**Interview with Chuck Turchick**

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

**Oral History Project**

**January 17, 2019**

**and October 10, 2018**

This project is sponsored by the Minnesota Independent Scholars Forum with funding provided by a Minnesota Historical,

Cultural and Heritage Grant.

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**Peter Simmons, Interviewer**

**January 17, 2019**

Name of interviewee: CT

Names of interviewer: PS

Recording 1

00:00:00 PS: This is January 17, 2019, and I’m interviewing Chuck Turchick for the Minnesota

Draft Board Raiders Oral History Project organized with the help of the Minnesota Independent Scholars Forum titled currently, “We Won’t Go, and We Don’t Want You To Go, Either.” My name is Peter Simmons and I have also been a draft board raider in the past or attempted to do that and I will be conducting the interview today.

And so, Chuck, I’d like you to say something about why we’re here talking with you, the events of 1970 that are the highlights of this interview that we’re doing.

CT: Well, I guess I’m here because I was involved in two draft board raids in 1970. The first one was on the night of February 28, March 1, where a group called the Beaver 55 destroyed all the 1A files—that means those who were eligible for immediate induction and the 1AO files—those are subject to immediate induction as Conscientious Objectors. We destroyed [unclear] all the 1A files in the draft boards of Minneapolis, St. Paul and the state headquarters which is also in St. Paul; state headquarters of the Selective Service System, that is. And in July—on the night of July 10 and 11, I was involved with a group of people that did draft board raids, or attempted to do draft board raids at five towns in outstate Minnesota. One of the places was called off; one of the places was successful; and in three of the places in the middle of the night we were caught in the act and subsequently tried, convicted and imprisoned. That group became known as the Minnesota 8.

PS: All right, so now I’d like you to describe your background origins. Are you from Minnesota? Native?

CT: I’m from Minneapolis, north side of Minneapolis, North High School [now North Community High School, 1500 James Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN]; lived here pretty much all of my life. That’s about it.

PS: And you were born when?

CT: I was born in 1946, first of the baby boomers, I think.

PS: All right, and that was in Minneapolis?

CT: Correct.

PS: So you went to school, high school, in Minneapolis. Tell a little bit about your upbringing; what your family was like. Do you have siblings?

CT: I do. I have a brother and a sister. My sister’s two years older; we were quite the rivals. My brother was seven years older so that was sort of another generation. My mother did not work outside the home; she was what was called in those days a housewife. And my father was a Hebrew schoolteacher at the Talmud Torah [Talmud Torah of Minneapolis, at that time located at 1616 Queen Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN] of Minneapolis.

PS: Say that again. At where?

CT: The Talmud Torah of Minneapolis.

PS: Okay, so your religious background is that when you were a boy, anyway, you were what? A reformed Jew? Practicing?

CT: Our family was conservative Jew; we kept kosher. I still don’t eat ham; I never developed a taste for ham.

PS: Never had a chance, huh?

CT: Or lobster; I don’t think lobster is kosher. Yeah, I grew up—

PS: In a religious home atmosphere?

CT: Yes.

PS: Okay, but you went to public schools?

CT: Went to public schools but then I went after public school every day from the second grade on, normally it’s the third grade, but I started in the second grade; to Hebrew school for an hour and fifteen minutes; an hour and ten minutes, five days a week. And that was the place where my father taught, the Talmud Torah of Minneapolis.

PS: Okay, so talk about what your high school years were like. You told me once that, in the context of the Vietnam War, you remembered writing letters to the school newspaper or things like that that you had—

CT: Well, that’s interesting. I don’t remember telling you that. I did write some stuff in the school newspaper, some stuff about civil rights, about how everyone talked about the segregation in the south was horrific and, of course, like any high school, we sat separately in

00:05:00 the lunchroom. Our school was about 10 to 15 percent African-American and all the blacks

 sat to one side and all the whites—very much like prison turned out to be. All the blacks sat at

one section and all the Latinos sat in another section and the whites sat in a third section. I wrote something in the school newspaper I remember about that. I don’t think I wrote anything about the Vietnam War at that time. I graduated in 1964 so that would have been early in our involvement.

PS: It wasn’t really happening much then.

CT: Right. The big escalation that President Johnson [U.S. President Lyndon Baines Johnson (1908-1973)] initiated was in 1965. The Gulf of Tonkin happened in August of 1964 and I graduated the previous June ’64. However, it was kind of interesting. I remembered this a few days ago—that I gave a speech for my graduation class. There were two of us that gave speeches. And in the speech that I gave I was critical of the school board. There was something they were doing—I’m not sure if it was cutbacks on arts programs or music programs—something like that. And in my speech I was really critical of the school board and somebody from the school board; I think it might have been the chair of the school board; was at our graduation ceremony. I remember after my speech, part of which I think I copied from a book called *The Mature Mind* [*The Mature Mind*, by Harry Allen Overstreet, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.; BOMC edition (1949)] or something, no one ever knew about that. But—or at least chunks of it. After the speech someone came up to my mother and said how thrilled she was with the speech that I had given and that she wanted to get a copy of it to send to her son in Vietnam.

Now this was before the massive escalation in 1965 that I mentioned so it was kind of interesting there was some sort of omen that Vietnam was going to play a major role in my life.

PS: And then, of course, it did, and when did that start to loom as a large concern for you?

CT: When I got to college, of course.

PS: Which was?

CT: I started college right after high school so I started in the fall of 1964 and I’d say by 1966, there was quite a bit of antiwar activity at the University of Minnesota where I went. And for those of us—for males, once we graduated; by the time I graduated in ’68, we were going to face the draft because they were eliminating deferments for some post-baccalaureate education in certain fields. Like I was going to go to law school; you could no longer get a deferment in 1968 for law school.

PS: But the student, the undergraduate student deferments were still at least partly in place?

CT: They were and I accepted my—what was it—2S—was that what the student deferment was called? I accepted the 2S deferment for all four years. There were people who were already turning in their draft cards as early as 1965, I think they were, but I was just on the fringes. I would go to any antiwar events on the campus, but I wasn’t really a big activist or anything.

But in my senior year, or it might have—yeah, it was in my senior year, I took a course outside of the university and I think it was what was called the Free University at the time and it was a course in nonviolence and it was taught by someone named Fred Ojile and at that time, I came to the realization that it was likely that I would join the draft resistance and refuse induction if I were called to the military. And as it turned out, Fred Ojile later became one of the Milwaukee 14, a group who destroyed draft files in Milwaukee in September, I think, of 1968. And so I decided at that point that I probably was going to refuse induction when called. Then I got involved a little bit more in groups on campus, the Students Against Selective Service and groups off campus like the Twin Cities Draft Information Center.

I probably, in most of my senior year, I was involved with the Draft Information Center’s newsletter project as well as leafletting once or twice a week at six o’clock in the morning,

00:10:00 young men coming in to be inducted at the old Federal Building [Old Federal Building, 212

 Third Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN] in Minneapolis or coming in for their pre-induction

physicals. We would go there at six o’clock in the morning and leaflet them as they came in the doors—a leaflet describing what their options were, both their legal options but not encouraging them to resist by refusing induction.

