that time—must have wondered who and what I was. So he assigned these people to watch over me, like Norman, and it was all fortunate, because they were excellent people.

*Now, were you in any position to pay? Did you pay Isaac?*

Oh, yes. After I took him on I gave him a salary, and I forget what that was. It would be now considered a modest amount, but I didn't have much money.

*No. Well, by today's standards your grant was a modest amount, also.*

Yes, exactly. But anyway, we worked something out, and he was very happy to do it, because he is a very quick learner. He learned so much so quickly. The fact that he is dead now I find very depressing, because he was a walking library of Gola history and culture. And going around with me he learned more than I did, and he picked all this material up as he went from clan to clan and up through the interior to the various Gola regions, places where most other Gola had not been—I mean unless they traveled a lot, which they didn't. But he had gone to all of the Gola territory and talked to the elders of those areas, and he had a great memory. Often I would be able to get material from him after we had been someplace, because I might have forgotten and not

gotten it in my notes, and then I would interview Isaac, and that was all in his head, what we had heard.

*This is a little off track, but I wanted to ask if he ever reviewed your articles? I don't mean formally, but did you ever ask him to look over some of your writing?*

No, not really. I can't remember that. Oh, I would ask him to review my notes if there was something that I was unsure of. For example, on the kinship system or in genealogies, if I wasn't sure of my notations and my handling of Gola terms and script form, I'd give them to him, and he would write me letters when I was back here. I have his letters in which he'd correct things or add to what I had given before. Yes, but not the articles, that I can recall. They wouldn't have interested him, I don't think. What you're writing for an academic audience and as an anthropologist wouldn't be the kind of thing that he would have been interested in. But the notes where I'd taken down what had been said fascinated him, and I'm sure he copied a lot of them. He had a little library of his own. [laughter]

*Well, shall we talk about that first trip upcountry, then?*

Yes. Norman, that wonderful man, had gone to Tubman and in some way or another got Tubman to agree to allow me to go up the other direction in Gola territory, up the new Bomi Road, which was a dirt road done by the Liberia Mining Company way up into the interior. There wouldn't have been a road had it not been for that company. Goodrich was at the other end of the road. So we had the permission to go up that road. We had

the famous green letter. You had to have a green letter from Tubman to get anywhere in the interior, and Tubman had given us this letter saying that he had approved of my work and would I be well taken care of, et cetera.

I didn't have my Jeep yet. Later on we got an old Jeep station wagon, a secondhand one that barely ran, but it ran. But on this trip we had a government car with a flag. Always a government car had a flag and a driver. So with Oscar Norman, and with Isaac in the car, we went up the Bomi Road.

*So it was the three of you?*

Yes. Kathy and the kids didn't go this first trip. It took about two hours then; now it takes about a half hour, because it became an oiled road later. [laughter] This was just a dirt road with lots of pit holes, and you had to go over wooden bridges, and sometimes log bridges. It took about two hours to go forty miles.

We went up one morning and got to the village of Kle. Kle was the major town, really, on this road before you get forty more miles up in the interior to Tubmanburg—or what was called Bomi City in the old days and then Tubmanburg—up near the border of Sierra Leone. But about halfway up was the village of Kle. We stopped, and I was going to see the paramount chief, but Oscar Norman said, "No, you have to see the commissioner first." [laughter] Again, "through channels." Then we saw the commissioner, Lehai Cooper, who was a *stupendously* pompous guy, a very big man, who would stand before you with the look of, "Who are you, and where do you think you're going in my country?" And we gave him the green letter.

*Are we in Gola country at this point?*

Oh, yes, this was one of the major centers, the Lofa-Gola chieftainship. So anyway, he was mollified by the green letter. [laughter] Later on I had all kinds of trouble with Lehai Cooper. He was a very difficult man, because anything that happened, if he wasn't in the center of it, you would hear. Also, he would find ways to diminish your stature if he could. Like one time I was going to the latrine back of our hut, and the bugle was sounding for the raising of the flag on the commissioner's compound, quite a distance away. And somebody reported that I was walking to my house. He sent the troops to get me and bring me over. Two soldiers came, and they escorted me back to his compound, and he said, "Don't you know that you must stop and give observance to the Liberian flag when the bugle is sounding?"

And I said, "Well, I didn't know that."



*"This was just a dirt road with lots of pit holes, and you had to go over wooden bridges, and sometimes log bridges." The road to Kle from Monrovia.*

“Well, now you know!”

And he made me feel very small and humble and had me escorted back to my house. So that’s the kind of relationship I had with Lehai Cooper. But anyway, when we got to Kle, after we saw Lehai, then we were taken to the paramount chief’s compound and met Zuanna Johnson, who turned out to be a wonderful old man and a helper to us. He said to me, “I’ve heard that you want to come and study our ways and our history and that you love the Gola, and we love you,” and all this sort of thing.

*What were some of the things you needed? When you greeted him was there a procedure to talk to him? Was he dressed in a cloth and formally?*

Oh, yes. Well, usually when he had visitors he would put on a kind of special gown, but it wasn’t very elaborate. It was just one of those beautifully woven country cloths, and a cap and a staff. But, no, he was very informal, and it wasn’t a high formal meeting. He greeted us and said that he had heard of me and that the president had approved of me and all that sort of thing, and he would be happy to welcome us to his land.

He said, “There is the house that you can stay in,” pointing to this great roundhouse, a very large roundhouse daubed with mud and beautifully rubbed by the women in designs on the side, with a carved wooden door. It was a very fancy roundhouse and had a thatched roof. He said this was his “hotel” for important guests and that he put people up in it. It was divided into three sections inside. He said, “That is your house. That is your home. You can have that.” So there we were. I realized that we finally were in Gola country.

*Was this in visual distance from his house?*

Oh, yes, very close. In fact, about fifty yards away from his compound.

*So he could literally point and say, “Over there is your house.”?*

Oh, yes. “There it is.” So Norman was very pleased, too, because Norman had, I think, arranged all this before we even got there, and Isaac was beginning to start interpreting, and I was really amazed by how easily he fit in. So quickly he became an interpreter. He had never done it before, but he spoke good English, and he obviously spoke very good Gola, because he always impressed the people he was talking to with his Gola.

So I went over and took a look at the house, and I thought, “Oh, my God, are Kathy and the kids going to actually live here?” I realized that a lot of things had to be done. Later on, of course, we had the thatch replaced by a tin roof, which I regretted in the rainy season, because you couldn’t hear anything except the banging of the rain on the roof. But I thanked him profusely for his hospitality.

Then he had his head wife and a group of his sons show us through the town, and a lot of little kids following behind, and people were calling greetings from their houses. It was all very pleasant. Then we walked over to Besiye, the sacred town about half a mile away. We walked there and through the town of Besiye.

*Are these two towns separated by bush?*

Yes, right, down a little trail. And there’s a drinking creek and the latrine creek and all the various kinds of creek you go by. I never could understand how the latrine creek water was kept from the towns below their

town. They always talked about how important it was that the latrine creek be below the drinking creek, but then what about the towns down the creek? [laughter] I never got clear on that. I would like to go someday and ask.

But anyway, we got to Besiye, and I learned that this was where the secret societies had their bushes. Their “bush” would be some distance away from the town. The Sande and the Bon Poro had their bushes near Besiye, and I was informed by Isaac that you had to be very careful what you said about them. Don’t even name them. You don’t talk about it. If anybody wants to talk about it, they will tell you, but you don’t ask about it, and that’s a protocol I learned very quickly. I learned more by not asking than by asking. [laughter]

*And he was referring to the secret societies you don’t ask about?*

Yes, that you don’t talk about them. They were telling me because they had to, so that I would realize how careful I had to be. I could talk about anything, but I must not even ask about the secret societies.

*But that’s quite interesting that they took you right there, though. They were laying out the groundwork for you.*

Well, because Besiye was an ancient town, an important town—even more important than Kle—that I would be doing a lot of work in. So they were showing me. It was a nice little village, maybe about thirty huts.

*So people lived there?*

It was the center from which secret societies of that particular chieftainship

operated and where they had their bush, as they call it. The Sande bush and the Poro bush were in the bush near this town, and the chief of that town comes from a family that had the closest relationship with early leaders of the societies, and it was considered a sacred town. I was going to be doing work there, because it was such an important ancient town, but they wanted me to know that I had to be very careful about talking about the men and women’s bush. And as I have said, I found later that by not talking I learned more, because they would tell me. But if I asked, there would be a great silence; I wouldn’t hear anything. So, all those little aspects of protocol I learned quite quickly.

So then we came back down the road, and there was quite a crowd following us by that time. You know how African people are—this is wonderful. Here is a visitor or guest, so there’s some excitement in the village. There must have been fifty people following us down this little path by the time we went back to Kle.

When I came back, Zuanna had another wife present us with a big bowl of dry rice and a flapping, white chicken. Well, all through my fieldwork, this was the presentation that you would get as an important visitor. Then I learned that the bottle of English gin that I had and a roll of white cloth was the proper kind of return for this. Isaac had told me about that—I must bring this English gin. So I made my presentation and thanked them, and I was set pert in Gola country.

We went back to Monrovia. I told Kathy and the kids about it, and I remember that Kathy was very calm about it. I thought she was going to say, “Oh, for gosh sake!” [laughter] But she and the kids were all ready to go. So we started getting ready to go up to

Kle. Well, the kids were wonderful. They actually were excited by it.

*So let's talk about getting the Jeep.*

Kd: Warren bought the Jeep from Claratown, which was a commercial garage in Monrovia, and it had come from the Ganta Mission. That was our transportation, and it was wonderful. Old and beaten up as it was, it worked very well. Warren drove us out to the village and to the house to show it to us. We had Marvin Solomon with us, who was on loan from the University of Michigan, I think, to the university in Monrovia. He was a scientist. I don't quite remember whether he taught biology or chemistry. Anyway, he came out with us, and we looked at the house, which was pretty appalling.

*Was Isaac with you?*

Kd: Yes, Isaac was always with us. And, you know, I was stunned. It isn't that I was expecting a palace or anything, really. It was just that there it is, and it was sort of a shock reaction; this is what we would have to deal with. They were pulling off the thatch—which was pretty old and rotten—and Warren had ordered this square, tin roof put on. They were building that, dressing the whole roof. Well, we had to wait for that to be finished before we could actually move to the house, of course. So we looked, and I think we didn't talk a lot. [laughter]

*And the kids were with you?*

Kd: Yes, they were. They were just, of course, interested in the village, and there were lots of people around. Then we went back to Monrovia.

*Well, now wait, Kathy. Were you and the children introduced to the paramount chief?*

Kd: Oh, yes.

*Did you go through the whole thing?*

Kd: Oh, yes. This is your “stranger father,” they said.

Yes, and he called me his “stranger son.”

Kd: Yes. We went through all of that, and we walked through the village. It was interesting, to say the least.

*Did you have a meal? Did they feed you?*

Kd: No, because we weren't there that long. But, you know, people came with their children, babies in arms, and the babies would be terrified of us, because we were white, and they had never seen white people.

Scraped pig. [laughter] Erik was called “scraped pig,” because he was white.

Kd: Anyway, some of the women would very aggressively push their children in their arms up to us, and the children would just be screaming in terror. That was pretty difficult for us. [laughter] There wasn't much you could do about it, either.

And some of those people had never seen a white person.

Kd: That's true, yes. And, you know, spirits are supposedly white and terrifying; and there we were.

And what we had, the house, was not really such a big roundhouse. [laughter] It was



The d'Azevedo's house in Kle. *Left to right:* Six of Erik's friends, Erik, Anya, Warren, and Kathy.

divided into three sections. The first was the front section, and in the back were two big slices, uneven, one little, tiny one and one bigger one, you know, like a pie.

*So half the pie and then . . .*

Kd: We had this little, tiny bedroom, and then the other room was where all of our stuff was stored, where the kids' beds were, where they slept, and where we cooked. You know, it was the only space that we had as a family, and that's when we knew before too long that we had to have more space, and we built this house on the back, which is another whole story.

Another roundhouse.

Kd: No, it was a square house we built on the back. [laughter]

Mud hut with a tin roof, right?

Kd: Yes, mud—it was the same construction as the roundhouse, because that's how the people built, but it was a different shape.

*Then didn't you have a reception area, the outdoor area?*

Kd: What did we call that? A palaver house.

That was done later.

Kd: Yes, that was built later. That was built when the Herskovitses came to visit, to make the house more elegant. And the people did a beautiful job. But anyway, we built this back house, because it was where we could eat and sit and have some degree of family connection and privacy.

*So how long was it between the time that you first went up to Kle and that you actually moved?*

Oh, a number of weeks.

Kd: It was not too long.

Two or three weeks.

Kd: Yes, they just had to finish doing the roof.

Yes, and then we started lugging our stuff up there.

*In the Jeep?*

In the Jeep, yes, back and forth. We had a lot of stuff. We had trunks, and, fortunately, we had trunks, because we could use them.

Kd: We had to have all our furniture built. There was a carpentry shop next door to us, which mainly specialized in coffins for children. But anyway, they built this very rough table and benches. You know, we had to have something to sit and eat on.

Well, the thing is, Kathy, how did you feel about it?

Kd: I can't remember. [laughter] I just know that I was in a state of shock when I

first saw it, and I sort of closed my mind and just kept putting one foot in front of the other, and it turned out all right. It came out OK. Once I was there, you know, you just did what you had to do.

And the kids seemed to have had a good time.

Kd: Well, they managed. But I think one of the hardest things was being used as objects of terror. Every time we would walk out in the village there would be some women—and some men occasionally, but more women—who would bring their kids out to scare them to death, to make them more obedient. That was hard.

“If you're not careful, we'll give you to those white people. They'll eat you.”  
[laughter]

So anyway, we started bringing our stuff up from Monrovia, and that took a number of trips. I don't remember how many, but it took a number of trips up that road, and it was just beginning their rainy season, wasn't it?

Kd: No, not quite.

Not yet rainy season?

Kd: Well, it was the beginning, true, you're right.

So now and then the road would be . . . .

Kd: And we had to have a latrine built, too.

Yes, that came next, the latrine. We had to dig a hole for our latrine and make something that was at least possible to use



and that was near the house. Then we had to get some help. We had a house boy, Bobo, who was our water boy. He'd bring water from the stream with the help of some little kids. We'd boil our water, and we had a large tub, a tin tub.

Kd: A kerosene drum that they put the water into.

What did we bathe in?

Kd: Well, in the new house that we built we got a big galvanized wash tub, and we used that as a bathtub.

Galvanized wash tub, right. And we used that. That was our bathtub.

Kd: And Warren had built a drain, so it was huge. [laughter] He had a drain built in the room so that you just had to overturn your tub, and all the water poured outside.

*How did you find your labor force to build the latrine?*

Oh, easy. Everybody wanted to help.

*But how did you decide who to hire?*

Isaac helped us decide that. We got Bobo, and then there was Daniel and Momo, the cook—and he was wonderful. He came later.

Kd: He came later, and he was marvelous.

Yes, Momo was wonderful. He made rice and soup for us, and he even knew how to make some of the stuff that we may have made for ourselves. So we had three or four helpers and at very low wages, but they were

happy with it. We didn't have much money, so we had to be quite careful. I wasn't careful enough. Kathy was. That's why at the end of the trip I was broke and still stayed on. I was crazy.

But anyway, from that time on, I began to do work with Isaac, and it went beautifully. I must say, it was an ideal field situation, because I started out in Kle and in Besiye with the elders and with the OK of the paramount chief, and everybody was very helpful. The elders were helpful, and I learned the protocol of how to go about the interviewing, which was extremely important, as I think I mentioned earlier. If you didn't do it right, if you didn't go to the right person to begin with—like Herskovits's "going through channels"—if you didn't know who to go to first, you didn't get anything from anybody of lesser stature than that person. So I learned how to go to the key elder or the chief first, have the first interview, and then have him suggest who else I should see, and then he would tell me who to see, and then everything went well.

I would say in the first few weeks I got a tremendous amount of material, mainly starting with kinship, because that's the way I was trained, and then genealogy, which was very important there anyway. The genealogical history of a family really gave you the history of a community, because these little communities, these villages, were built upon the genealogical structure. And I learned the historical depth of three or four generations, beyond which was the mythological origins, and that's what varied.

From Gola clan to Gola clan you'd have a different kind of myth of origin. Over a period of months I went through every Gola section. Some I could drive to on this old road; others I had to walk long distances through the bush to get to. I went all the way

up to Bopolu, which was the interior trading town, the ancient trading town. And so I covered all of the Gola territory in a few months, and with Isaac's help it was wonderful, because Isaac was interested, also. To him, it was a learning experience, and he did a great deal of work in figuring out where we should go first and who we should see, and sending up word that we were coming so that they would be ready, and there would be two or three elders ready to talk to us.

I would say that my field notes are voluminous. [laughter] I have boxes of field notes, and I haven't used most of them. I just have so much material that I think I'll never write it up, you know.

*So from their perspective, it sounds like it was fulfilling getting their history down.*

Oh, yes. The whole point was—they didn't of course know about ethnography [laughter]—that I was getting Gola history, and to them history is important. History means the genealogical depth, and then beyond that a kind of a mythological perspective that is the ancient world.

*Did you know the geography of the area you were going to be dealing with to start with?*

I had an idea, but by the time I got through I knew very specifically what the boundaries of the Gola area were and where the Gola had moved beyond their territory into Vai and Dei and Mende. Oh, they had actually originated in Sierra Leone, so there were a lot of Gola that I didn't visit among the Mende in Sierra Leone. But I knew where the rough boundaries were of all these territories. By the time I was through I had, I think, a very concrete notion of who the Gola

were, what they thought of themselves, and what their notion of their history was.

So right in the midst of all this, at the end of our first six months or so in Kle, we got word, a letter from Melville Herskovits, that he and Frances were on a tour of Africa and would be stopping through Liberia to see us. To Herskovits this was important. He always loved to visit his students in the field, because he was field oriented. He just loved being in a situation where students that he had trained were working. And this, of course, threw me into a tizzy. I mean, right in the middle of my work when I was getting my own confidence in what I was doing, suddenly here was going to be my mentor, who's going to tromp in and take a look at what I'm doing. We just stopped everything and prepared for this visit. [laughter]

Eventually, he and Frances came in by plane into Monrovia, Robert's Field, and we picked them up and brought them up to Kle and set them in our little roundhouse—these distinguished visitors. At first, I had to prepare in Monrovia to see the president and to see the key people. The president, of course, was away. He was on a trip out of Liberia, so we couldn't see the president, but we saw Vice President Dukuly, who seemed to be totally unconcerned, because, with the president not there, who could do anything? But, eventually, he got the idea that this was an important person, because Tubman knew the Herskovitses. They had met. In fact, Tubman had visited Northwestern University in an earlier period, and so Herskovits knew everybody and all the key places in Africa that people had worked.

I was very concerned. I thought, "What the hell's going to happen? He's not going to be received in the way he should be," and all that. Then Dukuly at the very last minute

realized that he better do something and had a lunch—that horrible lunch—where nobody knew why they were there in the first place.

Kd: At the old Izetta Hotel.

Sort of the key thing, the symbolic thing to me, is at one point Dukuly raised his glass and said, “I want to toast this great man, Melville Herskovits, who has done so much for the history of Liberia,” (which was not so), “and his student, Warren d’Azevedo,” and raised his glass, but nobody had anything in their glass. [laughter] So he looks around, and in typical Liberian fashion, he takes it very casually, picks up a bottle of Scotch from behind him on the shelf and goes around and pours a little Scotch in everybody’s glass. Then the bottle was almost empty, and he made the remark, “Well, everybody here is greedy.” I mean, “The greedy ones have used up all of my Scotch.” And he raised his glass, and there was a toast to Herskovits.

The Herskovitses seemed to take this in their stride. They just enjoyed themselves. They were remarkable and never indicated that they felt that they had been in a bad situation. Anyway, that was Dukuly’s reception to the Herskovitses. I’d gone through channels. You know, he was the top, and then all the way down the line, people that he met, all we had to do was mention that we had seen so-and-so beforehand. “Oh! Well, come on in,” and they were shown around and treated with great respect, having no idea in this world who they were or what. [laughter]

But it was a wonderful picture of Americo-Liberia and the social life at the point. As long as the person above them had given the OK, you better treat these people

with great respect regardless of who they may be, all the way down the line. Finally, we took them out to Kle.

*And when you say “finally,” how much time elapsed?*

I forget. A day or two.

Kd: I don’t remember—not long.

They were at a hotel in Monrovia. So then I asked Isaac, “Please see to it there’s some kind of reception in Kle.” I was worried that nothing was going to happen, you know. But we drove up. As we came up the road, just a half a mile from Kle, people were on the road waving as we came. Palm fronds had been set all around our house for decoration, and a palaver house had been built out in front to greet strangers. All the chiefs were there: the Besiye and the Kle town chiefs, and the paramount chief was there, and the clan chief, Zokai, and others.

Kd: What I remember is that they had put a palm frond across the road so that it had to be broken before we could go into the town. And as that was broken, and we started into the town, this drumming started—drumming and singing. It was quite amazing.

*Now, are you on foot?*

Kd: We were walking at that point, because you couldn’t . . .

No, we only had our little Jeep. [laughter]

Kd: Yes. The cars came later.

*But you got out how far away? Just so I can get a picture here.*

Oh, I don't know, a quarter of a mile.

*But it was agreed that you would get out of the car and walk at that point?*

Kd: No, this happened totally spontaneously.

*So they were there to greet you, and that's when you got out of the car, and you walked toward town.*

Yes, well, we finally got the car to town. And there must have been two or three hundred people there.

Kd: Well, at least a hundred. Yes, the whole village.

Well, two villages.

Kd: It might have been that much.

Yes, singing and drumming and dancing and greeting.

Kd: Then you walk into town with this entourage around you making their way.

And the Herskovitses, it amazes me . . . . In the first place, you take people's hands as you come into town. The chief would take your hand. We'd be walking toward the town, and the Herskovitses took this in their stride. They really understood this. They were able to walk in time with the music and the singing. Oh! [laughter] Worst thing is, when Herskovits got out of the car. When I first saw them, Herskovits got out of his car with Bermuda shorts.

Kd: They kept saying to you, "Where's the big man?"

"Where the big man?" [laughter] Yes, the clan chief, who was about six feet tall, higher than any other Gola, he was looking around over the heads of people, "Where the big man, where the big man?" And the big man got out of the car. Little, short, fat Herskovits gets out of the car with his Bermuda shorts on and a pith helmet. After all of the instruction he had given his students about proper attire, he is wearing the worst possible combination. Where he'd got the idea, we never have been able to figure out. He had been to British Africa, and maybe he thought that was the proper thing. But here he is out in the bush in Liberia, where he should be wearing a suit and tie as a dignitary, like an Americo-Liberian, and he gets out with a pith helmet and Bermuda shorts with his little fat legs. [laughter] I was stunned. But nobody seemed to mind. I was the only one who reacted that way. Finally, the clan chief comes over, "Where the big man?" And he looked down, and there in the middle of a lot of people is Herskovits. [laughter]

Kd: But Herskovits handled himself very well.

Oh, they were wonderful!

Kd: He knew just what to do and say.

They were wonderful, because they moved with the music, and they were enjoying themselves immensely. Whatever everybody thought, they thought it was a wonderful entertainment. They must have really thought, "My God, what is this? Is this the big man?" But anyway, the whole thing went beautifully, and Zuanna had been in charge of this and created a tremendous reception, for which I really owed something

to these people. I mean, he made everything possible.

Kd: We also paid. [laughter]

Oh, we had to pay something. Oh, yes, with dash. We had to pay a dash of . . .

Kd: And you had arranged all that before the Herskovitses came.

Isaac had helped me arrange all of that.

Kd: You worked very hard on making sure that that reception was good.

Well, yes, but I was concerned that it might not be, because nobody said anything. This all happened, it seemed, spontaneously, but it wasn't. Isaac told me, "Oh, the chief has spent a lot of money doing this," meaning I should do something in return. There are all these hints always about what you should give in return, and I sometimes made it and sometimes didn't. At the end of my fieldwork that was one of my worries. Had I done enough to keep these people from despising me, you know, calling me "dirty dish rag?" So they stayed two or three days with us in our hut, on little cots over in the corner.

Kd: They were in the room that had been Anya and Erik's, our all-purpose kitchen room.

Oh, that's right. We had sent Anya and Erik upcountry to Ma Miller's mission, because we had thought it was best. Also, the school in Kle was not good, and we were very worried about it. They were now at the Kpolakpele Mission—Ma Miller's mission. Miriam Miller was her name. We sent them up there. Frances Herskovits was very

disturbed. She wanted to see the kids, but we said, "Look, we just couldn't handle it." So we had sent them, and we left them up there, because they would have something of a schooling, which they weren't getting in Kle.

*I know this is a digression, but you've told me about a song that they would sing as the car would race over these wooden bridges.*

Kd: "Zizzy, I feah youah."

[laughter] Oh, the song over the bridge?

Kd: Yes. Over the palm-log bridges.

Yes. Well, it was when Zizzy was driving, and, [singing] "Oh, Zizzy, I feah youah. Oh, Zizzy, I feah youah. Oh, Zizzy, I feah youah." [laughter] "Ziz boom bah, Zizzy."

*And this is when the children would come home for a visit, right?*

Yes.

Kd: Or when we would go back with them. I'd travel back and forth that way.

Yes, "Zizzy, I fear you. You're the driver. I fear you. Oh, Zizzy, I fear you." [laughter] So anyway, the Herskovitses loved it. I'm sure there weren't many places on their trip around Africa where they were living in such spare conditions, but they took it well.

Kd: But I remember we heard them talking, of course, at night after we'd all gone to bed, and what he was saying. "Well, Frances," or whatever he called her, "It's pretty nice here. Much better than we had when we were . . ." I've forgotten where.

Oh, yes. "Much better than what we had. Oh, yes!" Meaning, that's not so bad. [laughter]

*These cushy anthropologists, these students have it easy. [laughter]*

Yes, they're pretty cushy, these guys. But it was really a pleasure to have them once they got there, but I was awfully glad when they left, because I couldn't do anything. I was driven at that point to get my fieldwork done, and I was getting more and more compulsive about everything, and here they were in the midst of all that. So when they

left we were very happy. [laughter] Because the whole area was in a state of celebration while they were there. You know, farming had stopped. Isaac would let me know these things, "Oh, the people, they've stopped farming and . . ."

Kd: And they made a beautiful feast of goat-meat stew. They did. It was really great.

*Did this go on basically the whole time they were there?*

Pretty much. Yes. Singing and dancing, you know.



"The whole area was in a state of celebration while they were there." The Herskovitses being welcomed to Besiye. *Left to right, front row:* A drummer, Frances Herskovits, Iris White (student anthropologist) with an unidentified attendant, and Melville Herskovits. In the second row on the right are Warren and the artist Vane Hime.

Kd: And people coming to talk to them, which they liked, and Frances would encourage them to tell her folktales.

*Now, Warren, I have to ask you, though, during this time, besides hosting this entire event in their lives that you wanted to make meaningful and good, was there the expectation, too, that he wanted to hear what you were doing in the field?*

Oh, yes! I was very aware at times. It was very collegial, because he was there in the field, and he loved that. So here I was, his student, and I began to feel that he and I were about the same level, because he was curious, he wanted to know about everything. He asked all kinds of questions, and he seemed to be approving of what I was doing, which was good. Except now and then I remember I'd make a remark like, "Well, Goodrich is here, and the whole situation has changed. I mean, their hiring policy is creating all kinds of problems and people are angry at them. Then the Americo-Liberians on the other hand, you know, this is their way of getting some kind of income for their operation."

As I was saying things like this, I noticed a tremendous intensity in Herskovits. He would listen closely to what I was saying, because I was verging on making political comments, which to him was . . . you did *not* politicalize your work. You were reporting; you were not interpreting. You were not guessing at the politics. The politics was a separate thing. Herskovits was a curmudgeon on this. And here he was listening to me intently, because, after all, he had sent me into the field, even though the State Department had tried to stop me, and he had had to help me get my passport to go to Liberia. So he was listening carefully to any indication that I was still a commie. [laughter] He didn't say anything, but I noticed that I

had to be very careful, because if I started on anything like that, commenting on the Americo-Liberian government and its relationship with the tribal people, there would be a long pause, and he would be listening carefully. So I had to be very careful myself.

*Were you able to keep those ideas separate in your field notes?*

Not at all.

*You just wrote down what . . . ?*

No, I did what I felt. And there was a lot of that in my work. I mean, the relationship of the tribal people to the government was, to me, a very important thing.

Kd: It was part of history.

Yes, it was a very important part of the history. But Herskovits was concerned whether or not this was affecting my fieldwork. Was I being partisan in some way?

In fact, very early he had had some problems with—who was it—an earlier woman anthropologist. It's been written about. People who were critical of Herskovits thought that this was because he was anti-feminist or he was conservative politically and all that. But it wasn't that, it was like Boas. You should not bias your work by some kind of political interpretation that you bring with you. It's very complicated, and I don't agree with it, but I understood it very well. I had to be very careful with him, but not in my own work. I mean, I did what I thought I had to do.

Anyway, so they left, and we were greatly relieved. The whole area calmed down, and I think they were relieved, too—the Gola

were relieved. [laughter] Then I went on with my fieldwork and did a lot of work until the end of that year and a half. And then it was time to go. But I just decided I couldn't go. I wasn't through. There were things I had to do.

*Before we get to that—and that's very important—you were going to discuss a little bit about how you started getting interested in aesthetics and the artists.*

Oh, yes. Well, as I went along, in the village, or in Besiye, was this very famous carver, Vane Hime. We saw his work when the secret society figures came in, these Zogbe women's society dancers with these beautiful head masks and the Poro mask.

We had known about the secret societies, but there was this first occasion when we went out to see the turning over of the bush, as they call it, the Poro to the Sande women's society. As we went out there, we were herded into the village with great concern about our presence. Kathy and the kids were put into one place with the women, and I with the men, and we were closed off, because the men and women were not supposed to be near each other.

Kd: We were in a circle watching the open part of the ceremony where everybody is prepared for the incoming of the women in their masks.

Yes, right. The arrival of the Zogbe.

Kd: And their singers and drummers, they're very fierce when they come in. They come in with a great drama of noise, and everybody has to scatter.

Yes, this is where the women's society is taking over from the men's society.

*Did that happen alternatively every year?*

Every four years, so this was a very important ceremony. But they didn't really know what to do with strangers, so they put you in one house . . .

Kd: They put me with the women and Warren with the men, because that's how society was structured.

Yes. The men were supposed to be secluded, because the women "devils," as it's said in the patois of the Americo-Liberians—or the Zobiai, the leading ritual figures with their great masks and costumes—would rush into town with their spears, taking over the town and driving the men's society out. So the men of the Poro society had to be in an enclosure, and I was put with them. They weren't quite sure what to do with us, but they did it this way. Then these masked figurines, which we hadn't seen before—heard about them, but hadn't seen them—were followed by women singing and beating their gourds, taking over the town and dancing in the center of the town.

Kd: And threatening any male with their spears and fining people for infractions.

Yes. But there's where we saw these wonderful masks, and I learned later that Vane Hime had done most of them, and another carver, Boima Gbuli.

*And they were both from Kle?*

That area, that region. But Vane we got to know very well—a wonderful guy—and





Vane Hime, famed Gola wood carver, with examples of his work.

actually learned that he had done certain of these masks. He would secretly bring them and show them to us, the ones that he hadn't finished or hadn't given over yet in the process of making. I bought a number of them from him. We still have them and gave some to the Lowie Museum and to Indiana University, the Liberia Studies Program there. So I got very interested in this process and his role.

*About how many months into your research was this?*

Oh, six months, seven months.

Kd: It's even less. The first turning over of the bush happened, I would say, at the end of the first month we were there. It was very early.

Yes. But working with Vane, I think, came later.

Kd: Well, it came out of that, yes.

Because there had to develop a kind of trust between us, because I had to be very careful not to mention him.

Kd: But that stimulated your interest.

Yes. So I got interested in the role of these special carvers. They were highly respected, because they made these sacred, dangerous figures, and Vane got to be so very open with me. We discussed his whole life, his life history, and discussed in detail how he went about making his masks, under what conditions, what kind of materials he used, and what they had to look like and for what

reasons, and what his own life was in terms of how he got into this activity. So, yes, I got very interested in that, and two or three other carvers. Also, I talked to some women later on about the designs they did in their house rubbings—rubbing the mud on houses—and different women had different designs. But I didn't spend so much time on that as I did with the carvers. So, yes, that was one of my interests.

So toward the end of the visit, then, it was time to go. Kathy and I had quite a few arguments about whether I should go or not, and I decided I just *had* to stay. I felt terribly compulsive at that point. I hadn't finished. There were things that I had to get. Of course, there's always something you have to get. There's never enough. And that was my trouble—I didn't realize that enough is enough. So Kathy and the kids left and went to California to wait for me to get over my compulsion, and I stayed for another month or two getting more anxious, and getting sicker and sicker. I don't know, I may have also had something. But I lost weight, and I was miserable.

*But you'd left the house in Kle.*

Yes, and I was dismantling it, bringing things down that hadn't gone with Kathy and the kids. There was still a lot of stuff left.

Kd: And he was giving stuff away to people in the village, and they were all standing in line demanding.

Yes, trying to give something to the community, things that we weren't going to use, and then all my notes and things of that kind. And I had a lot. I had trunks full of material and also artifacts that I had collected, and some of them were secret

artifacts, like Vane's, that I shouldn't have. And all this bothered me: how was I going to get these things out of the country?

*Were you storing those big barrels of masks in your house in Kle?*

Yes. Not the barrels, but we had sent some of them off before that, but I had a few things of that kind in trunks along with my field notes and things. I began to be paranoid about this. Supposing, when I leave, immigration sees these and makes a fuss over them? I had all kinds of worries that had nothing to do with reality.

Kd: Because there were no conditions at that time. Nobody knew or cared what you took in or out of the country.

*Oh, I see. So there wasn't that kind of scrutiny.*

Kd: No, that came later.

Yes, but I had this horrible paranoia about everything, what I had done wrong—that things were going to be confiscated by the government and all. [laughter] I became completely paranoid, and I'm lucky to have gotten out of there without destroying myself.

*Well, I think leaving the field is what I'd like to hear more about.*

Why is it meaningful for you, Penny?

*Because I've never heard anyone talk about it. And I think when you started talking about it, it just resonated. There's guilt involved, too, because you're leaving.*

Kd: Well, Warren was guilty at every possible level. [laughter]

Well, yes. [laughter]

Kd: About not having left, as well as being there.

I also felt very guilty about having Kathy and the kids leave, and my staying. You know, why did I do it?

*Now talking about shipping things home, I have a technical question. Did you make copies of your notes with carbon paper?*

Not many. Why? Most of them were just on note cards.

*I'm just curious, because some people used carbon paper in those years to make duplicates.*

No, mine were all in notebooks and on cards. I still have some of those cards—boxes of them. Some of those notes were about things that I should not expose, I should not discuss with others, or name names of people who had given me the information. So all this got in my mind as a big stew. I began to stir these worries up, and I was sick. I really was sick, because I think I weighed about thirty pounds less than I should.

Kd: You were very skinny.

And I began to talk to people about it, you know, “What am I going to do about this? What am I going to do about it?” Not Gola, but people in town like Ruth Hill.

*So you were living at Ruth Hill's?*

In Ruth Hill's house partly and then upcountry and back and forth. My relations with people upcountry weren't what they had been, because I was leaving. That old,

wonderful term that the kids learned, “dirty dish rag,” you know. “We're through with you now. Give us something, and get out of here,” kind of attitude. [laughter] I felt people were no longer friendly.

Even the chief was waiting for his part, you know. “Where's my part?” It's quite an extraordinary reversal of attitude and feeling that goes on when you're leaving, if you don't know how to leave, and I didn't know it. I didn't have Isaac at the time. Isaac was off doing something. He was in school, and I was on my own.

*Oh, I would think that would be big. So he left?*

Well, he was doing something else. I can't remember what it was.

Kd: He must have left for another job.

Yes, but I think he was in school.

Kd: Oh, I think that's when he became a justice of the peace. He went to law school in Monrovia, with our help.

Later, yes. I helped him get into school and all that. So I was on my own, and, of course, it didn't work. Nothing really worked anymore. I couldn't really work with people. So at the end of about two months . . . . [laughter]

*Was it your original intent that you had more work to do, too?*

Oh, yes. Oh, I did. I had a whole list of things that I hadn't gotten, I thought, and I had to get them. Well, of course, I couldn't get them. People were no longer as willing to work with me. I was going bye-bye, so, “Where's my part?” [laughter] But on the

other hand, I over-interpreted it. I saw it as worse than it was. Rather than taking it as something that happens and going along with it, I felt terribly guilty; it was my fault, I had created this horrible situation. I began to talk to people about it, because I had needed to talk to somebody. Alex Shaw just decided that I was going to ruin myself if I didn't get out—he locked me in his house. Locked me in his house, gave me some gin and some food. [laughter]

*Now we need to talk a little bit about who Alex was.*

Kd: At that point he was head of the UNESCO mission [United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization].

Fundamental Education.

Kd: Initially, he was with Fundamental Education, and then, I guess, later he came back.

*But how did you become friends?*

Because later, after we got up to Kle, he had a place in Kle, as well.

Kd: They were the only other non-Africans in the area.

He and his family had a place. It wasn't right in Kle, but it was near Kle.

Kd: Yes, it was right up the hill from where we lived. They had built a new school.

They became friends of ours after a while, but this was after we had been in the field for a while. They were a wonderful couple, and

Alex was great. He taught me how to drink gin and bitters. [laughter] So he locked me in his house. Not really.

*In Monrovia?*

Yes, in Monrovia.

*So he'd moved down, too.*

Yes.

Kd: With the help of Heinrich Mooey—a wonderful Dutchman who was also teaching at the University of Liberia—he and Alex together corralled Warren, who was going around talking to everybody where it was unnecessary and just making more problems for himself. They locked him up in Alex's house, and Alex came home every night and took him dancing at Accra Bar Number Two or whatever. [laughter]

One of the nightclubs—Accra Bar Number Two. [laughter]

Kd: So they would get some exercise, and they would go dancing every night. [laughter]

But he leaves me in the house with a bottle of gin and bitters and . . .

Kd: And food. Until they got him on the ship!

And food. [laughter] And by that time I got most of the stuff out of Kle—all of it, I guess—and I got ready to go. Then they got me on a ship and got me out.

Kd: They kept him locked up until the ship arrived, and they put him on the ship! [laughter]

Well, I wouldn't say "locked up." I could get out, but the point is they told me, "Stay here. Do not leave this house, *please!*" [laughter] And I got on a ship and slowly recovered over a period of months. I went back to Northwestern and became Herskovits's teaching assistant, and that helped me.

*Did you ever talk about that to any of your other colleagues, about that whole experience you had of not knowing how to leave, and that you couldn't give enough?*

Very few, because it is a ticklish matter, you see.

Kd: It was in those days, anyway.

Yes, it might mean that you're just no goddamn good.

*Well, now you could probably have written a hundred papers on the subject.*

Yes. But the thing is, who would I have talked to? I think maybe Norm Scotch, because he had had a similar experience.

Kd: I think it was Si Ottenberg.

And Si Ottenberg, yes.

Kd: And he agreed that nobody ever talks about this.

And Jim Fernandez I talked to about it. But, no, you were very careful not to, because this was a demeaning kind of a thing.

Kd: It was an admission of failure, and some might . . . .

Yes. But when I come to think of it, it didn't affect the Liberians at all. When I went back two or three years later, I was greeted as a great friend of the Gola. And that image, you know what I mean, coming back into the town, into Besiye, holding the clan chief's hand. All that was forgotten. Now, it's a whole new process, you see. You start from the top, and now you're going to be "dish rag." [laughter] You're a good dish rag at the beginning. So there we are.

*Didn't Richard Nixon visit in Liberia?*

Yes, he did. I guess I wanted to forget it. [laughter] But, yes, we'd been in Kle about a year, and word came that Nixon was visiting Liberia, which was rather a special event in itself, because of our so-called special relationship with Liberia. Hardly any important person from the States had come there. Nixon did, the reason being very clear, because of the Firestone and the Goodrich plantations. [laughter]

Kd: And the Cold War.

*And he was vice-president at this time, right?*

Yes, I guess he was vice-president at the time. So the word was he was going to be coming up the road. There was something of a reception—music, and dancing—not very much, though. I put on a jacket, and here come these official cars up the road, and Nixon with Pat Nixon next to him. They stop and get out of the car, and I was the only Caucasian there at the time, I think, and Kathy was upcountry. So, yes, I shook hands with Nixon, and there's a picture of me doing so. I've always regretted that I hadn't done something more interesting with Nixon.



*"I've always regretted that I hadn't done something more interesting with Nixon."* The vice president and Warren during Nixon's 1957 visit to Liberia.

[laughter] But nevertheless, yes, there was the meeting with Nixon.

Of course, why was he there? He wasn't there to meet the Gola; he wasn't there to meet the paramount chief or me. He was there to go up to Bomi Hills where the Firestone Liberian Mining Company was and the Goodrich rubber plantation. These were very important to the American economy at the time.

Kd: It was the time of the Cold War, too.

Yes, during the Cold War, when we had an airfield and a port in Liberia with the idea, I suppose, of driving off the Russians or something. [laughter]

Kd: Well, Liberia was the listening post for all of Africa on the part of the U.S. government.

*Well, yes, that's where Radio-Free . . .*

So that's the only reason why he would be there. Our relations with Liberia have been rather embarrassing, I would say, historically. But anyway, that's my visit with Nixon, and that photo, as I say, I do regret, that I'm smiling and shaking his hands. [laughter]

Kd: But you remember all the comments that were made on the part of the Gola who were watching, about Nixon and about Pat. Well, they were sort of poking fun at them.

Yes, "It's scraped pig." Yes, his wife was "scraped pig;" she was so white. Yes, they were poking fun at them: I've forgotten the details.

*So Kathy, you don't remember what Warren told you when he came back?*

Kd: I don't at the moment, no. But they were just sort of ridiculing them, you know. "What is he doing here, and who does he think he is?" and, "He's acting like this big shot."

*And, "Who is he really?"*

Yes. It's interesting. I was very anti-Republican administration at the time, but it's interesting how on occasions like that you supersede it. You know, he was a symbol of the United States, and I felt obliged to be friendly and pleasant and all that, and therefore, I'm now the inheritor of that terrible photo. [laughter]

Part of my recovery had to do with the fact that I was working at Northwestern trying to figure out how I was ever going to start a thesis with all the material I had, and

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under the shadow of my mentor. Then I get this offer from McCown at Berkeley. Would I come out for a year and teach? This is where I had graduated from and done my B.A. and a year of graduate work after the war.

Kd: You did your first year or so of graduate work there and then transferred.

That's right, and that's the last place in the world I would expect to have me, because in those days you didn't hire somebody that you had had as a student unless they had gone way up and become a professor at some other university. But here I was being asked as a

former graduate student. And then I had two or three other feelers at different universities. And I thought, "My God, the end of the world has not come. I'm not really 'dirty dish rag,' you know." [laughter] So things were getting better. So I did go to Berkeley, because, in the first place, Kathy and the kids wanted to be out there.

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Note

1. The interviewer had been in Africa in the Peace Corps.





## BEGINNING TO TEACH

**N**OW WE'RE going to skip ahead to coming to Nevada at the founding of the independent Anthropology Department.

Well, I think I should sort of summarize or hit a few of the high points showing what the trajectory was that brought me to Nevada.

In the first place, while we were in Africa, there was the famous exposé by Khrushchev in 1956—the denunciation of Stalin and the Stalinist era by Khrushchev—which although I was deeply involved in fieldwork and it seemed a cosmos away, nevertheless, that had some impact on me. I'll talk about that later when we come back, because that was a rather important moment in my life.