So, what was I going to do when I graduated college? I didn’t know. So I went into VISTA [AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America)], and I accepted that deferment, too. You got an occupational deferment for this; deferment means that they’ll just defer your induction until some—or your possible induction—until some future date.

PS: So that was in 1968?

CT: That was. And so I accepted the 2S [2A, in fact] for VISTA. VISTA was Volunteers in Service to America. It was a one-year commitment that you made. Sort of like, it was called at the time, the domestic Peace Corps. AmeriCorps—I think VISTA still exists, but AmeriCorps is very similar to what VISTA was, AmeriCorps today. And I knew I was going to turn in my draft card at the next massive draft card turn-in, which was scheduled for November of 1968. But I was off in distant southern Illinois at the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge—a job corps training center which it had become.

And I was—when you had a draft card you get two cards actually. One was a card that you got when you registered for the draft, called your registration card, and the other was a card that you got whenever your classification changed like from 2S, which was my student deferment to 2A, which was occupational. Whenever that changed, you’d get a new classification card in the mail. So you’re supposed to have these two cards in your possession at all times. It’s still illegal to burn your draft card. It’s not illegal to burn your flag if you own the flag, but it is illegal to burn your draft card—still. And I couldn’t find one of my registration cards. All I had was my classification card.

PS: And when was this?

CT: This was in—when I was going to send it in as part of a group and I was going to send it in to the group in Minneapolis who were turning in their cards and all I had was one card. So I sent it in with just one line of explanation, that I regret that I have but one card to give for my country.

And I don’t think my parents knew that I was going to turn in my draft card. I don’t even know if they knew that I had already decided that I was going to refuse induction if I was drafted. But somehow they found out that I had turned it in in November of 1968. That didn’t please them.

So I ended VISTA. Do you want me to just keep going?

PS: Well, let’s back up a little bit.

CT: Yeah.

PS: You talked about doing some things when you were a university student on campus at the university here. I’d like you to talk a little more about that. What was happening on campus during those years that you were either taking part in or aware of? What the atmosphere was like; student organizations, formal or informal that you might have had contact with; and other things that you were doing. And what you were doing in school leading up to your graduation, too. So what some of these things were that you took part in, whether you were a big actor or just on the fringes, and the other things that you were doing because you were a student on campus.

CT: Okay, well, I don’t remember. The campus was not as active as people remember I don’t think, or like to portray, at least through my graduation in June of 1968. There was—it was a minority that were antiwar activists, anti-draft activists on campus. And one of the groups that was the organizer for the anti-draft activities on campus, and as well antiwar activities was called SASS, which was an acronym for Students Against Selective Service. And I remember one demonstration that we held that just sticks in my mind the most is when we went to the Armory building and we had some bugles and marched around the Armory [Minneapolis Armory, 500–530 Sixth Street South Minneapolis, Minnesota].

PS: The Armory is where the ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] was practicing.

00:15:00 CT: The Armory is where the ROTC program is on campus and still is on campus. And we

 marched around the Armory building seven times like in the Book of Joshua at the City of

Jericho. And I did see—I actually witnessed—and I was not on any drugs at the time as far as I know. I did witness the walls come tumbling down just as it happened in the Book of Joshua. Everybody named it “A.J. Muste Mall” or “A.J. Muste Plaza.” A.J. Muste was a famous American antiwar labor activist pacifist.

PS: That was sort of a big event. There were a lot—it wasn’t just a handful of people who took part in that was it?

CT: It was—

PS: I mean, it wasn’t thousands but it was—

CT: Yeah, it was larger than most of the demonstrations but these were not thousands of people that would come to campus events like that. Maybe a few hundred. And one of the groups that came was the conservative group on campus. And just like SASS, had an acronym for their name. The conservative group on campus had a beautiful acronym for their name. They called themselves the Students for the Preservation of the American Republic, SPAR. And one of the leaders in SASS told me that he thinks that SPAR adopted their name precisely to spar with SASS. [laughter] And the SPAR—I don’t know if they called themselves SPAR-tans, or just SPAR, whatever they called them, the SPAR folks, came to that demonstration where we saw the walls come tumbling down. They came with signs that I thought were beautiful. Their signs said, “If the walls don’t fall, God is on our side.” Groups talked to themselves back in that era. I think, although we had political differences, the polarization was certainly not as strong.

PS: You mean groups talked with each other.

CT: Yeah, yeah, certainly at rallies when one group was holding a rally. I don’t know if they—they wouldn’t hold joint speaking events but I don’t know why that event in particular stuck in my mind. That was probably in 1968 sometime. But there were marches from the campus down to the Federal Building; there were marches from the campus to the Capitol. I think those were going on before I--those were going on before I graduated. Yeah, those must have been going on before I graduated in 1968 because there was a lot of organizing on the campus for the upcoming Democratic convention. Eugene McCarthy [Eugene Joseph McCarthy (1916-2005)] had come in second in the primary in New Hampshire in February of 1968, which was considered an upset of Johnson. And the—I would bet there were more student antiwar folks working within the system on electoral campaigns like the McCarthy campaign than there were people involved in the draft resistance movement on campus. I would bet that’s true.

PS: So that year, 1968, there was a lot going on on campus around the primaries and the election? I mean, it was a point of interest widely, right?

CT: Oh, yes.

PS: Because McCarthy was a local guy and a Minnesota senator and so on?

CT: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. And everyone was aware of the war and the draft—all the males –

PS: By that time.

CT: it was on their minds about the—I mean, if you dropped out of school you might subject yourself to be inducted into the Army. It was—there was a famous memorandum that was written by the national head of the Selective Service, Lewis Hershey [Lewis Blaine Hershey (1893-1977)], that he sent out to all of his draft boards that was leaked and became a very famous anti-draft pamphlet which actually used the word channeling—that the purpose of the Selective Service System was not so much to raise an army. It said—there was one paragraph in there that said, That’s a bureaucratically simple thing to do—that the real purpose of the Selective Service was to channel people into areas, into occupations, into fields that were in the, quote, national interest. And he withdrew, once it became famous—a leftist magazine at the time called *Ramparts* [*Ramparts*, published by Edward M. Keating, Menlo Park, CA. 1962-1975], printed that document and once it became famous he—I think he retracted it.

But I’ve read that colleges had—the people had attributed 6 to 7 percent increase beyond what

00:20:00 their increase in what college populations would have been because of the males being

forced to going to college at the time. And they were forced into certain kinds of fields. As a matter fact, you could get out, or you could get deferred, depending on whether you wanted to go on to graduate school in a particular area like engineering or something as opposed to another area. So it was an effective means of controlling the population. It wasn’t really just to raise armies.

PS: So that 6 to 7 percent, that means more would have been attending college level education than otherwise would have been.

CT: Exactly.

PS: Apparently, evidently.

CT: So that was in the interest of the colleges, too, so that they loved it. I read that someplace that they estimated that. I think that was in—what was that book? There was a book written with all the statistics about—*Chance and Circumstance* [*Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, the War, and the Vietnam Generation*, by Lawrence M. Baskir and William Strauss, Knopf, 1978], the book, written with all the statistics about who got drafted and who didn’t and how many people were indicted for refusing induction; how many people went to prison; how many got probation sentences and things like that.

So, if I could back track a little bit to when I decided to join the draft resistance movement. The draft resistance movement—some of the people were conscientious objectors. They were opposed to all wars. I don’t think I was opposed to all wars. I think I would have fought in World War II, I don’t know; I still think that today. Wars are stupid but if I had been drafted in World War II, I think I would have gone, I probably would have gone.

But even conscientious objectors came to the—some of them came to the position that they would resist the draft to make, not just a moral statement against the war, but as a political tactic to deprive the government. I mean, if your government is fighting a war, you can either deprive them of people; you can deprive them of money; you can deprive them of material like tanks and guns. So part of the draft resistance movement wasn’t just people making an individual statement of conscience but it was to get larger and larger numbers of people to fill the prisons with middle class white young men especially so it would put pressure on the government to end the war.

We weren’t always successful. From the statistics that I read in that book for example, *Chance and Circumstance*, there were about thirty-two hundred and fifty who ended up being in prison.

PS: Nationally.

CT: Nationally, for violations of the Selective Service System, the Selective Service Act, either refusing induction or refusing to register or some other reason. And that was out of a group of something like, I think twenty-five thousand were indicted; something like ten thousand were tried; and a larger group of those who were convicted, fifty-five hundred, I think, was the number—were given probation or suspended sentences. So they didn’t go to prison. So we hardly filled the prisons. There were thirty-two hundred and fifty people in World War II; it was a very similar number who went to prison in World War II when the draft resistance was not a movement at that time.

PS: Yeah, negligible.

CT: Yeah, these were just people making statements of individual conscience, not trying to create a political movement.

PS: You know, talking about conscientious objectors, in particular, you described the idea of not just doing something individual and personal, but resisting the draft as a political act, assuming maybe that at least some of these individuals would have succeeded in getting a Conscientious Objector status, which is something you had to apply for and be granted. So rather than trying to do that they just were non-cooperators on some level instead of trying to get Conscientious Objector status? Was that what you were describing?

CT: Right. Some of the people actually got—applied for that Conscientious Objector status—were granted it by their draft boards and then ended up refusing when called to perform the alternative service. Conscientious objectors either performed service within the military as medics, where they didn’t have to carry guns or shoot anybody, or they did alternative service sometimes like in hospitals or something outside the military. And some of them refused—

PS: To do that.

00:25:00 CT: to do that alternative service and ended up going to prison even though they had been

granted Conscientious Objector status. I heard one priest—one minister—it wasn’t a priest—a minister describe this whole process of applying to your draft board, a group of people in your locality, for the right not to kill people. And he said, “It should have been the other way around. You should have been required to go to your draft board if you wanted to enlist and prove that you were the type of person who could kill.” It’s a kind of interesting take on things. Yeah, so some people didn’t—some people, although they might have been granted Conscientious Objector status, joined the resistance and went to prison without applying for it. Some actually applied and got it. Some people who I did time with had received Conscientious Objector status and still went to prison.

PS: Talk a little bit about draft boards. You just mentioned local draft boards. A lot of people no longer know or remember what those were like. How did that, in broad strokes, how did draft boards deal with these sorts of things. How did that operate?

CT: Not only do a lot of people not know what draft boards were, but a lot of people don’t know what the word draft—I mention the word draft—I did [unclear] courses at the University of Minnesota campus and sometimes I’d mention the word draft and they haven’t a clue what the draft was.

PS: It’s a breeze? [laughter]

CT: Yeah, seriously. Yeah, every county had at least one draft board and it’s supposedly made up of people who, you know, from your locality. It’s sort of like your peers on a jury and the larger counties had several. I think Minneapolis had—I was in the—I think it might have been by zip code. I don’t think it was by zip code lines—but I know a lot of people in my zip code were in the same draft board, 55411.

PS: But it was still geographical?

CT: Yeah, it was all geographical. And gosh, there must have been—who knows how many in the entire country because every county had to have at least one. And because every county had to have at least one, that meant that every county had to have at least one set of draft board files. Each individual had a file that was kept on them every time they applied for a deferment.

PS: Every registrant.

CT: Every registrant and every time their draft board communicated with them, you’re supposed to let your draft board know every time you change your address. They wanted to keep track of folks. And so everyone had a file—some of them were very thick files and every county in the country had at least one draft board that had one of those files. I never met my draft board until later in the story. I met them after one of the draft board raid actions that I had been involved in. But we’ll get to that. We’ll get to that down the road.

PS: So the draft board had to deal with things like applications for CO, Conscientious Objector status, or rule on approving someone’s student deferment or things like that, right? These were administrative things that they did locally everywhere.

CT: Right, and every state, I think, had a monthly quota of people that they had to call up into the military and I think probably the state, head of the Selective Service System, would have told each of the draft boards, each of the counties in the rural areas and each of the draft boards in the cities and in Minneapolis and St. Paul, in the larger cities, how many people—what their quota was for the month. So, I mean, if a slew of people were actually got—if we had a—it was easier to get Conscientious Objector status, for example, if you were in a particular church that had a reputation as being a peace church. For example, the Quaker Church. So if we had a whole large group of Quakers in 55411 zip code in Minneapolis, and they all applied for Conscientious Objector status, they might not all get it if they applied at the same time because the draft board would have a quota and they would have to meet their quota that the state Selective Service Administration had told them they had to meet for that month. So it was all—

PS: You mean there were outside influences on whether someone was recognized for a genuine heartfelt belief.

00:30:00 CT: This is shocking; I know this is shocking. But it wasn’t all on the up and up. I mean,

you know, there were people who got out for all sorts of crazy reasons. I understand there was some fellow in Washington, DC, who got out for bone spurs; he was talking about he could have been a professional baseball player but he got out of the draft because of bone spurs. And when asked, which foot those bone spurs were on, he didn’t have a clue which foot.

PS: Didn’t remember that one, huh?

CT: It’s curious that bone spur starts with “b” and “s” isn’t it? [laughter]

PS: So draft boards were local and therefore they could—they must have been pretty variable in their behavior or conduct because it was local people and just a kind of a handful—it’s not like there were twenty or thirty people on a draft board. It was more like a half a dozen or something like that, right? So they would meet periodically and I mean, I met with mine one time. And they would review things like CO status applications and they didn’t all behave similarly, quotas or not. Some were notoriously hard to get various kinds of deferments from and others were not so tough. And is that how you recall?

CT: Oh, for sure, for sure. There was—I don’t recall if people were actually moving into different locations. I don’t know if your draft board would change or if you got the same draft board as the one you initially registered for the draft for when you were eighteen. I don’t know if your moving would cause you to be changed to a new draft board; I imagine if you moved out of state you’d have a new draft board.

PS: You know, I don’t remember precisely either, but I remember—tell me if you recall anything about this. That yes, where you initially registered, could be important and there were people who made a point of establishing at least long enough residency in Washington, DC, to register there because that was the home base for the children of people in Congress and high administrative officials in the executive branch, and their kids, who registered in Washington, DC, routinely had an easy ride to not get drafted. And additionally, if you were out of the country, and claimed that you didn’t have a particular address in the United States but you were a citizen, you could, and actually had to, go to do your registration when you were eighteen at a local embassy or consulate. And if you registered there, that was a special—either it sort of shunted you into that same Washington, DC group because you were out of the country or some other sort of status and that that was a way to avoid being inducted, too, by registering initially when you were elsewhere, out of the country altogether.