It didn't undermine any of my basic political orientations, but I saw it as historically extremely important and interesting to see this kind of denouement of a movement that had been so important in the lives of some of the people I knew. So, I'll talk about that later, but that did happen. And I want to come back to it.

*Were you in the field in Africa when it happened?*

I was right in the middle of fieldwork in northern Liberia among the Gola, and the word slowly filtered up from Monrovia on the little radio we had. I remember sitting around with Kathy in the evening and talking about life in general and what this meant. And it meant a great deal, but didn't mean the same thing to me, either, that it meant to some others that I knew. I wasn't crushed by it at all; I was made very reflective. And I still now look back on that as a kind of watershed, but a good one.

Then in 1957, I came back from Liberia to Northwestern with the intention of working on my thesis, and I was Herskovits's assistant. That was one of my jobs. I also did some teaching at the downtown center in Chicago, the Northwestern downtown center.

This was the period, also, politically, of the Hungarian uprising and the Hungarians withdrawing from the Warsaw pact and the Soviet invasion of Hungary. All those things were part of the deep re-thinking that went on among a number of people that I knew. And it really had a different impact upon various members of the former Left that I

knew, so that was important, too. But I did my initial teaching at that point and found that very stimulating.

*Now, you said that was the central downtown campus?*

The downtown campus of Northwestern University. I forget the exact title of it, but it was the downtown campus actually, right on the lake.

And that was the period of a visit from the FBI, waiting for me as I returned home to our little apartment. That was one of two or three visits, post-Africa, in which they wanted to have long talks with me.

*Would it be fair to call it a debriefing?*

They thought I was now softened up and ready to talk about my past and the past of people that I knew. And I think at that point they thought that people who had been members of the Communist Party would now be ready to blab because of the changes in the Soviet Union. And I'm glad to say that neither myself or people that I knew were prepared to do that.

*Was there some interest on their part . . . were they trying to find out any information from you specific to your experience in Liberia?*

Not particularly. They were mainly interested in the fact that I had been a member of the party. And let's see, 1956, 1957, the McCarthy-esque movement was still going on. And they knew about the Africa trip, because somehow or other . . . . They had read the state department reports; they knew that there was nothing there, that they couldn't get anything out of that. No, it was

the idea that maybe I was now ready to cooperate.

*Well, I know they found it difficult to investigate you, because they found that many of the people that you worked with didn't speak English. [laughter]*

In Africa, yes, yes. Here it is: [reading]

The American Embassy, Monrovia, advised this Office by Operations Memorandum dated August 14, 1957, that Subject left Liberia about the middle of July. As indicated in their previous reports, that Embassy was unable to uncover any information of a derogatory nature concerning Subject's conduct and associations in Liberia. The American Embassy, Monrovia, states that Subject spent a great portion of his time in the hinterland in the association of tribal groups in the study of their language and customs; consequently, few literate or articulate people had an opportunity to become closely acquainted with him. Rabat status—closed.

That was the state department.

*So they were really interested in pursuing getting you to talk.*

They were visiting hundreds of people with this in mind. You know, what stage was this person in? Was this character ready now to cooperate and provide materials to their voluminous disreputable files? I remember they parked out in front of my house, out in front of our apartment. And my kids were

coming home from school, and I said to them “Look, I see you guys sitting here in the car.”

They said, “Can we have a chat with you?” That was the kind of thing.

And I said, “Why don’t you come in?”

“Oh no, we don’t do that. We don’t.”

I said, “Well, you can meet my wife and my kids.” I didn’t know how to handle them. All I knew, they were two nice young men with ties and white shirts. I was sickened by it, but on the other hand, I didn’t want to be rambunctious and do anything silly. So I said, “Come on in. We can talk.”

“Oh no,” they said, “we can’t do that.” So anyway, that happened two or three times, and they eventually left me alone, because there wasn’t much forthcoming. That, by the way, is in my FBI Freedom of Information files, that I had these visits and that I was very uncooperative but not unpleasant. I just was uncooperative. I was glad this got in my files.

While I was at Northwestern that six or seven months we were really just recuperating from our field trip. It took a while. The kids were in school. We had been out to the West Coast visiting family. I had stopped to see my Washoe friends and continued my connection with them, and all that was very pleasant.

That was *the West* then. The West was, of course, a great attraction to us. Everything was wonderful out there. [laughter] So, we came through there and back to Northwestern.

While I was there, I got a letter from McCown, inquiring whether I would like to come to UC Berkeley for at least a year’s appointment. Now I didn’t have my dissertation done or anything, and I knew what that meant. It meant that if I finished it I then had a possibility of staying there, or that

this was just a look-over year, and they just had a slot.

Nevertheless, this was very attractive. Here I was just back from the field, still a graduate student, and got an offer from my old university. I was told—and it turned out to be right—“Don’t go back, before you’ve arrived in the discipline or in the field, to the place where you did your training. It’s death.” Nevertheless, the attraction of going back to the West Coast was overwhelming. Kathy wanted to, and the kids were delighted with the idea, and I was. I mean, you know, Berkeley in the late 1950s-early 1960s was quite a place. All kinds of wonderful things were happening there, and the department was still not too bad, even though people that I had known and really had a lot of respect for were gone. People like Dave Schneider, Lloyd Fallers, and a number of others had left in a kind of a huff and gone off to Chicago. Bob Murphy was still there, whom I had tremendous respect for. But most of the old timers were gone—Kroeber, Lowie, all these guys were gone. Well, Kroeber was still alive.

*Heizer was still there too, right?*

And Bob Heizer and McCown. These were people that I had some good feeling about. So, anyway, I accepted and went to Berkeley for that year, knowing full well it was probably going to be a terminal year unless I really shaped up.

Well, it was a very good experience, and I worked hard, did a lot of teaching, and was a sort of a pack mule for the department. Did pretty well. But I didn’t have my dissertation done.

*Did you like teaching?*

Yes, very much. Very exciting, you know. If one is at all a teacher or a scholar, the first years of teaching are extremely exciting, because you're learning as much, sometimes more, than you're giving out. In fact, it's the frosting on your training. It's when you really pick up the stuff you really want to know in order to develop a program of teaching, and you are in constant interaction with students. And Berkeley students, a lot of them, were a very lively and demanding lot.

Here I was teaching classes—a seminar or two, in which I was teaching graduate students. And it makes you quite humble in a way, yet it was extremely exciting.

*Did you discover that you actually had some ideas that you didn't know about before? What I mean by that is that in that process of teaching, it really helps you refine what the kernel is and what you think is important.*

Oh, sure. That's what's exciting about it. I mean, you have a lot of stuff that you developed as your own material and what you think is important.

I had an introductory class, and I did a lot of rethinking of the whole field. A thousand students, you know. Jim Downs was an assistant, and Richard Henderson. These were graduate students more adept than I in many ways. But nevertheless, I worked tremendously to develop what I thought was a cutting-edge kind of introductory course. And a lot of new material. Did a lot of new reading, sure, but that's what happens. Thought through ways of presenting the material that would get across to students and things of that kind.

Oh yes, when I look back, occasionally, I've run across some of those notes or syllabi that I had. They were tremendous for the time. I think graduate students are sometimes

the very best stuff that you can get as teachers. Sometimes, you know, people who are already in advanced stages of their careers, they might be damn good scholars and doing awfully good work and publishing good stuff, but the excitement of teaching is not there anymore. They're more interested in their own work and what they're doing.

There are exceptions to that. There are some people who manage to give out a tremendous amount of themselves and where they were at in their field while they're teaching. But a lot of them wear out. It took me a long time for that to happen. I began to realize ten years ago or so that I was tired of teaching, that I really wanted to spend more time thinking about my own stuff, my own work. And I realized that I felt I was on a treadmill. It took a long time.

I give myself credit. I felt very excited about teaching for most of my teaching career, and I was able to get out when I felt that I didn't want to anymore, when I wouldn't regret dropping it, and when I was quite glad to leave it at that. So, yes, those first few years of teaching, I think, are essential.

I taught introductory anthropology, and I had a seminar with George Foster, and poor old George and I didn't get along too well in that seminar. We had quite different views of things, and I was a graduate student full of ideas. I was right up to snuff, particularly in social anthropology and the effect of structural-functional concepts on my thinking and the new work that was going on in symbolism. A lot of things that were just beginning to develop at that time were very exciting to me. They were new ideas. Young people, graduate students were talking about it, sometimes more than their professors. So this stuff was coming into my teaching.

I had this course on culture change with George Foster. And he had an acculturation approach, which is perfectly all right, because I had come up through that through early Cal and Herskovits. Acculturation was one of the major paradigms in the field at the time; however, I had a lot of criticism of that approach and wanted to present a much more formal social-anthropological orientation. So, at that seminar, I learned an awful lot about getting along with older colleagues and what it meant. But nobody begged me to stay on the following year.

I had other courses as well. Oh yes, I had a course in Africa, and I think I followed Fallers, who had given it earlier. All very stimulating. It was a good year for me.

*How much contact did you continue to have with Herskovits during this teaching phase?*

Just occasional letters or third-hand comments from people. Not direct. Oh, he did come out and visit while . . . . Herskovits's visit was when he was out there for some meeting and asked me to show him around. I was delighted to do it, but he wanted to see Kroeber. That was it: There was the famous meeting between Herskovits and Kroeber after many years where they had sort of avoided each other, and I was there when they sort of made up. It was very nice. They went through a lot of reminiscence about the past. So, we'll come back to that.

So, that was that. Now, then, of course the end of that year came, and I didn't particularly expect or want to be asked to stay on. I felt that I really needed to get my damn thesis done.

*And you probably weren't working on this thesis at all, were you?*

No, I'm not one of these ambidextrous people who can do twenty things at one time. [laughter] No, I was too much involved. And also, there was a lot of things going on at Cal. My god, Eldridge Cleaver was speaking weekly on the campus, and there were marches, and it was the beginnings of the civil rights movement. Not the beginnings, but where it was hitting campuses, so, there was an awful lot of excitement around the area.

And, of course, we were in the area where we knew a great many people. So, we were doing that, having sort of a re-entry. Yes, that was. That was a year of that.

*Were you dabbling at all . . . ? And I don't mean necessarily dabbling, but were you doing any writing at all at this point, any poetry?*

Not creative fiction. Well, no, I can't say that. I wrote a short story that was on the air for KPFA and eventually got published later somewhere else. I forget. A little of that, but mainly I was immersed in academic work and thinking and writing some articles and things of that kind. I wrote two or three articles that were published in professional journals by that time. I told Herskovits—who was saying that I should be getting that thesis done—I was telling him, thanking him for releasing so many sections of my dissertation for publication by rejecting them. [laughter]

Oh yes, Jim Downs became editor of the *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers* as a graduate student, and he practically devoted one issue of it to a very long, redundant kind of an article of mine that was, I guess, my excuse for not finishing my thesis. It was, in a sense, the spin-off on some part of my thesis, and that got published in the Kroeber journal.

And I was doing a lot of reading, people like Edmund Leach and others. I was fasci-

nated by his work in Burma, and Gregory Bateson. A large number of new materials were coming into a field that I was fascinated by.

So, anyway, here comes the end of that teaching year, and what was I to do? I had no job, no nothing. Kathy and I talked about it. I could have gone and asked to stay on or . . . Oh, well, I did. I taught at the extension division—just like Radin, I taught at the extension division. I taught a course or two there and made a couple of hundred bucks or something. I did that. I also got my old part-time job back at the liquor store. [laughter]

*Is Radin alive at this point?*

Yes, yes.

*Did you reconnect with him?*

He was gone. He was now with the Bollingen Foundation, but out of the blue, he died right at the end of that . . . Was that the end of that year, 1959 or 1960, when Radin died? He was, I think, in New York, at the Bollingen Foundation.

And here I was, doing all these odd jobs and trying to decide what to do and also sending out letters looking for jobs. But I knew all the time with a sickening feeling that I had to get my damn thesis written. And it wasn't coming along very . . . Oh, I'd done a lot of writing, but it never quite fit, and Herskovits didn't accept most of it. He was a curmudgeon, but he was probably right.

I have a lot of the stuff that was rejected. I've looked at it, and it was good stuff. [laughter] But it doesn't fit together in the kind of dissertation he would accept. And so, actually, when I finally did it, it was just merely

restructuring and rewriting the whole damn thing in a format that made some sense to that old man. That was later at Utah.

So, anyway, after two or three months of this flailing around, I suddenly get a letter from the Bollingen Foundation saying that Paul Radin had died and that his last act was to suggest a grant for me to finish some work that he had heard about on the Washoe.

*Wow! Did you have an inkling?*

I hadn't the slightest inkling of it. It just sort of . . . He probably did this for a number of people. You know, he was getting ill and all that. And he was director, and these are the grants he wanted to . . . I hadn't applied for it. He applied for me, I guess. And I forget what it was—\$6,000, \$7,000. Those days, that was terrific.

*Well, had you been in contact with him at all since you came back?*

Only indirectly and occasionally. I hadn't seen much of him. Well, he knew about my work, and we had gotten together at some point when he was still . . . maybe when I first returned to Cal and before he went to Bollingen. And even before that, he had been very interested in my narratives, the peyote narratives.

I didn't do *Straight With The Medicine* right then; it was a few years later. Although, I got these things together, while I had that grant, it was later that they were published.

But he loved those. I mean, he thought they were great stuff. And he liked what I was doing up there, and he was always asking about the Washoe. But I didn't see much of him. This just came out of the blue, you know—I learned that he had died.

So, here I was gratefully living on the good will of the old man. And that held us up for, you know, a few months fairly well. I did spend some time on my thesis and got something together that was really beginning to look like something.

Then I suddenly got an offer from Utah. Apparently, again, my old Professor McCown, I think, was responsible for this. Somebody had . . . Maybe Omer Stewart, I'm not sure, but somebody had suggested that they ask me.

*So, they came to you, you hadn't . . . ?*

Yes, a letter came, an inquiry. That went to somebody at the department, I can't remember who. It was either McCown or . . . Mandelbaum wasn't there. I forget who told me, "Look, this letter came asking me whether you would be interested in going to Utah." Something like that. I forget just how it was.

I wrote and said, "Yes, I would be interested." And then I got this formal letter saying that they were willing to have me, and would I come out and visit? And it was Jesse Jennings, Robert Anderson, old Charlie Biddle. Who else was there? Was Mel Aikens there at that time? I'm not sure.

But anyway, so I went out and visited and really liked the area. University of Utah was quite a place, I thought. Mostly archaeology, but Bob Anderson was a social anthropologist, and Bill Biddle was interested in Maya history and archaeology and transcription of Maya texts. And they had a lot of students, and I needed a job. [laughter]

That's how those things happen. And the money wasn't much, but it was certainly more than I had. I don't know. Those days, it could have been an offer for four, five, six thousand dollars, so it wasn't bad. And so, we went

to Utah and were there for two years. Then I had an offer from Pittsburgh.

*But it was in Utah you finished your dissertation?*

Yes, that's it. That's what I was trying to think of, yes. Nineteen sixty-one or 1962, I finished it in the basement of the little place we had in Utah, where we had a quiet, dark, dank basement. I spent a few months putting it together and finally got a draft in that Herskovits accepted.

*And that's where you met the Fowlers?*

Well, they were students—Don Fowler and Kay, who weren't married yet—and Mel Aikens. They were in my classes, and part of what I considered a very vigorous group of students, and interested. Sort of archaeologically oriented, but nevertheless, they were good. A lot of them have gone on to become very good fieldworkers and scholars.

*Do you remember any specific things that you might have refined that you want to talk about in terms of how you were teaching at that time? I mean, was there anything that stands out?*

Well, when we come back to it, I'll get into that. I think I taught courses there on American Indians of Western North America, and the Great Basin. There was a course on Africa, though they weren't particularly interested in that. Students turned up, and I had a seminar on the Great Basin. That's where I met Kay [Sweeney] Fowler as a student.

And, of course, Jesse Jennings, who was a terrific person to have gotten to know . . . we didn't hit it off very well at the beginning, but we developed a *modus operandi*.

We began to get along very well and liked each other. He was a pretty gruff character, and I learned to be as gruff in return, and we got along fine.

And there were a lot of other things, also: I had some—not trouble—but confrontation with the Mormon Church. [laughter] They said that they felt the materials I was giving out in one class—I guess this was introductory anthropology—were demeaning to Mormons. And actually what I had done was distribute a paper by a man I had great admiration for, a John Sorensen at Brigham Young University, who was a member of the church and was also an anthropologist. He had written this marvelous paper on being an anthropologist and a Mormon, and I felt it was wonderful. I felt it was a good take on the problem of being a scientist and religious. But when I distributed it to my students, I was called into the president's office, because the parents of a couple of students had complained.

*That has such relevance, you know, today with all the creationism and . . . .*

Yes. And I just remember talking to them and saying, "Look. I think John Sorensen is a fine anthropologist and a fine scholar. And I thought his paper was just the kind of thing students here need, because many of them either come from the Mormon Church or have deep religious convictions and wonder why they're taking anthropology. And that's what I wanted to do."

And I remember the president at Utah at that time, he looked at them and said, "That sounds reasonable to me."

They looked at one another and then said, "Well, we're so glad we've met you, and it seems to be all right."

And I said, "Had you read the article?"

They said, "No."

I said, "Well, may I give you a copy?" [laughter]

I had a copy, and I gave it to the president, and he gave it to them. And they thanked me, and that was the end of that.

*So, there was no problem in those years teaching explicitly about human evolution, or was that not your . . . ?*

Oh, yes. Well, evolution was a problem, but I mean, they just expected it. I mean, students would come expecting that they were going to hear about evolution, and they were steeled to be very cautious and critical. No, I never had any direct problem over that, and I never pulled my punches.

Evolution—they knew that that's what these characters in some of the sciences talked about. And they were in university, and you sat through your courses, and you put it down, and you passed your exams, and you learned what you were taught, but you kept your faith, which is very common. That's true even today.

But no, the nerve that was touched there was that I was thought to be making fun of the Mormon Church and its ideology. I had to explain that I had great admiration for this guy, which I did. In fact, I didn't tell them, because I didn't give out that much, that I really had some admiration for the damn Mormons, too. [laughter] I mean, we knew some members who we liked, and I had read a lot of Mormon history and theology, and thought it was just a grand myth, just wonderful, just as good a myth as basic Christianity, you know. Also, some of Kathy's people had been Mormon, so that we were kind of going through this faith.



*Don't you have some materials . . . ? Weren't you working on a project on Mormon culture?*

Later, with Kay [Fowler], which is much later, the NSF field school. So, anyway, let's move on, because we've got to move on. So here I was two years, enjoying Utah. But again, these were the years in which mobility was very much part of the scene. We really were searching for a place; we were looking for the place we wanted to stay. I remember thinking that I could have stayed at Utah. Kathy and I sort of liked Salt Lake City, but it just wasn't what we really wanted. We wanted to go West again, you know.

Kathy would never have been *fully* satisfied without returning West. On the other hand, she would have stayed, and the kids liked it. They had two very good years in schools there, and their associations.

However, I wasn't going to make much more of a salary than . . . . It was going to be very slow and all that, and yet I could put up with that.

It's hard to explain those years. People were moving. There was great mobility. Anthropology was growing. Departments were opening up all over, and there was this kind of opportunity to move around and to finally get what you wanted. I don't think that that was my motivation all the time, it's just that it was the atmosphere around me. And, so I got an offer from . . . .

*So, there were many opportunities that you could explore?*

Yes. I had a number of offers. Portland came through.

*Well, was part of it looking for a congenial academic atmosphere?*

I think partly, excepting I think I was really just learning to be an academic and a scholar moving through the trajectory. [laughter] I don't recall that I had any great ambition or goals of moving up the line to some fabulous place. It's just that every place was one that you were looking at: Would you want to stay there? Is it the place to be? So, I got this offer from Pittsburgh.

*Was that again something out of the blue?*

Not really, because Art Tuden was there, and he had been at Northwestern. And I'm quite sure that he had suggested me to the staff. The Kennards were there, whom we later got to know, and they came here [UNR], and Pete Hammond had been there earlier, so, along with Art, there had been sort of a Northwestern wave through the place. So I think Art brought my name up, and I sounded OK, and old Pete Murdock decided that I was all right, and I was given an offer.

The money was better than what I was making—in fact, substantially better. But from the perspective of the present, it was awful; it was dismal. But *then* it wasn't bad at all. I forget what the offer was, eight or nine thousand, something like that.

*Did Pittsburgh, at that time, have a certain emphasis in anthropology that was appealing to you?*

Well, there really wasn't an African program, but Tuden was there teaching Africa, and there was one other person that I can't remember who had been working there. So yes, there was something of an Africa orientation and an ethnicity orientation.

But then there was Pete Murdock, you know, who was all over the world, all over the planet and something of a figure. He was

always interested in any area as long as he had people around that could feed him information and all that. And it was a fairly prestigious place, growing rapidly and very gung-ho, putting up a lot of hype about where it was going to go and its plans.

It was a little heady. I didn't know if I particularly liked that, but nevertheless, Art was there and the money was good. It's that old thing.

*Well, were you curious about going East, because you'd been in the Midwest, but I mean, were you curious at all with that part of it, too?*

Well, we were interested, but whether we could stand it or not . . . [laughter] And it was a new experience. Those are the adventuresome years. My god, Kathy and I—Kathy not as much as I—but, I mean, any idea of having a new experience, you know. I am talking for you, Kathleen.

Kd: I hear you.

I mean, it was a new experience, it was something that was a new adventure. Kathy in those years was quickly talked into things like that, and it wasn't too bad. [laughter] But we did worry about the kids moving around so much, except it wasn't that unusual among the people we knew.

*Among the academics?*

Yes, that's the way it was. So, I accepted. Utah tried to meet the offer—you know, that's part of what was going on—and they wanted me to stay. And I really liked Jesse Jennings a lot. For many years until his death, I found him a very attractive, meaningful person, and his wife Jane. And the others

there, I enjoyed—we enjoyed, had students who enjoyed it, Don and Kay.

But nevertheless, I accepted, because in those days it was part of the trajectory. This was the way you upgraded yourself, not only through scholarly work and writing, but that partly had to do with it, because you didn't get offers if you didn't do something. Except that Bob Murphy says any old characters can get offers and move, because that was the name of the game. [laughter] Nevertheless, it was the way you did things, and it was very hard to turn down an offer with three or four thousand more a year than you were getting if you thought it might take you many years to get that where you were by just a slow attrition rate of time.

So, we went, took off to Pittsburgh. And I have to go quickly through this, but that was a tremendous move. We were driving down in our old car with that little trailer in back of us, down to the cobbled streets of Pittsburgh. I'll never forget western Pittsburgh down through that ancient town and the smoke and the belching smoke stacks. And in those days, it was awful. They've cleaned it up since.

So, anyway, here we were. I was at the university, got to know Pete Murdock and the others who were there, did some teaching for the year. Again, there were some very good students.

Oh, one reason not only that I went there, but tied with my going, was the Peace Corps. I was asked to help develop the first Liberian Peace Corps training project in 1962. First I had thought, "Gee, we ought to have the training project at Northwestern." But when I got the offer from Pittsburgh, they made it very attractive to me to have the Peace Corps project there. And that was one of the things that convinced me that I wanted

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to go there, because they were just going to lay out the red carpet and provide all kinds of amenities for the Peace Corps contingent that hadn't even been developed yet.

And I went back to Washington, D.C., met with Sergeant Shriver and all that. You had a feeling of big times, talking about the first Peace Corps contingent. And I and two or three others were asked to develop the Liberian one.

So, all that was going on, but after that one year we knew we didn't want to live in

Pittsburgh. We could just feel it, although it was a very good experience.

I'll never forget the "Cathedral of Learning," you know, this skyscraper in the middle of campus with the Anthropology Department on the thirty-fifth floor. [laughter] The whole thing was new, strange, and, you know, a little bit disconcerting experience. Nevertheless, I learned a lot there.



## BEING COURTED

ALL DURING this time in 1962 and 1963, every anthropological meeting I would go to I was met by Carl Backman from the University of Nevada, chairman of the Sociology Department. He always tracked me down, and he was probably trying to track others down, too, but he was recruiting. He would sit and buy me drinks and sometimes go to dinner, and he was very persuasive.

And I had always felt he was a little bit of a, I don't know, a Western hayseed. I didn't realize at the time that he was really a very accomplished sociologist and a very well-known one; I learned that rather quickly. And he was a nice guy, but it was annoying. "Warren, let's have a talk now."

And each time he would talk to me, the offer would go up a little bit, you know. They had one anthropologist, but they weren't satisfied with him, and they wanted to help to build a program of anthropology. I didn't learn till later that what was behind it was that Bob Heizer, Fred Eggan, Omer Stewart, and Jesse Jennings had been part of a group that the University of Nevada had called

upon to help them plan a strategy for development of anthropology, and that they had suggested me. And oh, that made me very happy when I finally learned it. I didn't know it at the time.

So I just kept putting him off, and this went on until the winter of 1962-1963. I later got a letter from somebody saying that Jesse Jennings had told Carl Backman, "Just give him a year in Pittsburgh, and you'll have him." [laughter]

That was partly true. So, it was the spring of 1963 that we finally decided it was probably good to look into this offer from Nevada. This was very attractive to me on one level. That is, we knew western Nevada, because I had done fieldwork here, and it was like going home. But I didn't really know much about Reno. I don't think I'd been on the campus of the university. I had just sort of avoided all that. It didn't occur to me that anything important existed here that was academic.

And most people would come to me telling me, "Don't go there. That's the land of jackpots and whorehouses, you know."

[laughter] So, that was a little unnerving, that part.

What could one really do there? Like Bob Murphy told me, "Now you're in the big time, and what are you going to do? Drop it all and head out to the slums of the West?" So, that was a problem. Did we want to do that?

And yet, the pull to come back West and the hype that I was given from the university about coming back here . . . that they really had serious plans about building anthropology. And I had had in the back of my mind all this time, while I was at Utah, about programs in Great Basin anthropology, that there was sort of an area where there hadn't been enough fieldwork, that there was a real need for concentration and efforts in that area. So all of that was swimming around as well as the negative aspects of it.

And there were lots of negative ones. I mean, when I would say to people, "I might go west to Nevada—Reno."

"Reno? What's in Reno? Is there a university? How could that be?" I mean, it was really negative. It was like you're jumping off the end of the world—"the Mississippi of the West."

And, you know, you can't explain to people what the combination of things are that cause you to do this. Kathy was quite happy about it, because, you know, we'd be in driving distance of her family and our friends on the West Coast. And we knew the area and liked it. Not Reno itself, but west-central Nevada and the Sierras and all that, our old stamping grounds.

So, Jesse was right. That winter in Pittsburgh, black soot on the snow. [laughter] That wasn't it alone; it was just the whole atmosphere was not our way of life, what we liked. However, we enjoyed it, we met some good people that we liked, and I met students there that I knew for years afterwards.

*Was Don Handelman a student at Pittsburgh?*

Not then. Maybe he went later. You know, I'm not sure. I think he went after I was there. During the NSF field school period he may have come from there. I have to check on that, because they did send some people.

*This is jumping a little bit ahead, but I just don't want to forget to ask you if, while you were at Pittsburgh, any of the groundwork had been laid for that NSF field school. Because I just found it interesting that it was Pittsburgh, Stanford, and UNR that . . .*

I'm not sure that we were thinking about it while I was there, though Kim Romney and Art Tuden were certainly . . . I don't know whether we started to develop that after I came out here; I'm not sure. It may have been in our minds, but it wasn't until 1964 . . . I'll have to think about that. Romney at Stanford, Dave Landy—it may have been talked about in various ways. That's interesting. I have to look into that.

So, anyway, when I finally decided to come out here, I came with a lot of intellectual baggage, a lot of plans. I guess on my mind was that it would be wonderful to be part of the introduction of a Department of Anthropology, and one that was sort of breaking new ground and where people that I knew would be interested in coming. That was an exciting part of it.

But behind this, like a cloud, was the area. What kind of university could possibly develop in this damn . . . ? Oh, the university was having trouble. The university had been kicked out of the AAUP [the American Association of University Professors] because the president . . . And people were telling me, "For Christ sakes, they apparently haven't been accredited by the AAUP, and

they're having all kinds of trouble out there, and the regents and the president are . . . ." There had been two key people at the university who had criticized the policy of the president, and he had fired them. And this had been a big cause célèbre. So, anyway, I think . . . .

*Were you aware of the politics of the state?*

Oh, I heard it was very conservative, but the point is, it wasn't. It didn't turn out to be. I mean, I knew it was a rural desert area. I knew the area and found it very attractive. And I kind of liked that Western outpost quality to that part of Nevada and its history, all that; I had spent a lot of time reading about it.

*Also, the fact that they were courting you, so to speak, for the job, and you were a known entity. It's not like they would have been recruiting you if they hadn't wanted someone with your perspective on things.*

Yes. I'd been talked up pretty well by the people they asked, and that's good. They saw me as somebody with a lot of energy and a lot of ideas. And my teaching had been well-thought of in the places that I was doing that. And apparently, people I'd worked with recommended me, so that's good. But I think there probably weren't many who were willing to even think about coming to Nevada.

So, anyway, I was invited out. And I remember that trip out here while I was at Pittsburgh, to talk, to look the place over.

*Weren't you awfully young in your career to be offered something like that?*

In my career, but I wasn't young as a person. Well, I was forty-two years old.

*Yes, but you had been an instructor in three places and . . . .*

Yes, but I also was a late arriver. I had gotten my dissertation done years after a number of my colleagues.

*It just seems that with all the negatives that you raised, nevertheless, how many opportunities were you going to get to get in on the ground floor and really contribute to the character, the development of an entire program?*

That's true, but I don't think that's the way I thought about it. I mean, that may have been the fact, yes, but I don't think I saw myself as a program builder or as a department builder or anything like that. I just saw it as being a kind of creative idea, a challenge, kind of an adventure, the sort of thing that appealed to me in those days.

Could I cut it? And they were talking about giving me free rein, you know. I could do as I please. I wasn't sure what "I please" was, but, you know, that was pretty heady at that stage of the game.

*I like Bob Murphy's suggestion, which was to start a department and to hire one other person when you were sixty-five. [laughter]*

Oh, that's wonderful. That's true. And then retire. [laughter] Oh, he was an evil genius.

So anyway, I came out to Reno. And I had never really seen Reno. We'd passed through it.

*Is that what you referred to as your intellectual baggage, the kind of the prejudice you had? "What is this little . . . ?"*

Yes, and also a lot of plans and ideas related to other things. I mean, we were coming from a different world, though this world wasn't completely strange to us. But Reno was strange, because I had never really looked at Reno. And the few times that we ever had come through that town, or when I was a kid and had gone to Harolds Club or something, it was always like going to a sideshow or circus. And then you got out as soon as you could and went back to the desert and the mountains and Lake Tahoe. That was what the area meant to me. And Reno was just sort of a surly Disneyland, which it still is—smaller than Las Vegas's Disneyland.

But so, here I was at this small, little university, kind of attractive with its old early-twentieth-century and Western buildings and brick; and it had that feel of being an old land grant university. I kind of liked that look. But I don't know, there were only about five, six thousand students at that time, if there were that many. It was very relaxed and quiet and trees and lawns and strange.

*It's also very white, wasn't it?*

Oh, yes. Well, we'll get to *that*.

*Yes, yes. I'm just thinking of the initial visual impact.*

Yes, excepting I'll tell you, most universities were pretty white in those days. I mean, in Pittsburgh for god sakes . . .

*Really! Oh, I'm surprised, because I assumed . . .*

Oh, yes. We had some Africans on campus but no, I helped develop the committee on discrimination at Pitt while I was there. There were three or four African students I knew for some years after that and corresponded with Hamilton Otho, a Kenyan, and he became leader of this organization to protest discrimination against American negroes and Africans at Pitt, and so, I helped him develop that.

*Oh. See, I had a very kind of naive idea that oh, it was urban East . . .*

But, how many could get to the university in those days?

*That's true, in the 1960s. That's right.*

I mean, downtown, you'd see a lot of minorities and blacks, but not necessarily on campuses. So that wasn't so unusual. But this university was pretty rural and lily-white, but they had those blacks on their football team. That developed into something later.

But anyway, so here was Carl Backman, and Alex Simirenko—quite a wonderful, wild guy. He was a University of Nevada version of Bob Murphy, but nowhere near as wonderfully witty. But Alex was quite a guy. And there was Paul Secord from the psychology department, and Wendell Mordy. I saw Wendell separately.

*Now, Wendell was head of DRI?*

Wendell Mordy was director of the Desert Research Institute, developed on Fleischmann funds and many grants. It was very successful, moving ahead with all sorts of studies, you know, atmospheric studies,



studies of climate change, geological work, a number of ecological programs.

*Were they still doing above-ground testing in Nevada of the atomic bomb?*

Oh, that was going on. I should mention that. Well, that's a little later when we moved out. [laughter] Yes, the underground nuclear bombs had been blasted in southern Nevada, and when we came out, the newspapers had an editorial saying we needn't worry, because the wind is blowing eastward. And, of course, the wind *was* blowing eastward and getting the sheep and causing all kinds of health problems for Utahans. But that was the attitude of the press in Nevada.

I have to go back and find that editorial. I would love to find it. "We need not worry. The winds are blowing eastward." [laughter] Assuring people they don't have to worry. Yes, don't worry about it.

OK, so yes, all that was going on, but that wasn't unusual. My god, this was the period of the Cuban Missile Crisis, while we were at Pittsburgh.

*I'm just trying to get a picture of how common . . . I mean, if everybody who lived in Nevada knew that they were living in a test ground. It's not the first thing . . . I mean, when you told people you were considering going to Reno, they didn't say, "Oh, what about the atomic fallout?"*

Well, I think that was probably mentioned, but I don't think with most people it registered that much on them in those days. I mean, there was curiosity and maybe a little bit of anxiety, of course, at times to some people. But, you know, it was still the end of the World War II period and gung-ho United

States doing all these wonderful things. And although there was a lot of protest about atomic energy and the bombs and all that, nevertheless most Americans felt this is the way it's going. This is the wave of the future.

*Well, it was part of the Cold War, too, wasn't it?*

Yes, the Cold War, but also atomic energy and all that sort of thing. I mean, there was a lot of protest as well, but I don't recall that when I came here, people were talking about that. They had more local problems.

So, we were going to lunch at the Holiday Hotel, and it was then a not fancy, but good, place to eat. Now, it's a rat hole. It was a wonderful place on the Truckee River, and you took guests there to show them the best of Reno.

And we sat around at a big table, and Carl was giving a spiel, and Secord, too, about what their plans were for social science and the three departments working together, developing an anthropology section of the social sciences and how important they considered this and how much backing there was for it at the university. And oh, they had taken me to see Charles Armstrong, president of the university, who was also gung-ho, you know. "Oh, we're so glad . . ."

*Now, this is still at the recruitment stage? You have not accepted?*

No, no.

"We're so glad that you're thinking about coming here," and on and on, all the big talk. You know, a small university doing its thing is much more interesting than a big university. [laughter] They really go out, and you can see everybody, all the deans and up to

the president. They show you around, and they really give you the spiel.

And Carl was very good at this. I trusted him. He's an honest man. I always admired Carl, liked him very much. And he really sincerely wanted anthropology. He felt it was important to have it in social sciences. And he even had taught introductory anthropology, because there wasn't an anthropologist, and he was apologizing for what he had done. I said, "Man, god, you're a hero," you know. [laughter]

And so, anyway, all that was going on at this table. And then Alex was sitting next to me like Rasputin whispering in my ear. "Don't believe a word they say. This place is a dung heap. I mean, you don't want to come here."

While I was listening to him, I was thinking, "Why did they let this guy . . . ?"

Alex Simirenko was one of those marvelous characters that every college should have at least one, if not more, and that many colleges and departments deserve. [laughter] In fact, in some remote sort of a way, he reminded me of the other colleague that I had that I had tremendous respect for, extremely funny, and vitriolic: Bob Murphy, who was at UC Berkeley for a while and then went to Columbia. And Bob was very much the same sort of satirist, but not as evil as Alex was. [laughter]

Alex had a deep and abiding hatred for so many things, while Bob, I think, pretended to have such hatred, because he felt it was good style. But he was also very accurate and right. And both of these guys were great gossips. They knew everything about everybody and what was going on, and Alex was one of those sources. But his was seldom positive. I mean, there was seldom anybody he seemed to like. [laughter]

*What department was he in?*

He was a sociologist and a very good scholar. He had done some excellent work. In fact, before he left and a few years later died, he did a little study of Carson Colony, because he got interested in being part of what we were doing in terms of the study of local American Indian groups and colonies.

He did a nice sociological type study, which we needed to see, a little different from the kind anthropologists we have around here would do. It was quite good. He was a productive guy, but one of the most hypercritical characters that I've known.

But here he was, sitting beside me, undermining every positive thing that was being told me, and in a hoarse, loud whisper. Others seemed to ignore him as though they had gone through this before. [laughter] I thought it was wonderful.

*Maybe they thought that's what sociologists did.*  
[laughter]

And he says, "You know, a lot of great plans around here," he says, "but wait till you see what they have in store for you actually." He says, "Ask them about where you're going to be housed." [laughter] Well, I did eventually.

And oh, he also felt that the political climate was absolutely atrocious, that from the point of view of any kind of progressive movement, this was the pits, the whole area. And although that kind of thing registers on one, at the same time, I saw a tremendous amount of sincere and effective movement going on at the university, particularly because of the Desert Research Institute. The fact that it had this very large Fleischmann grant and that Wendell Mordy had a couple of years previ-

ously written into his proposed future plans developing not only a department, but a program of anthropology. He saw it as essential. Well, that, of course, makes one feel a little more assured, and this was one of the reasons why Secord and Backman felt that they had a lot of backing to push for a department.

So, I knew, looking at it, they were starting from scratch, that this was, in a sense, truly a desert, and that somebody was trying to build a little oasis in it. And also, because it was in that part of Nevada which I knew something about, I had a friendlier feeling than I would if I had just come fresh from the East or fresh from Berkeley and looked at this—what Alex felt was a dung heap of an academic institution [laughter] that had had all the troubles it had and a little land grant college type of place. But it was going through these throes of very rapid and exciting planning for the future. That attracted me to some degree, and I liked Paul Secord and Carl Backman.

I trusted them, and they were both good scholars, had done some excellent work, and were well known nationally and internationally. And I felt, “Well, if they could put up with this place and they had certain positive views of its potential, it was worth thinking about.”

As I said, we saw the whole place. I was driven around to Lake Tahoe, to Pyramid Lake, and all these places that I knew something about. They wanted me to see that the university was in a larger setting than just that little clump of buildings just north of downtown, and that the casinos . . . there was a “red line” in those days where nothing was supposed to be built in the way of a casino or a bar north of the railroad tracks. Well, of course, that’s all been changed. [laughter]

But nevertheless, they were also actively involved in the idea of regional and city plan-

ning. They saw the university as having a very important role in this area, and yet they were both very productive scholars. That’s reassuring when you hear that.

I had not made up my mind. You know, I thought, “Well, I’m glad I saw this.”

Was there anybody else I saw? As I say, there were very few students, and sociology had about thirty or forty people as majors. They had not yet developed a graduate program.

*Did you meet the man that was the anthropologist?*

Charles Stortroen. No, not that I can remember, maybe just in passing. But yes, there had been this guy who apparently was not working out; there were many problems. Alex Simirenko had all the dirt but I’m not going to repeat any of that here. [laughter] He was a kind of a sad guy, in a way, and they were just letting him go.

Then there had been this wonderful woman, Margaret Sellers. I corresponded with her. She was a very active, excellent undergraduate teacher in anthropology who had been here and had done a lot of work making liaisons with Indian groups and things of that kind. But she had left before I came, two or three years earlier. And she left a good feel around in that section of the university about anthropology.

And I met Wendell Mordy—I don’t know if I mentioned this earlier. Sat for a few hours two or three times talking to Wendell, who gave me probably the most proficient hype pitch of anybody. I mean, he was a master at laying things out in big programs, big ideas. The thing is, you couldn’t really cut him, because he was doing it. I mean, they

had the funds, and they did things. They were building this atmospherium-planetarium, which is about the only thing left of that great program and now is sort of one of the major landmarks for the area.

He was developing a number of programs in atmospheric physics and ecological studies, attracting a lot of attention internationally. They were doing major work, major research, and this was no small matter. But he was also a blow-hard, and you would have to listen for a couple of hours to this grand program. Now and then, he would put in where you might fit, "Where things might fit, and what we want to do for anthropology."

I have always had a negative reaction to that kind of pitch. I never felt comfortable with anybody doing that. I always suspected anything that had that element, but I mean, the world is full of them, and a lot of good work gets done by people who have just this approach.

*Were you at all concerned that maybe this was sort of a token gesture, a nod at meeting a department, but that, in fact, you'd be kind of constrained because people didn't really know what was involved?*

Oh, all those things entered your mind, you know. Why do they want anthropology? Now, the best take I had on that was from Carl and Paul Secord. Both of them sincerely felt that sociology and anthropology and psychology were, in a sense, related fields which should be developed together at a university.

*Do you have an idea about how usual it was to combine those fields?*

In those days, I think it was quite common. In fact, you see it quite a bit in small

universities where somehow or other they can't quite get the momentum together to split departments, because that's expensive, and gosh, you see departments of psychology, sociology, and anthropology still at very small places. Well, that's what UNR was, a small land grant college.

And, of course, there was a lot of prestige in separating departments and having these distinct disciplines with their own department, and that's what Carl and Paul were working toward.

*Was there an early appreciation, you think, for what kind of field opportunities the Great Basin . . . you know, that UNR was just perched on the edge of this Great Basin?*

Only vaguely. I mean, when I talked about that because that was my interest, there was positive reaction. "Oh yes," you know, "of course. Yes, that's one thing that ought to be done." But that wasn't their field, and that wasn't their interest. The fact that an anthropologist or anthropologists might be interested in doing this was, to them, a new idea. I mean, "If that's what you want to do, have some kind of Great Basin orientation, fine!"

My view at that time was that if I were to come, that the best thing that one could do would be to focus on the Great Basin as an ethnographic area and the relations between a department and the local groups of Native Americans. And I knew quite a bit about that and had relations with them, so I thought that's the thing that I would focus on.

I also thought very seriously about what that would mean to my Africa interests, you know, what was going to happen to that. In fact, Carl even asked me, I remember. And I said, "Well, I'm hoping I can work it in, but

you can't do everything. It would take a very big department to do all of that."

*Did your own experience in two major culture areas have any bearing on the forming of one of the criteria for hiring staff, that they would have control over two ethnographic areas?*

Well, yes, but that would be difficult and a small department couldn't cover everything. But the idea was that that, for an anthropologist in those days, I felt—and others would agree—that it was important for somebody to be more than a specialist in one small area, either theoretically or in terms of their ethnographic work. I think it was a relatively common view that it was good to have a range or experience in more than one culture.

*I just wondered how usual it would be for candidates at an entry level to have that range of experience in those years.*

There were some.

*Because my sense is that it's not that common now. Now, I don't know.*

Well, I don't know if it's true. I have a feeling that it's less so; there's more specialization. However, I don't know if there's any statistical work on this. I would suspect a lot of anthropologists, though, made a point of having at least one other area they got interested in because of comparative studies, the whole idea of comparative research. You really should have more than one area of focus.

*Well, wasn't there also an emphasis in . . . I think there still is—and maybe it's not just anthropology, maybe it's just a good idea in general in*

*academia—but it was very important for people to have a range of experiences in different schools. In other words, not to go to graduate school where you'd been an undergraduate.*

Oh yes, and that was there, too. That's why I said I learned that it was true. One should really try to avoid going back to the place where one was an undergraduate or graduate student too soon after getting one's degree or even before, because you would always be a student there. Not that you couldn't work your way out of it, but you'd have to be a pretty active and productive character to surmount the relationship that you have with people who are your mentors or were there before you. Not that that's an iron-clad rule, but it's one that's worth consideration, and many people felt that they shouldn't or that they got into difficulty if they did.