CT: Isn’t that interesting.

PS: Do you remember any of that?

CT: No, I—I didn’t know that was going on—I didn’t—I never read anything about that. That’s interesting. I did not—I mean, part of the time, in fact it might have been when I eventually did get drafted I wasn’t living in 55411, in that zip code, or in North Minneapolis even. So I guess it was where you initially registered is the draft board that they would keep you in. There were some people, not a whole lot, there were some few people who decided to become draft board—some people were antiwar—decided to become draft board members, or apply to become draft board members themselves so they could—but I mean, they’re going to have to meet a quota. I mean, eventually, they’re going to—if someone gives someone a Conscientious Objector status, someone else is going to go and get drafted in your place. And it’s very similar, even for those of us who refused induction, which I eventually did twice. Someone else got drafted in my place because of that, you know.

And it’s similarly for draft board raids, I mean, there you—I mean, when we did the first draft board raid that I was involved in in Minnesota, where we destroyed all of the 1A files in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and the state headquarters, where files went where people had appealed what the decision was at the local draft board, they would go to the state appeals board. And we destroyed all of the 1A files at those three offices and it held up the draft in Minnesota for

00:35:00 as much as six months to a year. But that just means someone in Mississippi, someone in

 Ohio, got drafted instead. Their quotas went up while Minnesota’s might have gone down for

 that period.

PS: Or waited for a—

CT: Even though it didn’t hold up the draft in Minnesota, I think that it held up the draft in Minneapolis and St. Paul for some time in those five—at that time they didn’t have backup files. This was pre-computer era and they hadn’t microfilmed the files, which was the method for creating backup systems. And so, yeah—

PS: So a lost paper file was a lost file.

CT: Yeah, absolutely. There are some people that I’ve approached, members of the first group that I was involved in, the Beaver 55, who were told then that because their file was taken they [men who were registered at those boards] ended up not getting drafted.

PS: So they sort of disappeared from the system, right?

CT: Yeah.

PS: Back up again a little bit just so I don’t miss anything. When you were an undergraduate on campus were you involved in other activities, not academic ones necessarily, I mean, were you part of Hillel House [University of Minnesota Hillel, 1521 University Avenue SE, Minneapolis, MN]? You did something kind of athletic, too, I remember. [laughter]

CT: When I went to college I lived pretty much at the Hillel House, but then I moved to Coffman Union for a time, because they got ping pong tables. I took up table tennis in college and ended up playing in tournaments and stuff and yeah, I skipped a lot of classes playing ping pong while I was an undergraduate. My undergraduate degree was philosophy. I’m trying to think whether I was active in other things on campus. I was tending politically to the left. I had already come to the conclusion that most of the stuff that my government would tell me is a lie. And I came to that conclusion probably around the assassination of President Kennedy [U.S. President John Fitzgerald "Jack" Kennedy (1917-1963)], which was in November of 1963 he was assassinated. I remember because I was the editorial page chief on—the editorial page editor on the high school newspaper. And I remember when Jack Ruby [Jack Leon Ruby (born Jacob Leon Rubenstein, (1911-1967)] shot Oswald [Lee Harvey Oswald (1939-1963)]. I had written some editorial about how the media had contributed to his—had tried, convicted and executed Lee Harvey Oswald. And it was shortly after that—it might have been a couple of years—like in ’65, maybe ’66, ’65, that I read *Rush to Judgment* [*Rush to Judgment*, by Mark Lane, The Bodley Head, 1966], a book about the—the first book about the assassination, written by Mark Lane [Mark Lane (1927-2016], and from that book—that’s when I decided that everything, pretty much everything my government told me, was a lie, wasn’t true.

PS: That’s Mark Lane, prominent attorney then and for years later—

CT: Yeah.

PS: sort of a movement attorney involved in lots of prominent public sort of notorious cases. He was involved with Wounded Knee [Wounded Knee Incident, February 27, 1973, Wounded Knee, SD], for instance, right?

CT: Yeah, he did later become involved in that. When I mentioned those Free University courses, one Free University course, which are these informal courses outside the university, they didn’t have any cost; you didn’t get college credit for them or anything. One of the courses I took in ’67 or ’68 was from a guy who later became a psychologist. He established the walk-in counseling center, I think, for youth. His name was Gary Schoen or Schoener [Gary Schoener], and he had been down in Louisiana, working for a summer with a U.S. attorney down there named Jim Garrison [James Carothers Garrison (born Earling Carothers Garrison (1921-1992)], who’s had a theory that—

PS: He was district attorney in New Orleans ]New Orleans, LA] am I remembering?

CT: Yeah, that’s right, he was not a U.S. attorney; he was a district attorney. And his theory was that there was conspiracy involved in the killing of Kennedy and Gary taught—Gary came up the next fall and he taught a course in the Free University about the Kennedy assassination and that really played a role in my not trusting the government any more. I don’t

00:40:00 —yeah, we might have known at the time that the Gulf of Tonkin was kind of a, more than

ambiguous, was kind of a made up story. I think that was in ’64, so I think we already had—there were already writings about that at the time. And then when I was in college, because I was going to be facing the draft, I started reading books on Vietnam War. I think probably the most influential book that I read at the time or the one I remember the most was a book by a Kahin and Lewis, called *The United States in Vietnam* [*The United States in Vietnam* by George McTurnan Kahin and John W. Lewis, 1967] That book, probably the course that I took on nonviolence from Fred Ojile and that book were the two biggest influences on my deciding to refuse induction. So I ended up turning in my card when I was a VISTA volunteer and I ended up finishing my VISTA year—

PS: Just the one year?

CT: Yeah, it was just a one-year commitment but we got kicked out of the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge job corps center because one of the four VISTA volunteers had bought some racy books at the drugstore and the guys at the job corps were all functionally illiterate, which they said at the time, at that time, was reading at a fifth grade level or below, and he had brought these books in because the reading material that they had were Dick and Jane type stuff and these were, you know, adolescents, you know, they were teenagers, seventeen, eighteen year olds, probably even older than that. And we got in trouble. They were taking these books over to the dorms and reading them. They were actually reading them to each other and that ended up by the four of us getting transferred out of there. And I got transferred—we got all split up. I got transferred to a housing agency in Milwaukee [Milwaukee, WI] and coincidentally, during my time in Milwaukee, was when the trial for the Milwaukee 14 occurred.

PS: Just to back up a second about your VISTA work at the job corps center—so your assignment for VISTA was to work with the people who were at the job corps center doing their education for job corps purposes, right?

CT: Yes. Some were assigned to recreation. I was assigned to the education department. A couple of us were assigned to the education department.

PS: Okay, so you were at the job corps center but you weren’t part of the job corps program?

CT: No, we were staff or something.

PS: You were adjunct.

CT: Adjunct staff of the job corps.

PS: Okay, so then to Milwaukee.

CT: Yeah, by that time it was in September of 1968, that Fred Ojile had participated in one of these draft board raids in Milwaukee. These draft board raids, incidentally, started in Minnesota by a fellow named Barry Bondhus [1945-2018], who lived in Big Lake, Minnesota, and in 1966, he was in danger of being drafted and he was from a big family and his father was very religious and I think the whole family was very religious. And they were antiwar but they weren’t antiwar like us crazy leftists. They were antiwar coming from a Christian fundamentalist standpoint.[[1]](#footnote-1)

PS: Sort of like Seventh Day Adventists antiwar—kind of like that, huh?

CT: Yeah, and when his father declared war on the United States government threatening he would take out a shotgun if anyone came for one of his sons he’d fire the shotgun once and then he’d lower the gun and allow himself to be arrested. He said, “None of my sons are going to fight wars for the rich business interests.” That’s what they believed that wars were primarily being fought for. And so Barry and his twelve siblings, eleven brothers and one sister, saved up their human feces—

PS: Hold on. So Barry had gotten an induction order. Isn’t that right?

CT: I think that’s true, yeah.

PS: So that was—

CT: Or was it that they hadn’t registered or something. I’m not sure they got an induction order.

PS: I think Barry had gotten an induction order and that was what sort of started this whole process going that you’re about to describe further.

CT: That might be right.

PS: So he and his siblings—

CT: Yeah, they saved up their human feces. Well, the board had told them something and someone, some official at their board office, their Selective Service office, had told them something about the remainder of your family or something, meaning that they wanted the other sons to register when they turned eighteen years old, too, and subject themselves to the draft.

PS: Because Barry was one of the older ones.

CT: Yeah, I think he was the second—was he the second or third oldest? And so they went home and they tried to figure out what the draft board official had meant by the remainder and

00:45:00 they decided to save up their human feces for two weeks, something like that. And Barry went

into his draft board office in Elk River, Minnesota, with two buckets of human feces they had saved and opened up several draft board file drawers and poured this in on the files. This was in 1966. Twenty months later, some Catholic radicals, four Catholic—I think they were all Catholic—maybe they weren’t all Catholic but it became known as the Catholic Left, the Catholic Radical Movement—in Baltimore, Maryland—this was in October, I think, of ’67 —went into and poured their own blood—or actually it was blood from a poultry producer they got nearby—poured blood on the draft files in Baltimore. They became known as the Baltimore 4, but they had modeled their action on Barry Bondhus’s in Elk River, Minnesota, who became known as the Big Lake One, and also, of course, the movement that started the movement.

PS: So you know that the Baltimore 4 were, at whatever level, they were aware of what Barry had done a year and a half plus beforehand?

CT: Yes. I don’t know if I was even aware that Barry had done this in February of 1966. I’m not sure I even was—I must have been aware of it. But it got more national publicity when the—some of these people who were involved—at least one of them was a priest, Phil Berrigan [Philip Francis Berrigan (1923-2002)], in Baltimore. A priest incidentally who was born in Minnesota. And it got national publicity, more national publicity at that time. And I thought that was a terrible thing to do—to destroy property. That was a step that—I would refuse induction, but I would not have gone to the step of destroying property at that time.

PS: Talking about the Baltimore 4 blood pouring, right?

CT: Yes. And then in early—in—that one happened in ’67 and then in, I think, it was May of 1968, another group of—this one was all Catholics—including Father Phil Berrigan, and his brother, his younger brother, Dan Berrigan [Daniel Joseph Berrigan (1921-2016)] who was also a priest, who was also born in Minnesota. And it included another Minnesotan named George Mische, and nine people went into the draft board in Catonsville, Maryland, and they took out files and napalm, used napalm, symbolic of the napalm the United States was using in Vietnam. And they burned the files there and that probably made the biggest media impact. And then it started happening all over the country and one of the places where it happened—and these people were traditional civil disobedience, although I still think I was not too keen on destroying property. And these were sort of traditional civil disobedient people and by that I mean they stood by and invited the police to arrest them. They didn’t try to do this and get away with it.

And one of the places where this happened subsequently was in Milwaukee, the Milwaukee 14, in September of 1969—

PS: Sixty-eight.

CT: Sixty-eight, yeah, ’68.

PS: So that was later the same year?

CT: May of ’68 would be Catonsville 9 and September of ’68, right, it had to be ’68, was the Milwaukee 14 where they did a similar action in burning the files, I think. And two of the people involved in that were from Minnesota—at least two—maybe more than two. But one of them was Fred Ojile, the fellow from whom I had taken this class on nonviolence. Then I— it was time to think. I was starting to think maybe this might be something that wasn’t unjustified. Maybe destroying—because it was focused. It was focused on particular property and I later came to believe that the destruction of certain property was legitimate. I wouldn’t destroy any property and I wouldn’t bomb a draft board because there was all sorts of property within the draft board—typewriters—that could be used for other legitimate purposes, what I thought were legitimate purposes. But the draft files themselves had only this one purpose and that was to provide—to get people into the Army. Of course, Hershey disagreed with that—that wasn’t really the purpose of the draft. It was to channel people but that was an equally nefarious purpose in my mind—to channel people into occupations that were in the national interest.

So I ended up in Milwaukee at a housing agency when the trial of the Milwaukee 14 was

being held in May of 1969 and I went several days to the trial of Fred Ojile and there—that

00:50:00 was the time that I became convinced that if the opportunity arose, this might be something

that I would do. I don’t think I had been drafted at that point yet. When I turned in my card the draft board reclassified me to 1A, eligible for induction. That was a power they thought they had. It turned out in a later court case that went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, also initiated by a Minnesotan, Dave Gutknecht, decided that the decision in that case was that the draft board did not have the power to reclassify people 1A and move them to the top of the list of people who were eligible for induction simply because they turned in their draft card. They could have reported that as a violation to the U.S. attorney, because you had to have your draft card on your person, your draft cards, on your person at all times and they obviously wouldn’t have had it on their person if they turned them in. They could report that to the prosecution but they couldn’t initiate their own penalty by reclassifying people 1A.

So I even was reclassified 1A—I don’t know when I got drafted the first time but I got drafted and I don’t know if it was while I—I don’t think it was while I was in VISTA. Probably was right after I finished my year at VISTA and I went down to the induction center.

PS: Here?

CT: Yeah, here in Minneapolis so I don’t think I came to Minneapolis from Milwaukee for that purpose. It must have been after I was out of VISTA and I got drafted and I went down there for the induction physical and the induction physical was governed by Army regulations at the time.

PS: So this would have been in 1969 probably sometime?

CT: Probably sometime in ’69 after June ’69 when I left VISTA. And the Army regulations that governed the pre-induction and induction physicals were all so detailed. I mean, they had stuff so; every motion that they wanted you to go through or be directed to take—like I don’t know what the moving your elbow this direction or this direction. It was described in great detail. It was even described in there that the Selective Service—that each of the people for the pre-induction or induction physicals was to be given a cloth bag with drawstrings to wear around their neck to carry their valuables around while they were going around on the physical because you were just going around in underwear to take the physical. And I was given a paper bag with no drawstrings and they violated nineteen things like that on my physical, some of the motions they didn’t go through. And I wasn’t trying to get out of it. I was just taking—I take these things with humor as you can tell when I turned in my draft card and—

PS: The motions you were referring to, those were things like touch your toes and turn your head to the left and right, that kind of thing?