*Well also, in terms of having different experiences as a student in different schools, it also exposed you to different theoretical orientations, right?*

Well, sure, that was the idea. I mean, I can remember even here telling students—and particularly if there was a student we really had a lot of interest in, because they were very able and just made to order—but telling them, "Go out and work somewhere else, and then if you're still interested, apply here, and we'd be very interested in you." Because the idea was they should have more academic experience—a range—and see what's going on in the academic world around them.

*Because different schools really do get identified with theoretical perspectives, don't they?*

Well, it also gives you more contacts in your field, in your discipline, more people that you have related to and know. You get a bigger feel for the discipline, for what's going on in it and the kind of people that . . . . My gosh, when you're a graduate student, you just know a *few* people.

You might meet people in meetings, and you have friends elsewhere in other universities, but it's a little different than working there; it's a little different than working among them, going through the usual academic competition of publication and teaching and testing yourself against others. Like in any job, I suppose, that's the practical job aspect of the discipline.

But I don't think it's in all cases necessary. I mean, some people have all that to begin with. They somehow don't . . . or they're in the kind of institution or the kind of university where that isn't necessary, where they're able to go about their work without being interested or concerned about that. But those were the years in which mobility was very important.

*Well, also, those were the years, don't you think, where anthropologists were more generalists? They were expected to be more generalist.*

Right, exactly.

*Because now, I think, people become hyper-specialized. For instance, there are only a few departments that have well developed programs in something like medical anthropology. And if somebody identifies that as their primary focus early on, it's not like you can get a lot range of experience, it seems to me. It's just one of the consequences of the specialization of the profession.*

Well, that's true. At the same time, it was always important to have demonstrated some notable ability in your specialization. Then you were a generalist, yes. You should be able to have a little bit more flexibility in teaching and range of directing students, but it was still expected that you were doing something that was of particular importance within the discipline.

*Well, was that considered your unique potential contribution to the field?*

Yes, your specialization. But in developing departments and in any established department, there was the idea that you also were a generalist—except in very large, well endowed university departments where they could afford people who were highly specialized and who could do seminars in one thing and not in anything else and teach a couple of courses of one type and not others.

*Well, and promote huge research programs within . . . .*

And promote, yes, that was there. But in a way, that was sort of looked upon with a little bit of irony by a large section of the field, too, because in most universities, you wanted people with a little more flexibility. You couldn't afford to have somebody who would only do what they wanted to do and then, you know, go off, hide themselves away, and do their own work.

*Well, also, the very nature, I think, of the field of anthropology is very interdisciplinary.*

Well, then that's another aspect—the interdisciplinary aspect, which I'll get to in a moment. That's another area. But also, it was

very common to build departments of student-oriented people, people who really cared about teaching. And that's always been the strain in academia, you know, to what extent can one be so specialized and so concerned with one's own work that the role of mentoring or teaching is minimized? That's a luxury of very large, well-endowed departments.

*Well, I noticed—and it was very interesting to me, but I don't know how representative it is of other programs—to see how the funding was broken down. And I know we're jumping ahead a little bit; I'll just bring this up, that the funding was broken down for the staff. For instance, ten months of it was paid for instruction and two for research. And that kind of balance seemed to . . . . The junior people were more focused toward . . . .*

Well, in various departments and universities, there were these scheduling kind of things in contracts. I mean, you had so much time for teaching, so much time for this or that. In fact, some of them were kind of silly, broken down into hours and days and things of that kind.

It was that way here when I first came. You know, your contracts and your expectations were very, very rigidly laid out in terms of how much classroom time, how much time for supposed research, and how much time for this or that. And I must say that this university, like many others, finally sloughed off that kind of restriction. I mean, it had to do with what a department determined, not what a college or the regents thought; it's what the department felt was a reasonable kind of arrangement at the time.

*Well, was that one of your issues with this offer from UNR, the idea that a lot of this time was*

*going to be taken for you for administrative duties?*

When I first came. I mean, that was another interesting or supposedly attractive thing is that I would have minimal teaching, though I wanted . . . . I knew I had to teach; there weren't enough anthropologists here. In fact I taught three courses a semester just to get things started when I first came. But on the other hand, most of my salary was being paid by this . . . .

Well, I'm jumping ahead now. We're not even here yet. We're not even at the university yet; I hadn't made up my mind I was coming. And Alex Simirenko's words reverberated in my head like a dirge. [laughter]

So anyway, I did ask where were we going to be housed. Well, there was no room. "It's just that we don't have any facilities yet, you know."

They did have a \$5,000 grant from NSF for equipment for anthropology. They'd already gotten that, and that was nice. Those days, that wasn't bad. And you saw the list that I eventually worked up, it was fantastic. But that's what we started on, was a \$5,000 equipment grant.

But we didn't have any place on campus, so they were talking about, "Well, you know, we'll find something. And there are plans in, you know, the next couple of years of actually developing a full section of the social science building for anthropology along with sociology," which did happen eventually. "But in the meantime, we have these two old buildings over here."

Well, there was one building, the old gym. And they didn't take me into it, they just showed it to me. They showed it to me, and it was the old brick building that became the Buildings and Grounds Building—one of the really old University of Nevada antique

buildings of the campus. But that didn't bother me too much.

The idea was I wanted to feel assured that their plans were serious and that they really intended to do something. I didn't expect all this to come at once. I saw what they wanted. They wanted somebody to come in and help them do it, to push for it, and I was at the age where that wasn't too much of a problem. In fact, that was kind of exciting, the idea of coming in on the ground floor if I felt assured they really were going to do something.

And that's what I was really watching for while Rasputin was whispering in my ear about, "None of these plans were forthcoming. It's all a lot of bull. Don't believe a word they're saying." [laughter]

I turned to him one time, I said, "Alex, why are you here?"

"Well," he says, "I've asked myself that."

Oh, one of his reasons was that his wife, Marie, was an artist, and she was a wonderfully bright, lovely person. She did what I consider excellent engravings and drawings, and she was a very good local artist. She liked it here.

He said, "Well, but, you know, I want to live somewhere else."

"Where would you go?"

"Well, any place but here."

"Well," I said, "maybe you'll have your chance, Alex." [laughter]

But I'm saying this about him, talking about him in a kind of a deprecating way. I don't mean to, because I liked him. He was a type of person that I'm used to in academic life and always appreciate when they're around. They're important to have around. They might drive you nuts at times, and you might get awfully mad at them, but there's something refreshing about their presence. [laughter] They are tearing everything down,

and you have to put it back together again. And we've had them in the department.

*Well, you were used to the Wobblies on the ships, anyway.*

Oh, well, I was used to the Wobblies at the University of California and at Northwestern and at Pittsburgh. Oh, always. Always in a college or university, there's always a few characters like that that help to make life worth living while they're destroying it. [laughter]

Oh no, I liked Alex. But he could do mean things and all that, but not to me. I never felt that.

*The study that he did, the sociological study, is that published?*

I think it came out in a DRI publication. It was on the Carson Colony. Well, I'm still jumping the gun. Another student of ours did a long-term study of the Carson Colony, and his work was useful to her.

OK, so this is what I had in my noggin after a few days in Reno and then headed back cross-country to Pittsburgh. And it was on the way back that I was thinking about did I really want to consider this place? They'd been after me for two or three years.

*And Kathy did not come with you?*

Not on that trip, no. Small universities usually didn't, unless you insisted, have funds for husband and wife teams to come out.

And so, it was a very heavy thing on my mind, whether I would really want to do such a thing. I had been somewhat pleased; I suppose I had been stroked with the idea that three or four people that I had considered



major anthropologists had recommended me. They had even contacted Jesse Jennings, who had been my chairman at Utah. He hadn't wanted me to leave Utah for Pittsburgh, and he was mad at me or acted mad when I went. I had finished my thesis there, and I was ready then for some kind of appointment. But he always was helpful, and he always was supportive to me. And now, here I was at Pittsburgh, and I was being thought of for Nevada, so he had been solicited for an opinion.

Fred Eggan, whom I had tremendous respect for, was another of the people who had been brought out here for a conference on how to develop anthropology a couple of years before, along with Omer Stewart and Bob Heizer. You know, these are all people I had worked with and who were people that I had gotten a great deal from. I was told that they had all unanimously recommended me, that I am the person Nevada should bring out, because I might be able to get something started here.

Well, that gave me a certain confidence about the administrative aspect of it, because that was the part I didn't like. I mean, program-building and fund-raising is something I don't like. However, being part of something that's growing, and pushing for something that I could cope with without feeling that I had to carry the whole thing myself, which I didn't feel competent to do, was something I was curious about. I thought maybe I could.

I was a little leery of the Desert Research Institute or Mordy. Although, in a way, I admired him, because of what he was able to do out here, and he was a good organizer, fund-raiser, and something of a good scientist. He had done considerable work and was known and all that. But all his energies were

now focused on this administrative development of the Desert Research Institute.

And he had big plans for the state; many of them came to fruition. He did a lot in this state and in the West, but I'm always leery of that kind of person. Even though they might do admirable things, you feel like you're getting in a meat grinder if you get too close. There's something cannibalistic about them, you know. [laughter]

Well, they have to be. They utilize people. And you're part of a plan, and you're in it and you get wedged. I could sort of feel that, you know. I fit into some kind of check-board of things, and he was just giving me the full pitch; and Carl Backman and Paul Secord were part of that organization that he was developing.

*At this point, were you feeling a little bit of that pressure that you'd mentioned before of expectation that you would focus a lot on fund-raising?*

Oh, yes. There's *always* that. That's part of this reaction I had was that, you know. Although it wasn't specifically said, it was just clear that one of the things you were expected to do was raise money, because others were talked about who did, all these various sub-programs. People were getting grants—NIMH, NSF, and various kinds of other federal grants were coming in, and the Desert Research Institute was the type of program for which that was very important, this post-war building of institutes of this kind. But somehow or other, I thought, "Anthropology? Do I go out and struggle to bring in my own grants?" There are people who can do that, but I didn't think I was the kind of person who was able to do that well. I had a hard enough time getting grants for my own work as against for a program.

*But, in fact, you did succeed immediately in getting a rather hefty NSF grant for the field school.*

Well, when I came in, I had to come with some plans, and I had a lot of them. Some of them came off. But they weren't big enough. I mean, we're talking about enough money to run a department and a research program independent, in a sense, within the university.

*And probably build a building. [laughter]*

Well, sure, of course, with some Fleischmann help, but, you know, you bring in matching funds and all that sort of thing. Somehow, I got the feeling that's where Wendell [Mordy] was, and it turned out to be right, because the Desert Research Institute soon became independent from the university. My concern was I wanted to be connected with a university. I didn't want to be part of a soft-money program.

And all of these people were being brought in, and later on, many left because they didn't want this constant year-by-year struggle for funds. Bad enough to go to the regents in a university and struggle every year, or the legislature, struggle for funds. But this business of, you know, independent search through all of the foundations of the country and the federal government for funds and struggling and competing with others . . . .

*Did you have support from the university administration, from Arts and Science, to make the department part of the university rather than DRI?*

When I came, I met President Armstrong, who was a very affable, nice guy. And he was very happy about all this new activity that was taking place and had a good

relationship with the Desert Research Institute. There was always tension between the Desert Research Institute and the university, however, because it was big, and it had a lot of money, and it had power. So it could bring people in and really impose them on the university, like me or others. So, it was very important to Carl and Secord to have me meet the president and meet these other people as somebody they were supporting and not just coming from Wendell Mordy.

*But from the get-go, was the plan to make the department eventually part of Arts and Science at the university?*

That was our plan. That was my plan and my understanding and assumption. But I don't think it was Wendell's, Wendell had another trajectory. Well, three-quarters of my salary, when I did come, was from DRI.

So, it was easy for the university to say, "Yes, yes, bring this guy in. Sure, bring him in." And there was a later struggle, and we'll talk about it later, with finding my place at the university.

So, anyway, that was all in my mind going back. And as I approached Pittsburgh, more and more, I thought, "Do, I want to stay at Pittsburgh?" I knew Kathy didn't. And it was a tough decision.

When was the Cuban Missile Crisis?<sup>1</sup> I'm thinking about this, because this was part of my mood when I got back.

*Lord, that was right about that time.*

That had happened just before. I was at Pittsburgh, and I was . . . .

*That's right. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, right?*

Yes. A lot of things happened in 1963. But anyway, the Cuban Missile Crisis had happened, and it left a real pall over me, at least. I was supposed to go to a meeting at Northwestern that Francis Hsu had called on archaeology and ethnology. I had a paper that I sent and all that. The meeting was probably the week of October 16 or so, and I decided not to go.

It's one of the few times in my life where I pulled out of something that I was scheduled to do. I sent my paper, but I didn't go. And it made Francis Hsu really miffed with me. It's one of the reasons why I didn't get an offer from him that I might have been interested in. Paul Bohannon was there, who I knew well and all that.

But I just didn't go. I don't know how many people had the experience I had. I just felt sure that this was the brink of the nuclear war. And by the way, just recently material has come out that it was! It's unbelievable how close it was. Well, that's the way I felt at the time.

People were saying, "Oh no. It's all going to end," and all that. "You're being paranoid," and all that sort of thing. But I just had this awful feeling that I just didn't want to leave my family during that period.

I mean, Pittsburgh is that kind of town with a pall of smoke hanging over it where you're thinking the worst can happen. And I was deeply affected by the missile crisis, because it just seemed as though it was a matter of a flip of the coin, it was going to happen. And as they know now, it was so close our planes were being sent off with nuclear warheads and the Soviets had . . .

*Do you think you had a heightened sense of that because of what you saw in Japan? I'm comparing your reaction to your other colleagues.*

Maybe. I don't know. I don't know if I was particularly fearful. I don't think I was. It is that I just had the feeling . . .

*Somehow it's more real to somebody that's actually seen that.*

No, it was I think more real because I had a sense within myself of the political struggle going on in the world in which I was torn between what was happening in Cuba, which I felt very positive about and saw in a way no good reason why the Soviets shouldn't be helping the Cubans develop their own weapons and was sure that they had done so. In my own view they had done so, and I thought, "What the hell? What right do we have to kick? We've got nuclear warheads in Turkey and along the whole perimeter of the Soviet Union through European countries, and so, why shouldn't they have a deterrent of their own out here in the Caribbean within striking distance of our country? That might be good for us."

Not that I agree with that kind of thinking now, but that was, you know, one set of facts as against the fact that it was a *terrible* moment. It could happen. And the kind of bellicose statements that were in our press. When I look back, how lucky we were that it was Kennedy in office rather than some other character like that general who kept urging our presidents to drop the bomb, you know.

I just felt this is one of those moments in world history that could be a determining factor, and so any accident and any . . . It was all depending on two or three people. I mean, somebody could just go off on their own.

*But that mood wasn't particularly shared to the degree you had it by a lot of your colleagues?*

Well, some did. But people take things like that in a different way. Like, "Oh, well, it'll all pass away," but, you know, "How terrible it is!" And some were paranoid like me about it, but I just was not going to leave home during that period with my kids there and Kathy in Pittsburgh while I take off to Chicago when all this was happening.

Well, I've just recently seen a very interesting documentary on that with new material that's come up from Soviet files as well as the CIA and state department files. It was a trigger moment that our planes would have been off up in the air. And at one of our bases in Kansas or some place where we had a lot of our planes surrounded by highly technological defenses, some guy who was on guard reported that somebody was trying to get in. We thought it was Soviets, and it turned out to be a bear. And already the planes had been given the order to leave the ground, and it would have been very difficult to bring them back, because there was such disorganization in the American planning system at that time. They had never had this kind of affair.

So many things like this were going on that it could have happened. And Kennedy was being urged to use the nuclear bomb before the Cubans did and all that sort of thing.

It's hard now looking back to reconstruct all that was going on, but I wasn't scared. I was just deeply troubled and almost certain that something ominous was taking place that we couldn't control. And I wasn't going to leave my family. I just remember that, because that was part of my mood as I was in Nevada and going back to Pittsburgh, that pall of smoke.

*And you didn't have any idea that Nevada should be avoided because this was a nuclear test site area? I mean, I'm just thinking about all of that.*

That concerned me. Oh, that concerned me. But the wind was blowing to the east, Penny. We don't have to worry about it. It was down south there. Nothing wrong with Las Vegas being wiped out, you know. [laughter] But at that time, all those things, if you were reading and thinking at all, were on your mind. You felt precarious. In fact, we ought to feel precarious today, but we don't. But that was the first time that Americans, I think, really were exposed to this kind of anxiety.

*I remember it very well. I was in high school, and I do remember.*

A sense of precariousness ever since the World War, where it was no longer assured that things were going to be the way you thought they were. Things could happen all of a sudden that changed things, and the power was there to do it.

So, anyway, that was the atmosphere. No, Nevada, in a way, was a kind of . . . you thought it was so remote, who would want to bomb it, you know? But no, that didn't even occur to me. You know, you have different levels of . . .

*I was just thinking of the ethical issue of living in a state that was part of the nuclear industry.*

I thought of that, yes, but also, that almost every state could be said to have something like that. You'd have to live on an island in the Pacific, and then even there it could happen. [laughter] It most likely could happen.

I want to say that these weren't a matter of daily fears. It was a matter of a deep sort of abiding, oppressive sense of not knowing what's going to happen.

*Well, it's a pall that people lived under then, that atmosphere. And it feeds part of that . . . .*

Half the time, you're not aware that you feel it. It's just there.

*And there has to be a consequence to "having harnessed something that massive," and why wouldn't the consequence be an incident like that? I mean, it was almost a logical . . . .*

Yes, it's armageddonish kind of stuff. Well, I can remember thinking, "Well, hell, I've got to stop thinking about this, because this is what my grandparents thought about all the time," you know. And this is just a repetition of that old . . . .

*But people had stopped building bomb shelters at this point, hadn't they? Or had they?*

No. They were still built, people were still doing that and had them, and kids were still having drills.

*But, I mean, I remember when it was almost a product of suburbia. You had a basketball hoop, you had a bomb shelter.*

Yes, there was this sense of portent that many people had at the time. Sometimes, you're not conscious of it at all, but it's there always in the background. And somehow or other, as I was heading back by plane to Pittsburgh, I had this image of this big industrial city covered with soot and the big smoke pall over it. That's the image I had of the place. It's very unfair, because they really went to town the next few years and really cleaned the city up until it became quite attractive. But not while we were there. It was really a smoky, dismal place, you know, when even the snow was black, things of that kind.

[laughter] And yet, there were some fine people there that we got to know and liked very much, as usual. That all happens. But all that was in my mind.

Then the other thing that I've almost forgotten to talk about here was that Herskovits had died in the early part of 1963. And his death . . . I don't think I mourned over it the way I would a close family member, but it was a loss. It was a sense something big had been taken out of one's life. And I was so glad that I had finally finished my damn dissertation, got it in, and patched up my problems with the old man. [laughter] We at least had a year where I could treat him like something of a colleague and he could treat me something like somebody who was a promising former student. So all of that was part of my thinking at the time.

I don't want to make it seem as though things like the Cuban Missile Crisis were dominating views. They just were part of the atmosphere, and one couldn't help thinking about these things and wondering about them.

I suppose I had the feeling that the Cold War was leading to something like this, that this was almost inevitable, that there would be a confrontation of some sort. And I guess now if it wasn't for people like Kennedy and a few level heads around him, he and others could have been convinced that this was the way to go. You know, hit first and all that sort of thing.

So, yes, I thought about this. But I never really got over hearing Francis Hsu saying that I was being paranoid, you know. [laughter] Paranoid like that wonderful line that used to go around, "I suppose if there is really an elephant in your front yard, you're not paranoid." [laughter] If you report one and there it is.

Anyway, I got back, and Kathy and I had long talks about it, talked to the kids about it. They were quite happy about the notion of heading back. But I had all these career concerns too, you know. What about my African interests and things of that sort? And I had already begun doing something about this at Pittsburgh.

I don't know if I mentioned it: the committee on discrimination. There were a number of African students and African-American students and many others, and we formed a committee. Who was that young Kenyan? Hamilton Otho, I think, was his name. He sort of headed it up, and I was faculty advisor, in a sense. I already felt I was getting involved in the Pittsburgh local scene.

And there was a lot of this kind of activity around campus, good students and all that. That was attractive. And some of my colleagues: Art Tuden and George Murdock [laughter]—although I really never liked him, he was a stimulating character to have around—and Ed Kennard, a very nice guy who had done work in the Southwest and all that. Those were things that made me feel I could stay on there.

But on the other hand, I just thought of another year or two here. I didn't know

whether we could stand it. We didn't feel set there. We didn't feel that this was our turf, our soil.

*Did you have any idea of accepting the UNR offer, which I guess is really the DRI offer, and then just staying there a few years and then moving on?*

Oh, yes.

*Was that a reasonable prospect?*

In a way, that always was in one's mind. I think most people at that time were moving around. Yes, go and check it out. However, I realized that this was more than that kind of commitment, that I was, in a sense, committed to try to do a job, and it would take a few years. Then, of course, maybe I would want to move on.

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Note

1. The Cuban Missile Crisis ended on October 28, 1963, when Khrushchev agreed to Kennedy's demands to dismantle the base in Cuba in exchange for the withdrawal of U.S. missiles in Turkey.

## COMING TO NEVADA

I HAD MANY offers when I finally came to Nevada and before I came. I was waiting for an offer from Northwestern. I think how foolish I was. I would not really have wanted to be there once I got there, and I had reason to find that out during this period.

I had offers from Howard University that I thought of very seriously because it was connected with my interests. I had feelers even from Harvard. Norm Scotch was at Harvard and trying to get me there. He was saying, you know, they would be asking if I showed any interest at all. And somehow or other, I didn't do anything about that. But those were the days when there were opportunities.

Oh, I had a very definite offer from Emory University a little later in the following year when it was going through the same process of expanding and they were reaching out and bringing in a number of people, and I was asked to come and be chairman.

That's after I accepted the chairmanship here. But that's the way it was. And a lot of this was fluff, you know. You were also being

brought in provisionally and dropped if they didn't like you. So it worked both ways. It wasn't just you picking and choosing.

But it was the expansion of the field. Anthropology was growing, and it was a period of excitement and exuberation. And candidates were making demands and wanted to know things. Not anymore; now they're sniveling, you know. [laughter]

You know, anything, any old port in the storm kind of thing—that's not fair. That's not really true, because there are people you go after and you really want them, and then they do make demands. But a lot of the movement is . . . .

*Well, there are so many more people and positions are limited.*

Yes. So, anyway, I think I finally decided that I would take it in late spring and wrote and told Carl Backman and Wendell Mordy and old Dean Irwin—a wonderful old curmudgeon who was against everything and saw everything as a matter of a bunch of young

upstarts looking for nothing but money. But he turned out to be a very good guy. I got along very well with him later on.

So I wrote and said I would accept. Well this, of course . . . I get a flood of letters from my friends and colleagues throughout the country telling me what a terrible mistake, and being very funny about it. You know, land of jackpots and whorehouses and the Mississippi of the West. And did I think that there could even be a university there for long? Maybe it would be just as good that they nuke the whole place. [laughter] An awful lot of funny talk went on back and forth.

But I began to be very sure that it's what I wanted to do, at least take a stab at. And I wrote around a lot to . . . . God, I think I still have some of those letters, you know, to a lot of people I knew and respected and people that I'd known at Cal—John Rowe, and Heizer, and from the East—asking them, you know, if they were to do something like this, what would they think is important? I stipulated a couple of things that I thought were important—that is a focus on Great Basin ethnology, which needed to be worked on, and interdisciplinary programs in which various kinds of interests were focused on the Basin, et cetera, et cetera. And I got a lot of suggestions of this kind. A lot of people were really interested. They thought it was a fascinating problem.

So, I began to feel better. Maybe this wasn't a bad decision. I put together a program before I'd even finally accepted—well, in that interim, that couple of months I had before we came out here. Because that's all we had, just a matter of weeks to get ready, to get out and come. And I put together in my mind and on paper a number of programs that I thought would be important, at least to start with, and even some idea of where I

might try to get some moneys and grants and things like that to earn my keep with the Desert Research Institute. And so all this was going on in my mind as we got ready.

I think Kathy was really quite happy to go west. Oh, and I also was in touch with my Washoe friends in Gardnerville and Dresslerville and Woodfords and had seen them when I was out.

*Oh, you had? I was going to ask you about that.*

I always try to do that. And they were all involved in their usual squabbles within the Tribal Council. People that I knew that had been in were out. Then the peyotists were going through another set of crises about themselves and were worried about state laws about the herb. Because California had very strict laws, many were coming up here from California. Later on, Nevada had its own legislative squabble over this that Earl James and myself took part in. And finally, Nevada passed a very lenient law allowing peyote as a religious sacrament.

So, I felt involved. I felt there was something in this area that I was connected with. We pulled out of our digs in Pittsburgh, said goodbye to our friends, and took off across country again. Came directly to Reno. We stayed with Bob and Joy Leland.

Bob Leland was a lawyer for the Pyramid Lake tribe, and Joy Leland is a very interesting, intelligent woman who was putting together material on Indian alcoholism and eventually did a book on it—very able person and was working at DRI.

So, the first place we stayed in was an apartment above their garage. It was a very nice place they had right over here in this section of town. And we stayed there for a few weeks.



Oh my god! When I come to think of it, all kinds of things were happening. We were looking for a house, and we finally found one that we could afford by getting a loan, way up on the north side of town, Windsor Way. We got the place and moved in. And then I had a Summer Institute on Africa that I had agreed to take on at Northwestern University. So, I had two months of work there that I had to prepare for.

*Located back in Pittsburgh?*

No, that was at Northwestern, in Evanston—the Summer Institute on Africa that I had been asked to do by the department if I wanted to take that for the summer. I had agreed to do it, because I needed the money. Though it wasn't much, in those days, that's the way you got your little extra.

So, we were just on the run, obviously, and I didn't have a chance to do anything at the university except go in and sign my papers and get ready and say I'd be back for the semester.

And there were no students. I mean, that first semester, it was just a handful of students from various departments. But I had to work at getting some colleagues, and Wayne Suttles, fortunately, was available. I was quite clear he wasn't going to stay, but he was very interested in coming down for a short course. So, he came down, and I think he was here for a year, year and a half.

*Now, had you known Wayne before?*

Somewhat. We had met. I knew his work. He had done a lot of work on the Salish and the Northwest Coast, and he was really wanting to get to British Columbia. That was where he was heading. He had got as far north as Portland. [laughter]

But anyway, he came down. And then Wilbur Davis, who was an archaeologist I had known from some meetings that I'd gone to. So, we had a staff of three all set for the fall. But I had to go and do these other things.

*But you recruited both people.*

Yes, right. Well, there weren't many people available, you know, on a short notice. Oh, and one other, a former student of mine, Joan Davlin from Brooklyn. Oh, and I'd also recruited a secretary—a wonderful sixty-year-old woman, Antoinetta Cincotta, who had been in a class of mine, a class on religion in the extension division at Cal. So had Joan. So, I knew these people.

And Joan was a very able, bright student. In the department later on, she did some excellent work. She had a lot of personal problems, but she was brilliant. So, you know, I said, "How about coming up for at least a semester or so to help us out?"

And, "OK," she was coming. And she did Africa, you know. [laughter] She was capable of doing that. And I was going to do North American Indians. And I'll have to check to see what else I did in beginning there.

It was during that first course I taught that I began to be very aware about the state of things in this section of Nevada and at the university. The so-called "Little Waldorf affair" happened just before I came, and then was still reverberating in some small way when I arrived. There had been some action on campus, some protest—a few petitions protesting, and the *Sagebrush's* take on the whole thing. And so, that was fermenting when I arrived.

And I didn't realize it at the time, but later I found that my course had become a focus for more action. When I look back, I'm

very happy about that and pleased that it happened.

Then I became aware how few Indians were on campus. I think there was one Native American in my course. At the moment, I can't remember his name, but this very bright guy. Very able young fellow, and he was very active and very much involved with concerns about minorities on campus.

And then there were two or three black guys. Bobby Herron, who had left, was the football player around whom the Little Waldorf affair had centered. He was one of the major players that was brought into the Waldorf by the team and not allowed to stay. He left the campus for a time because of that. He was completely disillusioned about not only the campus, but the state, and called it the Mississippi of the West, which was a common term in those days among blacks.

There had been a sit-in, which caused the thing to become very public, and it was really the first public expression of outrage around here having to do with discrimination at all. There were a few student-faculty forums, and those were going on in the late spring and summer while I was away, but in the fall, it was still festering. So my course really gave a kind of instrument to at least some of the black students and one or two Hispanic students and at least one Native American student and a number of the white students who were very concerned and interested.

Now, I have to say something about the area at that time. It's so easy to think of this as, you know, a place of festering activity. It really wasn't. Reno was a nice little village in those days, except for downtown, that little strip with that sign across the road—what was it?—"The Biggest Little City in the World," kind of a small tourist center. Las Vegas was really taking over most of that by this time. But here, there was that three or four blocks

downtown of the Harolds Club and Primadonna and a few other casinos.

Lake Street was where the minorities went. Blacks and Indians were not welcome at all in downtown Reno in the casinos and were urged to leave. And there were what we used to call "sundowner" rules, unwritten rules where Indians and blacks were just sort of discouraged at night around town except for Lake Street. That's where the sleazy, low-level bars and hotels were, and they could go there.

And there was hardly anywhere else in town where blacks could stay, or any minority could stay coming through town. We used to call it the underground railroad where you'd put people up as they're on their way to the West Coast. Or they'd have friends living over in the ghetto section of Reno, which was a very small population of blacks over on the east side of Reno.

And there was the Indian colony, which was always in trouble with the police. That was considered to be a blight on Reno, because it was too close. It had been built earlier on the town dump well out of the downtown area, but then as the town grew, here was the Indian colony right in the middle of Reno. And extremely poverty-stricken—the saddest little shacks. It was like the Indian colonies for Dresslerville and Carson Colony in those days.

So downtown Reno, because of tourism and all that, was very unfriendly to blacks, and the campus was, to some degree, that way. The black students managed to get around, but they had to be very careful. I actually saw situations in which a black walking with a white student, or certainly a male black with a white woman student, would cause a little rumpus. I mean, people would shout at them.

And there were some characters on campus that had a little club called "The

Sundowners,” and it had a tradition. They were very redneck, right-wingish, and rural. Awful combination. And the fraternities were segregated. Everything was segregated.

*Were the dorms segregated?*

Yes, yes. There were a few blacks that got into the dorm, but they always left because they didn't like the atmosphere. There wasn't any rule against it; they were just discouraged. So, finding housing around town was extremely difficult. That's one of the first things that I remember us getting into when we formed this little Human Relations Action Council with faculty and students.

*When you say “we formed,” who was “we”?*

Oh, a few faculty members and these students from my class. But really, the energy came from people I . . . well, Carl Backman, Alex Simirenko, Jerry [Gerald] Ginsburg, even Joe Crowley, who is now president of the university—quite a different guy, I think, than he was in those days when he was a young whipper-snapper.

*When he was young? He was a student then?*

No, no. He was on faculty in the Political Science Department. And I liked him very much. I still like him, but the point is he's changed. He's become a bureaucrat. That's unkind, because he probably is a better guy, but I had a lot of flaps with him later, but that's neither here nor there. The point is he was one of them.

Charles was it . . . not Stortroen, Willard Day, a number of the faculty who were liberal helped form it. And then there were some students who would come in, and some of the black students were involved. We

would meet regularly and form a little agenda about things that needed to be done. One of the first things was housing. I mean, where are minority students going to live around campus, because most of the landlords would not even think of having a black rent their house or their apartments.

So, it's one of the first things we did. We started a little campaign where we'd go. And I did it and some of the white students and some of the faculty would go around and go to landlords and say, “You know, we hear you have a place for rent, and I'm interested. Would you tell me about it?” And we'd get it and then withdraw and send the black student in. We had this record of landlords refusing blacks and even Indians. This one Indian student was involved in this.

Of course, this was the period when there was no civil rights legislation in Nevada at all. Governor Laxalt had an Equal Rights Commission, which the legislature abolished, I think, somewhere around 1964 or 1965. So, that was one of our major concerns at that time as well as problems on campus, confrontations between blacks and whites, with whites hurling insults.

Not all. I mean, the campus was relatively open, but there were these very sleazy characters on campus. Some of the students were so ignorant and rural and redneckish. It was a small group, but they were very vocal, very active.

The rest of the campus didn't know quite what to do with it; they didn't like it. And the *Sagebrush* was not very friendly to any kind of civil rights action.

So, here's Reno. I would say a small town at that time, kind of nice, wonderful little residential areas, and if you stayed away from downtown, you'd never know that it was a tourist or gambling center. It was very quiet and quaint and quite isolated.

But people would come to visit through town, and they'd always want to go downtown and see the strip. So, you take them down. That's the only time I ever saw downtown. And the fact that there were no good restaurants, but restaurants that served good food cheaply, so, you'd take your guests down there. [laughter]

And people were always fascinated with downtown Reno, saying, "How could you live here?"

And we'd say, "We don't live here." [laughter] "We live outside. We live on the edge. We live in the real Reno, which is outside of here."

Then all around Reno . . . there was about a three or four mile separation between Reno and Sparks, all ranches in between and open space. The whole valley and all Truckee Meadows was a great ranching area, wide open, very rural looking. Well, I can remember driving down to Carson Valley to visit some Washoe friends, with herds of sheep or cattle on the road, you know. [laughter]

It was a quite different experience from what you have now. You had the feeling of a Western rural area. And then there was something kind of glamorous—I even thought it was kind of funny at times—about a little gambling strip in the middle of all this, like Jackpot, Nevada. It had that kind of wild West feel to it.

So you didn't feel at all oppressed by that. In fact, it's even a little titillating and kind of fun, and you joked about it.

*Well, it's part of the frontier.*

Yes, that feeling, you know, the frontier. It's very important looking back to place the university in that setting. It was really a land grant university, these old brick buildings back to the 1870s and little quads and little

statues to people like Mackay and others who have been part of the early development of the university, and a little residential area that was sort of spreading out around the university northward. All north of the university all the way out to Stead was pretty much open land. So, you really had the sense of being on the edge of the Sierras and in the real West.

By the way, the University of Nevada at Las Vegas was just beginning, and so we had no feeling of competitiveness. We looked rather patronizingly at it. Now, of course, it's sort of taken over most of the . . . [laughter] I mean then, we all thought of it as, you know, we are the Athens, and they were one of the villages of Sparta or something down there surrounded by the big casinos. And what could happen down there at all that was worthwhile academically?

There was some anthropology. Let's see, Claude Warren and two or three other people were developing an anthropology department down there. But, you know, we felt that we were really moving much faster. And we were, at that time. And so, that was the setting in which all this was going on as far as the university's concerned.

And I suppose for Kathy and me, we felt that we had seen the underside—in fact the much better underside, which was down in Carson Valley. We had started working with the Washoe and saw the old Nevada and knew some of the old settler families down there. That was our image of the area.

Then Reno was always something we avoided in those days. We'd just pass through on our way over the mountains to the Bay Area or home, or in the other direction. So that getting to know Reno, we had a feeling of having been immersed here earlier, that we knew something about this area, and we were biased by that.

Developments in Reno always made us a little irritated, because the region as we knew it had been such a beautiful area, all of this region. And, to me, it belonged to the Washoe. What the heck are we doing here anyway? And Lake Tahoe even then was a much more brilliantly beautiful place than it is today, even though already the developments had begun to take their toll.

But the whole area was new. Well, that's the feeling I had about the university, that it was new. Even though it had been here since before the turn of the century, was one of the older universities in the region, I had the feeling that it was just beginning to emerge as an academic institution. And there was a feeling of excitement being involved in that. Of course in the early 1960s, there was also the ferment of the civil rights movement that was affecting it, and that was very congenial to me, because I felt there was something to do here that I felt strongly about.

So, in that first semester, actually, that I was here, not only were we developing a department and all that, but we had civil action going on. [laughter] And there were a few very committed younger faculty.

I must go back to this. A lot of this sense of newness and expansion came from the Desert Research Institute. And I have to give old Wendell Mordy his due, in bringing not only myself and backing the beginning of an anthropology program, but that certain grant moneys that he got that were relevant to other departments that went to the university as—not matching funds, but the funds that go to the basic institutions at that time—he got the university to agree to turn most of those funds over for research in various departments: in English, in history, in foreign languages. All these that seemed to be peripheral kinds of departments as far as the Desert Research Institute was concerned, got

a great deal of stimulus from the funds that came in through the Desert Research Institute or because of them, so that new people were coming in with fresh ideas. And a lot of these were the ones who were involved in the Human Relations Action Council and other kinds of activism and were friendly to civil rights actions.

*I wanted to ask you about the civil rights issue specifically, because you put it in the context of the university in Reno. But I just wanted to clarify if you were . . . Do you think comparing it to what you'd seen nationally—like at Salt Lake and at Pittsburgh—do you think Reno was just an example of its time, or was it more prejudice or ignorance than . . . ? Were you surprised by that, at the time?*

By what?

*The degree of prejudice?*

Oh, no. I don't think so. No, first place, there was discrimination and prejudice everywhere. But in bigger population centers, you had more action, more activity, but you had just as much opposition and you know, sometimes bigger and more ruthless. But no, I saw it as rural, as part of somewhat provincial America, which it was. And I was surprised that there was any kind of positive response at all. I mean, I was delighted. I felt, "My gosh, it's really worth being here. There's hope here."

I mean, you're in a little university where you're dealing almost directly with the president of the university. You walk into his office and make comments, or he's walking around in your classes and things of this kind, like a college or a high school. And two or three of the regents were always around. I mean, Molly Magee, who was a terrific person, was

one of the regents. She was very interested in anthropology, and we would deal with her all the time, visit socially.

I haven't been at other universities where the average faculty was dealing with the regents on a daily basis. And it was this kind of small-town atmosphere, which was kind of intriguing. I kind of liked it, it was new to me. I had been to big universities where you're buried, and you made your mark in two ways—by outstanding scholarship and then by your bootstraps or by toeing the mark and compromising and moving up the channels within the university. That happened here too. When I think of the number of people we knew then who worked at it and then became deans and presidents and things of that sort and were far removed from what they had been doing earlier . . .

Nevertheless, all that was going on. Molly Magee was a remarkable lady. She had had a ranch out north of Elko—Grass Valley, I think, was the area. And she had come out here from the East, was an Eastern preparatory school young lady, came out West, fell in love with a Western rancher, and got a ranch. She was one of the best riders there, used to take herds of cattle down to market, you know. [laughter] Quite a wonderful lady and fairly well-to-do and made something of a mark for herself in the state and therefore was one of the people elected to be a regent.

And she was interested in anthropology, because she had done some amateur archaeology out on her ranch. Rather good stuff, couple of little articles. And she was just very anxious to have that kind of work developing at the university, which was very useful to us.

And it was that small clique of people. I mean, I can remember people like two or three regents, Wendell Mordy, a number of faculty sort of meeting socially and all that

sort of thing and talking up programs and things of this sort. That is, one person could make a stir—I guess that was it.

Then there was Fred Anderson, another regent. He was a physician in town, physician and surgeon. A nice old guy. He was interested in anthropology, and I liked him very much, but he was something of a burden to me, because he always had some idea about things that we should be doing. [laughter] I remember he knew some woman down in California who had done some work on local Indians and wanted me to meet her. So, you know, there were things like this. I had to go on these trips.

I remember that trip down there to . . . where was it? Beyond Portola, some little town there in the Northern [Long] Valley, in his great big Cadillac. And he wanted me to drive, and I remember feeling extremely provincial, because I realized that I could go 100 miles an hour if I wasn't watching it. I mean, on these winding roads and the car was so powerful. I wasn't used to cars like that, and I looked down at the speedometer and it was something over 100. [laughter]

But there were a lot of these things like, "You should do this." There were a lot of pothunters and arrowhead collectors around who were somehow thought of as part of the scene of anthropology. I felt obliged to see these people, because they were sent by Fred or somebody else.

Oh yes, that was like up at Herlong Junction, where there had been an Indian burial uncovered at a ranch. For the life of me, I can't remember the name of the young fellow—I have it—who called the university saying that they had found this . . . . If anything would come up, we'd get these strange phone calls from anybody about they'd found a flint knife or a piece of ground stone or something of that kind. What do they have?

They'd come into the office, and Wayne and I would do our best to identify things, and we weren't necessarily archaeologists. [laughter] Fortunately Buck Davis was there, and we'd always send these people over to him, but he was swamped by them.

So, here was this burial up at Herlong Junction at a ranch. Nobody was around, so I had to go up. I felt, you know, this was part of our service. We had to do these things. Here we were a department of anthropology, starting; we'd better show an interest in locals.

We got up here, and here was this young fellow, and he had defended this little . . . . He had a sort of a fence around the burial, and he had his shotgun at night, and he was fending off pothunters and arrowhead hunters who were coming from all around the area trying to get into this burial, because the word had gotten around locally.

So, I came up, and there must have been dozens of people waiting to see me, bringing their arrowheads that had been mounted in frames on cotton or little baskets full of them and all sorts of little objects of this kind: Pieces of bone, you know—was it a human bone? Well, I must say I got an early initiation in what the interest of the local population was in anthropology.

Nevertheless, this young fellow was wonderful. He said, "I've always heard you're not supposed to mess around with these places when you find them."

And I said, "Well, that's right for two reasons. First place, this is an Indian burial, and there might be people who really care about this. And secondly, it's very important to first identify what kind of a burial it is."

Well, my first impression from the stuff that he had taken out and very neatly left by the grave site . . . there were a couple of quartz points, which would be kind of late,

at least by the kind of thinking we were doing at that time, and some worked basalt, four or five things that had been in the remains of a pouch. Well, this was fascinating. It might be a shaman's burial. And a few other things, which I have photographs of, fortunately, as you will see.

And then there was this flexed burial in there only about two feet underground. This was on the edge of Honey Lake so that it had probably been inundated at various times in the past. I had no idea whether it was an early or late burial, but it had to be fairly early, at least early-historic, because there was nothing in it to indicate a later historic burial.

So, I complimented this guy profusely on how well he had taken care of it. And he said, "Well," he said, "you know, at night these people would come creeping up, and they're trying to get through, and they want to take this stuff." He said, "I really had to watch it." Oh my, I thought he was a heroic young fellow.

He wanted me to take the stuff or something. I said, "I don't want to do that. I want to get the museum on this. That's the first thing we'll do. You'll just have to take these things you picked up into your house and keep them in your house and cover up this burial. And keep a watch on it. I don't think anybody's going to go in there to get bones."

But, "Well, they might try!" [laughter]

Anyway, so then I went back home, and I did a little report and immediately got hold of the museum. Calhoun and Chuck Rozaire [curator of archaeology] was there. And I told Chuck, "Gee, there's this burial. Really ought to get up there and tie it down." So, in the next few days, he did. He went up there.

And from then on, it's a great mystery. The next thing I knew a few weeks later, I get a letter from Herlong Junction from this family saying, "What has happened to the

materials that were taken from here?" And I had no idea, because I hadn't heard from the museum.

I checked around, and it was not real clear whether the stuff had been taken up and boxed or what. But whatever, in the long run, the burial disappeared; this is the mystery of the missing burial. [laughter] And I felt terrible about it, because this young kid and his family were very upset for good reason, you know. "What are these anthropologists doing down there?"

And my view is that it's boxed and stored somewhere, that it is still somewhere boxed in some crate. Nobody has looked at it or knows what it is.

And Rozaire didn't remember. Well he left; right about this time, he got a job in Southern California.

And he says, "I don't remember. Yes, I crated it." And he couldn't even remember where he had taken it. You know, it was one of those side things that he had done.