CT: That kind of thing, yeah.

PS: Yeah, okay.

CT: So I wrote a nine-page letter to my draft board pointing out these nineteen different things that I thought that they did illegal on my—I wasn’t trying to get out of it.

PS: You were just being a good citizen, right?

CT: Yeah, trying to enforce the laws—that’s what I was—law enforcement. That’s what I later did when I tried to destroy draft files. We were trying to enforce the Geneva Conventions for god’s sake, Geneva Conventions for god’s sake. And for a long time, I thought that was the reason that they sent me another induction notice, that I had sent this, and it never occurred to me that the reason was that this Gutknecht decision at the U.S. Supreme Court was the reason that they drafted me again. And the next time they drafted me, they had already given me—the lottery had come out. I don’t know what year the lottery started.

PS: Back up a little bit. That got kind of confused. So the first time you were inducted and refused induction that was after you sent your lone draft card in—

CT: Right.

PS: and that was then—that was a violation to refuse induction but it didn’t go much farther than that because it was a punitive induction and so that was rescinded in some way because of Dave Gutknecht’s Supreme Court case?

CT: Exactly.

PS: Okay, so then you—they did it all over again.

CT: They did it all over again. They sent me another card, reclassifying me 1A, I think, even.

PS: Not punitively but just on general principles, right?

CT: Exactly because I was no longer eligible for the occupational deferment even if I had

00:55:00 turned in my cards saying, “I don’t want this deferment anymore.” I was no longer eligible

 because I was no longer in VISTA.

PS: And law school was not a deferable student status anymore.

CT: Exactly. I had started law—I started law school in ’69. I lasted two weeks. None of my law school classmates knew there was a war going on I don’t think. And that was the time of these big moratorium marches, national events, where millions of people turned out in opposition to the war. In October there was a moratorium and in November there was a moratorium.

PS: In ’69?

CT: In ’69.

PS: Yeah, I remember that.

CT: And so when I refused induction the first time, there had been—since we were leafletting every day at the induction center—

PS: And that had been going on for a while when you were drafted, right?

CT: Oh, probably years and so we got to know the one—I don’t know if it was a sergeant or a lieutenant who was involved in the whole induction process. It was in the—some of the time the people—I wasn’t involved in it, but some of the time the leafletters from the Draft Information Center actually went into the old Federal Building [212 Third Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN] when these people were going to be inducted. And there were—they would talk to the sergeant or the lieutenant who was involved in the process of asking you to make that—to take that step forward—or to step over that line when they called your name which would mean you were inducted. And I didn’t step over the line and all I remember was he came up to me and said, “Well, they’ll just keep calling you to come back at six o’clock in the morning.” I said, “Oh, if that’s all they’re going to do that’s fine.” He didn’t say—they took you to a room and they tell you that—I think they must have told me that it’s against the law but what his emphasis was they’ll just keep calling you back for these six o’clock induction physicals. I said, “If that’s what they’re going to do, god bless them; I’ll keep coming back at six in the morning.”

PS: Horrible inconvenience, right?

CT: Yeah.

PS: So then they did it again?

CT: They did it again. I think that might have been after I was already involved in destroying draft files but I’ll tell you what happened the second time they called me for induction. The second time I remember he asked were they any questions.

PS: The same fellow that you saw before?

CT: Same fellow, same fellow, and if I hear his name I’d remember it. And so I raised my hand and asked why we had to go to Vietnam. It was just a simple question. And he gave a very nice answer saying something like, You don’t have to go. It’s your decision. And this was clear to me that it was the people who had talked to him and had these conversations with him had had an effect. He wasn’t telling people, You have an option to refuse induction, but when someone asks the question, Why do we have to go? He said, “Well, it’s up to each one of you; it’s your individual choice,” which was the message that the Draft Information Center people were trying to get across to people—that you were making an individual choice.

PS: That’s kind of remarkable.

CT: It was incredible. It floored me and it wasn’t incredible enough that when he called my name I did [didn’t, in fact] step over the line so I refused induction again. And they ignored it because eventually they got me for the draft board raids.

So when—if I could go back to the watching the trial of the Milwaukee 14—at that time I thought if the, as I said, if the opportunity arose, I would get involved in this type of action. And the opportunity rose all of a sudden. I happened to be driving a car, driving some people home from some meeting, and one of the people in the back seat mentioned that there was—someone was organizing a group that might be involved or might be planning draft board raids in Minneapolis and St. Paul and if anyone was interested, they were supposed to contact a certain person. And I contacted this person and there was a meeting. And I don’t know why it was to plan draft board raids in Minneapolis and St. Paul but the meeting was in Chicago [Chicago, IL]. Don’t ask me why. It might have been because they were planning draft board raids all over the country.

PS: Or thinking about it anyway.

CT: Yeah, so I got in a car—I got on a train and I was going to meet someone else who was going to be going down to that same meeting. It turned out to be Brad Beneke. We met on this train to Chicago to discuss draft board raids and at that meeting—

PS: So was this in late 1969, early 1970 somewhere?

01:00:00 CT: Yeah, it would have to be late 1969 because we did the action in late February of 19 –

wait, 1969, yeah, because it was in late February that we did the action. And there was a pretty large group that were meeting. We did a lot of talking and—

PS: How large a group roughly?

CT: Oh, might have been fifty people there.

PS: Dozens then?

CT: Yeah, there might have been as many. I remember we went around the room and some people went on talking for fifteen, twenty minutes. Maybe not. Maybe there were only thirty, maybe not fifty. Phil Berrigan was one of the people there. Some of the people from the Beaver—a group that called themselves the Beaver 55 who had destroyed draft files in Indianapolis, Indiana, and then a week later had destroyed computer tapes in the Dow Chemical plant in Midland, Michigan. And then after that they claimed moral and political responsibility for their action. I think, yeah, they were eventually arrested. They were eventually arrested and did prison time. But by this—well, so we met in Chicago and—

PS: Was that a one-day event?

CT: It was a weekend event. I could not name more than two or three people that I knew who were at that meeting. I don’t know if the people who were at that meeting were the same people that got involved in the draft board raid up in Minneapolis and St. Paul or not. But as it turned out—and I don’t think we had a ton of meetings either. It turned out that there were about twenty-two people who got involved in the draft board raid in Minneapolis, St. Paul and the state headquarters and one, two—I don’t think I knew—

End of Recording 1

Recording 2

00:00:00 I might have known one or two of these people before I went to Chicago. I met Brad at

Chicago. I don’t know if Frank Kroncke was at Chicago. I might have known two—and of those twenty-two maybe four or five were local people. They came from all over the place. I don’t think I—I wouldn’t recognize the names of the people who were involved.

PS: So you didn’t know how local they might have been but you didn’t know them.

CT: No, I didn’t know them so it wasn’t some kind of well-knit affinity group like it seemed like these other actions that people knew each other, had been involved in other activities, whether religious or political with each other, in the past.