So, anyway, it blew over, except for years later, I got a letter about it, "Did you ever find those things?" [laughter]

Yes, I felt awful. It's one of those things that happen. But anyway, I at least got some photographs of the stuff that was in it. I donated these to Juanita Schubert, who was an amateur archaeologist and anthropologist down in Carson Valley, and as part of her collection, it went to the Genoa museum, I

hope. I haven't gone there to look myself. But oh, there had been an eagle bone whistle and things like that; it looked like shamanistic stuff. Well, anyway, that was one of things that happened in this sort of setting.

When I look back, it's kind of wonderful and adventuresome. I thought, "This is the way it should go when you've worked in Woodfords and Carson Valley with the Washoe, that you should now also see the other side of the coin, the whites in this area." [laughter]

And the fact that the university was beginning to develop, was also a kind of exciting time. I was revved up. I felt, "Gee, I'm glad I came, and there's something that can be done here."

*Well, you had an idea, too, of establishing some kind of reciprocal relationship with the museum.*

Oh, well, we did that. We developed an understanding, a statement of understanding between the two. It was a very good idea. We were going to have joint teaching, they were going to teach certain courses that we had at the university, and we were going to have a liaison with them in terms of their collection, use their collection for teaching purposes and all that. Calhoun, at that time, and Rozaire and others there were very friendly about this.



## ASSEMBLING A DEPARTMENT

WE GOT HERE about May, I think, so I did have time to look over things on the campus and get Antoinetta up here, so we had a secretary. She could type, and she could take shorthand—in those days, that was important for a secretary. And she was a wonderful, witty, bright, older Italian woman who really enjoyed this adventure she was on and meeting new people and students and all that. And she just took over, you know, as the old grandmother of the rest of us.

But we had no place to put her, so before I left to go to Northwestern for the African Summer Institute, I had to get something settled about our place. Well, it turned out our first place was the Old Gym, for now. [laughter] “Would this be just enough to get you started?”

Well, we fixed this other place, this other old brick building, that had to be divided into our offices upstairs, and downstairs was Building and Grounds. And I remember Brian Whalen, a wonderful Irishman, you know, saying, “Oh, my god! Do I deserve anthropologists over my head?” [laughter]

We had the basement for storing stuff, and we had these ramshackle offices up above. And by the way, there were earthquakes. We haven’t had that kind of earthquake problem in a long, long time, but there was a whole series of sharp, little earthquakes about that time. That brick building, you know, would just shake and shudder, and we’d think did we really want to be in there? As for the old gym, it was all wooden like a ship and just creaked. [laughter]

Well, down below was a shooting range in the basement, and on the next floor was a basketball court and an archery range. Then up around the sides on balcony level were a number of little rooms and offices which we were told we could use.

Well, I don’t remember being that shocked. I just said, “Yes, well, we’ll start there, but by god, we’ve got to get out of there, because we can’t have that.”

So, I set up Antoinetta with a desk and a telephone and told her, “Just keep track of calls and all that. I’ll be in touch with you. And if anybody comes, give them these sheets of paper, give them a program. Sign them up

if they want,” and all that sort of thing. [laughter]

And she loved it. She was wonderful. I really think that one of the triggers that started our department was Antoinetta Cincotta, which most people around here have forgotten. I think the Fowlers probably remember her.

But the other thing I had to do was to gather together furniture. And all this was being done on the first few weeks. We were settling in our own place and trying to get our bearings in Reno, get the kids ready for school for the following semester and all that. They were enjoying it. It was kind of a great vacation for them. But Kathy and I were a little worried about what we had done . . . what I had done.

So, anyway, I learned that there was a dump heap over behind what is now one of the science buildings. There was this great pile of old furniture that had been taken out. The university was going through refurbishing, and lots of things were happening in terms of remodeling and building. And all the old furniture from, you know, the land grant period, the 1870s and 1880s, were piled there. I looked at it, and you know when I think of it now, one could have made a fortune in an antique store of what was there: old wooden filing cabinets, great big mahogany and oak tables and desks, and roll-top desks. And piles and piles of equipment had been junked—typewriters, old typewriters. I even have one left, an old Remington noiseless typewriter. [laughter] It was piled out in the open.

So, I went through there and got Buildings and Grounds to pick out a lot of furniture that looked useable, those wonderful revolving bookcases—there’s one right there now—that I have lifted. And there were big ones, and I got a number of those and desks

for each of those little rooms in the Old Gym, and old-fashioned oak desk chairs. I refurbished the department before I left, just had everything taken up, old dusty stuff, and had them clean it up. And by god, we had offices. Yes, we had a department. Everybody had a wooden filing cabinet, or two or more, if they wanted it. But the damn building was so rickety that they were worried too, Buildings and Grounds, that this might sag down and the floor might give out.

*So, you had Antoinette, and were Joan and Will . . . ?*

No, they hadn’t come up yet. No. I was getting things ready these two weeks before I left for the Summer Institute. And, you know, it looked pretty raunchy, but by god, there were offices, and there were wastebaskets and filing cabinets and bookcases—beautiful old bookcases. [laughter]

My gosh, when I think of that stuff, in a way it was kind of wonderful, it was kind of beautiful. I’d walk through there and think, “Well, this would be back in 1875,” you know.

And in those days, right across from what is now the Ansari Business Building where anthropology is now, right across from it was the old stadium. Just right across the road where that open area, grass area is now between the science building and the parking lot, that was a great big sports arena—an old one, you know, built with wooden benches and overhangs and old planks. Just amazing, when I come to think of it. So, there we were with all sorts of sports events taking place right across from the Old Gym, and people coming in and doing basketball and shooting in the basement and all that. I’ll tell you a story about Wayne Suttles when I get to it and his course on American Indians. [laughter]

But anyway, we got started, Kathy stayed, and I headed back to Northwestern to start this institute. It was on Africa, and I enjoyed it. It was great. There were a number of summer people—teachers and graduate students.

*Now, was this an ongoing program that you were directing for the summer?*

No, I wasn't directing it. It was being directed by different people. Francis Hsu was one of them, and Bohannon and others were part of this interdisciplinary group that started this institute on Africa. And it was really for teachers, graduate students, and others, anybody around who wanted to have information on Africa.

*With the intent that they were going to Africa?*

Not necessarily. Some of them were, but the main thing was just for people who wanted a course on Africa. And so, no, I was not director, I was the presenter of that summer's program; I had been brought to handle it and direct it, but I hadn't established the program.

So, anyway, I was there, and Kathy, had an opportunity to go to the Southwest with a good friend of hers, Mary Sarvis, a psychiatrist from Berkeley that we had known for many years. And it was summertime, and Kathy decided that she and Mary and the kids would all head off to Santa Fe, and I would meet them down there, which was a wonderful idea. And we'd see the Doziers—Ed and Marianne Dozier—and all that. So while I was in Evanston, they were tooling off down to Santa Fe, and I was very glad that they were doing something pleasant. It was pretty hot here in Nevada in the summertime, as you know, and we weren't used to it, coming

from Pittsburgh. We got used to the humidity and the soot there, but not this dry desert heat.

So, anyway, that program . . . Herskovits had died, so the department was in shambles. And here I was, back to my old digs with a department in a state of total disarray. Bascom was gone during that period. Hsu was the only one around, and Bohannon was in and out. And Herskovits's death had left a big gap. Students were unhappy, and many of them were leaving. It was a very dismal scene.

Frances Herskovits was in a very strange state of mind. She was, of course, mourning his death, but she was also a very hard-hitting, critical person, and she was angry at everybody there, because they weren't doing the right thing and weren't living up to the legacy of the old man. She was going through his papers out in the library, and she would ask me to please come over and help her with what she was doing.

I went over while she had all . . . at least she had some space, but all his papers were laid out, and she was sorting them out and throwing just scads of them away. And I would say, "Well won't someone . . . ?"

"We don't want this in his record," you know, that sort of thing—and people that she didn't like. [laughter] I'm being unfair. She was working very hard to develop an archive for the old man, and she had her notions about what ought to be in it.

I guess that was her right, you know. She and a couple of graduate students were working on this. But she was so embittered about the department and so embittered about people that she felt had not given proper recognition to her husband and that sort of thing, which was too bad. I hated to see it, because she was a brilliant woman, a woman with great talents.

She had written a lot of material that both of them had published. She was a very observant person, but here she was at a point in her life where things were falling apart. Their daughter Jean would come in occasionally and help out. Jean was a nice sort. She had married a fellow student of mine, Igor Kopytoff—I think by that time they were married. So, anyway, all this was going on.

And Paul Bohannan would come through, but apparently he was deeply upset because Frances Herskovits had decided that he was the cause of Herskovits's last year or two of unhappiness, which just wasn't so, you know. He had a quite different theoretical orientation, which would have bothered old Herskovits a great deal, very much a social structural-functionalist and an Africanist of an entirely different ilk, trained in England and all that sort of thing. And all that, I think, bothered the old man and certainly Frances Herskovits. So, she got the idea that he was out to get rid of her husband and take his place, which is so stupid, because I don't think Paul Bohannan had any notion of wanting to stay there. Even at that point he wanted to move, and he did, actually, to California. He and I talked a lot, and I saw his side of it. And he was very depressed by this; it was a depressing thing.

So, here I was teaching a course on Africa after Herskovits's death. I had just moved out of Pittsburgh and was looking at the place that I would have accepted an offer from and thinking how lucky I was that I hadn't.

So that summer that came and got through sometime early August. Did the semester start here late August, early September in those days? I forget. I did have time, though, to come West and meet Kathy and Mary and the kids in Santa Fe and had a week or so, a just wonderfully pleasant time get-

ting around and going up to Corvallis near Santa Fe to see the Doziers.

And they were building an adobe house. Two people that we really loved. Ed Dozier was just a beautiful person, and Marianne was wonderful too. And they had two kids, so we stayed with them a day or two in this great house. I have pictures of that, that beautiful house that Ed built, pictures of them building it using a Hopi plan, you know, but making it a little larger with fireplaces inside.

Anyway, so then we had to head back. We got in the car and came back here, *just* in time for me to start. What the hell am I going to do now? [laughter] How now, brown cow? Get our little house together and go up to the university, and there's that ancient department I put together out of nothing. And Antoinetta saying that a number of students had come in, and they were going to take anthropology courses. I forget now the courses that we had scheduled. Wayne was going to do North American Indians, and I was going to do something else, and both of us were going to take a hand in introductory anthropology.

*So, they're going to come now pretty soon, the other people, Davis and Joan and Wayne Suttles?*

Yes. Wayne and I were there first, and then I guess Davis didn't come in until the end of that semester, and Joan just to fill in. Was it then? I'm not sure just what order, but either one or both of them were also there.

And Joan, I asked her to do Africa. I was tied up with a course people wanted in religion, and the introductory course. Wayne and I both handled the introductory courses, because that's where most of the students were coming from other departments.

*Had you taught those classes before?*



Kathy d'Azevedo with Ed Dozier.

Oh, yes, I knew what I wanted to do, and my god, at Cal, I certainly taught those. That's what they shoved on me, with 1,000 students. Buck Davis, when he came in—whether it was that semester or right after, I'm not sure—we had him do the archaeology and prehistory. And I have to check to see exactly what the courses were.

But anyway, we had a little program going. And I don't know, all of our classes had anywhere from six to twelve students, and we felt not bad at all. They weren't anthro students, as such; they were from other departments, but some wanted to be majors, so we were beginning to get . . . . It was kind of wonderful being there on the ground floor, you know. It's hard for me to remember all the details, but there was something very pleasing about knowing that there were five or six students that wanted to be anthropolo-

gists. We didn't have a graduate program yet, but we were going to have one.

Carl and I and Paul Secord were talking about developing a graduate program, and I'd already laid out a graduate program that we were going to submit for anthropology for a year or two down the road. Things were exciting, and there was something basically academic and instructional about it. It felt like you were really now at the roots of your own field. You were seeing what would go in a place, you know, and you could dream about the things you wanted to make happen.

I was already doing that. I had four or five programs which I got started right off, because I figured I'd better hit hard at the beginning, get people used to the fact that we needed to have expansion and things of that kind and that we had ideas about what we wanted to do.

And Wayne was very helpful; Wayne was a very able guy, had very opinionated notions about the field, but they were ones that I found congenial. I mean, the traditional anthropological orientation to teaching and all that.

Joan Davlin was a wild card, but she was great to have around. I mean, she gave you the feeling that you had a department of anthropology, because she was a rather exotic, bizarre person, and yet a wonderfully bright, able woman. [laughter] She was still a student at Cal. She'd bring her dog to class, and he'd bark and snap at everybody. And sometimes she would sleep in her office, you know, overnight, which bothered the janitors, and they would report her. I'd get a call from the dean's office about, "Do you allow your staff to sleep overnight?"

And I'd say, "Well, Joan Davlin is an exception. We do." And we got away with it.

*Did everybody that first year that you'd brought in accept Nevada and Reno well, or did you have to deal with people adjusting?*

Oh, no. Well, I mean, they knew before they came what they were getting into, because I always made it very clear that this was rough territory. But no, Wayne had no intention of staying here. He was very cynical about it, you know. He'd sing, "On top of old Peavine, all covered with shit." [laughter] And he had a number of verses he would sing in order to cheer himself up. But he was a good teacher, and he attracted students. Drove a lot away, because he demanded a lot of work, but nevertheless, good to have around.

I felt we were doing the right thing, you know. And Joan was a good teacher—a wild one, but a good one. Students loved her. I got letters after she left, letters for years,

"Where's Professor Davlin?" you know, because she was a hands-on kind. She would take students out and do flint knapping and things of that kind.

*This is a pretty basic question, but in those years, were you consciously trying to provide some gender variety for the students as role models?*

Little early for that in terms of the era but also in terms of what we were doing. We didn't have time to worry about that. I mean, Joan was here because she was available. But I thought of that later. I mean, it was very important to me to have women on the staff. Well, I don't think that I was necessarily pioneering that, but, I mean, I was very . . . ?

*Well, I think for a new department to have one woman. I mean, I just noted it and wondered if . . .*

No, I was very aware of having a department which had both women and men.

*Now, do you remember if in the student body that first year there was a preponderance of either men or women, or was that true of the university?*

Yes, there was some disparity of males over females, but I don't know if it was extreme. The main thing was there were no minorities; I mean it was a lily-white campus. And I was very aware of that.

*Were most of the students local, from Nevada?*

Yes. Well, a lot of people from California because it was cheaper than California or they were having trouble in California. We had a lot of problem students. But a lot were very good students from various parts of the

state. Good rural kids, some very able, very smart, and some of them did go on into anthropology. But we had a lot from out of state. I can't remember now the reasons why so many out-of-state students came in. That was before they had higher tuition for out-of-state students. They were being encouraged. There were shifts in the policy, and I forget now just how it worked. But anyway, we had a lot of out-of-state students.

*In that first year, was there a notable disparity between performance of students here . . . ?*

Yes. There was not the same level. It wasn't the same style of behavior. I mean, the big Eastern universities, for god sakes, or University of California, students know how they're supposed to behave. They've got to be feisty, they've got to *appear* to be up on it. Not all of them, but I mean, those who really want to make it have learned this behavioral style.

You didn't have that here. You had students who were essentially plodders, nice, good, clean-cut kids. Some were bastards, and we had things like "The Sundowners" clubs and things like that, with vicious pranksters.

*What is a Sundowner?*

Sundowners was not really a fraternity, it was just a large club, a traditional club, raising hell kind of a thing, particularly on homecoming week and things of that kind. And we had some trouble with them later, which I'll talk about. There were fraternity kids and things of that kind.

It was a rural, land-grant college atmosphere. Six thousand, seven thousand students going through change. And you could feel that change taking place. New

people were coming into various departments that were congenial to change. The English Department was going through change, sociology and psychology certainly, foreign languages were getting new people that were coming from out of the area and bringing in new ideas, which created tensions with the older group. But nevertheless, that was exciting, that was good. And we would have little coteries, little get-togethers before faculty meetings, and we had our agenda and programs, and we'd push them, you know. So, all that was very pleasant in a way. I found that to be good, nurturing.

But anyway, that first semester was weird. I can scarcely remember it excepting just these little highlights. And at the same time, you know, I was seeing Mordy, and he was pushing me to go out and get grants and all that. I told him, "Look, I've got some programs. Just give me a chance here."

And what were some of the other things that happened there? Oh, I became very aware of the racial atmosphere in this area. You know, I expected it, and I had known something about it earlier. But somehow, seeing it on a campus . . . I mean, mixed couples just didn't happen, and when they did, they were beat up. That's where the Sundowners came in—these young kids, who took it upon themselves to be the masters at arms on the campus.

People were insulted, blacks were insulted, Indians were looked at, stared at. And, in fact, at homecoming events on campus and during the football season, caricatures of Indians were common. I mean, cowboy and Indian things were acted out, and the Indians were sometimes dragged along behind horses, you know, caricatured Indians. "Squaws" were very common—dragging squaws from tepees in the middle of a football field.

Blackfaced minstrel shows were common, had been very common in the earlier period and were still being done. I remember seeing Blackface on campus during festivals and things of that sort. And I was shocked by this and at the same time, intrigued and motivated. You know, something needs to be done.

And there were a few black students on campus; most of them were on the football team, of course. They were complaining about their treatment. That's when the Little Waldorf affair had taken place just before we came.

There was a little bar downtown called the Little Waldorf. Now it's up next to the campus. In those days, it barred all minorities—no Indians or blacks could get in the place—and there had been an incident where the football team had just won an important game.

*Was this explicitly enforced?*

Yes. Oh, yes. They were told to leave. They were told to go, get out, and the clientele would join in, "Yes, go over to Lake Street," you know. Or they were just treated with such hostility that they left.

Well, anyway, the football team had won a game. This was sometime in late 1962, early 1963. They had won an important game, and they were celebrating, and there were three or four black members of the team who had done amazing things and had won the game for them. They all went down as a group to the Little Waldorf, and the proprietor refused to serve them.

And that was in all the newspapers, the *Sagebrush*, the university student newspaper, with people taking sides. You know, "The proprietor had every right in this world. He

owns the place. He has the right to decide who comes in."

And others saying, "Well, that doesn't seem to be a nice idea. This is a democracy," and all that.

The *Sagebrush* was on the side of the proprietor. You know, here is a student newspaper saying that it was just a bunch of troublemakers had caused these guys to go down there, otherwise, they wouldn't have done it. There were a lot of these people on campus who encouraged them. I wonder who those would have been. I don't know who they would have been. [laughter] But anyway, so that was a big issue when I got here. People were still talking about that.

Oh, one of my first courses in the second semester of that year in a kind of a nod to Herskovits was, "The Negro in the New World." I had all the blacks on campus—there must have been about fifteen. Most of them were football players or sports people. I had a wonderful guy named John West—very able, intelligent guy. He now has a newspaper or something in Las Vegas. We got acquainted especially because he had an uncle or a cousin who was the Dr. West we used to go to in Liberia, a black doctor—very great guy. Well, John was an active radicalized young fellow. Not basically, but he got that way here, you know, "What the hell is going on?"

So they started a chapter of the NAACP in my class. And that little group—with some whites in it, of course—also developed a SNCC<sup>1</sup> organization on campus. This was the 1960s, and there were some left-wing white students in the class, a couple of Latinos. That is the same group that became the Black Student's Union a couple of years later, but then it was the NAACP.

So, all of this was happening, and my class became a kind of a center of activity. I was



dealing, essentially, with the history of the American black experience, which I loved to deal with, because it was like what I had been interested in much earlier. And I put together a lot of materials that I had.

One of the saddest things that occurred over the years was later when I taught the course again, I laid all my notes on a wastebasket at the office one evening as I went home, to just set it aside as I was straightening up my office. I forgot to pick it up and put it on my desk, and the janitor took it to the dump. Fortunately, I was able to reconstitute most of it. [laughter] Oh, I felt terrible about it. I was developing this course, and it was really attracting a number of people.



*We were talking earlier about the relationship between the state museum and the Anthropology Department. I just wanted to ask if you had an insight into why there isn't a working relationship now.*

Well, there is. Friendly. Whenever necessary, we would utilize the museum's facilities, and they would us, excepting they really are not so much a research museum as they are a state-funded local museum with some wonderful materials in their collection. And over the years, we've had some very good people going through.

But see, in the old days, when Calhoun was around and finally left, and Don Tuohy came in, there just wasn't that much funding. The state didn't give them much funding for activity. We wanted, in our agreement, the state to supply a certain amount of funds for research assistants, et cetera, and we would supply other things in terms of staff here.

It was a little too ambitious for what the state was ready to do, or the university, for that matter. It wasn't a central, urgent program, and later on, we had a very good

relationship with Tuohy, and they had people doing research. We've had students who have used their facilities, et cetera. And then people like Amy Dansie, who had been a student of ours, was an excellent person down there.

We had very close relations with the museum, but there isn't the program that we had in mind that was going to be a sort of joint teaching and research responsibility. That just never got off the ground, because it did require funds which weren't there at the time, and there were other things more pressing.

But there was never any hostility between us and them. It was always very friendly. And then, you know, people like [Gene] Hattori later, and others.

*So, you never did hire anybody that held the shared post? There never was one?*

Not that I can remember, no. We were intending to do that. It just never got off the ground.

*It just sounded like a great idea.*

Well, it is! And it still would be excepting, you know, institutions have their own trajectories and problems. [laughter] And there were just other things more important, but the museum has done a lot of good research and had excellent people there over time.

*Then I had also a question given your own research interests and your own work and all of that. I haven't heard you mention a close association or working with the history department here at UNR. I mean, was there an opportunity to cross-list courses, or was there any . . . ?*

Well, that's coming up when I talk about curriculum. We did have. We had a very close sort of consortium arrangement with a number of departments as part of our interdisciplinary approach. Partly because of the Desert Research Institute, partly because of the Western Studies Center, which I suppose I was the major developer of—the Center for Western North American Studies.

But right now, I'm sort of dealing with the setting of the university and what was going on. Some of the social issues which were going on, which, you know, were part of the soil in which the university and the program grew in that period.

And at that point, I remember because of the housing problem and our concern about it and because of the equivocation on civil rights issues that were going on in the legislature and locally and the fact that the minority students—Native Americans and blacks and others—were having a hell of a time on campus, that that was a very important focus of the extracurricular activities of some of the faculty of which I was one. And this Human Relations Council, I remember one of the things we did. We wrote to the governor and said something had to be done about housing. We wanted an open-housing law passed. It took years for it to happen in Nevada, but we were the first voice of that kind.

And we got some kind of meaningless response, so a number of us got in cars and went down to a march on Carson City. [laughter] I don't know, about fifty, maybe seventy-five or a hundred all in cars, and we drove down to the governor's mansion to see the governor. Carl Backman was one of the major figures in this. He and I were key—Willard Day, Alex Simirenko, of course, in those days, and oh, there were a number of others. I can't recall them.

*Was this Grant Sawyer? Was he governor then?*

No, Laxalt. See, we had had the Great Basin Conference here in 1964, and Carl and I issued a statement that we'd hold no other meetings of our professions [sociology and anthropology] in Reno until there was a non-discrimination policy on the part of the casinos and hotels, because of the embarrassment it caused to so many of the members of our professions who were minorities. And this got a little press and all that, and then this governor's thing.

Well, we were really vilified. There was all kinds of flack in the press about "What's happening to our 'dear little university'?" [laughter]

*These outsiders.*

Yes, you know, "These outsiders are coming in and causing all this, although we've never had any trouble at all here. And they're going to foment trouble."

There was a lot of that, but on the other hand, there was a lot of sort of community acceptance, because the community is a very diverse one. There was that, too, so there was a lot of support as well.

I remember Governor Laxalt being very irritated with us, because he thought we were interfering with his *very subtle* efforts to develop a civil rights program. [laughter] He had just been turned down by the legislature, and we felt we didn't want to wait twenty years for him to be able to work out his kind of program. So at least that got things started. There was more interest, more concern about this sort of thing. Now, at this same time—this was 1964—the ASUN [Associated Students of the University of Nevada] senate for the first time proposed to support a state bill to prohibit discrimination in all

public and private places. That was, I think, a result of the activity that was going on. All of a sudden—and the ASUN senate had stood off from all these kinds of issues—it became interested.

A bill was formally adopted by the Nevada state legislature in 1965. It took a year or more for it to actually be passed by the legislature, but it wasn't implemented or activated until as late as 1971.

Nevertheless, these good things that were going on in the state. Also, there was the first conference of the Nevada Inter-Tribal Council. The Inter-Tribal Council had already formed, but we invited them to the campus to have a state-wide conference to develop the institution further. And John Dressler, a wonderful guy who had been chairman of the Washoe tribe for a while, was

Chairman of the Inter-Tribal Council at that time. A very able man, and it was terrible that he died a few years later. He and I developed this program on campus where, for two days, there was an assembly of Indian leaders from all over the state—it was a wonderful thing—and some observers from other states. The first time anything like this had ever happened on campus.

Why I remember it vividly is because it happened on Mackay Day, you know, which in those days . . . I forget what goes on now, it has slowly frittered away. But Mackay Day was a big a-hole event, a screaming, wild, drunken party like homecoming. And Mackay Day was a time for all the fraternities and people like the Sundowners and all that to raise hell, which they often did, usually coming dressed as Indians pulling squaws



*"[John Dressler] and I developed this program on campus where, for two days, there was an assembly of Indian leaders from all over the state." Warren at the podium and John Dressler at the far left during the Inter-Tribal Conference, 1964.*

behind them, you know, with ropes, and cowboys and lord knows what else. All of that hanky panky of small rural colleges. And here, on the same day, was the Inter-Tribal Council [ITC]. [laughter]

It hadn't occurred to us, you see, that they were going to coincide. But it was wonderful, because here are these dozens and dozens of dignified Indian men and women dressed well and on campus with their briefcases and a number of other local Indians. The campus was an Indian day, and it was Mackay Day. [laughter] It was amazing to see how this put a damper on the festivities! They just faded away. Mackay Day took place off campus, pretty much, those two days. So, I remember that was a great pleasure. There was something about that get-together that I found extremely pleasing.

*Well, you had said that it was also common, like during football games and just any time of a rowdy celebration, to kind of have this cowboy and Indian . . .*

And blackface, yes. You know, innocent in a sense, and ignorant, but real. It told you where things were at. And it hurt blacks and Indians. I mean, they didn't like it, but they were so used to it, nobody did anything.

*Do you remember the year of the Inter-Tribal Council Conference?*

May 1964 on Mackay Day.

*Now was it northern Nevada, northwestern Nevada, or was it all of Nevada Indian groups?*

As I remember, I think Southern Paiute people came and Shoshone from Reese River. Most of the participants were from the Inter-

Tribal Council that had started, really, with Walker River, Fallon Reservation people.

*Was your role or the university's role sort of as a host or facilitator?*

Yes. We had invited them to have their conference. I had done that in connection with John Dressler whom I knew very well and who I had a great admiration for.

*And at this time, John Dressler was the Chairman of the Inter-Tribal Council?*

Inter-Tribal Council and also, I think at the same time, Chairman of the Washoe tribe.

*Was he living on the Reno-Sparks Colony?*

Maybe at this time he was living in the Reno-Sparks Colony, but his original home was from Woodfords, and he lived in Carson Valley. But I'm not sure where he was actually living at that time.

*I had a sense that the Reno-Sparks Colony was more integrated into the Washoe political scene than it is now.*

No. Reno-Sparks Colony has always been divided, and sometimes hostilely, but not usually. It's just that there were Paiute and Washoe and others all together, and the Washoe felt that it really ought to be theirs, but that hadn't been how it was formed. It was formed, really, as a place for urban Indians back in 1917, I guess it was. And there had always been a contention as to who should be there, and the same with Carson Colony in Carson Valley. The Paiutes moved into it, and the Washoe were saying, "This really was

meant for us.” And the same kind of conflict took place at Reno-Sparks, but not seriously.

*Well, what I meant was that I get the impression that the Washoe that lived in the Reno-Sparks Colony are somehow less involved in what goes on in Washoe country than . . .*

Well, maybe, they have outside representation; they certainly have representatives on the Washoe Tribal Council and did at that time. And here was John Dressler who was a Washoe who was chairman of this new organization. I think it probably came out of the fact that the Reno-Sparks Colony *was* a place of contact between a number of tribes, and the Inter-Tribal Council was a natural outgrowth.

There were some very wonderful people around at that time. Winona Holmes, a very intelligent young woman from Owyhee, she was very active in it, and a number of people who later became important figures in the area.

But we felt it was a very exciting thing to be doing, and John was very pleased at the fact that here they were on this campus where there was hardly an Indian student. There was a handful, and I remember one of the pitches at the conference was there should be more fellowships and scholarships and tuition grants to Indian students, which did happen. Within the next few years, there were a number of small but important grants for Indian students that increased the membership slightly.

That, to me, was a landmark sort of thing. The ITC, for a number of years, was an extremely important institution in the West here, but it slowly sort of lost ground. I don't know why. Still exists, but it doesn't have the same vigorous program that it once had.

Then this was also the period Martin Luther King had been invited to speak on campus by students. And I was asked about this, and I was very happy to lend my support to that. It was set, except that things were really happening in the South, and he had to cancel at the last minute. But at least that was among the kind of things . . .

*Well, you had seen him while you were still in Utah, hadn't you?*

In Utah, I had, and I remember saying how wonderful it would be if we could get him here. But a number of students had proposed this to the ASUN, and he was formally invited but couldn't come. Things were really heating up, and that's why he didn't come.

A number of our students had gone down and worked with SNCC in the South all during some of the most active and difficult periods, and they were beginning to return from the South in 1964 and 1965. Some are going down, and some are returning. And they, of course, were gung-ho. These students were heavy-duty. They wanted to get something done around here.

*Did you continue to teach this course?*

Not every semester, but the next year I did, too. Out of that, a number of associates that I've had here for years were in that course; they still live here. A number of the black students who settled here became some of the well-to-do and influential members of the community.

This was the period when the John Birch Society was very active and raised hell with the campus demanding that SNCC and the NAACP and the American Civil Liberties Union be banned from the campus. NAACP

had formed a chapter, and it was such a small campus that all these organizations were all cooperating with each other, the Civil Liberties Union on the part of some of the faculty and SNCC—these very, very hard-hitting, vocal young students coming back from the South, who had been in the battleground. “Where are we?” You know, “We’re going to have things happen around here.” So, it was a very lively time.

I’ve gone through this just to give something of the setting, but now, our program. In the midst of all this, I was developing a program and deciding what kind of a curriculum we should have. There had really been very little on the agenda for the sociology and anthropology departments, and we just scrapped all that and started from scratch.

When I say “we” I mean it was me in consultation with Wayne Suttles and later when Don Fowler came out the following year—that would have been late 1964 from Pittsburgh. Don was a former student of mine, along with Kay Fowler. Oh, how lucky we were to get them!

But I had already begun to work out a curriculum for anthropology, dividing things into 100, introductory courses; and 200, basic area survey courses; and 300, theory and content—the formula in those days; and 400, courses on research methods and problems. When I look back on it, we had a pretty good curriculum laid out. Hardly anybody to teach it, however, which made sense for a small department and a small university.

We made plans to put in proposals for additional staff. We wanted, in the next two years, to have a staff of four senior anthropologists—altogether seven, including assistants. And we had goals for 1966 and 1967 to carry out this curriculum prospectus.

We were concerned about the library. Fortunately, through, again, Molly Magee—

Molly Magee Knudtsen later—a grant of funds, a fairly large amount in those days, came through for the library for anthropology. And oh, I haven’t mentioned Harumi Befu, who had come out here from Wisconsin and was here when I came just during the transition. He was with us that first semester, a very able, very bright young anthropologist, social-structuralist. It did my heart good. I just thought, “Oh, if we could only keep this guy.”

But he was ready to leave. He’d been all alone, and I remember him in this plant we had above the Old Gym, that old messy office that we all had. I remember him sitting there doing his work. He was writing an article and saying, “Well, I don’t know how I can work here.” [laughter] Wonderful guy. We wanted to keep him, but he didn’t want to stay. He helped work out this curriculum, as I remember.

*And how standard is this breakdown of the introductory, survey area, research?*

Well, I think it was fairly standard in those days.

*In all disciplines, or is this explicit to anthropology?*

I don’t know about all disciplines, but at this university, that was the standard layout for various courses. However, if you look over that curriculum we had, it was not extensive, but it was really very comprehensive and very focused. I had already become aware that we were going to have to have an area focus, and certainly it was the Great Basin. And I was quite happy to do that.

I was also worried about what I was going to do about Africa and other concerns that I had, but I eventually worked that out.

Nevertheless, we knew that we had to have this kind of area focus, which I think also was a very important and creative thing for us to do.

*How much do you think you were influenced, maybe, by models from elsewhere and that kind of thing?*

Oh, very much! I'd been at, let's see, four universities with established departments, and some I would use as a model and some not. But I had an idea of what I thought a good undergraduate program ought to be, and I had some biases in this direction.

*What were some of the biases?*

Oh, the biases had to do with . . . . I always felt, even though I had gotten a great deal out of Northwestern, that they didn't really have an undergraduate program. And I always felt that if they weren't able to bring in people for that African studies program who had had good undergraduate experience elsewhere, that it was something of a drawback. It wasn't serious, but I noted that. I felt that [the University of] Utah was better at this, had what I considered to be a sound undergraduate program. Berkeley was just too scattered all over the world, and students could do just about anything.

*It's still true. [laughter]*

There were certain requirements, but the thing is, you could just about get by any way, hook or crook. No, I just felt that a very tightly knit undergraduate program was important that covered the four basic fields.

Not that we could teach all of that in the first year—certainly not—but our goal was to be able to do so, that we had to have a

physical anthropologist, at least somebody who was capable of teaching in that area, and we had to have somebody with linguistic experience, and certainly archaeology. We knew that archaeology was going to be one of the fortes of this place and should be. And then ethnology. None of these people would be specialists, because we couldn't afford it, but that that would be a focus they had as well as being generalists, that they could also teach other courses, certainly introductory.

I was very concerned that we had some good cultural anthropologists who were capable of carrying what I consider to be the core of the program, and that they, too, should be capable of more than a single focus. I mean, like if they're cultural anthropologists, if their focus was in linguistics, fine, but also another area that we needed to teach.

So, of course, when hiring, we couldn't be that careful the first year or two. We were lucky to get anybody who was good. We weren't able always to get a person in the categories that we wanted. But later on, this became one of our key objectives—that we look for people who had a sound basis in general anthropology but had some focus and specialization that was their research and scholarship activity and that we expected both of those things to be very strong.

And it worked for a while. We got some very good people. It took us a while to get to the point where we could even attract people or convince them they should come here.

So, anyway, I was talking about the library. One good thing. Harumi Befu, because he was so upset about the anthropology holdings at the library, had spent a great deal of time developing a card file of works that should be in any library in any university worth its salt. [laughter] I look back and really appreciate that he felt that way. I really liked him very much. Even after he got a job at

Stanford and went on, we maintained a correspondence for a number of years, and I would see him.

I remember sitting in this little hot office—there was no air conditioning in those days. At the best you might have a fan. And it was a dusty campus in those days. When the wind blew, you had dust storms. And here was Harumi, working on this card file, and I was wondering, you know, what we're going to do with it.

Then Molly Magee comes through with, I don't know, enough money for 5,000 volumes or something, and it was a windfall. So, we could go about getting the journals. And by the way, there were some older materials in the library that were wonderful, from back before the turn of the century, old stuff. God, we had runs of government publications and early materials from the University of California, lots of archaeological reports and things of that kind, which were valuable old things. We had some antiques, you know, but not necessarily a teaching library.

So using Harumi's card file and other things, we got a very good basic library started—journals, basic texts, and a lot of the recently published materials. And I think the library still has gained from that. If you go through the old catalog . . . [laughter] I love to use the catalog; the hell with the computerized version of it. We just got one hell of a lot of stuff, and some of it very valuable, because I think most libraries get rid of stuff, you know. You'd have to go to a big university library to get some of the stuff that we had. There's a lot we don't have, but some good runs of anthropological journals.

All that started back in 1964 and 1965. A guy named Dave Heron was director of the library at that time, and he was very cooperative and helpful and really was enjoying the push we were putting on.



Well, we have been dealing with those first years of the 1960s when I came here. So, just to go back: in 1962, 1963, I was at the University of Pittsburgh, and 1963 was the year of Melville Herskovits's death and the first Peace Corp program that I developed at Pittsburgh.

Carl Backman was recruiting, and I had seen him a number of times during 1962 and 1963 where he had proposed that I come to Nevada, and I wasn't ready to make up my mind to do that. And while I was at Pittsburgh, Don and Kay Fowler came as students from Utah, because they had been students of mine at Utah, excellent students, and I proposed them for scholarships, fellowships at Pittsburgh where Don entered the graduate program; Kay as well, though she had more work to do toward her graduate credits than Don had.

Then when Kathy and I decided that we would come to Nevada, first there had been that initial meeting with the department heads and staff that I have already discussed,



*"Carl Backman was recruiting."*



and then we came out here together in May and got ourselves established and got a place to stay. On our way out here, we stopped at Utah, because Don and Kay Fowler were getting married; Kay Sweeney, that wonderful young lady, and Don were getting married, so we were there to celebrate their marriage and then came on through to Reno.

So, already, Kay and Don and Kathy and I had established a very close relationship, and I had great admiration for both of them—very able students and wonderful people. So, we came out here, and then I went on to the Summer Institute on Africa at Northwestern. I've already discussed my experience there after Herskovits's death. And then I came out to Santa Fe to meet Kathy and a friend of ours and the kids and then came back to Reno for the fall semester. That's the trajectory, as I remember it.

*Right. But when you were at Pittsburgh is when you had met Barbara Lane?*

Oh, yes. Barbara and Bob Lane. I think we stayed at their house at one point when we first went to Pittsburgh, two very brilliant young people. Both had been at the University of Washington, got their degrees there and had done ethnographic work in the Northwest Coast. And that's where they knew Wayne Suttles, and I had heard a great deal about him. I believe I must have met him or corresponded with him, because by the time I got to Nevada, he was on my mind as somebody I wanted to ask to come here, because he had worked in the West, the periphery of the Great Basin—the plateau and Northwest Coast—and had done already a great deal of basic ethnographic work, recording, and ethnohistorical work.

*And his ethnohistorical work would have been very congenial with your own interests.*

Well, of course. I thought of that as somehow a basic criteria. At least anybody who was going to be working in the Great Basin, it was very important to have some kind of historical approach. And also, he was a linguist and had had two areas. He'd worked in Okinawa during the war, linguistic work for the army, I think, rather than the navy.

That meant he had a broad range of experience, and he had taught at British Columbia and Columbia in New York, at least for a summer. Somehow or other, he was between jobs, and I knew he didn't intend to stay at Nevada, that it was a stopover, but I was very happy to get him that first year when I was just beginning, and he was willing to put up with the horrible conditions that we had.

And then a little later, Buck—or Wilbur—Davis, the archaeologist, came into our program for a period. So, that was the beginning.

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#### Note

1. Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee, a national organization first developed in Raleigh, North Carolina devoted to furthering civil rights in the South through direct non-violent action. By 1964, about 150 people worked full time for SNCC, roughly 80 percent black and mostly associated with Freedom Rides and registering voters that attracted over 1,000 volunteers.



## NSF FIELD SCHOOLS

*D*O YOU THINK one of the things that might have been intriguing to anybody you had been recruiting at this time was this opportunity for having one of the first ethnographic field schools for graduate students?<sup>1</sup> I mean, to be part of that program seems to me to have been a pretty exciting . . . .

Yes, and I'm trying to remember at the moment just how that thing initiated. I mean, I know I was thinking about it, but it must have been . . . well, Dave Landy at Pittsburgh. I didn't know Kim Romney well at Stanford, but somehow or other, the idea coalesced at that time, or NSF had announced that they were prepared to give grants for anthropology training. I'm not sure. I'd have to go back to the record to see just how this thing got off the ground, but I know that I wrote up a good part of the program, because I saw it as extremely important here at Nevada as one of our first major projects to bring in students from other areas to work in this area. It was good for us to develop a kind of a training orientation to the various Indian reservations and colonies in the state

to get more familiar with them and make an identification of the university as a research center for Great Basin studies. But at the moment, for the life of me, I can't remember exactly how the thing got off the ground.

*I think what's so interesting to me about it, in just reading the proposal, is that a third of the students that were going to participate were going to come from Stanford, and a third from the University of Pittsburgh, because they had such a vigorous program, and the new program at UNR had no graduate students, but you had an incredible research opportunity.*

Yes, but we had two or three students who were . . . . I mean, like Brooke Mordy, who later became our first M.A. [in 1966]. We had a little leeway there to bring in people.

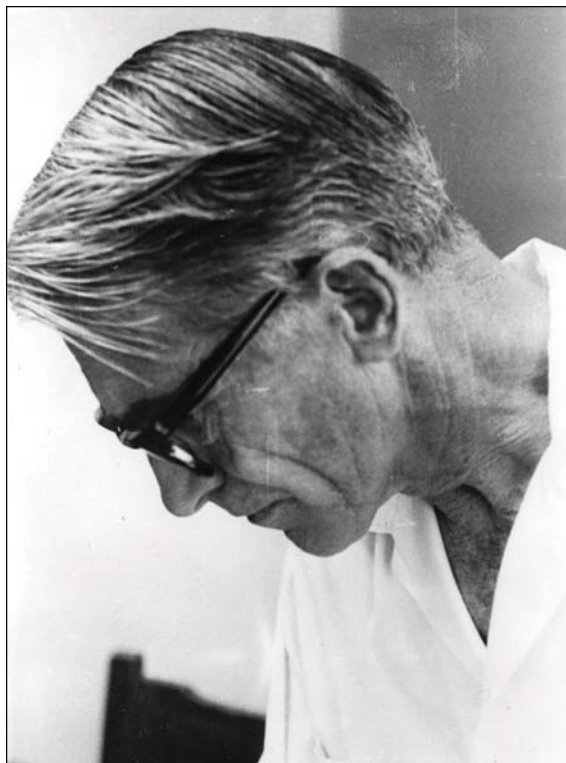
*OK. Then we'll get into that, but I still thought it was extraordinary that you had this triumvirate of schools with anthropology programs.*

Well, sure, well-developed departments.

*Yes, and UNR's great strength that you really promoted was this connection, because of DRI, a great research potential. It's extraordinary!*

Yes. And as I see it now, we knew students from other places that I had worked that we could call in as the third that we wanted that weren't just assigned to us. There were three or four students like Brooke Mordy, who was here with a graduate background from elsewhere. She was Wendell Mordy's wife and a very able woman. There were also people like Don Handelman, Eileen Kane, and others whom we knew of. Oh, that's right, Sven Liljeblad, I consulted with him about this. And certainly Wayne was part of the consultation on developing the program. However, it somehow seems to have come out of whole cloth, but it didn't.

*This must have had a genesis before you actually moved to UNR.*



Sven Liljeblad.

Oh, yes. When I decided to come here, that was my thought. "What should be done there by way of research? What would attract people to this area to do research?" Key people, because there had been so little done, and what a wonderful laboratory it was for field training, for new anthropologists.

And I have always been interested in the idea of field training for students. I thought every student should have some kind of local field experience. For example, my courses at Utah, I always had students go out and do a research report on a local area. I have two or three boxes of papers from Utah students on Salt Lake City and the Mormons, which later stimulated Kay Fowler and I when we did our St. George project under the NSF grant. [June-September 1970]

There was a lot of preliminary thinking that went into this, but somehow when I try to think who did what when, it's really hard. But I know that Dave Landy and a couple of other people who were around had corresponded on this, and we were sort of agreeing on the general layout. But as I remember, I think I did the major writing of the proposals.

*I was reading that as a precedent, you referred to the Anthropology Laboratory in Santa Fe, that it had had a field school in the 1930s, but nothing had been done on that kind of level . . . .*

Right, and one of the early and very successful projects of that time.