PS: So this was sort of ad hoc arrangement for that particular raid, that—

CT: Yeah, very ad hoc.

PS: Just to pin that down. That Beaver 55 raid that took place in Minneapolis and St. Paul and at the state headquarters—that was—what was the calendar date of that?

CT: That was the night of February 28, March 1, Saturday night, Sunday morning of 1970.

PS: Okay, so it was a weekend long effort.

CT: Yeah.

PS: Talk a little bit more about that.

CT: Okay.

PS: The actual doing of that, what that was like.

CT: I was involved in St. Paul, at the St. Paul—the Minneapolis draft board was located on Tenth Avenue South in a basement of an office building. All of Minneapolis draft boards were in there. And the St. Paul draft board was located in the St. Paul Post Office building, which was down behind Union Station in St. Paul. Now it’s combined hotel and condominium, condo place [St. Paul Post Office, 180 E. Kellogg, St. Paul, MN; now Custom House Apartments]. Someone had cased these places very thoroughly. One person I think in the group had cased them very thoroughly; had actually spent the night in the St. Paul Post Office. We simply walked in from the employees’ entrance. There was much less building security in that era.

PS: The St. Paul Post Office employees’ entrance?

CT: We walked through the post office buildings employee entrance and we walked in one every half hour and I was the first one in. And I walked in—I don’t know—nine or nine or ten o’clock Saturday morning. And we walked up the stairs—I think we walked up all the stairs. We didn’t take the elevators. Walked up flights—something like eleven, twelve, thirteen flights of stairs and there was an abandoned office up there on the top floor and we just hid out in there as we accumulated. I think there were fifteen of us in St. Paul and we hid out in there until midnight and someone had hid out in there one whole night before at least once, probably more than once, and charted when the guards came around and stuff like that. We just hid out in there.

After the entire group had gotten up there I was up there for twelve, thirteen, no, twelve to fourteen hours waiting. And then we went down to—on two different floors. There was the state headquarters of the Selective Service on one floor. I don’t know it was seven or something like that and on another floor were all the St. Paul draft boards on floor four or something. And we brought in with us spray paint; we brought in some tools to cut the glass on the draft board—there was a glass upper half of the door was made out of glass and there’s a technique where you cut the glass in a triangle shape and tape it. You can then use a butane torch on the corners and you can actually pull out a piece of glass, stick your arm in through the window and turn the door knob. That’s how we got in. These places were not—they didn’t have alarms or anything in those days. It was pretty strange.

And I went to—we brought in spray paint with us and we wore surgical gloves. I later heard that fingerprints can show through surgical gloves. I don’t know if that’s true or not. I hope not. I remember my gloves tore at one time when I was ripping up files and I was all concerned that I may have left one thumbprint someplace, but we had spare gloves and we wore these surgical gloves. And what we did is we sprayed out the names on the files with black paint so that they couldn’t be identified and then we ripped up each file both lengthways and width wise so four times.

00:05:00 PS: After doing the spray painting?

CT: After spray painting out the names.

PS: It must have been sort of an assembly line.

CT: Uh, well, although we did both things. I remember spray painting—I remember we were in there for five hours ripping files and my fingers—I could not open up my hands—my fingers were so sore the next morning when we gathered. And my fingers were sore for several days after that. But it was a good feeling. Now some people spray painted slogans all over the walls. I didn’t know that was going to happen. I don’t know—I don’t remember what was painted all over the walls but I—my position was the walls, you know, could be--was not property—that was inherently involved in the war effort. They could be used for other purposes.

It was okay for me that some people bent certain keys on the typewriters in those days—these were typewriter days. They bent the “1” key and the “A” key symbolic that you could no longer type 1A, which would be the people eligible for induction. That didn’t bother me as much even though typewriters could be used for humane purposes as well. But the spray painting over the wall—I was shocked at that.

And coincidentally when I went into my draft board office to visit with my draft board—

PS: Later?

CT: The very next week after the draft board files in Minneapolis had been destroyed, they intended to do it in a similar manner but they had difficulty getting into the place for some reason and what they ended up doing was breaking a water—not a fountain—but a water container and they poured water all over the files after they had ripped them up, I think, on the ground. And they spray painted the walls, too, and when I went in to meet with my draft board for the first time and it was just to meet them, to talk to them about the draft and the war, but I had some pretense that I had reason to be classified or something so I made an appeal and asked for an appearance. And it just happened to be a few days after the Beaver 55 had raided these—their offices. And my—I don’t know if it was someone on the board or my clerk pointed to the walls and said, You don’t know what people who do something like that could do. That was what upset them the most. I remember the files were—I don’t know—I think I was in the St. Paul boards, not in the state headquarters, the files were almost knee deep for me. Now I’m short so maybe it doesn’t mean all that much but it—the floor and this was a big office—the floor was actually filled with ripped files and spray painted out names on those files.

PS: So, just again, to be clear, your draft board was still in Minneapolis and it was not your draft board that you went to take part in this raid, it was anybody else’s draft board, not yours.

CT: I never thought of that—that my draft board—I should have gone to my draft board. I don’t know if I volunteered to go to Minneapolis or St. Paul. I think some of the fellows who were organizing this simply divided us up into the groups.

PS: But as it happened you had nothing personal to gain from destroying the St. Paul files. All yours were in Minneapolis?

CT: Yeah, and I don’t know if I had to—I don’t think I had been drafted the second time by then so it was sometime later that I did get drafted out of Minneapolis. I wonder how that happened. All the names to put my file back together.

PS: Your timing was pretty tightly organized with all these things between the raid and talking to your draft board a few days later and all that.

CT: Yeah, it was weird. But how did they draft me if those files—this is interesting—now I don’t—well, anyhow.

PS: Did you get your second draft induction order before the Minnesota 8 raid?

CT: I don’t know. I don’t know when I got it.

PS: Because you actually refused a second time, you said, right?

CT: I did refuse the second time. I don’t know. That would have been very quick because they would have had to put those files back together very quickly.

PS: At least they knew about you after the Minnesota 8 raid maybe. You had a public identity then plus you’d been involved with leafletting at the induction center.

CT: I think I was drafted probably after the Minnesota 8 raid.

PS: Because you weren’t anonymous at that point.

00:10:00 CT: No. For the Beaver 55 raid we took the name Beaver 55 because this other group had

used it and we wanted the government to think that there was some national conspiracy. Though there was an informal national network of people who did these things but there was no big national group that did them all. So we took the same name, the Beaver 55. We weren’t that original in our name choices. And most of our discussions, I think, now that I think about it, was whether to do what was called a “hit and run” action or a “standby” action. The standby action were the ones that typically were done—they had been done mostly—well, I don’t know if we should say that mostly—there had been a lot of hit and run—but these were the standby ones were the ones that I described as the more traditional civil disobedience.

PS: Like Catonsville and Baltimore?

CT: Yes, standing around, allowing yourself to be arrested.

PS: And the Milwaukee 14.