*But until the NSF field school that was partially here, there hadn't been that kind of concerted effort, at least that's what it looks like when I'm just reading the proposal.*

Yes. There were other smaller efforts, but the Santa Fe school was sort of a well-known example where the people who had been part

of it were very enthusiastic about it. That developed, really, out of that sort of thinking that I was doing and a couple of other people were doing. So, the main thing, though, I saw this as a way of establishing the department here as a research department and also trying to attract interest and get staff here.

*Well, it must have been exactly the kind of emphasis that DRI would have wanted, too, because of their research orientation.*

Oh, well, sure. Not only that, it was almost a requirement.

*But it must have been a wonderful opportunity to get graduate-level work done through the field school and to train people to do anthropology rather than just talking about it for such a young department.*

Well, what I was saying was that it fit a number of criteria. Number one, I wanted to see research done in this area and develop a new look at the university, at the department of anthropology, as something that had not existed here before, and that it had some value and use. Also, I knew that I was going to have to develop some kind of program because of the Desert Research Institute. They didn't bring me in, and others, just to teach and develop departments. In fact, that was the least of their interests. Wendell Mordy was vastly disinterested in developing a department of anthropology; he wanted a research center that he could add to his list of research programs at DRI.

So, I knew that we were going to have to, in some way, partly fund ourselves and fund some kind of research. And the most exciting and useful one I could think of was a Great Basin research project using the NSF funds to get some students out here, both to

develop a program for field-training for students, but also to start developing some new ethnographic material, a roster of new work, which it did do.

I mean, the files that we have of student reports are amazingly valuable at this point, even though they were done by new students who hadn't done any fieldwork before. But there was an amazing amount of valuable material turned out and those are fortunately on file and on record and are used [archived at the Getchell Library, UNR Special Collections 92-90].

*Did the field methodology guide get written? Because that was going to be another product of the field school, was the field methods guide.*

Well, I don't know what you mean by guide.

*Well, maybe I'm not using the right . . . .*

In our proposal we laid out the things that were going to be done and that each of the three centers . . . . See Stanford was doing this field school in the state of Oaxaca, and Landy and Murdock [University of Pittsburgh] were using Puebla, Mexico as their center, because they had already done some fieldwork there, and then ours was the Great Basin.

But there was sort of an outline for the topics that were going to be covered over the summer. The first week we were going to cover the ethnographic background of the area, where a number of people were presenting to the students a summary of what was known about the region. And here, Wayne, Sven Liljeblad, and myself essentially were the ones contributing to that in introducing the students to the area and discussing the role of fieldworkers and what some of the

problems might be of entrance into the various communities. And then we had a few days or a week on mapping.

*Now "entrance," just for the sake of people that don't know, is sort of a term with a capital "E" isn't it? I mean, isn't it a term that's used to describe the process of establishing rapport and getting accepted by a community that you're going to study? I've heard you use the term before, and I just wondered if . . .*

Well, that was a very important part of it. What is the character of the communities that you will be trying to go into, work with? Oh, that's right. We had one or two local consultants from the Indian groups that we knew come in and talk and then allowed the students to interact with them.

But yes, we spent a lot of time on what was the demeanor, the approach one should have, how did one explain one's presence, what one was doing. And I think we did an extremely detailed survey of the kind of communities we would be choosing from to send out these twelve students. Actually, they were sent two by two, not necessarily to exactly the same community but to communities that were approximate to each other or of the same tribal grouping.

We tried to bring in people that they could meet from these various tribal groups so that they would have an introduction when they arrived there. And I think we were fairly successful in that: Reese River, Owyhee in northern Nevada; there were people at the Reno-Sparks Colony who were from those areas, and we would bring them in to at least meet these students so they would get the feel of what local Native American people were like. And we talked about the Reno area and what its problems were and the kind of great divide between that and the outer, more

rural areas in the history of the state—not only the state, but the region.

So, that was part of this introduction. Then there was technical advice and demonstrations on mapping and the importance of being able to make a map and use a compass, particularly in an area like this that was so spread out. They'd need to know where they were in relation to other places. We also expected them to produce a map of the local region that they were in using very simple and direct map-making techniques; that was one of the tasks.

Then the role of census in fieldwork, how to do demographic work and what the importance of it was and whether or not house-to-house census was relevant or possible. And where possible, they should try to do it for at least a small sample of the area they were working in, and that this was also a way to get to know people. You didn't do this just by knocking on the door of any Native American house out in the colony or reservation area; you had to know somebody who would take you there. And people had to know who you were before they'd even talk to you, and all these problems of fieldwork.

Nevertheless, going to houses and talking to people was the very basic way of understanding, too, how the area was organized, particularly when you have scattered houses over miles of land. You know, what's the relationship between these places? What was a colony as against the old reservation organization and certainly as against the aboriginal social organization? And they were expected to observe and try to understand what the changes had been between the aboriginal situation and where people found themselves now and the impact upon them of their present distribution and demography.

And then genealogies. In those days that was very important—I still think it is—genealogical work. This is the best way to get introduced into a community, to be interested in family history or families and their organization.

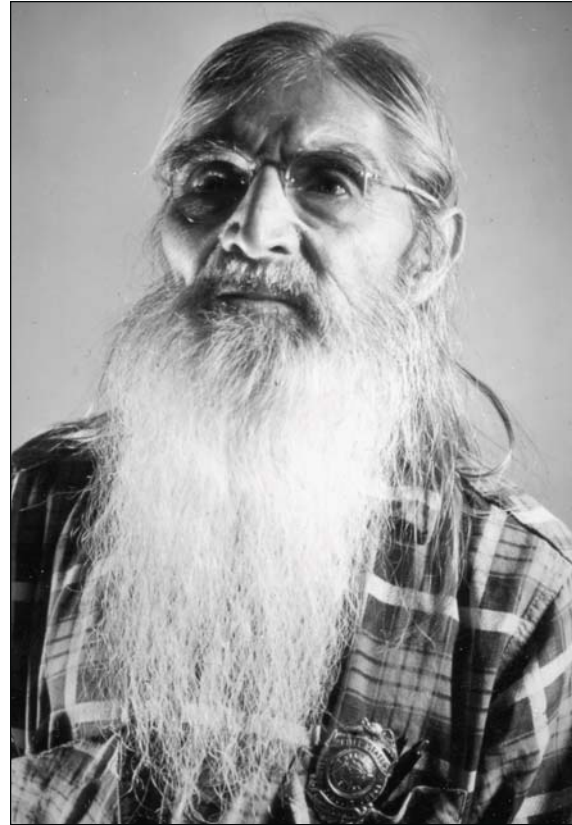
*Do you think that's pretty universal regardless of what group you're working with?*

Well, it depends on what your problem is, too. But if you're doing ethnographic work, ethnographic survey, as the first contact with the group of people, it's a good entree. It's number one and extremely important later on when you want to know what the nature of the area is in which you are working.

*But it's also like you said, among any people, even if you didn't want the explicit information and data, for some reason it's a wonderful ice-breaker.*

Well, that's what people are willing to talk about: family and history, genealogy. And it's also relatively neutral until, of course, you get into too much detail and begin to uncover family problems and conflicts between families and all that. But initially, it's a way to work with somebody in what is a fairly comfortable and neutral subject matter.

So, we went through all that, and I think we demonstrated some of this. We had people come in who would sit and be interviewed. A wonderful guy, whom I knew, Frank Morgan, who was at the Reno-Sparks Colony at that time but was from the northern Washoe area. A very articulate guy. We had him in, and his genealogy was worked over in every different way. And I also later had to point out to students that also he was a very inventive guy, that he didn't have . . .



Frank Morgan, 1977.

[laughter] If he didn't have all of his genealogy worked out, he could invent it very beautifully.

*Now, were the students learning to make those genealogical charts? I mean, you're using the standard symbols?*

We had very simple ones in those days, and the whole approach was less . . . Well, it's changed a great deal in terms of terminology and how you go about laying out a genealogy on a chart or graphically. Nevertheless, they did that. That was one of their tasks.

Each of these things they were supposed to show or demonstrate that they had done. They might have a special problem that they

were working on, but they were to do these things. Their notes that they turned in to us, their final report, had to have these things in them.

While they were doing genealogical work, their job was really to work out the kinship system as best they were able to, and this was the beginning of having some degree of understanding and control of terminology and the use of native terms. Kinship terminology is one of the best ways to do this, because people will talk about it and give it to you and correct you and be very happy when you use it. And they were to develop a kinship system for the group that they were working with, and that was to be turned in.

And interviewing, problems of interviewing—what were the techniques and methods of working with people of various statuses of those groups? If you were working with a person with spiritual power, a shaman, as against somebody who was merely a construction worker in the group or who had gone to school or not gone to school . . . various levels, statuses within the group. What were the problems of interviewing these people? What were the kinds of things you could talk about and deal with easily, and what could you not with women and men and children?

And some of the pitfalls of assuming that you are doing well and that you are getting along very well with somebody and getting familiar, and then finding out that you are being talked about and made fun of and ridiculed. And you hadn't prepared for these things and how not to let it bother you and develop a kind of persona that was able to cope with this without creating a negative reaction. And we had a lot of demonstrations. Those were very interesting. It's hard for me to recall all of them.

*Like role-playing?*

Sort of. Role-playing, but not just with one another. I was a stickler for having local people come in that they didn't know. However, yes, there was a degree of that. They spontaneously would role-play among themselves. As I remember, it was very stimulating to the group. They had never had this kind of experience before, and they were coming from all over.

In fact, it was stimulating for them just to meet one another from all over the country from different universities. And here they were, stuck in this little shed that we had as a department on the campus and looking at the landscape and being near downtown Reno. [laughter] I mean, they were having a new experience. They were having a kind of culture shock, which was very good. It was mild, but it was good. And most of them responded very positively to the experience. There were a few who were really not made for it.

*Yes, and they found out.*

Yes, they found out. But most of them were very excited about the whole thing and challenged.

And they were very argumentative. A lot of these students came from big universities, and their demeanor had developed as one of challenge and confrontation with their professors. We learned a lot. [laughter] Wayne was a much more somber and dour person than I was, and he wasn't always as tolerant of some of the student antics and behavior. But it worked well. And then Sven Liljeblad, who was this remarkable old fieldworker with a certain mystique related to his work and activity over eighteen years with the Shoshone; and he spoke Shoshone and Paiute so, you know, people were very respectful of him. But it was a good situation.



*This is a pretty minor question, but I'm very curious. Was it common during that time to pay? Did you discuss payment to informants—when you paid, when you don't?*

Yes. Oh, yes. That was very important. And they had very small stipends, and it was very important to them to make that clear to people that they worked with. And at least in those days, it was an open-ended thing. Some people you worked with you didn't do it, and others . . . . But you always looked into what was the pattern of appreciation locally. I mean, gift-giving, food, bringing things to people when you went to town. And hopefully only with people that you worked regularly in terms of a time schedule did you even talk about payment. Then we had some notion on that and what was a reasonable kind of help to anybody who was working.

*Would you have addressed this when you were working on the interview segment of the field school?*

Oh, yes. It would come up all the time. Not all these things were kept separate. What I'm talking about now is what we had as weekly topics.

The students would be out in the field, but they'd come in for two days. I don't remember—I think it was weekends. I'm not sure, or it changed each week. And they'd come in for a one day or two of discussion.

Well, for example, on the seventh week of the summer they were brought in to discuss use of questionnaires. We suggested they didn't think about questionnaires prior to this, that they work on the things that we've been talking about.

Not that they couldn't wander off and do something else, but that these things were required; they had to get that done. It was

trial and error: "You now try these things out in the way of topics. You go out and look for these things, and your field notes should reflect that you *did* do that."

But at that point, the students had no *problem*. We encouraged them to develop a *problem*. The idea was they were to get out there and experience being in a totally new and special environment and to be as observant as possible and have good notes, notes that we would read.

They came in the next week, and we assigned the following: "By using the information you gathered in the previous week or so, develop or construct an interview schedule, a questionnaire that deals with a particular kind of *subject* or *problem* that you have begun to feel you know something about or you're especially interested in. Develop a specialized questionnaire."

They had to do that. Then they would come back and report on how effective it was, what was wrong with it and why it did or didn't work or why people would refuse to have anything to do with it, all that sort of thing.

And then we would work out these problems with them as they would come up, and ask them, "Well, what should you do about it?"

Someone would say, "I can't use questionnaires. It's a stupid thing to do."

*Now, this was all in a group. All the students are together to discuss these things?*

Yes, except we also had individual consultation during their period on campus. And, of course, Wayne and myself and Sven were out visiting these sites we administered. We made a round I think every week or so. We were busy. We worked our tails off. We'd go

out all the way to Reese River, and that's a long trip.

Oh, and by the way, just at the beginning of the field school when it started, I'd had an automobile accident where Kathy and I crashed into a telephone pole on a stormy night. This was at the very beginning when Romney and Landy and others were here at Joy and Bob Leland's. We had met there and discussed the whole program and were having a kind of celebration that we had the grant. And then we go home during a storm and run into a telephone pole. [laughter] It's the only accident we've ever had . . .

Kathy was all right, but I had a real injury on my foot, my leg, and had to have it in a cast. So, here I was on crutches at the beginning of the field school. But you know, when you're young you do everything. I didn't lose energy. I was just zipping around on my crutches.

Pete Miller was one of the students and did some work with the Washoe. He had been in the army, so he became a kind of—what do you call them?—an orderly for me, I guess. He went everywhere with me helping me up and down stairs because I had a hard time getting around, driving a car for me, or for us when we were making these trips to visit students. So Pete was with us on these trips.

That summer was full. It was two years' work in one summer. Everybody was busy.

It was a wonderful bunch of people. Don Handelman and Eileen Kane, who went on to do fieldwork in Ireland after this, was down on the Yerington Reservation. Shirley Lee, Mike Lieber were out in Yomba, and Betty Berutti, now Betty Wendt, she went on to teaching. Some of them, you know, went on in anthropology, but some did not—went off in related fields.

*Now, I just want to backtrack a moment and just ask you to describe what the open-ended interview is.*

Open-ended means you don't have a tight schedule, scheduled questions. You have a few things in mind that you want to get that are not a matter of question-answer. You let the thing go where it's going to go. In genealogical work you have a kind of a framework in your mind of what you're trying to develop and get; an open-ended set of interviews would be that you let the person go where they're going to go. And you get terrific results sometimes this way. I mean, most of your fieldwork is that way. You don't go around with a tight schedule. Some do. Some people do, and I never could cotton to it.

But, you know, you start talking about family history, and somebody goes off on all sorts of legends about early wars and myths that had to do with an area. You let them do it and then later come back—you take time doing this—later come back to where you were and say, "Well, now, where were we?" [laughter] "What about this?" And I think that's what I mean by open-ended.

*I guess the questionnaire would be more useful to supplement the groundwork that you'd laid with an open-ended interview? I mean, there was an understanding, wasn't there, that an open-ended interview would be the foundation of almost any other method you'd apply?*

A questionnaire and tightly scheduled interviews would be for specific problems that you're after. But my view—and I've always had it—is you don't start out with that. People are too tight and too worried and suspicious or bored or unfamiliar. And a good consultant in any group is one who has be-

gun to get interested in what you're talking about and begins to see, in a way, what you're after. And that might take a few sessions, a few interviews, or a little experience with that person.

And then at that point, or later when you know a very specific problem you have that you want to know about, then a scheduled interview or even a questionnaire might be useful. Questionnaires also can be useful just on a sampling basis at random.

*In the context of this field school—and I can see where it might not work out, and yet individuals might have done this on their own—did you discuss the whole idea of participant observation and the best way to know someone sometimes is to work with them?*

Yes. Well, that was all a matter of entrance, and that went on all the time. I mean, you were always discussing those problems, of rapport with the people in the area, how people might look at you and what you do about it in order to dissolve their concerns about you, and how you don't always manage it. How you live with the fact that you may not be liked and yet tolerated or even sometimes not tolerated at all, and how to avoid the worst problems of getting into situations like that. [laughter] And they ran into them. Their field notes are just full of these wonderful incidents of discovering that what we had said does happen, you know. "My god! You know, they really do . . ."

I remember this one wonderful young woman. I won't mention her name, but she went on in anthropology and became dean of a very important women's college. And she was a feisty young woman, always saying, "I'm getting along fine. Don't worry about me. Everything's going great," you know.

And she was a little irritated with being given advice. And there were reasons to give her advice; she was pretty flamboyant in her behavior sometimes, but she was very smart, very quick, a quick study. She ran into some problems that she couldn't get out of when a section of the tribe wanted to get rid of her and all this because she had not absorbed the fact that a woman working in this area is going to be a special matter. She was pooh-poohing all this, you know. [laughter] She was an early feminist and a good one, but she learned that if you want to get a job done, there are certain things you're going to have to face, and that is that there are certain things that a woman does not do that a man can do in a situation or vice versa.

Some of the men ran into these problems with role ambiguity problems where they learned that there was a particular status they had. They might be taken to be some "white-eye" who came in and intruded on their life, but they nevertheless had to deal with certain kinds of role expectations. There were kinds of things that we considered as innocuous friendly gestures that could be considered arrogant and presumptive, or worse. You don't do them. You might have . . . well, I won't go into it.

*Well, the thing that is so interesting about this is that it's an attempt to structure what really is almost an intuitive process. It's a very subtle thing you're talking about.*

That's what we were trying to do. As I remember now, we used to try to sensitize them to the variations of experience that they were going to receive. There were going to be all kinds of things that they had not had any earlier experience with, confrontations that would be new to them, and just by vir-

tue of being the kind of people they were, they were going to often misread, distort, misunderstand the gestures and symbols of others, fail to read the real situation or impose their own idea of what was happening on the situation, which would turn out to be a disastrous mistake.

And this young woman ran into that and learned a great deal, and we did, too, because there were things happening there that we didn't ever experience in our own fieldwork. There were so many kinds of things going on that sometimes we were a little at a loss what to do. We had to put out a lot of fires.

We had to go out and build some fires too. [laughter] Some people's handling of culture shock was to become immobile or to go out drinking in the local bars.

*Read novels. [laughter]*

And so, it was fascinating all around. And the students, I believe . . . . It would be wonderful to do a survey of some of these people, even those who didn't go on in anthropology, just what it all meant to them.

In fact, I might find I'm quite wrong. Maybe they were all upset or angry. I don't think so. I think they were very positive.

*Well, it sounds like an extremely demanding program, but there were so many products that they could actually . . . . I mean, what I like about the way this is structured is that there would be defined benchmarks that people can achieve, and they know at some point when they're done.*

We were very concerned that their experience would be too open-ended, which is very easy to happen, "Go out there and see what you . . . ." By the way, some of us were thrown into the field that way.

"Do what you can do," said Kroeber, "Go out there, get what you can." And some people can swim that way, and some can't. But we were very concerned about it.

I was concerned on another level. I didn't want to create situations out there in these populations in the state that would interfere with later work. It was very important to maintain good relations with these people, that this was going to be something that would enhance our research role rather than be a detriment to it. That was very much a concern of mine, a practical political concern about our relations with the Indian colonies and reservations, what kind of name we would have after this was over. So, I was very rigid about this. They must not do things that would cast aspersion on anthropology or on the project. And we had very little of that, very few problems of that kind.

But the other thing was we felt—and we were right, I think—that you don't have people just go out and find their own problem and develop it. They're not ready for that. Some can, but most cannot.

And I don't remember more than one or two who had a pretty good idea of what they wanted to find and went out and did some really developed field investigation because they had an interest. That's fine. That was great. But we can't expect that everybody is going to be ready for that in a new situation.

So, again, one or two would come out here with a lot of reading. They had done a lot of preliminary study; they were ready to go, you know. Great. But some of *them* made real mistakes, too, because the experience of doing work in the field with people turns up problems you never dreamed of. Things happen that you would not expect would happen to you or to a situation.

So, our idea was to have a kind of a flat-footed, week-by-week set of problems that they had to address, that kept them focused on the requirements for the field-school. After they got some confidence in three or four weeks, then they would be able to start thinking for themselves about what it is they were really interested in, because they had learned some things, and they were ready, then, to develop independent problems. So, after this business of sampling and questionnaires they were expected to be critical about to what degree it gave the kind of information they wanted.

*Did this involve any statistical sampling at all?*

To some degree, yes, but not highly involved statistical work, no. If somebody could do that, fine. One or two or three students enjoyed that sort of thing. But our focus was just to have them understand the importance of sampling, that whatever information they gathered by questionnaire or otherwise, they had to be awfully clear on where they got it and what it meant, and they had to be critical about it, look at their own work in those terms. No, it wasn't highly technical. And the mapping and the sampling and all that, it was on a pretty simplistic level, but very useful.

In this situation on the ground where they were, it was enough. Most of their problem was just living day-to-day and getting along with people and handling their own sense of anxiety and of loneliness and homesickness and all the other things that go along with it, and not falling apart.

*Now, most of the students were young, weren't they?*

Well, I'd say all of them were under twenty-five. I think one or two were older, but they were all young.

Then we had a session on ranking and sociometric techniques. Wayne was very good at that, though we didn't get very far with it, because there wasn't much time for them to apply this. But they were introduced to this for special cases, some of these techniques they could use for ranking the people in their group. And they were expected to devise and utilize some of these techniques to the degree they were able to supplement the information they had gathered by questionnaires, you know: Where can I go with this data now that I have it? In what way do I criticize what I have? Where can I go from here?

*And also by different methods, don't you kind of cross-check your own work? I mean, different approaches to get to the same . . . ?*

Exactly. It gives them just different windows. None of them became experts in anything. We didn't expect that. They had the experience of seeing what it was like to be outside their own culture on a side road of their life, meeting new people, being in a new situation, then cast out of it and having to find their way back in it. What are the ways you make some sense out of what you're doing and where you are? I think it worked for all of them.

Some of them went on to do some very, very advanced kinds of work, and I'm sure that they would say, "That experience didn't teach me a lot about techniques, but it taught me an awful lot about what to expect of myself, what can I do, what are my limits, what is going to happen to me in a new situation?" In fact, I was told that by a couple of students.

And then life histories. I made a big thing out of that, that they must collect one or two life histories. They had to present a detailed life history with special emphasis on the factors involving whatever special topic they had developed during those few weeks. What were they especially interested in? And then they developed life histories looking for where that kind of material comes to them through an individual's life trajectory. If they were interested in shamans or in ethnobotany or whatever, they would find a consultant, an informant, whose life history would tell them how that person got to be knowledgeable about these things, what role it had played in their lives. So, we emphasized that.

*Were there any topics that were just plain off-limits?*

I don't remember.

*Did you set parameters?*

There probably were. But I can't remember what they were. I think we warned them about . . . well, in any society, sexuality at that stage of fieldwork. You don't just plunge into it, so to speak. [laughter] They had enough problems about this anyway, without it being a special topic. There were enough problems about that. But I don't remember, you know, telling them not to do it, just that there were certain topics they would find out were sensitive. Not that Native Americans in this area don't like to talk about sex. It's just that they have a different way of talking about it and thinking about it than we do. And you can make some big mistakes in what you think is funny and cute or ordinary that isn't funny, cute, and ordinary to this other person. You have to find out what they think is funny, cute, and ordinary, [laugh-

ter] you know. But that, as a special topic, would be very difficult.

Oh, and don't follow up family problems, controversies. You don't have time. You don't have time to investigate things which are deeply problematic in the community. You can note that they're there, that you have seen them there, but you don't try to follow them up, or you're immediately going to be involved in factional disputes, and you're going to be attacked for it or avoided.

*Was there any special caveat about children, working . . . ? I don't know what made me think of that, actually. I just was wondering.*

Well, in what sense?

*Well, just how to behave around children?*

Well, they were certainly to look and to see how children behaved and how adults dealt with children just as part of a family organization and understanding the kind of group you're in. I remember some of the women students were very interested in this, in child behavior and disciplining of children and all of that. One person, I think, did do a study on child care, weaning, early training. But I don't think that was something that we pushed, except you were to become really aware of interrelations among people, your notes must indicate this, that you observed interrelations.

*What about keeping notes? I mean, did you tell people that they had to race to the car immediately, or could they take notes? I mean, how was . . . ?*

Take notes any way they knew how to do it, but they had to get the information down.

And there had to be in their daily log an indication that they had noted things that were important to them and that they followed this up—in the evenings or whenever they had the time—with more detailed . . . . As a matter of fact, I think that's what we suggested, that there would be these quick notes about such-and-such happened, and follow it up by more extensive development of these things each day.

Now, they couldn't do it all every day. Nobody can, but they were expected to have at the end of the week a fairly detailed statement of what they'd found. And there would be the log or the journal type of thing with their own notations and views, and then their findings, their data.

They didn't always keep it just like that. We don't. Nobody does. Nobody is that organized. But they at least should try to do it this way. And keep a kind of index of the sort of materials you're getting and where you can find them in your notes. Maybe do indexing weekly, at least.

*Were they encouraged or not encouraged to talk to each other about their fieldwork?*

Oh, sure, and they did. They intervisited a lot between reservations. We tried to . . . .

*Oh! Oh, I hadn't even thought of that.*

They had cars. And that was one of the problems was a little bit too much mobility sometimes. And yes, we had discussions about that—to what degree would a congregation of them be distracting in a community? It might not be good, you know, to have three or four of their friends sitting around drinking beer and joking unless it was part of a local group that you did it with.

*Yes. So, you were really to immerse yourself in the community.*

Yes, individually. But that didn't mean you couldn't go meet somebody. One person going to visit somebody else they knew or visit away from the camps, somewhere else. And then once a week, they were seeing one another anyway here. I think they had two days to raise hell and mess around and yak and all that.

There were a lot of things that happened which I can't remember that were, you know, off-beat, peculiar, and marvelous. But I don't recall all that now. But it was very stimulating to us.

And then the last week they were out in the field they were to devote to filling in the gaps, having looked back over all their work and the discussions they'd had with us and others, and filling in the gaps in their data toward the final write-up that they were going to do, their reports. And each student was expected to turn in a complete set of their field notes. Sometimes they were voluminous, some were a few pages, some were fifty pages.

*Did they have to be typewritten?*

Yes, they were supposed to be typewritten. Most of them had typewriters. If they didn't, there were typewriters available for them. However, every now and then somebody did handwritten notes because they weren't typists. So, we had some handwritten reports, which was all right as long as it was legible, as long as we could read it easily.

And then they were to turn in that and then spend that last week here—mostly, some of them started in the field—writing up a final report based on the problem, a short paper

on a problem with names, dates, bibliography, and their maps and whatever else they needed. They were turning in a finished paper that could be included in a set of student reports, was readable by others, and made sense. And so, that ten, eleven weeks was a full course. And we did that in the Great Basin for two years in a row, and some wonderful people went through here.

*The initial proposal as written certainly focused on and emphasized the opportunities of working with the Indian communities. But you said later, you and Kay [Fowler] developed a project on a Mormon community?*

Well, it was the same program, with NSF grants.

*Yes. Did a group of students actually go?*

To Saint George?

*Yes. See, I don't know anything about that.*

Oh, yes! This was one of the last ones.

*I just wondered were there any other non-Indian studies that were a part of that?*

Yes. Nineteen sixty-four was in the Washoe, Paiute, and Shoshone communities in northern Nevada, and 1965 was the same. Another group came in, and we did some in the same communities, but we tried to get new communities for them scattered all over Nevada. Then 1966, there was a set project on our same grant in New Mexico with the Navajo at Kaibab. Again, this was based on the basic plan that we had that we had submitted to NSF. And I'm trying to think whether Stanford and Pittsburgh went on

with their Mexican field schools. I'm not so sure. They may have.

But anyway, the one that we had, we turned over to Jerry Levy to take twelve students into the Navajo reservation. We considered this part of western North America. Then 1967, when Wayne went to Oregon, he wanted to do a study on Vancouver Island. We felt that was just great. And Wayne did that and his records showed a tremendous amount of basic fieldwork he got out of that group. I would have liked to have been more involved in that just to watch him at work, because he had a quite different style, and he was a very, very good man.

And then in 1968, Luis Kenmitzer and James Hirabayashi applied to do a field school on Samoans in the Bay Area. And so, that one went on. They kept their papers, though. We want to get them here for our files. All those papers from that year are down there at the Department of Anthropology at San Francisco State.

I visited Wayne once and went a couple of times down in San Francisco, as a kind of general director. I wasn't really a part of things, but just to watch how things were moving along.

They had students all over San Francisco and out to San Jose studying Samoans, which I thought was quite wonderful. And that material now is very important. There's a new push to study American Samoans in the United States. And this is early material, back in the 1960s.

*The Vancouver notes are where?*

I think those are at the University of Washington. No, they kept the reports at University of British Columbia. However,



they may not give a damn about them, and we should see to it that we bring them down. Yes, and San Francisco State kept theirs, and hopefully, they still have them. I wonder about whether people hang onto things like certain pack-rats do.

Then in 1969, there were the urban studies in Reno and Sparks done by John Price, who was a student of mine from Utah and did extensive work with the Washoe. He handled a field school which ended up in a little report, "Twelve Doors to Reno," which were the collective papers of that study. I think there's only one of those papers now on file at Special Collections [Getchell Library], and Susan Searcy [curator of manuscripts at the time] isn't sure what happened to the others. And either John took them for himself for reworking for this little collection, or I don't know. Lord knows. Anyway, there's one paper left there on Reno gambling. [laughter]

But this semi-publication, "Twelve Doors to Reno," we must have it. That's the sort of final write-up of the papers that he got. I would love to see the field notes and things, but I don't know what happened to those. We'll have to check on it.

And then in 1970, Kay Fowler and I went to St. George, Utah with twelve students and did that study of small Mormon villages. And that was very, very exciting. We never got a publication out on that, and we should have, because there were some terrific papers and great experiences. It still could be done, but I hope the people are alive who were doing it, because they had a great experience down there. [laughter]

That's when the St. George area was really rural, really spread out, and it was a conservative Mormon community. And we learned a lot about Mormons and

Mormonism. We have all those papers here, fortunately. So, that was the trajectory of the field schools.

*So, the initial NSF grant was for three years, and you would just get extensions, or how did that work?*

Well, it was understood that we would reapply each year. As long as NSF had the funds, they would fund it.

*And then what happened in 1970?*

I'm not sure. I think that we had pretty well run the course. I'm not sure that anybody applied for a similar one, but we were tired of it. I mean, we had done it now for a number of years, and that's a big drain each year. And here's a little, small department, for gosh sakes.

We had, as you will see, many other things that we were doing, however. During that period during the 1970s we began to develop a staff, develop a coterie of students, got a graduate program, all those things. So, I'm not sure whether the thing just sort of died out or whether we just quit. I'm not sure.

*Yes. Are you aware of any other programs that might have developed? Similar programs based on the success of this one to kind of fill that gap? I mean, there are various ethnographic field schools, but . . .*

Well, I'm not sure that I can make a connection between what we did and what others have done, but there have been a lot of field schools. Field schools popped up all over, and I'm not sure that isn't just because funds were available for them. And because there was a great interest in field training

during the 1960s and 1970s. It was a major interest in anthropology, preparing students. I think it's too bad that it's not at that same level now.

*I do, too. I just have to say for the record that I'm very envious of that experience. Now to shift slightly, I wondered if the experiences that you were preparing students, future anthropologists, for were similar to the kinds of issues that you were helping Peace Corps volunteers deal with when you developed the first training for the Liberian Peace Corps.*

Oh, yes. Very close. I mean, in 1962 when I helped organize that first Liberian Peace Corps contingent, my own view as an anthropologist was to bring these kinds of materials into the training. And that sometimes rubbed some of my colleagues the wrong way. In the Peace Corps, you know, there were some bureaucratic characters and characters from other disciplines who were really interested in these people going over and doing certain kinds of applied work and, you know, getting jobs done.

*Build that toilet. [laughter]*

Yes, which is fine. That's one of the things they were supposed to be doing, or teaching or whatever. And I was very interested that they have a background in the region that they were going to work in—that they knew something about the culture of the people in Liberia and that they had some idea what it was like to work in a community of that kind. What rural Liberians were like, the complexity of the linguistic situation in Liberia with sixteen to eighteen languages and relatively distinct cultures, and they needed to be ready for having to move from one kind of setting into another. Also, what the history of Liberia

was, the ethnohistorical aspect and the history of [U.S.] government relations with tribal groups, so that they would understand something of what they would be viewed as as they came in.

They could be referred to as possible agents of the government bureaucracy or missionaries. In those days, I mean, strangers were missionaries if they were do-gooders. If they were coming to do good, they had to be missionaries. They would be expected to have some kind of religious orientation or attitude about what they were doing. I mean, all of the problems that come in getting settled in this kind of new area. And yes, a lot of the ideas about what I felt was important in the NSF field training projects I had had earlier and were part of my view of training and teaching and what anthropologists had to offer.

*And what anthropology had to offer to that experience, it seems, is adjusting to that cross-cultural experience and that whole issue of entrance.*

Yes.

*I mean, how you gain rapport and how you develop some kind of thick skin, that you understand that you'll always be a stranger and how and what that means.*

Well, you develop not just thick skin but the resiliency to cope with the situation, understand why it's happening and be the kind of person (otherwise, you're not going to do fieldwork) who learns from that experience, who learns about the self and learns about the situation by this interreaction—that you become a more reflective person. Also, I insisted in Peace Corps training all through . . . I'd go almost every year as a consultant to some Peace Corps training

program—Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberian programs. I always stressed that every person who went over there should be interested in the local culture, take notes, come away with a deeper understanding of the culture itself, that you weren't just going there to lay out something or to provide a service, which was all very nice, but you were also going to learn. And by learning, you have a better rapport with people.

*You're more engaged.*

If they think you are interested in who they are and what they are, you're going to have a better chance of performing the kind of tasks that you think you were sent there to do.

*I think early on, the Peace Corps had an aura about it, anyway of trying to provide precisely that experience.*

Well, that was the pitch, you know. That's what was said, but when you got to the training program, it wasn't often there.

*So, were you involved in other training programs for other African countries as well?*

Yes. Well, I was a consultant to the Sierra Leonean one. I was called in as part of the training team, to give a few lectures or something of that kind, and to Guinea. Not to Nigeria, but to Ghana, Ivory Coast.

That was my pitch, you know, to emphasize what a wonderful opportunity this was to learn about another culture, and by learning about it, develop a new kind of relations with these other people than foreigners usually did. But it was that way in the Peace Corps. The Peace Corp experience was one of the major experiences in the lives of hun-

dreds and hundreds of young American people. And I think that, as an anthropologist—and other anthropologists that I knew, felt this—here was the penultimate experience that anthropologists would understand and feel engagement with. People were going out trying to do something abroad, and what they also needed was to have a deep curiosity and interest in the culture that they were going to, not just how to get “the job” done.

But some did. Some just went out there, and sometimes very successfully—Got a dam built or bridge or something of that kind and were highly admired by the local people. But the ones who I think came away with the greatest sense of achievement were those who came away . . . . Like some of the Peace Corp people that I met that I had known back in the 1960s and I met just last year back in Liberia who were part of the Friends of Liberia contingent to observe the election.<sup>2</sup> And it was amazing to me the degree to which their early experience still resonated in them, their sense of excitement and familiarity and of being part of where they were. You know, going to see old friends, visiting old villages, weeping with some of their village friends about recollections and things of that sort.

That kind of deep experience was very important. It wouldn't be there had they been insulated from the idea or the requirement of knowing the culture, knowing more about what these people were, what they were like, their history, their relations with government, their relations with historical events that had taken place.

*That was a definite side-track, but I think a relevant one. Now, I wanted to understand better exactly how Sven Liljeblad fit in as an associate of the university's or a consultant, or . . . ?*

No, we had Sven down as a consultant in the ethnographic field school training program. That's one way that he was involved. Of course, I knew about him long before then because of his work, but I hadn't known him personally. I got to know him at that time.

He was at Idaho State University, and we wanted him to come to the university. He was toying with that idea, but the problem was finding a way to do it. Finally, I think, he came here in the English department when we helped develop a new interdisciplinary linguistic program, and he was brought in on that. Bill Jacobsen was here by that time, so Bill and Sven were really the first contingent of a linguistic program.

*So, he had been brought in specifically for the field school?*

Well, that's when we had him here as a consultant and were trying to talk him into coming to the university. But it was hard to find out just where he would fit. We wanted him in the Anthropology Department. At the same time, his particular interests were not necessarily those of teaching anthropology, though I think he would have done that. And it turned out that the development of the linguistic and folklore program in English was just made to order, and Bill Jacobsen, I think, was encouraging that kind of direction.

*So, he was part of the English faculty. I didn't know that.*

Yes, he was interdisciplinary. He was in the Department of Anthropology, teaching courses in English, and they were cross-listed

courses. And there was a linguistics and folklore minor, and so Sven was both. He taught for us North American Indians, taught folklore and linguistics, but these were also in the English department. So we had a good relationship that allowed us to fund that kind of program.

*Relative to field school, I wanted to ask you again, because I just found the reference: "A publication of a field training guide incorporating the joint products of our experience and work is seen as an integral objective of the project." And you do say in the proposal that it was a Stanford University responsibility to manage the funding to get that field training guide written, but . . . .*

Never happened.

*It never happened?*

Yes.

*And the reason I was asking is I was thinking it'd be really a valuable thing.*

I guess that's what we initially hoped to do.

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#### Notes

1. NSF funded the Tri-institutional Field Training Program in Anthropology 1964-1970 that Warren d'Azevedo and colleagues from Stanford University and the University of Pittsburgh co-directed.

2. Warren d'Azevedo was part of a team recruited through this organization to observe Liberia's Presidential election in 1997.

## GREAT BASIN RESEARCH

**N**OW DO YOU WANT to talk a little bit about the Center for Western North American Studies?

Yes, well, that was right around the same time. Part of my thinking about how to get the department to have more of an integral place in the university and to have more connection with other departments was this business of focusing attention on the Great Basin. Now, that wasn't too hard, because Wendell Mordy and the Desert Research Institute were very interested in doing something like that anyway. They were already doing all sorts of atmospheric physical work, work in ecology, botany, management of the water resources, cloud seeding, all sorts of things. It was a very busy and very productive affair up there.

And so anthropology, what could it do? Well, it could encourage research in the area, and it occurred to me that a center for Western North American Studies might be the answer, and the idea began to take fruition, I guess, when the Fowlers got here. But anyway, we had the committee already set up in

1964, with history, sociology, geography. Oh, who else?

*Political science?*

Political science.

*Economics?*

Yes, but I'm not sure how much involved. But anyway, a number of departments had representatives, and we'd meet occasionally and discuss a program, what were we going to build and how to encourage research. We wanted to have more people working together from different disciplines on research projects, and we began to lay out in 1964 a plan.

Well, that was about the time at the end of 1964, early 1965 when my relations with Mordy began to get a little difficult, because I was pushing for a department, and a department as part of the academic structure of the university. And Wendell's thinking was always in terms of special independent—what do they call them in bureaucratic

terminology, not programs, but . . . ? Anyway, the Desert Research Institute was made up of a number of various projects independently funded but part of a whole. And he saw anthropology and archaeology as being like that, fund-raising activities, turning out research reports, making a name for the Desert Research Institute, and mostly on soft money, and we had started out with it.

*But you had spent a lot of time getting funding.*

And one has to be that kind of person who cares and knows how to do that. And at the beginning, we started out with that first year with the Desert Research Institute supplying, my god, a major part—\$22,000. It sounds like nothing today. And Arts and Science supplied about \$12,000 to \$13,000, and they were complaining that that was too much. So, my objective was to increase Arts and Science's responsibility to our support rather rapidly and diminish DRI's, thinking that that should please Wendell.

It wasn't the way he saw it. He didn't mind the money coming out of the university as long as DRI maintained total control, but he knew that total control was not possible if substantial money was coming out of the university. [laughter] And I guess I was actively interested in seeing that that would happen. I did talk to deans and people in other departments that I had respect for about the fact that that's what I wanted to do and the direction I wanted to go.

President Armstrong, at that time, was very interested in research, very interested in developing departments. I remember talking to him a couple of times about what I really wanted, which was to see to it that the university had the major responsibility. I wanted a Department of Anthropology at the

university, and Wendell became a bit irritated with me.

The Center for Western North American Studies was very dependent on the various DRI departments also taking part, because it was made to order for them. There was a kind of a lip-service interest in it. But I had so many other things going, I couldn't put the pressure on at that moment.

When Don Fowler came in 1965, it was made to order for him as an archaeologist. And I remember he and I discussed having him slowly take over the directorship of what we then called the Western Studies Center. It began to fund archaeological research, and Don did a lot of work there in that first year or two. It became known as the Study of Prehistory and Archaeology in the West. And also the NSF cultural anthropological training program was considered as part of it and as contributing to it.

So, things really got galvanized. And Don, for the next three or four years, as long as it was a viable thing, did a very good job of directing and getting funds, too, for archaeological research. This pleased Wendell, because Don worked directly with Wendell Mordy and got Mordy off my back. But he was not very friendly to me. He saw me as somebody who had betrayed the cause, I guess. But I had never misled him. I came here thinking that I was building a university Department of Anthropology, not a Desert Research Institute program, you know, although I was very happy to have them help us get here.

So, that was one direction that things took. And the center went on for a number of years until it was taken over by other things. There was enough other work being done so that that umbrella no longer was necessary.

Then, let's see, by 1965, we had . . . our goal was to have seven anthropologists on the staff by 1967 or 1968, and by 1968 to have the College of Arts and Science picking up almost all the tab for the department. We came very close to that. Can you imagine that the whole department was running on \$55,000, \$56,000? [laughter] But nevertheless, we came close to achieving that, and the DRI graciously providing extra things like assistant research, helping out with some of the field programs and some funds for the graduate assistants, but that slowly withered away.

Of course, by 1969, Wendell Mordy was in trouble with the whole university. He was looked upon as an empire builder, and he was. He had rubbed so many people the wrong way that he was eventually asked to leave. I felt that was terrible. I thought that the fact that this university didn't give him a major citation or commendation for the work that he had done was very small-time stuff. He was a difficult man but a brilliant guy, and he had done an enormous amount of work for this university. He put it on the map, and he certainly put a number of departments on the map with research funds that they wouldn't have had.

*So, that was in 1969 that he left?*

That was 1969 when he was asked to leave. And a number of us, you know, went to bat for him and were denouncing this. But he had made a lot of enemies.

*So, did the character of DRI fundamentally change after he left?*

Well, I guess so. You know, when you don't have a furnace in the middle of something, creating, stirring things up. It went on

doing very important work and had a number of directors after that who did well, but never quite the excitement and the pressure for development and change as with Wendell Mordy.

Another thing that rubbed some people the wrong way is that he was really developing kind of a dynasty and moved the whole operation out to Stead so the DRI was a separate institution.

*So, it had been on campus before then?*

Yes, it still remained partly on campus, but they had most of their operation out in those old Stead buildings that have been remodeled. And it was really, I guess, his ace card with the university. "If you guys don't cooperate with me, we'll just set up a rival research institution here." And there were a bunch of fuddy-duddy regents that didn't like his kind of style, which was a little bit too big-time for them. He was very outspoken and rubbed a lot of people the wrong way. And although I didn't get along with him because of the departmental thing, I always admired him for what he contributed.

*But by 1969, the department was pretty much separate?*

Pretty much separate. There were things that we were still getting from DRI in the way of extra emollients and little grants for this and that.

*And they published a series of reports, didn't they?*

Yes. They also had a lot of support for press publication, things of that kind, yes. So, that was an era that was very important. The 1960s and the DRI era have never been adequately discussed in this university or faced.

They had there a brilliant man who was, himself, a scientist—and a good one—and a researcher who, bumptious as he was and difficult as he was, had done something remarkable for this university.

*Well, I'll tell you what we haven't even touched on, and that's the Vietnam War protests.*

Well, that's a little later, you know. You're talking about mid and late 1960s. But it was the beginnings of it. It was brewing. Excepting I think I ought to mention the programs that we were working on.

The Great Basin Anthropological Conference was held here in September 1964. Can you imagine that with all this going on? I brought it here and was a chairman of it in cooperation with Jesse Jennings in Utah, who had really developed the Great Basin conference out of the old Pecos Conference in 1954. It was called the Great Basin Archaeological Conference earlier, and then there was a lapse of a period when it looked like it wasn't going to be held again. The name was changed to Great Basin Anthropological Conference when we held it here at Reno, and it was a very successful conference. And there was a publication that came out of it, *The Current Status Of Anthropological Research In The Great Basin*.

Jesse Jennings really has to be thought of as the guy who kept this thing alive and going, and he encouraged me to do this, and I was happy that we did it. Again, things that would put our anthropological program into focus in this region, where nothing had been going on except for individual occasional research. But to promote a focused program of archaeology, ethnology, and accompanying research was a very important move, I think, on our part. And I don't know quite how we did it, but we did it.

The point I want to make here is that the Great Basin Anthropological Conference and the National Science Foundation-funded field school that we had were really the underpinning of the formation of the department, because at that point, we began to be recognized as a viable, ongoing center for anthropological studies by other universities and colleagues in the field. Because a lot of the people who came here—and it was a very large conference, a few hundreds—a lot of these people had never even thought of the University of Nevada, Reno, as providing any kind of base at all for development of anthropology or archaeology, although everybody recognized the importance of the Great Basin as a large-scale laboratory not yet fully explored. So I think in the view of the people who came here we were already a viable program, and that was important.

At the same time, we were taking part in the development of the Inter-Tribal Council in Nevada. As I mentioned earlier, in 1964, we hosted the first Inter-Tribal conference of Nevada Indians. They had already formed an Inter-Tribal Council. Again, John Dressler a Washoe man—a wonderful and brilliant fellow who died a few years later and I miss terribly—had been sort of the main spring of the formation of an Inter-Tribal council with its headquarters in Reno. And so, John and myself and two or three other Indian leaders in the area decided to hold this joint conference.

The University of Nevada agreed to host it, so we had this very large conference of Indians from the whole area representing most of the major groups, not only in Nevada, but in some other states. And this, again, gave our department that particular orientation I had said was important for us to establish. We were also going to develop a program of close relations with the American Indian



groups in the area. That conference, I think, for many years after, gave us an important place in the minds of various American Indian leaders in the area who saw us as carrying on very important support programs for the kinds of things that they were interested in.

Well, we had a follow-up conference on Indian education. There was a Charles Pullman at that time who was in one of the state of Nevada education bureaus, and he and I set up this conference on Indian education, which was very well attended by teachers throughout the area and many representatives of Indian schools. So what we were doing in that period in 1964 and 1965 was carrying out the initial plan, the vision that I and a couple of others had about what this area held as a good workable soil for the development of an anthropology program.

Now, at this point, too, all kinds of problems were developing—what one might expect. But I was a newcomer into this whole business of administration and working with university state officials, and as I have mentioned much earlier, we were in a state where you could actually sit-elbow-to elbow with state legislators and university regents, going out for coffee sessions and carrying on the kind of dialogue which would be very unusual in other, particularly larger, universities. [laughter]

I was dealing not only with Wendell Mordy, the director of the Desert Research Institute, but the president of the university, Armstrong, and two of the regents who were very helpful in their aid to anthropology. Fred Anderson, a physician in the area, was on the Board of Regents, and also Molly Magee, who later became Molly Magee Knudtsen. Two very, very helpful people who had been among the initiators of bringing anthropology to the university, along with Wendell

Mordy. They had pressed for this and talked it up.

Their views about what we should be were maybe a little different than mine or ours in the department. [laughter] I think it was the archaeological aspect of it that interested Molly, who was a very bright and able woman, and an erudite person with regard to archaeology. She had run this ranch out in eastern Nevada, and extremely well.

She'd done some archaeological work herself, and so she was gung-ho on the development of anthropology. To her, anthropology was really prehistory, archaeology—the romance of archaeology, which was very good for us, because that's what we had to start with. We had to begin with where the interest was and the action was in the state.

And Fred Anderson was helpful in other ways, because he had had a sort of an amateur interest in ethnography and the Indians of the state, although I could make all sorts of remarks about my own reaction to somebody like Fred's interest. [laughter] As I said earlier, he was always pulling me aside, wanted me to go on trips to meet some person who had written something in some local newspaper about Indians of the area or some artifacts that had been found. And I spent a lot of time going on these little junkets which didn't really interest me at all, but they were important for maintaining these relationships. But that's sort of putting Fred down because he was really actually very seriously committed to the idea of us having a department.

At the same time, something very interesting was going on. At the very beginning, way back when Omer Stewart and Heizer and Eggan had been out here as consultants to the university and had recommended me to come out to start anthropology, one of the

things that had been brought up—I think Anderson was one of the ones who was really pushing for this—was that there should be a Basque Studies Program. There should be studies of the Basque because the Basque were such an important element in Nevada. Well, I had no objection to this. In fact, I thought it was a good idea, but we didn't know of anybody who would do this.

I remember the Laxalts were in on this, too, but not directly. But Bob Laxalt, a wonderful guy and a great writer and a great Nevadan, was also indicating that this would be a good idea, and it was. It was a natural.

But this didn't really get rolling until Fred Eggan wrote me—and I think he wrote Mordy too—that there was this young student at the University of Chicago who had come from Nevada and who was interested in the Basques and who was a brilliant student and that we should be thinking about him for this. Well, I glommed onto this immediately and started checking it out and learned about William Douglass, Bill Douglass. I forget what year we did it [1967], but we were able to get him out here through DRI, who got him out initially.

*Wasn't that also one of the focuses for the Center of Western North American studies?*

Oh, yes, that was in there because it had been pressed earlier, but it was one of those things that I had sort of set aside because I couldn't see how we were going to implement it. I was very concerned about getting staff for an Anthropology Department, and a Basque Studies Program was a great idea, but I didn't see how we could handle it all. I was fighting a fight to the death to get appointments in anthropology and to get us out from under the umbrella of DRI. And so, anyway, Bill was finally brought out on DRI money

and then little by little was able to work out a program with the College of Arts and Science for the development of a Basque Studies Program, which took off and became a very viable and good program that's still going at this university [now the Center for Basque Studies].

*So, there really wasn't anything in place that would have made it possible to focus one of the National Science Foundation field schools to study Basque culture?*

I remember that occurred to us. But on the other hand, it was a Native American program, and our interest at the time was focused on the various reservations and Native American groups in the state. I remember it came up, you know, "What about the Basque?" But again, how are we going to study the Basque? I mean, when we started out, Bill Douglass wasn't here. Had he been here in the beginning, we have very well have done that. But he was very busy finishing up his doctoral degree [in anthropology from the University of Chicago, 1967], and was coming out here as a new person finding his way around. He had a partial small appointment in the department but mainly with DRI, so he had plenty on his plate, and that wouldn't have flown. But yes, it was an idea, and it could have happened. In fact, later on, it's too bad we didn't do something like that, but nobody brought it up, and it wasn't pushed. I think you must know how those things go. I mean, you do what you can.

*Yes. I was wondering if it was just a topic of discussion, because one of the things . . .*

Oh, it was more than a topic of discussion after 1964, 1965. I mean, we began to

develop a Basque Studies Program, and Bill actually got the thing going.

What else was going on at this time? There were, again, just so many different programs that were feelers, were attempts to find our way. Well, in 1964, 1965, Don Fowler came out with Kay Fowler, and they gave me a lot of not only ideas but a sense of confidence that we could accomplish some of these things. As I said, both of them were very able, hard-working, and committed people.

*Well, it was very important for the center. You haven't really talked about the different . . .*

Well, that's what I was going to get into right now. So, one of the things, then, at that time in 1964 and 1965 was this idea for coordinating the interest in the West and the Great Basin that existed here at the university and the museum—the historical interest as well as the archaeological and ethnological interest—and pulling together the people in the various departments, both in DRI and at the university, and academic people elsewhere in the state into something we called the Center for Western North American Studies. It was the idea of pooling the interest that there was in the area. History had a couple of people, English had two or three people in linguistics and folklore, sociology had one person. Up at DRI, there were people in the various ecological studies and in land management, et cetera. All of these had this interest in the West and the Great Basin as a particular area of study and research.

It began very haltingly, and we had meetings, and we were trying to formulate a program. The idea was, "How are we going to coordinate our efforts by having publications, encouraging publications, getting DRI's support for this?" And in the beginning DRI

really gave the main support, as was the case in those years.

*Well, the Center was really considered an adjunct to DRI, wasn't it?*

Well, it was part of DRI, but connected to the campus.

*Administered by them [DRI].*

Yes, and because there were so many people from the campus also involved, there was some help from the university, but I can't remember how much. It was very little. The idea was establishing an archive, developing a center for gathering material, having publication from it.

I think two or three monographs were already in the making. I do believe that Don Fowler not only had already done some work of his own, but other people were ready to present some archaeological monographs. I think Bob Elston had just begun . . . Well, that was a little later, but he had just begun as a grad student here and was working on Washoe ethnohistory, prehistory, and archaeology. So, there was the beginning of this kind of interest that we were able to pull together on the campus through DRI.

However, in 1967 and 1968, I was beginning to get very irritated by how slow the university was in supporting our program. All kinds of fine words and agreements from deans and presidents and all that, but no money. And I was desperate to get out from under this situation where DRI was taking care of three-quarters of our expenses, and the college, you know, less than a quarter actually. And then the rest was coming from little grants that various members of the staff had. Beyond our one secretary, any aid that

we had, any secretarial assistance, had to come out of our own grants and pockets.

Now, this is what DRI always wanted. "You go out and get your damn grants." You know, "We'll support you to get you to the point where you are on your own." Well, I must say although I know it's necessary and important, it's anathema to me. [laughter] I am not able . . . . The idea of working under this constant pressure of going out and fishing for your money, and soft money at that . . . .

*Well, and really marketing your research.*

Well, that's all right. I mean, people have to market what they're doing. But I didn't feel that I could organize a program that way, that I wasn't capable of it.

I had a hard enough time getting my own grants together and getting back to Africa in 1966 and the little seed money that I needed for work around here. So the idea of developing a department that depended mainly on getting outside grants, and the annual struggle to do so, I didn't want it. I didn't come here to do that.

And Wendell was very irritated with me, because that's what he wanted me to do, and he thought that I could if I wanted to. He was wrong! [laughter]

*Well, I think the field school grant from the National Science Foundation must have looked like you could garner that kind of support.*

Well, yes. Well, those things are all right, but they didn't bring in a lot of money to support the whole program. They brought in money for that project, see. That was fine for me. I thought our staff should go out after things like that for specific research programs. But if you wanted to support a department or

an institute, it means that the director of that program has to go out and get big money for all the supplies, the additional personnel, salaries, et cetera.

*Plus the fact you really couldn't attract and retain the kind of small quality staff that you wanted to create a good program focused on . . . .*

Well, not necessarily. You see, I have to give institutes of that kind their due. People like Wendell brought in a lot of good heads to this area, and many of them were good research people and all, but *he* carried the ball for the funding for the whole deal. They went out and got their grants and things like that, but *he* got the big grants, you know, organizational, structural grants. And he was brilliant at that. He could do that.

It didn't last too long, because those things dry up, and they eventually did dry up. [laughter] Not that DRI dried up, but it certainly didn't maintain what it had in the period of its fluorescence in the early 1960s.

So, to me, that was a trap. I didn't want to get into that. I saw its utility, its importance, and it helped us get started, and I was grateful for it. But I didn't feel I could do it. I didn't come here to be that kind of grantsman, constantly looking out for the next buck. I wanted the university to support us so we could teach and do research, you know, because that's the kind of background I came out of. That was the kind of trajectory I had, an academic department. And I had nothing against the other, but it wasn't my scene.

So anyway, Wendell and I began to have a lot of difficulty about this. He saw me as backing down, betraying the cause. He kept telling me, "You know, those guys down at the university, they're not going to help you. They're not going to go to the legislature and push for you guys. They're not going to go

out for money. You're going to have to do this yourself, and it's going to be small money." And he was right. It's true.

So during late 1964 and 1965, I was in the midst of that kind of quandary. What in the hell am I going to do with the slowness of the university to respond, and the fact that there was pressure on the other side to become almost independent of the university and go with DRI, because they began to split off as a separate institution all together. First off, Stead, and then later and now, the new buildings they have up in the hills just north of Reno. And they wanted to maintain independence, become their own organization. And that would have meant having to make a decision about that! Was anthropology going to go off that way and move off with them? I didn't want that, at least not for me.

But there were others who were able to . . . . Now, Don, when he came in . . . one good thing about Don Fowler was that he was able to work both sides of this. He saw not only the utility of DRI but knew that it was a very important thing for the kind of work that he could do, the kind of projects that he had in mind—archaeological projects.

So, the Nevada Archaeological Survey idea coming out of the Center for Western North American Studies was essentially Don and people from Nevada Southern, the Brookses [Sheilagh and Richard] and earlier the Shutlers [Elizabeth and Richard], and Buck Davis who was here, and others. The idea of the Nevada Archaeological Survey emerged at that time, I say mainly with Don's push, and it began to be in competition with Nevada Southern and the museum.

We had a very ticklish relationship with these two other institutions who saw us moving in on archaeology and all that. Don handled this very well. He was able to keep the Nevada Archaeological Survey idea go-

ing here, get funds for some gigs and some publications, and bring some very good people around, like we had in 1965, 1966. We had some staff: Floyd Sherrock, who had been at Utah, Mel Aikens, who is now in Oregon, Mike Lieber, who came as a lecturer. But these guys came as assistant professors for a short period; they really had their sights on other places.

Nevertheless, we began to have a staff, and that staff was here mainly because there was an archaeological program going. Not that that's all these guys were. They were archaeologists, but they could also teach other things, and we had to have people like that.

I have to say that the Fowlers made *that* transition possible. Also, Don was able to work with Mordy in a way that I was no longer able to, because Mordy saw me as pulling away from DRI support. Slowly the university was beginning to take over some of what DRI had provided, but nothing new. We weren't getting new staff.

So, I remember writing reports to the deans and the president saying, "You know, all we're doing is treading water here. We're not moving. I'm very glad that the university has decided to pick up some of the responsibility that DRI has held these first few years, but the early promise was that the university was going to back this program fully, but it has not done so."

And when I look back over some of the materials you found [in the archives], I had something like fourteen, fifteen offers during that period to go elsewhere. [laughter] I'm amazed that we had a period in academic life, at least in our discipline, when you could move. I mean, there were jobs available. Universities were *begging* for people. However, most of the ones that I got were for chairmanships, and I thought, "No!" I was

not going to move into a chairmanship anywhere ever again at a university.

*Well, not only chairmanship, but also offers to start departments.*

And offers to start departments. I had gotten a name for starting a department, and I'd tell the deans this, you know, "Here people are offering me the chance to come to other universities to start departments, but after my experience here, I'm not so sure I want to do it again. I never want to do it again without written commitments that you guys only made verbally."

So, that was going on. There was a tremendous amount of irritation and tension about this. I created tension around me at that time, and I think it was good that I did. You know, this thing wasn't going to last, unless . . . . And I sort of put it that way, "We've just got to have your support."

And piddling support would start coming in. We had a very good dean at that time, Kirkpatrick, who was on our side, and he did push for it. He at least understood our quandary and knew our needs, and we would get something. We got a position or two out of this.

*Well, you also had somewhat of a reputation among your peers, anyway, in Arts and Science that somehow you were getting concessions. The perception was that you were getting concessions on salary caps and . . . .*

Oh, of course! At a little university—in fact, oh, my god, also big ones on a bigger scale—the competition and the jealousy and the back biting and the sniveling fights that would go on about who got an extra F.T.E. [Full-Time Equivalent position] or a research assistant or money for graduate student tui-

tions. You know, who got what? And we were right in the middle of this, because we were a new department and we were pushing hard, and we were moving, and we were getting these things.

Some of the standard departments at the university were furious at DRI, because DRI would give money to certain kinds of disciplines, and we were the golden-haired boys getting this stuff, and they weren't. It was something. But that's the kind of thing that goes on in a new situation that is growing. The university had come from decades of static city-college kind of existence to suddenly being a university, and there was a hell of a lot . . . . The hyenas and the predators were out, you know, fighting for their turf. So, we, I think, instigated a lot of that without realizing it. We created all sorts of problems; other departments were furious with us, often.

I remember we developed a program where we tried to have cross-listed classes with other departments, like English and history, to sort of create a kind of camaraderie. It partly worked and partly didn't because, again, of the idea that each department wanted something for itself. This reached a head, of course, in the late 1970s, anyway, when funds got really short and the legislature was giving hardly anything to the university and grant funds were drying up and jobs were hard to get. Oh, what a bad scene that was.

*Yes. And part of the justification for F.T.E.'s were the number of enrolled students. Is that right?*

Yes, on a simple-minded counting system!

*Numbers. So, in cross-listed classes, if a class were being taught, for instance, by Bill Jacobsen*

*in linguistics, and he's being paid by English but there are students who are enrolled with anthropology, they could . . . .*

We'd get credit for the ones enrolled in anthropology. However, Bill Jacobsen, we had him part-time on our staff. He was also a joint appointment. I forget how much for each. I think it was mainly English. Nevertheless, we did a lot of that in order to make these ties to other departments. But it doesn't really help, because the nitty gritty is who in the annual budget gets the dough to control and handle, and who gets the appointments and who gets the extra student aid and things of that sort. So, it was a rocky period.

*Now, you had very little student aid, isn't that right?*

Oh, hardly any. We were always complaining that we weren't able to build a graduate program, because we couldn't attract students here. The only students we could get were locals. Some of them were very good, fortunately, who *were* here. Certainly Brooke [Mordy] and Joy [Leland] and a number of other early students were excellent. But we had lots of applications, yet people were looking for at least partial student aid, you know, fellowships of some kind, and we didn't have one.

*Do you think other departments of anthropology in those years did have student aid available?*

Well, in an established department. Any established department that had a viable master's or Ph.D. program certainly had that kind of aid. The aid we had came as a side-effect of the grants that members of the department got. You know, they'd get a research assistant or something of that kind

written into the grant, but we weren't getting anything from the university.

So I remember we fought over that constantly and exhausted a number of deans over this. And other departments saw us as the great competitor, the black hole. I mean, they saw everything coming into our department, which isn't true.

But the fact is the energy that was exuded by the little staff we had was tremendous. I would say myself and Fowler and Suttles while he was there, and even Buck Davis and later Sherrock, Aikens, and Lieber, I mean, these were the kind of characters that created waves, you know, out of our department. We were gung-ho. We were building something.

And then we had these outside programs, conferences and the training program and all that, NSF support, which a lot of the old departments didn't go out to get. They didn't have them. And they saw us as this new-fangled outfit—and also, we were anthropologists.

*And grand-standing.*

Grand-standers, yes. Well, we had to be. I don't think we intended to be, it's just that we were determined either to make it or not, because I think anybody who was here, including myself, we didn't have to stay. I wanted to, because I liked the area; I felt connected with my work with the Washoe, and it was the West, and my family preferred to be out here. We were close to people we knew in California. And, you know, I didn't want to go East again or far out of the area, but I was prepared to do it if things didn't work out.

And as I said, I had all these offers. I had an offer even from Pittsburgh, to return to Pittsburgh, the one place I had left be-

cause . . . . Of course, by that time, they had started to clean up their act in the city and it wasn't such a bad place to live then, and we had friends in the department and all that. [laughter] Emory, which now is really a large and active university in research and social sciences and anthro, I was offered a chairmanship there. And I said, "I am *not* going to go to New Orleans to be a chairman at Emory University!" And I told them so. And also, Howard University, that I was always interested in when I was a graduate student. I don't know if I'd want to live out my academic life there, but I always thought anybody should have a stint there with my interests, you know. A friend of mine, Charles Frantz, he offered me to come, and at a very high salary, higher than what I was getting, and a full professorship with tenure.

Again, that was very attractive, but it was in the middle of all this when I felt committed to finish this damn program. I would have felt very guilty had I decided to leave at that point. Also, I felt responsible for the staff that was here that I'd helped to bring on. Although they would have had no trouble leaving either. I mean, that was an interesting thing about that period—people could move. And so, again, we made ourselves unpopular by constantly bringing up all the offers that we had.

I mean, my god, the people we had here. Sherrock and Aikens, who eventually did move because they got good offers to places they wanted to be at. The Fowlers could have gone anywhere. They had done very good work as students and were very active in the discipline. So the whole thing could have broken up. We could have all moved out.

*But isn't it fair to say that the university at Reno was uniquely poised, really, at the doorstep of a field that could be explored? I mean, I think you*

*continually saw the potential for a really unique program.*

Oh, yes. That's why I kept pushing and others kept pushing the Great Basin aspect. We had around us one of the great untapped areas of archaeological and ethnographic research, and the work that had been done was minimal compared to what it should have been as against other regions of North America or Canada. We had that ace. I mean, this is what we could do, and we had shown that by starting that kind of a program and had developed interest around what we wanted to do. And that was a very important thing. We had to go to the regents and the administration with, "This is what we can do." And everybody thought that was a great idea, but, you know, where is the money?

Wendell's view was, "Go out and fish for it. Find it," which is OK. I mean, I understand that. But that isn't what I wanted. I wanted this university to make a commitment to *us*, you see. I thought there was no use staying here if there's not a long-range commitment to a department. I kept pressing the administration and the two regents who were very helpful and agreed with us, but they were only two, and the legislature had its own agenda.

Now, another thing going on, a little later in 1967 and 1968, was the development of Nevada Southern University. This had been going on for a few years—two or three years—this little college as we thought of it down there in Las Vegas. [laughter] Nobody took it too seriously. Dick Shutler and his wife [Betty] had done a lot of research in southern Nevada and were partly involved in the development of the archaeological program in the south and at the Nevada State Museum.





*"The Fowlers could have gone anywhere. They had done very good work as students and were very active in the discipline."* Catherine and Don Fowler.

Calhoun was the director of the museum at that time, and Shutler had made a very important contribution to the development of an archaeological program in the state and had a sense of proprietorship about that. So, when I came out and eventually brought Don out [fall of 1964], perhaps he saw it as a threat. He was rather concerned about what was going on up north; were we going to try to take over now? And some of his letters to me were a little sharp on this matter, though we had a friendly relationship.

In fact, he had even told me not to come to Nevada, that I'd be disappointed. He had written me when I heard that I was being considered and said, "You're going to make a great mistake in your career if you come out there, because this place is a hellhole. I mean,

it's awful." And he sounded like Alex Simirenko. But part of it was, I think, his concern that the University of Nevada, Reno was going to try to lord it over the rest of the state, that kind of thing. I never even thought of that sort of thing when I first came here, all this political stuff that I don't think I'm particularly adept at.

*And I think it was further complicated by the fact that his wife was just on the brink of getting her master's in anthropology.*

And she had been up here, even taught here.

*Had been lecturing, and I think ended up teaching at Davis.*

Yes.

*In the meantime, you were here, and he was at the museum, so that must have been very . . .*

Well, yes. So, I began to realize the politics of it. I mean, there was a hell of a lot of that. Not that Calhoun was any problem. Calhoun was just a nice little guy who was doing his job, but there were new people coming in. There was Rozaire.

Oh, that's when we started to establish this program of a close interrelationship with the museum, that we would have at least one joint appointment. When Buck Davis came in we had him on a joint appointment with the museum and the department in order to maintain this connection and keep the Nevada Archaeological Survey an inter-agency program. And the Shutlers were in the south, and then later the Brookses, Sheilagh and Richard Brooks, who came to Nevada Southern and worked closely with the museum. So, we tried to develop a kind of a coordinated program.

*Well, there's one letter I saw where after the Shutlers left, you tried to recruit the Brookses to come north and be at the museum. But at this time they were completely involved in Nevada Southern and went to Borneo.*

Yes, you're right. It was the Brookses who had the grant to go to Borneo to do work, and then our hope up here was that they would come to the Nevada State Museum and open a joint program with us. On the other hand, remember, we also felt that it was important if they would, when they got back, maybe help develop a Nevada Southern aspect of our joint programs. We had this idea of Nevada Southern, the Nevada State

Museum, and the University of Nevada, Reno, having a joint Center for Western North American Studies, with an archaeological survey orientation, which they were interested in.

However, in a very short time Nevada Southern began to drain money from the rest of the system. I mean, it was beginning to grow and had some very able program builders down there. [laughter] And what we had thought of as this little college was, within two or three years, a very strong competitor for state funds for higher education and eventually was named the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. And that became our sister program.

People like Claude Warren came in down there, and a number of other very able anthropologists, and began to do work. That was great, and we tried to develop a cooperative relationship, but you can't do it. You know, it doesn't happen that way. When you're on the teat of a legislature, things fall out. [laughter]

*Yes. One of the proposals—just before the split or the establishment of an independent campus—from Sheilagh Brooks was that the physical anthropology students from UNR would go to Las Vegas to use their labs, because she was a physical anthropologist, and she at Nevada Southern would take care of that end of anthropology. She had said, for instance, that if they had people interested in African studies they'd come north. It sounds great, but . . .*

Oh, well, no. See, that was part of the difficulty. Shutler and the Brookses really hoped that we would become a center for ethnographic studies and that they would handle the archaeological aspect of our joint relationship.

*Because physical anthropology is very closely linked to the archaeological.*

Oh, yes, and they saw themselves as the scientific side of our cultural side, you see. Well, this, of course, rubbed us the wrong way. We had no intention of being a department which would relinquish all of the prehistory, physical anth, and archaeology to the south. Our concern was we wanted to build a *department!*

That idea was dropped early. They really saw that it wasn't going to happen, but that was initially one of the things that Dick Shutler was really trying to work out. What was I coming here to do, you know? What kind of a department was I going to have? He had already established an archaeological program, and they could teach at the museum and down at Nevada Southern. Wouldn't we be competing for students?

When Dick pulled out—I forget where he went—that was dropped, and the Brookses didn't push that too much, but there was still the feeling we were pushing into each other's territory. And in the middle was the poor little Nevada State Museum trying to get along with these two pushy programs, one north and one south.

But anyway, the development of Nevada Southern into the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, was, we could see, a real problem. And it's one of the reasons why Armstrong, the president of UNR, finally resigned under pressure, because he was really against the development of a large-scale university in the south, feeling that this would be the end of the development of the northern campus. That view was very prevalent among the academic people but very unpopular among the upper officials, regents and the legislature; they saw this as special pleading on the part of the north, and Armstrong was slowly

pushed out. Humphrey came in and then N. Edd Miller, who understood that this was going to happen.

Then the problem became how to get more money out of the legislature to cover all the things that they had allowed to happen. And I was very concerned about this, because it might slow down what we were doing.

*Which was already slow.*

Yes, already slow. And one of the examples of this was the Western Studies Center and Nevada Archaeological Survey. We had this big meeting in 1968. Mordy was there and N. Edd Miller, the president, and representatives from Nevada Southern, and the Brookses came up, Calhoun from the museum, and a number of our people. And the whole question was where are things going? What's going to happen here?

In the meantime, over the last two years, we had brought in a guy, Robert Stephenson, from Washington, who was an archaeologist who we thought was really a great guy to handle the Nevada Archaeological Survey. He had a wonderful record, and he was known by one or two of the regents—our friendly regents. He was finally brought in by DRI to be the director of the Western Studies Center and the Nevada Archaeological Survey. And Don Fowler was very much involved in this, too.

*And this was at DRI and really was . . .*

It was funded by DRI, essentially.

*. . . and this gift from Molly Magee, the regent.*

Yes, but that couldn't have covered all the expenses. She must have put in as much

as \$200,000, I think. Anyway, at this meeting, what happened was that Stephenson had finally left in a snit, and maybe under a cloud. Mordy was furious with him, because he said this guy would not go out and get money. Now, I sympathized with Stephenson, because I thought there but for the grace of God, go I. [laughter]

This is exactly what happens in this sort thing. He'd come in, worked like hell, had some National Science Foundation money and was applying for more, but it wasn't enough. And he was still being supported mainly by DRI. Wendell was pushing and pushing, because, you know, the Nevada Archaeological Survey wasn't the main program, as far as he was concerned, in his institute. It was important and good, glad it was there, but, "Hell, if it can't support itself, we've got no time for them."

One of the regents was supporting him and was interested in it and all that, so, it was a real mess. It had all kinds of cross-purposes. And Stephenson finally decided to leave at the end of 1967 or early 1968 and put us in a crisis: What are we going to do about all this? And Molly Magee pulled out the rest of her money. She says, "If that program is so shaky and you don't have Bob Stephenson, I'm taking the money out." Well, this created a real crisis. There *were no funds*.

So, here was this meeting. Where are we going to get the funds to keep this thing going? What kind of new director are we going to get? All that. And there were no funds! [laughter]

*Well, actually, you formed a committee to approach the legislature.*

Yes, later, and got nowhere. However, the Nevada Archaeological Survey did go on,

and Fowler, I would say, was one of the more important people who kept the thing going and kept the relations going, because all these people wanted to have good working research relations with each other. But there wasn't going to be any big institute. There wasn't going to be a large program, so it was pretty much a good will program from there on and one that was able to stimulate quite a bit of research and kept a relationship with DRI and even got some help from them.

So, that was a kind of watershed period, as far as I'm concerned, in 1968. And we did manage to stabilize a department. Even though Sherrock and Aikens left, we were able to bring in people like Don Hardesty and then later Bob Winzeler, who are still with us—excellent people. And Peter Benedict was here; in fact, he was chairman for a while, and then he got a good offer in the east and left. And let me see, there was Benedict and Ken Knudson, who left and went to Okinawa but who maintained his connections by being on leave for three years and then, unfortunately, died. He was a very good man and did some good work here.

But we had a department going, and we did have some extra appointments. We were able to function as a small department of anthropology. We had a master's program we finally got through by hook or crook and enough funds to just keep the thing moving. And students were beginning to come. We had, I don't know, maybe twelve, fifteen graduate students and seventy or so M.A. students and majors.

So, we had a department, and as far as I'm concerned, that's what I came here to do. I felt, you know, this at least stabilizes the situation. Whether I'm here or not or anybody else is here or not, this is going to go on.

But one of the comments, a sort of put-down that came from the officials of the university was that anthropology has such turnover, while other departments had people who stayed for years got their tenure and stuck around. [laughter] We had gone through a number of years of almost total turnover. Myself and the Fowlers were the stable ones that stayed on, and everybody else was coming and going.

And one of the deans—Dean Kirkpatrick, whom we got along with very well—he wrote a long letter to the president to respond to this statement that was coming down from the president's office about anthropologist instability, saying, "That's the way it is with anthropology." He said, "I know people in Berkeley who tell me that anthropologists are always on the move. That's what they are. They're highly mobile people. And also, the discipline is growing very rapidly, and there are jobs available, and you can't expect to keep people unless you pay them well. Our salary levels aren't really sufficient for that kind of competition." So we had a lot of help from at least one of the deans.

And that was the pitch that I used all the time, "You know, if you want to keep some of these good people, you're going to have to offer them more money, and you're going to have to give them an idea of when they're going to get tenure in less than ten years. And as for myself, I've been here now since the beginning. I was told you wanted to bring me here as a full professor when I first came, and I turned it down. I said, 'I want to start as associate. I want to go through the steps.'"

I remember telling Armstrong that at that point back when he'd written me that one of the inducements was I could be appointed as full professor, and I felt that was cheap. I would rather have the money, you know, but I wanted associate professorship, because I'd

been an assistant, and I wanted to make the next step. I didn't want to make a leap. But here, I'd been there four to five years, and there had been no move to give me the full professorship. So, you know, Kirkpatrick was telling the president that, "This is another thing. You know, you have to show these people that there's some reason to stay here when they come."<sup>1</sup>

So, anyway, that was one of the attitudes that there was about us, that we were a fly-by-night department of people coming and going. And it was wonderful to have the dean recognize that that's the way anthropologists are. [laughter] However, by 1968 and 1969, there was some stability, and people came here who found that they wanted to stay and that they could do productive work here. Certainly Don Hardesty and Bob Winzeler were excellent examples. And then Kay Fowler in the early 1970s got her degree and was ready to be fully appointed. She had been a lecturer and assistant, and she had gone back to Pittsburgh and finished up her degree and came back. We were able to hire her full-time, and so we had a stable department.

And that was the end of the 1960s. There were other things going on. My god, the civil rights problems, the marches, the development of various civil rights movements on campus. All of this was going on, too, at the same time. It was a marvelously energetic and heady time, but we built a department, and I felt very good about that.

Well, we've discussed quite a bit about the development of the department during the 1960s, and that was a very special time for anything academic to be developing at a university. But the thing that I would like to sort of windup with is that we were achieving the objectives that I and a few others had had about what kind of department we

wanted to have against, you know, a great many odds.

There was this great pressure for us to be specialized in Great Basin studies, which, of course, I had no objection to. And I was very glad that Don Fowler and Kay Fowler had come here, because that was their interest as well, the Great Basin. But both of them were very well-rounded anthropologists and had broader interests, theoretically and otherwise, so that I didn't—and I'm sure they didn't—want to see a small, narrowly focused department.

It wouldn't have really been a department; it would have become an agency. In fact, that's really what DRI and Wendell Mordy had in mind, seeing us as a unit of the Desert Research Institute that was focused pretty much on the Great Basin prehistorically and ecologically, and the cultural aspect being there because we were anthropologists.

But my view was quite different, and it did create some irritation between us for a while that I think was partly resolved by Don Fowler and Kay Fowler being involved in the Western Studies Center and maintaining that link with the Desert Research Institute—which year by year was supplying us with less support financially. But the university was not taking up its share, so that we weren't able to build the staff as rapidly as we wanted, and yet our enrollment had gone up by 300 percent in those few years.

So, we had a large enrollment for a small, new department and a very small overworked staff. I think I've already mentioned that a good part of the teaching aid that we had was coming from research grants that members of the staff were getting and that sometimes included research aid. And some of these people were helping out even on teaching, as though they were graduate assis-

tants, though we didn't have graduate assistants from the university.

So, it was a very rough time that way, but we managed to keep before us the idea somehow or other of this old saw of a department with four fields of the discipline. Where that came from—in fact, you asked me that earlier—is hard to say. It's just a tradition in earlier academic anthropology that an anthropologist should be somewhat informed about the other sub-disciplines of anthropology (physical anthropology, prehistory, linguistics, and cultural anthropology), and that no student really should be turned out of a department with an M.A. or Ph.D. degree without having had some exposure to the theory and the methodology of these various subdisciplines. At least know what's there, know what the problems are and what the issues are that relate to anthropology. I think the old word was “holistic;” anthropology is a holistic discipline.

So, for whatever it really meant, it was important to me and important to us that we do that. It was part of my background. The departments that I had been in at least strove to do that. Cal in the earlier days (University of California, Berkeley), other departments that I knew of, and people that I had worked with felt that any anthropologist needed to be very aware of what was going on in the whole field, regardless of their specialization. No matter how narrowly they eventually specialized, that they maintain this interest and this concern for what kinds of input might be coming or might be available from other subdisciplines.

So, we managed to do that with this very small staff. We managed to maintain a curriculum. The curriculum was much larger than we could actually implement and teach regularly, but we managed in a way that every

student we had that looked like they were going on to the master's level could do so. Finally, in 1967, we managed to get a master's program agreed, with the university saying we didn't have enough staff. [laughter] We would say, "Well, why is that? We've got the energy and the interest, and we can do it with a few students."

And we felt that the students that we had during the early and mid 1960s were people that fit the kind of image we had of what an anthropologist should be. And, in fact, it bore out over the years that followed. The students that we turned out earlier in the master's program before we got a Ph.D. program were all students who are all over the state now, all over the West working in various agencies, working in archaeology, working as advisors—anthropological, cultural advisors—to various programs, federal and state programs.

We have our students all over the place. In fact, I would say we have a network of our students throughout the basic agencies in Nevada and partly in California and to some degree in Utah. And this, in a sense, carries out the view that I had of what a small department in a state of this kind could accomplish. It had already begun to look that way by the end of the 1960s with our very, very precariously funded program. So, to me, that was important.

I had moments of feeling very depressed about where we were going, whether I should have even tried to do this, whether or not this was wise for me with the kind of interests I had. I never considered myself an administrator or an organizer of programs, and here I was planning, directing programs. And I think I muddled through and managed to do that, but it wasn't something I felt indicated any kind of real competence. I managed to do it and kept a lot of things going that were important.

It was so important at that time for the department to have an image of productivity, to have an image of producing something that was of value not only to the state, but to academic life generally in the country—that we, in a sense, represented something within the discipline. And we *did*. Within, I would say, ten years, our department was producing material, carrying on programs, having conferences here, the Great Basin Conference would be one. Also the development of the ITC [Inter-Tribal Council] program, the Indian Education Program, which we actually stimulated and took part in, and the production of students that could go out and take part in various kinds of surveys with agencies within the state and for the federal government as well. We began, then, to have a place within the West that was very important for this large Great Basin region. There was Utah and there was Idaho, and now and then at that point, the Las Vegas department. And I would say that we stood out as equal to any of them and helped to create a consortium with interest in the Great Basin.

However, the Great Basin wasn't my only interest. I was interested in Africa as well and other kinds of issues and other kinds of problems other than building a department of anthropology. And that would be true, I think, of each of the people we brought here. Kay Fowler, who is, at the present time, *the* most accomplished Great Basin scholar and ethnologist and ethnobotanist in the West, her interests were much broader than building a department of anthropology. Don Fowler, whose archaeological fieldwork is very large, also is interested in the history of anthropology, a much, much larger frame that puts him in the position of being really quite acceptable to any number of universities other than those with an area focus.

And as time went on, you know, since the 1960s, we've gotten people like Don Hardesty with his historic anthropology approach and his archaeological work, which not only contributes to this area but has a much larger theoretical significance in the field. People like Bob Winzeler, of course, who was not interested in the Great Basin specifically at all, nevertheless he could handle our Southeast Asia program and very well; also, his interest in ethnicity and anthropological theory. His role has been extremely important within this department in terms of the kind of range we wanted to have where students weren't just exposed to one area and aspect but had now a number of areas.

Now Gary Haynes, who has picked up the Africa program, even though his particular interests are taphonomy and he spends most of his time in East Africa working with elephants, nevertheless he is a terrifically able guy as an anthropologist and his larger view of theory and method. He's handling the Africa program probably much better than I did. Laverne Jeanne, who has taken over a good part of the linguistic work and the work in North American Indians that Kay Fowler was doing, the two of them now really represent the ethnographic or the cultural focus of the Great Basin in our department.

So the department has developed in the direction that I hoped it would at the very

beginning—in fact, in some ways, much better and much clearer than I might have conceived of it in that earlier period. That was important to me. In the end of the 1960s, when we finally had a department separate from sociology and out of that combined department of psychology, sociology, and anthro, developed a separate department—finally with a master's program—I felt that we were on the road.

And the university was very well aware that we were a remarkable department. We survived a number of crises that the university touted everywhere about financial problems and loss, and we were able to fight through and maintain what we had and not lose, as many departments had. And I think it's because we had a very active department. It was very hard for anybody not to say that we weren't pulling our weight within the university.

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#### Note

1. Warren d'Azevedo was made full professor in 1969 after serving as associate professor of anthropology from April 1963 as Chairman of the combined Department of Sociology and Anthropology (1965-1966) and as Chairman of the independent Department of Anthropology since 1967.



## CAMPUS ACTIVISM

**A**ND NOW, while all this was going on, there was the 1960s, a hell of a lively period, even at this small university. [laughter] You know, beginning in 1962 and 1963 when I first came here, already the racial issue had begun to come forward. The complaints that were being made from black students in athletics were coming forward, there had been this so-called Little Waldorf affair. Well, that had begun to yeast within the university. And the fact that there were *very* few black students and even Indian students on campus, and there was a deep resistance to any kind of civil rights program.

*How was your class of "Negro in the New World" received? I mean, you taught that practically your first semester.*

Yes. That and Africa.

*And I'm not saying how was it received by the students, but I mean how was it received the other staff. I don't mean anthropologists, but in Arts and Science. Was there any surprise at all that you'd be teaching something like that?*

Yes, there were questions, but with the development of the Human Relations Action Council, which I helped to develop and was part of, it was taken for granted that something like this would happen. In the English Department, people like Adamian and others were beginning to teach aspects of American literature that had not been taught before. There was a start of this sort of thing, so there was a kind of a friendly atmosphere in a small group.

However, I think that there were a lot of raised eyebrows throughout the campus about this sort of thing, particularly when my course became popular after a couple of years. In fact, I began to give it more often. I saw it, originally, as what I was going to do with my Africa background and experience.

*Well, also, you'd taught the class at Pittsburgh, too. There's a wonderful continuity.*

I had forgotten the Pittsburgh thing, yes. My class at Pittsburgh developed into a movement. And after I left, I used to get letters from some of the African-American stu-

dents—two of them at least—who were heading up a program on discrimination at Pitt. And most of the people had been in my class through part of that new organization. So, yes, I did have some feeling that this might be an appropriate time for such a class here.

But mainly it had to do with the fact that it was two aspects of my interest—Africa and Afro-American studies, as I thought of it in those days. So, “The Negro in the New World,” taken after a title of one of Herskovits’s collections, was, for me, a way of making use of two of my interests.

However, I must say that the course “Negro in the New World” developed into more of a rap session where I had most of the black students on campus—I mean, black athletes—in my course. And it was well attended for this university. I had twenty or twenty-five students—most of the blacks, and one or two of the Native American students who were kind of leaders or potential leaders for their group on campus.

And the discussions in that class, I wish they had been recorded. Some of the most enlightening discussions that I had had for a long time took place in that course, students talking about the problems on campus. And I let it go that way.

*Were you surprised by what they were talking about?*

No, no, because I had seen it. But I was surprised that they were that interested or concerned, that they were actually thinking about it and doing something, wanting to do something about it. And, you know, while I would give readings and exams in a more general area and expect them to do that and did hold them to that, I allowed the class to

become a kind of forum. People were coming in who weren’t even in the class, sitting in on the discussions. [laughter] And it was a sign of the times, in a way, the fact that there was a need for this kind of colloquy on this campus.

It was a period when—I may have talked about it—if you saw a mixed couple on campus, there would be a fight. I mean, the Sundowner group, some of the fraternity guys, et cetera, would see this as an opportunity to haze. And there were racist cartoons and comments and things like that, even in the school paper. And when I look back, it’s hard for me to believe it was that way, because it’s changed so much.

And anyway, this was the beginning of the civil rights struggle in the South. And as I mentioned earlier, about 1964 or 1965, a chapter of SNCC was formed on campus, and that was denounced in the newspapers, and even a number of the state legislators said that the university was inviting communists and allowing students to be led by communists. And Senator Slattery—although his actual list was later—was already talking about the communists on campus. His list included not only myself but most of the people on the Human Relations Action Council, listed as communists or communist dupes.<sup>1</sup>

It was a strange time, a wacky time. And in that course, all this material could be discussed, and it was. It was discussed well, as I remember. Sometimes I wish that there had been notes taken on it, that there was some way to retrieve those issues, particularly those raised by the black athletes, who really felt they had been betrayed coming here.

Here, they were stuck in this town where they couldn’t even stay out at night, and there were still these sort of Sundowner activities

in town where blacks and Indians weren't welcome on the streets except on Lake Street, where there were two or three sad little casinos and hotels for minorities. And otherwise, they weren't welcome downtown. They certainly weren't welcome in the restaurants and not in housing around the university.

*Not in restaurants?*

No! Well, you could go in, but you would be treated badly and in some cases asked to leave. I mean, it wasn't quite as bad as in the South, but it was just as insistent. You didn't do it.

And the Little Waldorf affair was an example of it. The proprietor wouldn't serve the guys. Well, if it happened there, you know it was going on elsewhere, and they said that it was.

And housing: It was almost impossible for a black student or black couple to get housing right around the university. So, we started the Human Relations Action Council.

*And when you say "we," now who is we at this point?*

There were about fifteen to twenty members of the faculty. One of them was the present president of the university [Joe Crowley] in the days when he was a firebrand. [laughter] Well, not quite, but I mean when he was friendly to this kind of thing. Not that he isn't now, but I think that he has somewhat forgotten this time.

*His priorities are different.*

And have been for some time. And people like Jim Richardson, Dave Harvey.

*Paul Adamian?*

Adamian and others who aren't around anymore. Benny Moore has passed away, [Wilbur] Shepperson in history and, oh, a number of very, very good people. People from foreign languages. Not a lot, but we had altogether fifteen or twenty very, very clear-thinking, progressive people.

*Now, were you asked to be a part of this?*

No, I helped form it.

*I see. OK, so it wasn't in place before you got here.*

I'll take part credit for that, not that I like to brag, but in a way, I feel very good about that. I think Jim Richardson, myself, maybe Dave Harvey, oh, and Carl Backman, my old buddy on campus. Not that everybody appeared all the time, but this group acted as a kind of a colloquium on this sort of thing. And so, some of us set up that little scam of trying to get housing [for minority students]. [laughter] That was relatively successful in that it advertised the problem.

And then the university came through with trying to get housing for the black students, renting a big house, and then there was legal contention over that. For years, there was this kind of action-reaction. Something would happen, and then there would be a backlash and the university would withdraw.

And the university administration wasn't too happy about this, because they thought things were going on rather well, and here were minorities again making trouble and the characters who were a little overboard, you know, on the staff making trouble. In fact, that culminated during the mid-1960s [1968] when the governor had been sitting on an open housing bill and had not passed it.

*Who was governor then?*

Governor Laxalt at the time. And we kept pressing, and finally, Carl Backman and myself, of the Human Relations Action Council, formed a little group, and we declared we were going to march on Carson City and the governor's office. And Carl Backman was quite wonderful about this. As I said before, both our departments [sociology and anthropology] had jointly announced that we would not ask any more groups [conferences] in our discipline to be in Reno, Nevada. We eventually had another Great Basin Conference and some sociologists were going to meet here, and we cancelled all further meetings until there was some move on the part of the state to end discrimination in housing, in the hotels, and in the restaurants and banquet casinos that people had to use. We'd run against this in 1964 with the Great Basin Conference, where a few of the Indian and black members of the conference found that we had to do special things like put them up in people's houses or something of this kind.

So, Carl was wonderful in this again. The two of us issued a statement that our two departments were not going to do it anymore. That got the attention of the press.

And SNCC—many of our students were taking part by going to the South, and some of them had gotten hurt; I think one was even killed. And these sojourners to the South during the heat of the discrimination struggles there were coming back with reports, and we would help get their stories told and give them a forum. So . . .

*Was there an "alternative" paper on campus at that time?*

Oh, yes, that's interesting. The *Sagebrush* was mixed; it depended on who was the editor at the time, but it was either neutral during the early period or it was highly discriminatory. On the Little Waldorf affair, the *Sagebrush* supported the owner of the bar by saying, "What right do these people have to come in? He's the owner. He has the right to serve whom he wants," and all that kind of crap. But little by little, it began to change too, so it was one of the organs.

But some of the students began to feel that it [the *Sagebrush*] was no longer expressing the problems on campus. And they were first turned down by the ASUN, the association of students, on a request to have a new magazine called *The Forum*. But a petition was set up, and many of us signed it, and the Human Relations Action Council backed it up, and it went before the ASUN again, who were forced to put it up for ballot, for vote, and it passed.

So, a new magazine called *Forum* [first issue was Spring 1964] was loaded with marvelous material, and I would say a good little magazine during this civil rights period for presenting the progressive point of view. And it stems from the SNCC people coming from the South with poetry and stories and things of that sort.

*How much of an anti-Vietnam War voice was in there?*

Well, see, what you're asking is something that I'm having a hard time keeping track of here. Everything was going on at once. All during this period, of course, starting, I think . . .

*Well, the two things kind of radicalized each other, didn't they?*

Already there was beginning to be resistance to having ROTC on campus, and it had a free reign. ROTC was at the ASUN every day recruiting people for Vietnam.

*Well, didn't everybody have to be in ROTC, all the male students? [Until 1967, there was a two-year military requirement for nearly all male students.]*

I don't know if they *had* to be; they were recruiting, so I don't know. And they had free reign on campus and all over town. Those students who were anti-war—there weren't a lot, but there were some very vocal ones—were protesting this. And, of course, they were called communists and denounced and all that, but nevertheless, this was an issue which began to be linked with the issue of discrimination and civil rights.

And this came to a head about the mid 1960s.<sup>2</sup>

*Well, you wrote, "The Right to be Wrong."*

Yes, there was a forum held where a number of members of the faculty and others debated the question of Vietnam and Cambodia. [The University of Nevada Ad Hoc Committee on Vietnam sponsored a public seminar to debate the war in 1966.] It was two or three forums, and they were held at one of the little auditoriums, I think, down at Morrill Hall or near there, and they were packed, crowded. I was one of a number of the faculty asked to take a position on Vietnam. And, of course, I took what would be my position, that I was opposed to it and I saw it as an American venture in the Far East that was dangerous and put the United States in the position of siding with a losing issue in the Far East.

I wrote up my comments: "Vietnam: The Right to be Wrong," that, if I was wrong, I had a right to state my position anyway. And that got published in the *Forum*. [laughter] That little magazine was a bit of a voice for us.<sup>3</sup> And then there were those who supported the war, and they were very lively sessions. I would say that the faculty really showed itself in terms of its various factions through those forums.

That was as the civil rights movement was developing, and one of the main things that I recall is that out of the class that I had, as I've mentioned, the black students formed a chapter of the NAACP as some form of organization on campus to express their views and their problems. [1967] And in not very long, they changed it to the Black Student Union. So they had a Black Student Union on campus. [1968] And all of those students that had formed the Black Students' Union had come out of my class.

In a way, I was rather pleased with this. On the other hand, I had a little anxiety about the fact that I didn't want my class to be looked upon as an organizing unit for . . .

*Well, in fact, one of the syllabi that you have for the class stated something like, "This class is the history of the black experience in America, but it is not . . ."*

An organizing . . . [laughter]

*I don't know exactly how you put it, but it was well-put.*

Well, I can see why I must have done it, because it was a very ticklish time. I was concerned about these issues, but, you know, I didn't want a class in anthropology looked upon as a place where dissidence was formu-

lated. Also, students were talking that way in my class, so I had to remind them, "Look, fine. What you're saying is very interesting and important as long as it's relevant to what we're dealing with." I always had to bring the thing back to the material that we were dealing with in class.

But, at the same time, the students that were there were raring to go. They were active. And I have to admit that out of class, I did confer with some of them and advise them. And when they decided to form the Black Student Union, I thought that was a good idea, because the NAACP in town wasn't going to be that supportive of them. It was a much different kind of organization.

*So, the NAACP that they formed on campus was like a branch?*

It was a chapter.

*I see, a campus chapter?*

A campus chapter. There were campus chapters all over the country. But they had begun to lose confidence in the group downtown, though there were some very good people in the NAACP. And, in fact, I belonged to the NAACP. I think I still do. But the students just wanted something more militant. And so, the Black Student Unions throughout the country that had been forming was just their meat.

There were a number of invited speakers: St. Clair Drake came up from Stanford, an old friend of mine that I had known in the East, and a fine black scholar and an Africanist. And [in the fall, 1964] Martin Luther King had been invited, but he couldn't come. Oh, they invited two other people to campus who were very good civil rights activists. Partridge was one of their

names and immediately the newspapers and the legislature were screaming, "Communists!" This is what was happening and I was rather . . . not afraid, but I was concerned that our department would be seen as the nest of conspiracy.

Not that I didn't want it to be, but I just thought it was inappropriate, and I didn't want it to happen. So, I was always trying to admonish them, "Look, you're in class now. This is what we're dealing with here. What you do outside of class is another matter. It's your business, and you must keep it separate." So, that's what my syllabus must have been reminding them of. Because it was important to me that my class on Africa . . . and was there one on ethnic studies or ethnicity?

*Yes, there was. Ethnic Studies, yes.*

And these classes had begun to attract students, and they saw them as forums for their activities, which I didn't mind, because I felt that they had to have someplace, and they didn't have it.

*Well, in fact, didn't the students work on projects toward the eventual publication of the "American Indian and Black Students"?*<sup>4</sup>

Oh, yes. My gosh, my dear, you *are* going through the records. Yes. In those classes, I often gave them the opportunity to work on special research projects where they would go out in the community or the university with questionnaires, develop some kind of a little well-formed project, and write a paper. And out of those, over a period of two or three years, developed enough data that I was able, in the mid 1970s, to put a lot of it together in that little unpublished monograph on black and Indian students at the University of Nevada. They did quite a bit of work, so I

was able to turn a lot of that energy into some very serious investigation.

*Well, and it also seems to be a wonderful way to legitimize the students' concern and provide them with an actual mechanism to do something about it.*

Yes, because that was always one of the points that would be made in those classes and forums, that it's one thing to sit around and denounce something, but to find out how to get the kind of information that you need to press your point is very important. Like on housing, you've got to go out and get the data. It's like Herskovits, "Gotta get the data!" You've got to go out and find out where this is happening, how it's happening, and have times and places where it takes place. You've got to have new material to show it. And they did. In fact, I think those papers are still in Special Collections.

*Yes, they are. I haven't looked at all of them, but there's an entire file box of those papers.*

Because there was a lot done, and it became very important to me later when I put that report together.

Let's see. There was something else I was going to mention that took place there that was . . . . Oh, while this was going on, at the same time I was teaching an evening course once a week at the state prison. I had been asked by, I guess, either one of my former students or a friend of a former student who was in the clink down there in the medium security section. And he wrote up and asked me if I would teach a course in anthropology.

I forget exactly how it developed, but the prison officials gave an OK, and I was asked to come down and teach anthropology. [laughter] So, I thought, with everything else

that was going on, why not teach anthropology there?

*Was that a night class?*

It was Friday nights, every Friday night at the state prison. And I had to be let in, searched, and all that. I would say that class is one of the pleasant experiences that I had, because those guys really were interested. In the first place, they're bored. They had, you know, nothing else to think about.

*About how many people were in the class?*

Oh, I'd say seventy, eighty.

*Seventy or eighty?!*

Oh, it was a packed room. [laughter] And I had practically everybody in medium security there that could be let out to do this. There were a number of blacks and Indians—not many, but there were some. And I would say the age ranges there went from sixteen or seventeen to sixty.

It was a wide range, and it was invigorating, because these guys would ask the damndest questions. And they *loved* anthropology . . . at least, I think they loved it because they were so bored with everything else and because coming to that class was a way to get out of something else they had to do, I'm sure. [laughter] But they all came. It was well-attended. They took the exams, and many of them did very well.

*Was it a significantly different syllabus than, say, Anthro 101 that you would teach on campus?*

No, pretty much the same, except I handled it differently. I think I would probably be more amusing—more humor and

anecdotes and things of that kind—because that's what they liked. At the same time, they also wanted the material.

*Same textbook?*

I forget which textbook, but it would have been one of them that we would have used and the additional reading materials. These guys read the stuff, and they'd come back with all kinds of questions; obviously, they'd read the material. The most wonderful one, I remember, is—you know, you can't escape this with a group of guys, particularly in prison—when I talked about *Homo erectus* and *Zinjanthropus* and all the early transitional forms, hominoids and hominids. [laughter] And I came back one night, and one guy raised his hand and said, "Say, Prof, I want to know something. So-and-so over there, he called me a *Homo erectus*. Should I be mad?" [laughter]

And so I said, "It really depends on what you were doing when he called you that."

But anyway, they were loaded with this kind of wit and yet were very alert, very interested and did fairly good exams. There was always some that didn't give a damn and did nothing. Some of them, later on, the following years when they got out, were coming to visit me and planning to go to school and all that sort of thing. So, I felt good about that.

And we had a lot of discussion about race in the class, because there was just enough of that mix for this to come out. Some of the black inmates were very vocal, and some of them were very angry and just denounced everything, denounced the class and everything. But some of them were really into it and saw it as an opportunity to speak their piece. "Hey, you know, look at what these guys do and how they act. Let me tell you,

they're acting nice now, but you ought to see . . ."

There was this wonderful interchange going on. It all was part of that period, as far as I'm concerned.

*But it sounds like you were pretty energized by that.*

I had more energy than I have now, I'll tell you that.

*Yes, but I mean its immediate application.*

It seemed to be the way the world was. I mean, you just did those things.

*Do you remember why you didn't do it again?*

Oh, it was just I didn't have *time*. And also, that same group wasn't there. There wasn't the great request to have me come. Well, I *was* asked to continue, but it lost its appeal to me, because I was just too damn busy, and there weren't the guys that I had known there, and I had a feeling that, also, the newer bunch was coming in just as a way to flake off.

I had to drive down there and spend an hour getting in, because you had to be searched and all kinds of things. And, you know, it's interesting, but I couldn't go on with it. As a matter of fact, I tried to get other members of the staff to take part, but they weren't interested.

*Well, did you at any time consider that as a potential study of prison society?*

It was on my mind, but I couldn't do it. A lot of things look appealing. To any anthropologist everything is a potential thing to study.



*Standing in line at the grocery store. [laughter]*

You haven't even finished any of the work that you should be doing, but, you know, you're ready to take on another. [laughter]

*That's its great appeal. [laughter]*

But back at the university, not only was there a Black Student Union being formed, but about the same time, two or three very able, bright, and feisty American Indian students decided to form the American Indian Organization, the AIO, on campus. And that was very interesting, because never before had there been any real communication between the various minorities—the blacks, Hispanics, and the Native Americans.

As a result of that, there was a lot of cooperation between them on various programs. They cooperated on going to the president and to the governor demanding an equal opportunities program on campus, which they eventually got. But the Native Americans always had the edge on the blacks because they had people in the area who were ready to support them, tribes and a community.

*Of course, a little more political . . .*

Their homes, for many of them, were here. And they already had some stipends and fellowships and grants through the university programs. So, there was a little bit of tension there. Nevertheless, for the first time, there was that kind of cooperation. There was also a Hispanic organization being formed.

So, it was a period in which the minorities were beginning to see themselves as having a voice and coming forward, and I was fascinated by that. It was something that

really excited me to see this awakening taking place.

And then came the Poor People's March in May, 1968, just after Martin Luther King had been killed in April of 1968. Then came the Poor People's March. This probably would have passed almost unnoticed a few years before, and nobody would have been interested in taking part. There would have been a few straggling people from California going through on their way. But I'll tell you, by the time they got here, there were, I would say, three or four thousand people joining the march in Reno, going all the way down Virginia Street, through the casino area. I must say I've got a kind of a macabre strain in me, because to me, that was marvelous. [laughter] I always hated downtown Reno, and we only went there when friends of ours would come through who hate gambling but say, "We want to go see the casinos." [laughter] And that's the only time we would go, with people who hated gambling but wanted to see the casinos. It's a tawdry area and, also, during the period of the civil rights struggle, it was a nest of discrimination.

So here, that day in May 1968, were thousands of people marching down Virginia Street, blacks and Indians. The American Indian Organization and the Black Student Union on campus and the Hispanics—I don't know if they had, by that time, gotten an organization—were cooperating. Reno minorities turned out in great numbers and a great many whites. You got the feeling that, in this horrible little town, there *was* a progressive movement, there was something meaningful taking place.

And they marched down through the center of Reno with all the slot machines stopping, because people were looking out at what the hell was going on. They were scared,

you know. They didn't know what was happening.

*Either that, or someone's hit the jackpot at another casino. [laughter]*

[laughter] Yes, right. Yes, right. And so, with this disruption of the gambling that went on . . . . By the way, was that denounced in the newspapers! You know, this march through town was just purely a group of dissidents starting trouble, and, you know, what right did they have to march through town? Oh, there was a some talk about whether they'd gotten permits.

[laughter] But there were too many people to stop. That was a great day. I recall that with pleasure—the Poor People's March through Reno after the assassination of Dr. King.

*Were people not going to class in protest and shutting down classes during the anti-war movements? I mean, do you remember much of that?*

I think there were a few incidents of that kind, but it wasn't really wide-spread.

*There wasn't a big problem here?*

Well, there was to some degree. The Kent State atrocity happened a year or so later when the Vietnam opposition came to a head. There was a lot of activity on campus, but other than the Governor's Day protest I don't recall any demonstrations that interrupted university classes.<sup>5</sup>

Not only the civil rights struggle, but certainly the anti-Vietnam War feeling and action were heating up. All this was developing together, and I think students who were reacting to one were also reacting to the

other. I mean, they saw it as one problem. They saw it as a civil rights struggle. The ROTC matter [mandatory service], the matter of southern discrimination in the South, and the Vietnam War and the attack on Cambodia that Nixon brought about, they saw all that as one issue. This was the issue. The dissent was generalized, I think, at that point, which was an interesting phenomenon when I come to think of it.

My son [Erik] was involved in the anti-Vietnam struggle. He declared himself a conscientious objector, went through a tremendous amount of difficulty. At that time—I'm trying to remember—you had to prove that it was for reasons of conscious or religion. And he wasn't going to do it on the basis of religion, but on the basis of conscious, which was, at best, very vague and difficult to demonstrate. He had gone to Asilomar to a series of meetings by the Friend's Service Society, and he developed his own very strong view that he . . . .

*Now, the Friend's Service Society, is that a Quaker . . . ?*

That was the Quakers, and they had a lot of anti-war activities during that period. Erik was involved in that along with a number of his friends from here. And while we were in Africa . . . my god, how did we do all of this? In 1966, 1967, I got a grant to go back to Africa. And I must tell you, I was loaded with Reno and Nevada in my head.

My project was mainly intertribal relations and trade between the Gola and surrounding groups. And at the same time, Bob Levine, who was then, I believe, at Harvard, and a psychologist at Northwestern, had a project on ethnocentrism in Africa. They asked me if I wouldn't stay on for two or three months; they would extend

my grant to carry out some comparative work that they wanted done in that particular region. I was very interested in doing that, because it was right along the lines that I was working. So, while I was there, I was also involved in forming the first Liberian Studies Conference. What did we call it in those days?—the Liberian Research Conference, in which various Liberians and outsiders who were there met up in northern Liberia to discuss starting a journal and also doing some joint research.

It never really went anywhere, except it was the cause of the starting of the Liberian Studies Conference in the United States. Out of that, we developed an organization on this side, and I don't think the Liberian one is going at all now—there's not much going in Liberia except death and destruction.

But anyway, I was corresponding with people here also keeping track of my son's problem, which I was very concerned about, of course. Don and Kay Fowler were very helpful; Erik stayed with them while we were gone, and they were trying to help him understand the problem he had.

They were taking the devil's advocate position you know, like, "Do you know what you're doing?" kind of thing.

*Well, the consequences of doing that, I don't think anybody really . . . .*

Realized it, yes. Erik became very aware of the problem. He went very deep into it, had a good philosophical base, a good practical and political understanding of where he stood.

And I would say the Fowlers were partly responsible, and we were constantly writing. And, you know, it was during that period with all this corresponding—about the depart-

ment, keeping track of the department while I was gone—that I remember the dissonance and distraction was so great that one or two times I addressed letters to Nevada in terms of Bomi County, Nevada (instead of Washoe) and to a Gola paramount chief, I addressed *him* in care of Washoe County, Liberia. [laughter]

It was really a wacky time in many ways, except that it was a very productive fieldwork period for me. In fact, those two volumes of interviews, when I got them reorganized went into the Human Relations Area Files and were published by them in two paperback volumes.<sup>6</sup> There was some awfully good material. Some of what I consider the most important contemporary material was in that series.

Nevertheless, all this was going on while the department was being built. But I felt I *had* to go back to Africa. I was losing track, I was so involved here.

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#### Notes

1. The Human Relations Action Committee was formed in 1968 in response to the assassination of Martin Luther King in April of 1968. Slattery's list was published in 1969.

2. In 1966 at the Governor's Day Parade "a small group of peace advocates" protested both the war and the compulsory military requirement. (James Hulse, *The University of Nevada: A Centennial History* [Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1974], p. 127.) A larger protest against the war was held during the 1970 Governor's Day ceremony.

3. "Vietnam: The right to be wrong" was reprinted in *The Sagebrush* 48:56 (1972).

4. In 1975 Warren d'Azevedo published his report, "American Indian and Black Students at the University of Nevada-Reno: 1874-1974" through the Department of Anthropology. This

was reprinted in 1990 and revised and published in 1998 as "The Ethnic Minority Experience at the University of Nevada," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* 41:4 (1998): 225-292.

5. The Governor's Day protest referred to was in 1970 when Warren d'Azevedo was away,

a visiting professor at Indiana University. Transcripts of interviews relating to this event are in the collection of the University of Nevada Oral History Program.

6. *The Gola of Liberia* (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1972).

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## CONTINUING WORK WITH THE WASHOE

**A**T THE SAME TIME the department was developing and we had gone back to Africa, I was still very much involved with the Washoe tribe. It was right at the end of the period of the settlement of the claims case. And I would go down to tribal council meetings frequently and sit through them as they were deciding what they were going to do with the money and not sure they were even going to get a settlement and expecting an awful lot more if they got it than they actually got.

I was very much involved in it, because I felt that they were really being betrayed. There was something so sleazy about the government's program in the pros and cons of . . . . I mean, Julian Steward against Omer Stewart, as the legal eagles on that case, was, in a way, a kind of a joke.

And it made no difference. No matter what the anthropologists said, the government case was pretty well set. And here, \$42 million was reduced to \$5 million by 1970 when it finally got settled. However, I must say that little tribe managed to do *a lot* with that \$5 million.

They didn't give it all away like some of the tribes had done, divide it per capita, but they set a good part of it aside for investment and facilities and then began to work on more grants. Bob Frank, I think, was, in that later period, chairman. He was marvelous at making use of what they had, investing it, making it grow, so that the tribe became a fairly well-to-do little tribe with all the factionalism and all the difficulties that every tribe has.

But nevertheless, I was amazed at what they were able to do, and I kept track of that. I was constantly involved in it. I was very interested in . . . .

*Were you actually doing what you would consider fieldwork among the Washoe at this time?*

Well, I don't know if you'd call that fieldwork. I certainly was keeping notes, and I was constantly talking to people and asking questions.

*Well, did you have specific study goals?*

I think during that period, I was mostly friends, a matter of friendships. I only did fieldwork in terms of asking about things and who was doing what. I kept notes on how the movement was progressing and who was leading and all that, but I didn't participate anymore, because it had gone beyond that.

I think I would have found myself in a real factional situation or creating animosities among those people if I had pursued a more rigorous kind of field assignment. But I certainly kept track of what was going on. I suppose my interests that were ethnographic at that time were still in terms of territory, because the Washoe were not getting their whole territory. They were very angry at their lawyer and critical of Omer Stewart. So, I was doing a lot of work on that level.

*Did you maintain any contact with the peyotists?*

Well, during this period I was also collecting and organizing some of my earlier work on the peyotist narratives that I had taped during the 1950s and early 1960s, and I was still getting material on those. And some of those are the ones that were finally printed by Ken Carpenter at Black Rock Press, *Straight with the Medicine*. But I still have a couple of dozen from that period that weren't included that are part of that series and that one day I hope to publish. Although the collection wasn't published until 1978, I was working on them and getting some of that material at the time. How I found time to do it, I don't know, but I did.

Then, as I mentioned earlier, also, I had tapes and songs recorded back in the 1950s that I had shown to Moe Asch of Folkways Records, and he was very interested in presenting these. Al Merriam and I, earlier, had written an article on peyotist song style among the Washoe.<sup>1</sup> So, along with that and

my written explanation for the context of these songs, Moe Asch published them in 1972.<sup>2</sup>

Now, you have asked what the reaction of people was about this kind of thing? Well, I must say that's a good question, because I had many reactions, and some unpleasant ones later on during the late 1970s. No time to go into it here, but a few people objected to the fact that these were issued at all or shown publicly.

I was very careful on the narratives not to name names. This is an issue that I think is rather interesting from an anthropologist's point of view. I now am very happy when I find people naming their consultants in the literature, because you can check on that and go back. But anything I have published I have tried to leave names out. It's only in my field notes that anybody can find those things, because I was working with these people. I was around them, and I think that makes a difference.

David Mandelbaum, when talking about his work in the South Pacific in his class, said he didn't realize that fifteen years after he had done his work and published his articles that he was going to get a letter condemning him for having named some names. That stuck in my mind, because there was a kind of an orientation to writing in those days where you didn't name your so-called informants or consultants. And yet, later on, many people did.

*Well, it was a convention to protect their privacy, wasn't it?*

To protect their privacy. I understood that when I was working among these people, that if I published something, I ought to . . . . In fact, I did the same thing in Africa, and I'm glad I did, because I could have gotten a

carver in a tremendous amount of trouble had he been identified as the person whose work I was describing in one of my articles that did get circulated in Africa. I shouldn't have seen that; I shouldn't have heard that kind of material, so, I'm glad I hadn't named him. But even then he got in trouble, because some people guessed it was him, you see. So, I was always very sensitive about this.

I remember that John Price and Edgar Siskin both named their people. In fact, I think Freed did, too, and Lowie, but I couldn't. I found it difficult, because I remained there. They had done their work and gone away, but I was seeing these people every year, visiting them, and they were visiting me. And not that everybody read the stuff. In fact, I think damn few Washoe ever read anything that any anthropologist wrote about them. That's beginning to happen now. Nevertheless, now and then they did, and they were very resentful if something was said that gave another family some ammunition against them or made them, in their minds, look foolish or whatever.

*Well, particularly because of the peyotist material, there was additional . . .*

It was very sensitive. And not only that, but it was the kind of thing you kept to yourself. You only talked about it with your own colleagues. You didn't spread your views around to everybody. That wasn't just with peyote, it was true with some basic information about the culture. Some of this was sensitive, certainly with genealogy.

You know, there were things that people didn't want *everybody* to know. Or if they did, they didn't want their name attached to it.

As I told you before about the Folkways recordings, the names got on the recording

in spite of our agreement, and that really got me. So, my sensitivity to naming people is still there. Yet, when I go through Siskin's work and see all these names, I'm delighted, because I know who these people are and where they are. [laughter] It's very valuable, and I don't have to go to some archive to find out who he was working with. And I don't think the Washoe care that much anymore.

They did then, and the few people who did read that material at that time were very angry about that book. They were angry about Jim Downs's book whenever he named people and all that. But they've gotten over that, and they would have gotten over anything I had done, too, excepting I still know these people as close associates and friends, so I still feel . . . I would be hesitant about doing that.

In fact, I had unfortunate disagreements with Price and Siskin when Edgar asked me to do an introduction to his work. I got out of it some way, because I felt I didn't know how to introduce a work that I felt had so goddamn many names in it, where *every* family was named. Beautiful work. I mean, Edgar was a *good* ethnographer. I have a lot of respect for his work, but I found it difficult, you know, because I knew that people would then associate me with having gotten the names of people in print. Now I don't think they give that much of a damn anymore.

They think all of us anthropologists are a bunch of betrayers anyway. As my good friend says, "Never trust a white man," as he tells *me*. [laughter] He's my good friend. We are close. He says, "Oh, yes, you know, we never trust a white man."

And the same with John Price. John had used a lot of names, and at that time I was a little corporal about these matters, and I just

said, "You know, you shouldn't do it." And I got a little irritated by the fact that people would do that.

*Well, I think it's a rather huge point if you either protect somebody's anonymity or to give them credit for . . . .*

Sure, excepting pragmatically, one could say, "If you're coming here and you're working for a few weeks or a couple of months and leave and you're not coming back, what's lost? So, the Washoe and some other group get mad. They get over it, and that's that." And it doesn't do anything more than reinforce their view of outsiders as being a bunch of bastards anyway, which they do feel. And you're part of it.

However, I'm not only an ethnographer in this area. I developed, over thirty five years, friendships with some of these people. I mean, the James family, for example, even when we had a lot of problems and difficulties for a time, we've known each other so long, we are old friends. In fact, almost relatives in a way, you know.

And other people who I know feel something like that. "He's a white man, *dabo'o*. You probably can't trust him and all that, but he's better than most," you know, that kind of thing.

*And I think you're seen as a resource of sorts when people have questions.*

Right. I have given over almost all my material to them, and they've lost most of it or stowed it away in attics. [laughter] Nevertheless, they know that I'm available for that kind of thing.

And like all groups, not just the Washoe, they steal our stuff and put it out in their own names and sometimes don't give you credit,

because they don't want to give these white guys credit. They want to do it themselves. I respect that at this point.

Some time in the future, I may feel that the situation has gotten to the place where it's time to be critical and demand awareness on these things. I do so now with a couple of people who are well-educated academically in the tribe, and I let them know what I think, and they understand what I mean.

But that's the way the cookie crumbles. And so those relationships make me very sensitive about names, about naming people, and maybe too much so, because, as I say, I admire Siskin's work [laughter] even though I . . . .

*And also, actually, now that the work has been done, long ago, it's actually valuable, I would imagine, to the Washoe themselves.*

Oh, yes. It is. Where people would take my position and say, "Oh, the material's in the archives . . . ." Well, how many people are going to be able to get into the archives?

*Yes. And also, for non-anthropologists—not that there are many non-anthropologists that read something like that, unfortunately, but it also adds credence not only to the material, but it reinforces the idea that these are individual people of a particular culture who have collaborated in these ethnographic "facts" rather than just sort of this generic . . . .*

Well, see, but it's not "just." There's two sides to this. See, I agree with what you're saying, but there's two sides to it. A lot of this material is not only quoting somebody who is telling you something directly, it's talking about other people who aren't even involved [in the dialogue with the anthropologist]. I mean, they're naming names of



people that they have feuds with or they want to put down or they want to lie about or whatever. There's all of that, and it's very hard to pull that out. It's OK to give credit to the people who have been your main consultants. In fact, that's usually done in the introduction to publications. "I want to thank so-and-so and so-and-so for . . ." Those are the ones you work for hours and hours with and have gotten a great deal from. But those people are talking about a lot of other people and naming names, you see. And well, to me, that argument no longer holds as much water as it did earlier. I mean, I am a lot more tolerant now of that, but personally, I stuck around here. I have worked with these people a long time. It's a different matter.

And with the Gola, I've gone back to Africa, you know, four or five times, and I know now hundreds of Liberians. I even had someone recently—to show you how serious this is—ask me, did I support the present dictator when I went over to take part in the election-monitoring? [Liberian elections, 1997] "You Americans were supporting this guy." Well, we weren't, and I wasn't, but the point is they watch everything we do; they hear about it; the rumors fly. They remember the few of us who have been over there and worked with them, and they keep track of us through the rumor mill. What are we doing? What are we saying? What side are we on? Which family are we seeing the most of?

All of that is important, and if you go around stealing all kinds of private information, it gets back through some garbled form to those same people. So, even as far as Africa is concerned, you're not off the hook. It's like David Mandelbaum, in the South Pacific. [laughter] You can't escape.

But some people don't care about whether they escape or not, because they're never

going back, and so what difference does it make? But if you're going back and if you've got long-term relationships, it makes a difference. So, that's my little spiel on that, though I don't feel as strongly about it as I used to, because I figure, for Christ sake, we've got to have that information.

*What do you recall about the drug-use and the reaction to and situation among students on campus during those years?*

Well, I have to admit that I wasn't really in tune with that very much. I don't know, I just didn't pay too much attention to that. I knew that a lot of students were taking LSD at that time, and every now and then you'd talk to a student or see one in class acting spacey and all that. You knew they were on something. How extensive it was, I don't know. I just know it was highly tolerated. The idea was tolerated among students who just said they didn't give a damn; it was somebody else's business.

*But was it tolerated by the police and the . . . ?*

Oh, no. Oh, no, it was dangerous.

*Yes. I mean, people were getting arrested?*

It was dangerous to be found . . . . Oh, yes. And the peyotists were getting arrested for having peyote. Earl James and I . . . . I think it was 1967 or 1968, right after I got back from Africa, when this was heating up in the state legislature. Nevada had an old law against peyote. I forget what they called it. They had a name for drugs of that kind. Not hallucinatory, but there was a legal term. Anyway, I had already written a couple of things for the church members of the tribe, peyotist members, showing the history of

these legal problems in other states and the fact that they did have a case; they could contest the state case.

Well, it did come up before the legislature, and Earl James and I were called to speak on it. Earl did a beautiful job. He was a very dignified old man, and he was saying that he had gone to this church most of his life and what it had done for him. And many of his relatives were members of that church, and it's terrible that they have to think of this as being illegal when it's done them so much good. They don't drink, they don't use other things, they don't use other medicines. This is their medicine. And then I spoke as an anthropologist saying what I had seen, what I knew about it. In fact, I got a letter from Slotkin backing me up. So, as I remember, the legislature dropped this . . . .

*Now, wasn't Fred Anderson part of the movement to make it illegal?*

I don't think so. I forget what his position was. But earlier there were doctors in this state during the 1920s and 1930s who

opposed its use. They and the Christian church leaders in the area were united against peyote. It was, you know, misleading people. It was dangerous, creating orgies and all that. Well, they were completely misinformed.

So, anyway, that was happening during this period. I went to two or three state legislature hearings on this, and mainly with Earl. He was tribal chairman at the time, I believe. He was tribal chairman as well as being a church member.

That's fascinating. I'd have to go back and look at that material. I believe in Special Collections, they do have a file on that case.

So, that was the 1960s. It was just magnificently complex in every way.

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#### Notes

1. Alan Merriam and Warren d'Azevedo, "Washo Peyote Songs," *American Anthropologist* 59 (1957): 615-641.
2. *Washo Peyote Songs: Songs of the Native American Church*, Folkways Records, FE 4384, 1972.

**N**OW, WE HAVEN'T talked about Governor's Day.

Oh, that comes later, 1970, 1971 when things really sort of broke loose and then fell apart. That was sort of the end of the movement. But the university and the state changed enormously in that period. All kinds of things were going on in the community. There were equal rights committees, there were all kinds of pushes for reform of state laws, anti-discrimination movements going on, and NAACP.

Eddie Scott had a very active group on discrimination in the town, and there was a lot of action going on in various parts of the community and in the state. And a section of the university was very much a part of this.

So, anyway, it was a very funny time. And then the John Birch Society was on campus all the time.

*As I mentioned before, I have a copy of the Sagebrush that reprinted your "Right to be Wrong" in 1972. They reprinted that, and in that same*

*issue was an article about the president of the John Birch Society's visit to the campus.*

Oh, frequently. The John Birch Society was frequently on campus, invited. And we would then invite somebody that was, you know, a civil rights leader. Generally, we were denounced as being communists and revolutionaries. But I guess we have to remember, though, that John F. Kennedy had been killed in 1963. And this was the period, right about the time we're talking about now, that Martin Luther King was assassinated, and then Robert Kennedy. I mean, this was one hell of a decade. All this was going on.

It's amazing that there wasn't more trouble than we saw on small campuses throughout the country. Kent State was one of the major ones, you know, where some students got killed. Demonstrations were everywhere. Yes, all kinds of action. When you think of what that meant from a political and social point of view, it was one hell of a decade. And when I look back I'm glad to have been part of it. I feel that I really

knocked myself out during that period, and a lot of other people did as well.

You know, these assassinations took place while everything else was going on. The civil rights struggle was exposing a cauldron of social problems. Then, here comes Martin Luther King's death and then Robert Kennedy's. And right after that, of course, the election of Nixon, [laughter] which I think was a tremendous downer for many of us, the fact that this guy with his record and his orientation should become president after Kennedy's death. When Kennedy had won the California primary, and then he dies and along comes Nixon and people like Spiro Agnew and Kissinger. A strange time. When I look back at it, I'm not even sure that I can recall what all of our reactions were, but there were many.

Actually, you know, Nixon came in on the slogan that he was going to end the Vietnam War, and then within weeks he launched the bombing of Cambodia. That was in April 1970. Didn't take him long to get to that. And then in May 1970, the National Guardsmen fire on the students at Kent State and kill four of them. That precipitated immediately a lot of reaction at universities.

In fact, I was at the University of Indiana—I had forgotten this—as a visiting professor in the spring of 1970 when Kent State had happened, the Kent State shootings. I was teaching that one semester at Indiana. It was a wonderful semester, because I was dealing with my Liberian materials for two seminars. It was a very productive two seminars out of which a lot of publication came on the part of the students later, and I was able to put together a lot of material.

*Were these graduate students?*

Graduate students, yes. And so, it was a very productive time for me. But here came Kent State, right in the middle of it all.

The next day, there was a great demonstration. The newspaper said 10,000 students at Bloomington, Indiana—and Bloomington's a small university town, so, you know, when 10,000 students gather at a university in the middle of town that's no small matter at what was then the semi-rural community of Bloomington. I recall vividly seeing 10,000 students marching through the campus from one end to the other, from one side of the road to the other—nothing else could move—and into town, down into the center of town, chanting, "One, two, three, four, we don't want your fucking war," you know, over, and over again. [laughter]

It was just overwhelming, the students' reaction. Of course, they were also protesting Cambodia as well as the student shooting. Then later, of course, this came up at the University of Nevada with the Governor's Day march. The same thing—Kent State had stimulated the reactions here to the Governor's Day meeting.

That was the same period as Slattery's list. Senator Slattery, a Nevada senator, issued a list which, as far as I'm concerned, is the most important commemoration of the period that I know. Here in March of 1969, he issued a statement that got into the newspapers. At least two dozen people from the university were declared to be communists.

I am very happy that I am on the list, with people like Paul Adamian, who later became a figure in the Governor's Day debacle; Carl Backman, my good old friend who was anything but a communist but a very good liberal guy, a good sociologist; and people in the English department. The English department was loaded with people like Adamian. Dean Kirkpatrick, the guy that

had been so helpful to us in building the department and backing some of these issues, I would call a liberal, a progressive guy, he was on the list. This is a dean on the list! There was one woman on the list, Rosella Linski, who I haven't seen in years. But she was a firebrand on campus, a very good positive person in the Department of Education, and a very powerful progressive force on campus with a strong voice. And William Scott, who has now passed away, in physics, a well-known guy around. In that I *was* actually a communist, none of these people as far as I'm concerned were communists. *Far* from it, but they were all active in the civil rights movement on campus.

*Well, what was the list going to be used for?*

I imagine, just this—to try to get these people fired, to turn community attention on them.<sup>1</sup> And to cut the university budget.

*Did anyone take it seriously?*

Oh, there were many people in the community who did. And a couple of the newspapers were asking questions about what did this mean, and we should do something about it.

I do have quite a file on this event that I've turned over to Special Collections at the university from that period. I have to go back there and see what kind of response there was overall in the community here and in Las Vegas.

But oh, a lot of people took it seriously, and it met their needs to denounce the university and to criticize the regents for not being hard enough on students and setting up rigid rules. There was a lot of that; nevertheless, I think most people took it as very wacky on the part of Slattery, who was known

for things of this kind. Nevertheless, it tells you something about the times and what was going on around here.

And then people like Richard Siegel—who later on and now is the director of the ACLU, very good guy—worked very hard on various civil rights programs on campus, and of course, he's on the list; Leonard Weinberg in political science. Then two of my students. John West, who had become the director of the EOP, Economic Equal Opportunities Program on campus, and earlier had been one of the founders of the Black Students Union. Very good guy from Las Vegas, and of course, he's on the list. John Woodruff, another black student, who had been in my classes and was very active in civil rights activities in the state and here in Reno. And then David Harvey, of course, in sociology. A real firebrand, very left-wing guy, closer than anybody else there to being what I would call “like a communist.” A good head, very sharp guy. And, of course, he was on the list. And then, of all people, Wendell Mordy. [laughter]

I mean, this list is so wonderful, because it causes you to think back in terms of what the times were like. This ass Slattery listing people like Wendell Mordy as communists. [laughter]

And then “Communist Dupes” was another list. It includes the president of the university N. Edd Miller, who was a very good man. He had a hell of a time. Nobody I know could have handled this period with the grace that he did, taking the kind of guff he did from all sides, constant criticism from the community, from the state legislature, from the regents, and then trying very hard to understand student problems and getting himself in deep there.

I can remember a time I *very* much regret. I'm ashamed of the time when I was walking down by Morrill Hall—I think that was

1969—and the black students who were enraged at something that they accused him of doing with respect to a civil rights program on campus, had set up a picket line and were chanting slogans about Edd Miller as a racist. As much as that bothered me as I went by, here were all my students on a picket line calling, “Hey, come on Prof, come on Prof.”

And I found myself walking with them, asking them what they were doing, yet I was on the picket line. When I left, I thought, “What in hell am I doing here?”

This is one great regret I had, because I admired N. Edd Miller. I had a lot of respect for him. Not that the decisions he had made would be ones that I would make or even approve of, but I could not have handled the situation anywhere near as well as he did. I wouldn't have. It's not my bag. I would have made a mess of it very quickly.

So, here I was on a picket line in which the chant was that N. Edd Miller is a racist. Here were all my students, all the Black Student Union and people that I had known—not only blacks, but there were a number of white students.

*But how else could you have handled it?*

Oh, I don't know. I wasn't thinking. I was just walking by saying, “What are you guys doing? How long are you going to be here?” and all that, and I was walking with them, you see. Later on when I saw N. Edd Miller, I said, “Hey Edd, I was on a picket line denouncing you as a racist. I really didn't mean it, old man. I didn't say it. I was there, but . . .” You know, I really felt . . . He was so very gracious about it and said, “I almost joined them myself!” [laughter] What a man! What a man.

*Well, so overall, you really think as an administrator he was responsive to a lot of the students?*

Oh, more than anybody that I could think of would have been. He saw people. During periods of great contention with the Asian students, with the Hispanic students, with the Indian students, he saw their delegations, talked to them, tried to work things out.

But he was just one guy. What could he do? He had a Board of Regents who was ready to fire everybody and were being pushed to do so on campus—anybody that had been tagged.

Slattery's list was considered by most people on campus as ridiculous. It made a laughing stock of him. Yet on the other hand, it fired up a lot of right-wing members of the community who saw this as an opportunity.

*Well, how polarized do you think opinions were on campus?*

Quite polarized. But there was a middle group waiting to hear and who were wondering what was going on. You know how students are. A lot of them had never been confronted with problems of this kind. They didn't know what to make of it.

And there was a reactionary group on campus, partly from the fraternities. Not “they”, not all, but their leadership and the fraternity councils were very upset with the moves that we and others had made about the black clauses that they had had; their discriminations of blacks in the community, their refusal for a long period of time to help to do anything about it. We had pushed on that and finally had gotten some move in that direction. So there was a lot of animosity among some of those guys.

And then among them were some we used to call “Aggies” from the agriculture department, who were part of the group with a long history at this university called the Sundowners. The Sundowners—I think it was 1967 or 1968—had lost their charter from the university because of our complaints. Because they were really racist, or they sounded like racists, and they acted like racists. And they’re the ones that all the way back to the 1920s and 1930s that had blackface skits and all sorts of blackfaced events at homecoming and openly used what would be looked upon now as antique reactionary language. “Nigger this,” and, “Nigger that.” And so, these guys represented a force of reaction against any civil rights movement.

*You said also that the John Birch Society was frequently on campus.*

There were representatives of groups of this kind on student committees who would invite John Birch Society people to speak on campus and who would withdraw ASUN funds or . . . .

*Did you ever go to any of those?*

Oh, I may have. I don’t remember. I certainly heard enough about it.

*I just wondered how well attended it was. When I asked about polarization, I was trying to find whether you would characterize the university’s reaction to that era as moderate or extreme.*

Well, it varied, and it depended on what was going on. There were deep divisions within the university when certain events took place. I’ll talk about some of those later. But, you know, the *Sagebrush* was certainly a valuable document for that period, because

you could tell pretty much what students were thinking. And it varied from a progressive, tolerant view supportive of civil rights to denouncing actions on campus as being too far left or divisive. You have to go through that whole period to see.

But I must say that the student newspaper became much better during the 1960s than it was at the beginning of the 1960s. It had been pretty much a right-wing type of campus paper, not only politically, but in terms of social issues. But it improved all through the 1960s. That and the local press are good indicators. As I said, I have a fairly good collection of that stuff at Special Collections.

But there were these repeated invitations to very right-wing spokesmen to come on campus which found very little opposition. I don’t know how big their audiences were, but there was a substantial number of students and townspeople who would come to hear them. And they would denounce everything from Martin Luther King to the civil rights movement to student activities in the South. Our students had gone down with SNCC to the South.

I think I have mentioned that Martin Luther King was invited to speak here. In fact, I was part of the group that invited him, and he wasn’t able to come [Fall, 1964]. And I really wanted him to come, because I thought it would be as enlightening and meaningful to this university and this area as when I saw him while I was teaching at the University of Utah in 1961, I guess it was—1960 or 1961.

He had come to the university [in Utah] to speak, and it was packed, a large auditorium, as I remember. And he gave this remarkable speech. It may be recorded, and I would certainly like to have it. It was a tremendous speech toward the end of his life about the importance of the civil rights

movement and what it meant not only to blacks in the South but to minorities throughout the country and to the country as a democratic nation—as a multi-ethnic nation.

It was a brilliant speech. And, afterwards, there was a question period. I remember at one point, a Mormon minister rose and said, “Dr. King, I’ve heard what you’ve had to say, and it’s very interesting, and some of it is something we should all take very great care to give attention to, but I wanted to ask you a personal question, Dr. King. How is that you, a man of the cloth, a man of God, can stand upon a podium before a group of people and call for action, call for laws against the moves that are being made against you and others? I don’t understand how you can do that. You are a man of the cloth. You should be preaching the word of God and not calling for this kind of law.” I forget exactly the words the man used, but, nevertheless, that was his point.

But King’s answer I think I can remember entirely was, “Brother, my friend, I do understand you. I understand what you mean, I understand what you want of me. And all I can say is this. All I wish to call for is that there be laws, that there be protection for people like me while people like you are learning to love me.” [laughter] It brought the house down. It was one of the most beautiful things. He did it with such warmth and such sympathy, “For people like me until you can learn to love me. Until that happens, I want some protection. I want to see laws.” It was just beautiful, and I thought how wonderful it would be if he could come to the university during that period and do the same thing.

We invited Dr. Leonard Jeffries from San Jose State, who was a very well-known left-wing black leader. He came and spoke to a

fairly large group, and he was quite well-received by many of the students on campus. And Harry Edwards—this was the man who had asked American athletes not to support the Olympics. There was a lot of press, and people were very angry with him. Nevertheless, he came up and got a good reception. I’m trying to recall if this was the same period when I asked St. Clair Drake from Stanford to come. Yes, he did come up, and I think it was during the same period. He was magnificent—a great scholar; he was the guy who did the study of Chicago, one of the first, really, studies of race relations.

*Was he a sociologist?*

A sociologist and something of an anthropologist. He did a study of race relations in Chicago. I forget the name of his co-author, but it was one of the early sociological studies of race relations, and on top of that by a black scholar.

I had known him earlier because he had some interest in Liberia and in the Peace Corps. He and I had been together on a number of junkets. We were called the Bobsy twins for various Peace Corps training sessions, to talk about sociology and anthropology, and we would give our take on how the Peace Corps should behave in West Africa. He was brilliant. So, we had these things going on. But always we would get this very bad press, and these people were vigorously denounced.

*As agitators?*

As agitators. Well, also that *we* were bringing them in as agitators, too.

I want to mention here that while this was going on, the black students were having quite a terrible time. They were trying to



develop programs for housing, programs for more open entrance and to recruit minority students at the university. The level of enrollment of the minorities had hardly changed at all during this period. It began to grow during the 1970s; there was a period of growth in which it reached just about where it is now. [laughter] I think there has been a recent attempt to . . . .

What a university, a state facility will do to put a cover on what they're doing is amazing. They make it look as though something's happening. At that period, they would put out reports about increasing enrollment for black students. It was mostly athletes, brought in here to play on the teams, and nobody cared too much about what they did academically. One of the things the Black Student Union was exposing and talking about was demanding a black coach and more black or minority teachers.

I mentioned earlier the one black faculty member who was brought in and stayed two years. He couldn't find any housing and had such a miserable time he left within two years. That was during 1969 that that took place, and yet there still weren't any black faculty members. So, these were some matters that the black students protested.

And also, the discrimination in town, the inability to get good jobs and good pay, the harassment and hostility that they met when they went into town. They just had no place to go. I remember two or three of the black athletes wrote articles; some of them got published in *The Forum* and even in the *Sagebrush*, saying that they had never imagined there could be such a miserable place as this academic institution. They were only here because they had gotten the athletic scholarships. Their experience was an extremely depressing one.

As I remember, one of the things they wanted was a place to meet. ASUN and various student committees had offices. And they asked, "Why shouldn't the Black Student Union or the minority students have an office for their activities?" Absolutely deadening silence about this, and nobody had any idea what to do about it.

But during that period . . . . I just recalled that the Center for Religion and Life across the street from the university was a place where *anybody* could meet. And it's to the credit of people like John Dodson and John Marschall and others who directed that operation over there.

Then Eddie Scott . . . . What was the name of his organization? I think it was called the Race Coalition, or maybe it was the Ethnic Coalition, which was a Reno organization that he started, and it had an office across the street from the university. These off-campus places where people could get together were extremely important during that period. Yes, that was a pretty heavy time.

*I wanted to ask you too, if there was the seed being sewn for a women's movement or?*

Well, yes. You asked me about that, but you know, I really don't think that got started until maybe the mid 1970s or early 1980s.

*Yes. And Ms. magazine wasn't founded until the early 1970s. But I just wondered if there was any . . . ?*

Yes. Well, there were people like Rosella Linski and others—I can't remember their names—who were talking about these issues. But really, it began to be talked about later on when affirmative action was being discussed in 1972 or 1973. And then I remember

we were meeting with representatives of women's groups, very informal groups that were beginning to talk about what was the role or place of women in the affirmative action movement. And of course ten years from there, the women's movement was *the* movement for affirmative action on campus, and the minorities had been pretty well forgotten. [laughter] That was something that was very difficult to cope with in the late 1970s, early 1980s, was the fact that nothing was happening as far as minority students were concerned or minority interests on campus. But there was a tremendous amount of action . . . .

*For the women's . . . ?*

Which, you know, one couldn't oppose, but it was ironic, you know. The point is affirmative action had really gotten the impulse that it had from the issues arriving out of minority discrimination.

*Well, it sounds like you were very aware of the issues and the problems that the minorities had. And I'm just wondering in those years if you were conscious and sensitive of the extreme lack of parity in the profession?*

Oh, yes. In fact, it was going on in our department. I think we did a fairly good job of seeing to it that there was parity in our department or raising hell when there wasn't. I remember that two or three young women in our department had justifiably complained about the fact that it took them longer to reach parity than men. However, we had relatively little problem of that kind in our department, because we started out with that in mind. We didn't hire people unless we felt we could justify their salary level. But there

was a problem about it within the university as there was everywhere, yes.

*Was there any resistance, if you can talk about it?*

By the way, we also were determined to have more women on our faculty. That doesn't always mean it was always possible.

*Were there any issues of nepotism or concerns if there was a husband-and-wife team?*

Oh, of course. Oh, yes. And we fought that.

*Because, I think there was an issue with the Mordys.*

With Brooke Mordy.

*Yes, and before that, Betty Shutler.*

Yes, and Kay Fowler and Don Fowler. And we managed to surmount that on the basis that you couldn't get people who would come if the other can't get a position, particularly when you have two *highly* qualified people, as Don and Kay certainly were.

And in terms of the Mordy affair, it was mainly a matter of seeing Mordy as an overwhelming figure up there on the hill calling his shots, and here his wife was getting a degree and all. It wasn't relevant to the nepotism rules at all. She was down at the department as a student. But later on, she did work up at DRI, and she did do some work on committees and got paid for the work that she was doing, and there was a nepotism issue raised. But I remember we fought that.

It was very hard, because nepotism is a problem. We said, "There are many other

problems besides nepotism that might be handled, like the civil rights issues on campus, and the minority issues. And here it's so ridiculous when you have two highly competent people whom the university, needs to be hiring. The issues should be, 'Are they competent?' you know, not, 'Are they related?'" [laughter]

Are they competent? And that, of course, hit home, because there were some cases, situations of true nepotism on campus where secretaries, wives of people, were hired and at high wages. True nepotism, the kind of thing that was *meant* in terms of nepotism regulation.

But we were able to surmount that. We had to. It was a small department. Oh my god, if we hadn't gotten Don and Kay Fowler, this department would have never been able to get the thing off the ground. They were very good anthropologists. Therefore, it was very hard to argue there was case of nepotism. But it took a while. Catherine had to wait a few years longer as the struggle was going on.

And the Indian students, the Native Americans, already had made some inroads that way, because there had been some scholarships that had been developed in the Education Department for Indian students. There was this little entree for them to bring in students from the high schools from throughout the state. The Indian student enrollment was not high, but it was growing, whereas for black students, it was a closed door. So, these issues were fomenting all during this period.

It was in the same time frame that N. Edd Miller, the president, established the Economic Opportunities Program with John West the first director, a black student. There were a large number of protests from the community about the Economic Opportunities

Program—this was prior to affirmative action. The idea of EOP was to establish some kind of program that would allow black students to have jobs, to have housing, to be recruited into the university on a kind of a provisional basis. There were protests that black students were receiving special privileges, preferential treatment. That's still going on, you know [with affirmative action], however, it began back there with EOP. Now, poor N. Edd Miller, he presented the EOP program because the university was in danger of losing its funds from the federal government, because they were not in compliance with the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

This was one of the things that the university had to do, and there were various ways it could be done. So, he does what he's supposed to do, and immediately he's denounced for it. When I come to think of it, the 1960s were just loaded with issues of this kind.

*Well, I've been wanting to ask you if you ever felt compromised either by your position as a chairman of the department in what you felt you wanted to do in terms of social action or supporting students, or if your involvement with the students was ever perceived as a problem, being an administrator?*

Of course, yes. And now, as far as the department is concerned, we had, I think, a fairly well-unified department. I don't remember any member of the staff ever telling me that I shouldn't be doing these things. And I think most of them were sympathetic. They're anthropologists, for god sakes! Anthropologists were always denounced as being commies, even though they might be right-wing politically, just by the nature of their work. [laughter] But I don't ever recall anyone ever telling me that as chairman, I shouldn't be doing it.

I was told by one of the deans, you know, “Warren, this is inappropriate for you to be involved in these activities when your job is to direct a department.” But I was able to do that. Our department had a pretty good program, and it was developing and growing. And I would say due to the efforts of members of our department, including myself, we were always able to get some increase of funds.

I think there was also a lot of resistance to helping us in certain sectors of the university, because they saw *me* as problematic. I worried about that. I wondered to what degree I might be an obstacle to the development of the department. In fact, many years later I quit being chairman when I felt that my role, my interests were interfering with what the department was receiving from a particular dean we had, who was extremely small-minded and a lick-spittle for administration. That was years later. But during this period [1963-1970], I don’t think so. There was so much going on that I think, in a way, a Department of Anthropology would be expected to have some voice in it.

And other members of the staff took part when they felt like it, when it was meaningful to them. But I never organized them into

any kind of action. And I don’t recall ever being criticized within the department for it.

And, of course, my classes were fairly large—particularly minority students. We had a lot of minority students doing special research work and working with various members of the staff. And anthropology was one of those departments that minority students felt comfortable in, they felt they could move within it, and, that they were going to get at least a bit of attention.

So, I don’t think so. I thought about it a lot, to what degree . . . where were the limits of what I should be doing? But I don’t know. I did what I thought best, and it worked out all right, at least during the 1960s and 1970s. So, yes, the answer is yes and no.

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Note

1. Note on list states it was copied from a reporter’s notes taken at an interview with James Slattery, March 20, 1969. Stating that “The following list was sent on university stationery to the Nevada State Legislature . . . to be used against the University as it relates to the Ways and Means Committee and University budget.”

## ANYA AND ERIK

OH, YES, 1969. Both of my kids got married, and all that was going on too. Anya, our daughter, was going to the University of California, though she wasn't really interested in going on in university. But she was doing it. A very, bright and beautiful young woman. I felt a certain amount of empathy for her in that period, because she was going through what I think I had gone through at her age, trying to find my own way, trying to . . . .

When I think of the background that both those kids had, going with us all over the country, going to Africa, going to field-work here in Nevada . . . . We never had a stable place to live. We were always moving every year somewhere else. Then I had this series of jobs at various universities, and here they were in their teens facing who they were.

I think each of them had a kind of crisis which I felt very sympathetic with. But I couldn't, as a father, be that way all the time. I had to be imperious and critical and suggest things and all that. But at the same time, when I faced their resistance, I was well aware

that if they had my genes at all, they're going to do what they're going to do. [laughter]

And my daughter, she did. She had met Jonathan Rosen, this very talented young guy at Berkeley, who was studying history at the university, European history. But he was also very much interested in theater. He had a good voice and had done a lot of work in amateur theater and musicals. I think his parents were in New York.

Oh, I have to tell one little anecdote. This was on the edge of the kind of thing one should talk about, but I think I will. While they were going together and we were living here in Reno, they came up to visit once. Anya brought Jonathan up, and we were impressed by him. He was a very able young guy, very talented, very imaginative, very creative. He and they developed the Transformance Theater that was fairly successful, which I won't go into now.

So, anyway they came up to visit, and we gave them each a room. And that's when I faced the 1960s: "What's the meaning of this?"

My daughter came to me and asked, and I said, "Look, will you just at least be just a little bit receptive to your parents? This is what we do."

"Do you mean, we have to be married before we sleep in the same room?" you know, that kind of thing. And, if you knew my daughter, you would know how effective she can be under these circumstances. [laughter] I mean, she was really undermining my moral stance, like, "Who the hell . . . ? What's going on here?"

But I just said, "Look, it's got to be that way. That's just the way we are." And I said, "You know, it's not just us. We have a large family. And Jonathan's from a fairly large family, too."

I can give back as good as I get, you know. [laughter] So, anyway, they did it their way. And at one point, Jonathan, whom I really liked, yet I have to tell this story, because to me it's a beautiful sign of the times . . . . He came to me while he was here and says, "Warren, you know, Anya and I are living together."

And I said, "I know that. That's fine."

And he said, "You know, you and Kathy may want us to get married, but, you know, we're not ready to get married. Do you have any objection to us going on living together?"

I thought it was a silly question, you know, because they already were. And I said, "Well, I have no objection, excepting why are you asking?"

"Well, because people make something of this, and I don't want to have any difficulty with you people, because I like you and admire you," and all that.

And I said, "Well, thank you." Then I said, "Have you asked your folks?" [laughter] "Have you asked *your* folks?" Well, that brought that conversation to a *dead* end. Because it's the last thing in the world he would

have ever raised with his mother and father, who would have been very traditional about it. They were sophisticated, intelligent people, but they would not have put up with that, or at least would not have allowed themselves to be in a position of supporting it.

So, I said, "Well, why don't you get married?"

He said, "Well, marriage is just a piece of paper. It doesn't mean anything."

I said, "Then if it's that simple, why don't you do it? And then you have resolved this whole problem, you know. Maybe it's a good thing to do."

Well, he hadn't been expecting that kind of response. I think he was really hoping that we would be chagrined and authoritarian and all that so that they could feel that they were doing the right thing. [laughter]

But, I just said, "Look, we can't tell you what to do under these circumstances. And if you and Anya love each other and you feel that way, are living together and you think that it might go on a while, why not do that, you know?" I said, "Also for your parents' sake. It makes it easier for you to deal with your parents about all this." And I said, "I feel very honored that you felt that you could talk to me about it and not your parents." [laughter]

Well, anyway, they got married, and it was quite a wonderful marriage. And the ceremony was here in Nevada with his relatives, a wonderful Jewish family from New York. His Uncle Dave was quite a guy—loaded with humor, with Jewish anecdotes and things of that kind. And his mother and father, who we love and have a lot of respect for, they all came to Reno.

We put them up in hotels and motels. We had a little house down in the south of town, and we had the marriage ceremony in there with, of all people, Reverend John

Dodson from the Center of Religion and Life, whom both of them liked. Anya knew him from the university when she was here.

They didn't want a traditional ceremony. In fact, they wanted to write their own statement for John to read. Jonathan's parents were a little askance at this. You know, "Can't you two do anything in an ordinary way? I mean, can't you just do it for us? Even though it's your ceremony." These are things parents do.

But Anya and Jonathan were adamant. They wanted it their way. They felt they were doing enough just to have the family together. [laughter] There had been this effort on their part to make things right.

So, John Dodson came, and they gave him a little statement, which was all right, very nice, and they were married right there in our living room. It was very pleasant. John was wonderful, because he was able to bridge, I would say, all faiths in one.

*And cultures: New York . . . .*

Yes, for the good of the assembled, and then put it in a context that was meaningful to Anya and Jonathan in terms of their own interests and their lives.

And Uncle Dave had picked up his glass and broke it in the circle, "Mazeltov!" He was going to have one Jewish element. It was beautiful!

I remember going up to him and saying, "Dave, you have made this wedding great."

He was a little worried, because he had done this on our rug. I said, "Look, everything drops on this rug, and that's some great stuff to have on the rug!" [laughter]

So that little anecdote I had to tell. Anya and Jonathan, immediately on what little gifts that they had received, little gifts from his family, took off on a long honeymoon that

lasted for months throughout Europe. And that's another story all together. The end of that is still going on. [laughter] It's still going on. But they were off and having a marvelous time, tooling around as young American hip-types, you know, living very simply from household to household.

*Well, had Erik gotten his CO [conscientious objector status] at this point?*

Well not much later, we had another wedding. But anyway, yes, Erik in 1967 and 1968—in fact, while we were in Africa in 1967—was in the midst of . . . I think I mentioned this before, his struggle for conscientious objector status which in Nevada had not been given to anybody on the non-religious or the conscientious ground he had asked for. And I must say that he did a very good job. He worked very hard, very intelligently, to learn what his status was and what the limits were. There was a young lawyer here in town who was very helpful to him. And he went to Asilomar, to the American Friends Service and others, and took courses on just this question of the conscientious as against the religious stance.

He developed enormously during that year. It was great. I have great respect for him and what he did. And he finally won the case. He was the first in Nevada ever to get a conscientious objector status.

*I bet it's very unusual anyway.*

I don't know how many after that, but his was the first. Then he got alternative service. He had to spend two or three years assigned first to the Nevada State Mental Hospital. He put in a full two or three years. In fact, he even took a course in school-bus driving as a possible alternative. I don't think

he ever did that, but he was doing all sorts of things to carry out the alternative service requirement. And I must say his commitment to what he was doing at the hospital was, as far as I'm concerned, every bit as good if not better than a lot of the guys who had to go to Vietnam.

He put in full-time. He learned a hell of a lot about various kinds of problems that emerged. He could have graduated as an assistant technician with a psychologist. He had a great experience and worked very hard and really took it seriously.

In fact, Kathy, was it during that period that Erik was doing a lot of painting?

Kd: I think it's when he began. It was while we were gone [in Liberia].

Yes, he had been interested in art, and he had gone to the university here in the Art Department. Also, he was interested in social work, social welfare work and sociology. Then when this all happened and he was at the hospital, I think he got very seriously interested in painting.

He did a lot of painting. We still have a couple of those pieces. There was a period in which he got very discouraged and dumped everything that he had collected, but we have a few pieces. He did some things while he was at the hospital that are just beautiful—impressions of some of the inmates. That was a very important period in life, wasn't it? He still remembers that as powerful.

Kd: I think at that time he had switched to being more in the Art Department.

Yes, but he was also taking courses, I think, in sociology with Dave Harvey and people like that.

Kd: Yes.

There were a number of people who he had worked with that he admired. So that was going on partly while we were in Africa and when we got back.

And I remember the letters that I got from him while he was struggling with his CO status were quite moving. I have kept them because they're beautiful examples of the issues young guys were struggling with.

*It must have really resonated with the quandaries you felt for completely different reasons, but the quandary you were in before the war, World War II.*

Yes, of course, Penny. I just took that for granted. Why, sure. I had struggled with the conscientious objector status idea. I found the outlet of going to sea, which I wanted to do anyway. I could go in the Merchant Marine and not be a gun-carrying member of the armed forces. Yes, I found a compromise. I found an alternate service, which it was. It was legally an alternate service. My draft board gave me that as my draft status. Had that not been there for me, I think I would have found myself in the same situation as Erik.

*Now, the Peace Corps was not an alternative, was it, for people seeking CO status?*

I don't remember.

*I don't either.*

And I don't think so, or he would have done it or I would have encouraged him to do it. I don't think so.



*I wonder if politically that was impossible. Probably there's something in the Peace Corps' charter that said that it cannot be.*

Well, I seem to recall there were issues about Peace Corps people returning and being drafted or not being able to go because they had to go before a board to get released to go. There was something going on, but I don't recall at this point.

So, anyway, Erik had gone through this, and he became dedicated to painting. And he still is dedicated to painting, a starving artist, literally, at times. But that's his commitment. That's what he wants to do.

Then he met this young woman, this attractive and very intelligent young woman Joan Gearhart here in Reno, who was interested in education and history. She later became very interested in sign language and deaf-mute people.

They fell madly in love, and within a few months at the end of 1969 they were getting married. They had lots of friends in this area, and many of their friends were people that I'd worked with at the university, students. And both of them were good friends to many of the black and Indian students that we knew and had been very supportive of their issues.

Joan, interestingly enough, was interested in linguistics. I mentioned that she later worked with sign language. I wonder what she's doing with that now? But anyway, she was working with Bill Jacobsen, the linguist here and who had connections with our department. And she and Erik got deeply involved and decided to get married the end of the year. The arrangements for it were almost

taken out of our hands. Her parents organized the reception and all that.

Where did we have it and who did the marriage? John Dodson, from the Center of Religion and Life. [laughter] All these kids knew of that place, even those who had no religious interests.

And the wonderful thing about that center under Dodson and later John Marschall, it was wide open that way. It was socially open and not necessarily requiring of any kind of religious activity. It was also a place where the various groups on campus who had religious interests met, but it was wide open for others, and certainly for my kids, obviously.

So, after the wedding, the reception at the Center for Religion and Life was packed. There must have been two or three hundred young people there. And it was a wonderful, wonderful affair. It was great. And a lot of people from university they knew, and Kathy and I knew, came.

And so, that's the end of the 1960s, yes, 1969, with two marriages and all these other things going on. And we, I think, were going to Indiana for six months.

Oh, by the way, Joan and Erik were here for about a year continuing with school and Erik painting, and they decided to go to the Bay Area. They went to Berkeley, where Erik went to the California College of Arts and Crafts and eventually got his master's degree there.

But Joan worked and wasn't happy at all, because she wasn't doing what she wanted to do. And eventually what we hoped was going to be a great marriage wore out. And we felt very badly about that, and so did Erik, and I'm sure Joan did, too.



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## GOVERNOR'S DAY AND THE BSU

**A**NYWAY, THE END of the 1960s, and in that period, there was a tremendous undercurrent going on of unfulfilled promises and obligations with the university. I'm trying to think exactly actually what was going on there.

I had mentioned the Kent State matter in early May, 1970. I was in Indiana at the time, but when I came back at the end of that spring semester, the Governor's Day affair had taken place. That was right after Kent State, and Governor Laxalt was going to speak at Manzanita Bowl, the old football field, in support of American armed forces, ROTC, and a number of other things of that kind.

And the students—a very large number of students—were protesting the point of the Governor's Day speech. There was a large demonstration that day, and as Laxalt's caravan came into the university campus, there were so many students—some of them sitting in front of the vehicle and stopping the governor's vehicle.

Well, at that time you didn't do that in Nevada. Students just didn't interfere with

the coming and going of dignitaries like the governor. There was a lot of shouting, a lot of chanting, with the Kent State thing partly in their minds and the Nixon-Cambodia venture.

I wasn't here. I was in Indiana, but I certainly got reports and heard about it from everybody I knew. It was really amazing to hear about that much student support for the demonstration. The black students were really in leadership of it, they and some other minority student leaders. When the ceremony started at the Manzanita Bowl, they started chanting and drowned out some of the introductory speakers. And a number of the black students went down on the field and sat there to interfere with any of the marching events that were going to take place.

Among them was Paul Adamian of the English department. A lot of the students came down out of the bleachers, and of course it created a real mess. I mean, the ceremony was not able to go on, and here was Governor Laxalt unable to speak because of the demonstration.

The police were called; campus police and town police came in and rounded up a lot of students, arrested I forget how many, and arrested Paul Adamian as the leader of this event, which, of course, he was not. In fact, later it was suggested that he was out there trying to get the students not to create any more problems.

Well, Paul was the kind of guy who might very well have just entered right into it. And there he was, a faculty member, in the middle of the thing. There were other faculty members around, but he was probably more outspoken. He was picked up with a lot of others and charged with creating a disturbance.

Adamian was a very interesting guy, and I remember him with considerable good will. Way back in the beginning in the early 1960s and the beginnings of the Human Relations Action Council, he was right there at the founding. He was very active in developing programs for ethnic studies for the various ethnic groups on campus, which later were partly implemented.

He was a very outspoken, left-wingish sort of a guy. Certainly not a communist, but very progressive and liberal and courageous. [laughter] And so, here was this young guy in the English Department charged with very serious offenses, as far as the state was concerned and the regents.

Now, I don't want to go into detail, because I've written about it elsewhere<sup>1</sup> and others have. But the upshot of this was that the regents, pressured by certain people in the state, the administration, and by very conservative townspeople, first barred Adamian from his classes and eventually fired him.

*Were you reading it in the paper or were you getting letters?*

Oh, I was in touch with people that I knew on campus. By phone I was talking to people, getting letters, and it was in the newspapers. It wasn't a big story [in the East], but it was available. And yes, everybody I knew here had been involved so that I was hearing about it.

*Were you surprised? I mean, do you remember?*

I was surprised at the degree of attention that it got from the regents, who almost unanimously were out to get rid of Adamian, get him off campus. He was looked upon as a troublemaker, as a potential thorn in their side. There were a lot of reasons, and I can't go into them, but there were a lot of political reasons why this was taking place at the time. And he was an apt target. He was just what the conservatives needed at that point.

*Sort of as a focus or focal point or like a scapegoat?*

Well, as a scapegoat, as an example of what's going to be done with people like this. An interesting rumor and public case had been made of his role, which turned out to be inaccurate, that he had led it and spurred it on, and that he was the hero of the left-wing and the minority students. To some extent, that's true, he was greatly admired for the position he took.

So, there was a great move on to get rid of him, to get him fired, fined, and even to run him out of academia, to take away his credentials. I mean, it was the works that they wanted to pile on him.

Well, I don't want to go into it at length, but for a number of months, this went on. When I came back, it was still going on. We appeared before the Board of Regents, and 1,000 students signed a petition on his be-

half. Totally useless, because the aim was to get rid of Adamian and to fine him heavily, to ruin his credentials. I expect they even wanted to put him in jail. It was amazing.

It was amazing, actually, having the opportunity to see those who were out to stop any kind of civil rights activities at the university. And so, this went on for months with poor President N. Edd Miller caught between the regents, the state legislature, the townspeople, and the campus. I mean, it was a rugged time.

Eventually, Adamian left. Oh, he couldn't even come onto campus; he couldn't teach his classes. He was a clear and present danger! And so eventually, making this long and very important story short, he had to leave the university. I think he finally won the case against the Board of Regents. In fact, I was on the faculty committee that supported him before the Board of Regents. And their legal case fell apart, and most of the charges were withdrawn.

But that was too late. He was sick of this whole place, and he took off. I think he went off to California, to the coast someplace. I saw him once just briefly when I went down there, and then I lost track of him.

But the Adamian affair, the Governor's Day affair, was to me a kind of diagnostic at the end of the 1960s and that early period of 1970s. When that was over, I think the buried repercussions went on for the next year or two. When I got back here to the university, I could just feel a sense of hopelessness on the part of a lot of the students about civil rights. The black students were still pushing and pressing; they were amazing. The Black Student Union was a remarkable organization. There were not many. They had about ten to sixteen members, and I don't know how many black students there were on campus—hardly more than that.

And then there were the other students' minority organizations, and there was an Associated Student Organization that was pretty much backing civil rights issues on campus. And during 1970 and 1971, you could just feel this undercurrent of . . .

*Do you feel it was effective in curtailing any faculty support? I don't mean any, but I mean, do you think that it . . . ?*

Oh, I think so. That's what it was meant to do. You know, because of our little councils and committees and things like that, people would be more careful. And there was also criticism of Adamian by some faculty, you know, that he had overstepped. And some people didn't like his political orientation anyway.

So, in that period of 1970, 1971, the only group that was really pushing was the Black Student Union. And they were continuing to push for a place to meet—black students, supported by a number of white students and other minorities. There were one or two Native American students and leadership who would regularly take part or go to the Black Student Union meetings. A couple of Spanish students and Asian students were very active—not all, but there was some kind of a coalition. The black students sort of gave the leadership. And there were a number of us, faculty members and students, who were supportive of them and taking part.

The next event was the occupation of the student union. Now, when did that take place? Oh, October of 1971. Yes, for two years they had been asking for some kind of place on campus. They were using the Center for Religion and Life, but that was not very accessible to them when they wanted to meet. They were even offered rooms by outside people off campus. But they felt that they had

a right, these students, to have a place in the Associated Student's Union, too.

*Well, it's a form of recognition, yes.*

Why sure, recognition to have a space. And so they had been pushing for this for a long time, and finally in October . . . I forget what triggered it. Something triggered this. They occupied the offices of the student vice-president. And just like Governor's Day, you'd think that the world would come to an end. Nevada was about to be raided by blacks and communists, you know.

I remember going to visit them. I saw Dave Harvey and others, and, in fact, I tried to talk them out of staying. I said, "You've made your point, but if you stay, I don't know if it's going to really be that helpful."

Oh, no, they were determined. And I remember two or three of the leaders, they were very sharp young guys, and they were determined they were going to sit it out. "This has gone on long enough. This time, we're going to stay here until we're given an office. We're going to use this office."

And they stayed; they were there for two or three days with growing antagonism developing in the town and elsewhere. There were editorials in the local papers with some even taking a kind of sympathetic role: "Why don't they give them an office, for god's sake?"

But most of them were saying, you know, "They have no right to do this. You can't let a minority of people do this to a university or this town."

It was drummed up into an enormous issue, and there were lines of police cars all the way up and down Virginia Street. The state patrol and the local police were out in full force. You'd think that there was a war going on.

And I remember one day Dave Harvey and myself and a number of others . . . a number of faculty members very much involved in our Human Relations Action Council were there who went up into the room to talk to the black students. But they weren't going to leave. The police had given the ultimatum; the town had given an ultimatum. N. Edd Miller was very upset. I'd never seen him like that, but he felt he had to do something.

He had to take leadership, and it wouldn't be giving in to them if they wouldn't leave. And I remember, he told them, you know, "I *will* do something about this, but you must leave that office, because we really can't cope with this kind of situation."

And the police had given the ultimatum that at a certain time they had to be out or, you know, there would be trouble. And so we had gotten in—about six or seven of the faculty members and some students—had gotten inside the glass doors of the ASUN building there. And we had tried to talk to these guys, and they were adamant.

So, we decided to stay in the lobby overlooking the student plaza, just to guard the doors. There must have been fifteen of us or so.

I remember Dave Harvey, a big, heavy-set guy, and they put him up against the door, because there was a large crowd of not only supporters for the students inside, but a large crowd of Sundowners and others—as we called them, the "Aggies." That's very unfair, but that's what they were called . . . who were demanding that the black students get out or they were going to come in and drag them out.

And they were all crowded in front of the door, pounding on the door and trying to get in. I remember this went on for about an hour

or two, and I thought they were going to break the doors down. Oh yes, they were even getting rocks and things to try to do that. And the police were beginning to line up. It was getting close to the deadline.

And we held the doors. But eventually, the doors began to give way. All of us were up there holding the doors against this crowd of students, some friendly and some unfriendly. You couldn't tell anymore. The friendly ones were going to come in to protect the black students, and the unfriendly ones would come and beat them up.

Man, it was a mess, a total mess. And finally, the police came, and we had to give way. They weighed in, and we had to move out of the way. They went in and got all of the black students, handcuffed them, put them in paddy wagons, and took them downtown. It was practically the whole Black Student Union and four or five of the major athletes of the university who were in the group.

And so, we went down to the jail and talked to them, and said we were going to support them. We finally got them out. But they weren't allowed on campus. It was an awful time. They were going to be dismissed from the campus like Adamian and couldn't go on campus until the hearings took place.

And a number of them did get charged with creating a disruption and trespassing and all that sort of thing. I can't recall now just how it ended, but it ended badly.

*They didn't get their room.*

They didn't get their room. They got something like it, which they turned down, because it wasn't what they wanted. It went on and on for quite a while. It was very depressing. It was depressing to them and it was

depressing to the student body, especially the progressive students and to the faculty. And I think even N. Edd Miller saw this whole thing as a horrible let-down.

Nobody knew what to do about it. The interesting thing about that was that no matter what kind of program was suggested nobody was able to implement it because there was just so much disagreement. So, that is the situation things were in.

*I just wanted to ask you: do you think if there had been any support from the NAACP, and I'm not saying there wasn't, but do you think for an action like that that it would have taken some significant support from the . . . ?*

Oh, there was support, but it wasn't strong enough. There was the NAACP here. I was a member of it and all that. They spoke in support of the black students, but there was not a critical mass and they weren't in positions to make things happen. I mean, how are you going to move the police department? How are you going to move the city council? The state legislature?

But they made themselves *heard*. Eddie Scott, I remember his little group, they joined in the demonstrations, but they didn't have much clout. It's that way in an area of this kind. The clout is money and the casinos. The casinos weren't very happy about anything going on in relation to these issues, because they had a big problem with what they had been doing, real discriminatory practices and their role in seeing to it that downtown Reno was segregated. They had a major role in that, and they weren't going to come out and support any . . .

*Do you recall if the local press was either for or against?*

Mixed. Not evenly balanced. Mostly against. But I forget now which papers. There were certain reporters and certain editorials that were somewhat sympathetic, but not enough to make a difference. So, that matter just festered until 1972 or 1973 with the beginnings of the affirmative action program, which was an entirely different level of action altogether.

*And probably different individuals? I mean, had these people graduated or left school?*

A lot of them had. I would say in that era of political controversy, civil rights action was pretty much over at this university by that time. The problems were there, there was still

the complaints, but the playing field changed. Well, actually the affirmative action program initiated throughout the country was of some help in getting implementation.

And I want to say while this was going on, 1970s, Kay Fowler and I also and directed that last session of the NSF field school in St. George, Utah. So, we spent a summer there. While all this was going on, we were doing that, too.

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Note

1. "The Ethnic Minority Experience at the University of Nevada," *Nevada Historical Quarterly* 41:4 (1998): 225-292.



## POLITICS AND PROJECTS

**N**OW YOU WERE *talking about the last ethnographic field school session with Kay and a continued development of the Great Basin conference.*

Right. Well, that was in the period of the late 1970s and early 1980s, and Kay Fowler and I were just finishing up the grant that had been given by the National Science Foundation for field schools, which had been, I think, very successful. There were a number of students who we had not only at the university, but elsewhere we held other sessions of the field school, and I think that it trained a lot of younger anthropologists in the way that we felt was important. We went on doing this in our department.

Our department was, I think, one of the few departments that put an emphasis on fieldwork—both in archaeology and ethnography—and preparing students for fieldwork. But also, I felt very positive about what had happened in the department. We now had, starting from nothing at all at the University of Nevada, a functioning department of anthropology, an independent department with a focus on the Great Basin.

And, thanks to Kay and Don Fowler, and also Donald Hardesty, this has continued. But that period was important, I think, because I knew as chairman at that point that I had done something of a job in producing a kind of department that had been envisioned earlier when I was recruited to the university.

*You had mentioned earlier that there was also the role, perhaps, of a viable department like you developed as a watchdog of sorts.*

Well, yes. This is my own personal opinion, but my view was that with the kind of activism that I was involved in, and which was accepted by the department and by other people on the campus, that the department had emerged as a kind of a leader in civil rights programs and interests on campus, and that our focus on human rights during the previous years had helped to create a condition on campus which was quite different than when we got there.

I would say that Nevada and the University of Nevada and Reno were not centers of civil rights interests back in the

1960s, but by the 1980s there had been quite a change, not only because of changes nationally and in the development of American society, but because, locally, I think we had spent quite a bit of effort on those matters, and that I had, in a sense, been an activist as chairman of the department. So I feel good about that, as well.

Now, in wrapping up, at last, an episode occurs to me as being especially significant. In the 1980s I was looking forward to retirement by 1988, and in the early 1980s there was a shift in deanship. There was a wonderful man, Dean Ralph Irwin, whom I respected greatly and with whom I had many confrontations and differences of opinion in pushing for the department. He always took my pressure for the department as something I should be doing as chairman. When he couldn't do anything about it or didn't want to, he would say so, and I would understand that, and we'd move on to the next point. But we had a very good relationship, and I would say during his tenure as dean the department made great strides, because he really was concerned and interested in seeing to it that it was a viable department, and so I had a lot of respect for him.

So when Dean Irwin left, I felt a considerable change in my relations with authority and leadership on campus. I had always been on the most friendly terms with the university's President Crowley, for example, who could be counted on to support the progressive sector of faculty and students. But the new dean, Paul Page, changed all that from the very start. There was something crabbed and guileful about him that put me on edge. I soon figured that he had come into office fully briefed by the conservative portion of the community that considered me to be among the radical activists and troublemakers on campus. I suspect that from

the outset he saw it as one of his missions to remove this blight from his college.

Obviously our encounters were stiff and unproductive. He seemed not to listen to my requests concerning the department but would look past me with a smirk, as though indicating there was nothing he could do. It was like running against the tide, and I usually came away having made no headway.

Then I recall vividly the time I went in to see him about paltry, but nevertheless urgently needed, materials—like stationery, typewriter ribbons, pencils, chalk. [laughter] I think this is when he remarked, quite seriously, that I should “prioritize.”

It was, of course, a ridiculous and caustic bit of mischief, so I merely repeated, “We need them all as soon as possible.” Perhaps I was a bit forceful, yet careful not to be antagonistic.

But he chose this moment to blow his top in the repressive, repugnant manner which he adopted on certain trying occasions. Looking past me with that characteristic smirk, he announced, as though speaking to a small assembly in the room, “We can't continue to work together. I think this is the last session we should have together.”

Thinking he was just getting rid of some venom, I started to leave and said, “Well, see you next time.”

Shaking his head, he repeated, “No, we can't see each other.”

Well, I realized I was no longer a chairman. He was the dean, and unless someone above him (“going through the channels,” again) was to intervene, that was that. So I went back to the department, told them what had happened and that they would have to nominate a new chairman. I asked that they make no protest, because I thought this guy was out to get me and maybe the department, too. Yet I am grateful to my

colleagues Don Hardesty and Bob Winzeler for going to the university president to see if there was anything that could be done about the situation. But as I would have expected, Joe Crowley said he would discuss the matter with the dean, though there was really nothing he could do by interfering with a dean's personnel decisions.

So, that was that. It was two years before my retirement, which meant that my income would be cut quite a bit—at least ten thousand a year, which was no small amount at that time.

I remember reflecting at the time that the situation was somewhat like when I was ship's delegate on the S.S. *Castle Pinkney* during wartime, when that rather deranged skipper, Frank Stuart, strutted around the decks with a gun in his holster looking for trouble—especially me, who he saw as the arch troublemaker. As I was doing my job on watch, he couldn't take a pot shot at me, much to his disappointment. It was wartime, and he could have gotten away with hit. But when we got to Curaçao in the West Indies he had the Dutch authorities come aboard and put me in irons and take me ashore. Later, when I was sent back to New York, the coast guard told me to forget it and go back to sea: the skipper was a renowned nut.

Actually, I suppose he had done me a favor. I heard that the ship had gone on to the Mediterranean and was sunk by a German submarine. I felt very badly about my shipmates in the crew and have no idea whether they survived or not. As for Frank Stuart, I must admit that I don't know or care if he survived. He really shouldn't have been allowed to be captain of a ship. He was a danger not only to the crew of the ship, but to his country.

So that episode came to my mind in connection with my fateful encounter with

poor benighted Paul Page. Though he wasn't sunk in the Mediterranean, he was later sunk in stature. He shouldn't have been hired as a dean. But when he demoted me, perhaps he did me a favor, too. I was freed from the chores of chairmanship to turn my attention to more valuable tasks—teaching, writing, and reviewing my extensive notes from fieldwork. Moreover, the dean did not have a gun or the means to put me in irons, though he may have been inclined to do so were the times commensurate. [laughter] And it may seem strange that I should juxtapose these two events recollected from so deep in the past. I guess it has to do with the sense of powerlessness in the face of the inexorable. Nevertheless, things have a way of working out.

*I wanted to ask if you have ever regretted not confronting the situation with the new dean, either for your sake or for the future of the department. Have you ever looked back on that?*

No, I don't regret that one bit, because when I look back, I know it was the right thing to do. I've been in many situations like that during my life, when you know the odds are against you, and it's best to go with the tide. Yes, it was the best thing to do, not only for me, but for the department. We have a strong department still, and I feel very good about that. I'd regret much more having done something that put it in jeopardy.

Actually, the department got more out of the situation with me out of the way at that particular time. The dean had expected a hassle and knew he had the cards to win. Only a knucklehead gets caught in that kind of game. I think Page was probably disappointed. It put the brakes on his self-appointed mission. No, I think what I did was OK.

*You stayed on after this happened?*

Oh, yes. I was a professor with tenure in the department and went on teaching and advising as usual. It's just that I was no longer chairman after all those years. And, of course, that big reversal in my income. [laughter] You have to pay the piper.

*Now about the same time, you were also working on the Great Basin Handbook [as editor of the Smithsonian Handbook of North American Indians, vol. 11: Great Basin.]?*

Yes, that was going on, too, up through the 1980s. Kay Fowler was a most valuable assistant—a co-editor. It was a big job. We spent two or three years scarcely thinking of anything else but that, though we had other tasks and commitments. So you see, it was a very busy and productive period. And being selected to edit the volume, containing the work of a number of the major scholars of the region, was a profoundly gratifying recognition of our department's role in stimulating renewed interest in Great Basin studies. I felt very good about that.

*So now you are retired, an emeritus professor.*

So-called retirement has been for me the opportunity to continue my work relieved of regular teaching duties and related chores. I enjoy lecturing on various occasions of choice, but most of all to complete unfinished writing incentives. There is so much yet to

do. However, particularly gratifying to me are the lasting friendships and the respected standing I have among the Washoe and Gola people with whom I have been so long associated. I guess I am fortunate to be able to reflect on the seven or more decades of life with few regrets and some satisfaction. And unlikely as it may seem to some, I perceive the young squirt I was at twenty and the old codger I am today as quite similar in basic personal attributes and outlook—excepting, perhaps, for the cumulative cargo of mediating experience on this crowded planet.

Let me say, finally, that I attribute my good fortune thus far not only to my striving parents and the variegated world they bore me into, but primarily to my lifelong companion of beauty and intelligence, Kathleen. Without her trust and love, our bearings, taken at innumerable points of departure, could never have been as courageous and fortunate if I were to have gone about setting any course without compass on my own—something that has happened very infrequently, I'm glad to say. And then, of course, there are Anya and Erik, who in their early years survived our many voyages together. Few could hope for more.

If my great friend and shipmate Bob Nelson were still living, I would track him down and commend him for the very accurate reading of my life as a squarehead Portugee who would have to find a course by dead reckoning. Well, I think I have, and by a very circuitous route, reached a home port.

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