CT: And by the time we were doing it the—some people were doing what was called hit and run actions and some of the hit and run, which means you don’t wait to get arrested, and some of the hit and run actions would be followed by people which—surfacing—which meant that they would a few days later claim moral and political responsibility for the action. Say enough so you could go out and explain to groups, audiences, why they think that it was a valuable and just thing to do without making themselves subject to being indicted for action; destroying the files.

So there were some groups that did that and then this was the big discussion in our group with the Beaver 55—whether some people would surface. Now, you know, you think about traditional civil disobedience. You think—what you think about is the action was a symbolic action, very much like individually refusing induction if that’s an individual act of moral conscience. But it was also part of a political movement to hinder the supply of manpower into the armed forces. And this was civilian. We were trying—it was both a symbolic statement or else we’re trying to hinder the operations of the draft so that it would be more difficult to fight the war or to find people to go fight in the war. So it was both a communicative act and it was throwing or grinding—what is it? Throwing sand into the gears of the war machine act. And to the extent that it was the latter, you should be obligated to do it again.

For example, if you’re helping some runaway slaves on the Underground Railroad, you don’t help the first person that you meet; you don’t help them escape to Canada and then turn yourselves in because you want to be a traditional civil disobedience type person. You want to take responsibility for your actions. I say, “No. You stay out of jail; and you help the next person.” So my feeling was more toward the hit and run type philosophy.

But I was also of the philosophy that we ought to have some people, at least, who would explain why the action was necessary and justified. So there were four of us: Brad Beneke, Nancy Saunders, Joan Francis and me—all from Minneapolis incidentally—or all from the Twin Cities area as a matter of fact, who decided that we would claim moral and political responsibility at a rally at the University of Minnesota, I think on the Friday after—I think it was on March 6. I think it was on the Friday after the Beaver 55 action.

PS: So just a few days later?

CT: Yeah. In between, I told my parents that I was going to surface on the following Friday and my dad’s reaction was, “Oh, my god! How could I face my students?” So I was wavering. He thought he wouldn’t be able to face his students after that or something.

PS: Because he was still teaching at Talmud Torah?

CT: He was still teaching at Talmud Torah, yeah. I don’t know if that was his major concern but that’s what I remember him saying. So I was wavering; I remember discussing with Brad whether I was going to surface or not. He was somewhat wavering, too. But at the end all four of us did do that at a rally in Coffman Union at the University of Minnesota and our names were in the paper after that. But we didn’t get the brunt of the publicity because at that rally, which had—it had all sorts of energy had been generated from that rally—

PS: And the raid at that point was well-known. It had gotten lots of publicity so people

00:15:00 knew what it was about.

CT: Yes. Before I talk about that rally let me go back to immediately after the raid. I was on the newsletter project at the Twin Cities Draft Information Center. The newsletter project had a meeting, either on that Sunday night, March 1, or March 2, Monday night. I don’t remember which it was—at the Twin Cities Draft Information Center. The people that were involved, even the local people that were involved in the Beaver 55 action, did not really have close ties to the Twin Cities Draft Information Center, which was the local hub of the draft resistance and the draft counseling in the Twin Cities area. There were all sorts of places, religious places, that did draft counseling as well but the main organizing center for anti-draft activity and the main center for disseminating information about people’s options to the draft was coming out of the Twin Cities Draft Information Center.

And we had this meeting and I was very quiet. I would go to meetings that would last for hours, never say a word. Now I’m the total opposite. Now you can’t shut me up. But I was very quiet in those days.

PS: So that meeting was about the newsletter.

CT: It was about the newsletter.

PS: It wasn’t about the raid that just happened, particularly.

CT: Of course, but everyone had known about the raid because it was in the papers and so everyone was discussing it and I did say something at that meeting, I remember, about how I wasn’t particularly thrilled with the spray painting of slogans on the walls or something. And I remember a Quaker who was at the mimeograph machine in there, George Crocker, who ended up being a draft resister himself and going to prison in Milan, Michigan. He said something like, Oh, well, he thought that was okay. It showed they were having fun or something so it was very interesting.

And I remember one person was on the draft information newsletter project or the committee said that—her name was Jan Juntunen—she said to me; she said to the group—she pointed to me and said, “I bet Chuck did it.” [laughter]

PS: What did you do or say then?

CT: She said it jokingly, of course, because no one had a clue who did it and we were meeting in the Twin Cities Draft Information Center office offices and who knew if there were microphones at that place—was bugged or not? Who knew? And I simply said, “Yeah, I did all three of them by myself—all three locations.” And I said it with a perfectly straight face. I didn’t get red in the face—I would tend to blush if I said that, but I didn’t get red in the face or anything. I nodded and said, “Yeah, I did all three of them.” And so they were shocked when I was one of those because probably—

PS: You mean shocked later in the week? Surfaced?

CT: Later in the week when the four of us surfaced. I probably, of the twenty-two people, was the only one who had any connection to the Draft Information Center who was involved in any of the projects at the Draft Information Center was doing. So they were shocked. This floored them.

So anyhow, but getting back to this rally at the University of Minnesota and the energy that had been generated in the event, there were some people on campus who were fighting what they called the criminal—it wasn’t—it was the Criminal Justice Studies Department on campus. It might have been the Criminal Justice Studies Program, but they claimed that the head of that program, a professor David Ward [David A. Ward], who was a criminology professor, was a front for the CIA. And this was the Progressive Labor faction of the Students for a Democratic Society, SDS—it was the PL—they were still SDS but it was the PL, Progressive Labor faction of SDS.

PS: Yeah, faction splintering—SDS was sort of splintering then.

CT: Yeah, exactly, and that group pre-planned on their part. They intended to use the energy from this rally to encourage students or others to go over to the West Bank offices of the Criminal Justice Studies Department, I think, for some reason it was.

PS: So it was directly across the river, across the Washington Avenue bridge?

CT: And destroy the files over there. And a number of people got caught up in this energy and did it, had no intention—they had not discussed this in advance, what the implications were of doing such a thing. But they went over. I didn’t follow them but they went over and

00:20:00 destroyed files. Some of them got charged with serious offenses. I think they later they got

—they might have got reduced to misdemeanors. I don’t think anyone did prison time as a result of that.

PS: But this spontaneous running across the bridge was [unclear] to do damage to those files happened during the surfacing rally that you and the other three were taking part in at Coffman Union.

CT: Right. It was after it actually; it was after.

PS: Like immediately after.

CT: But because of that, that was the part of the rally that got the most publicity so our names were in the article but there was this—and later, the people who had organized it and encouraged people to do this action, in the Progressive Labor faction of Students for a Democratic Society, later they admitted that they had it wrong. It was—Criminal Justice Studies had nothing to do with the CIA. It was just—it was a disaster.

So anyhow, as a result of surfacing for the Beaver 55 action, we were approached by some people or others approached us. We knew we were going to do something similar again. That’s why we didn’t wait to be arrested. And if you’re going to do something again—Minneapolis draft boards, all the St. Paul draft boards and the state headquarters had the—the 1A files had been destroyed so we were thinking about doing this in some of the outstate counties in Minnesota.

And we began casing the joints, as they say. We began checking up on which ones were possible and Brad Beneke did most of that. He was the one who went around outstate Minnesota and checked on the—he did most of the casing of these places although others were involved. And people again began approaching us. I know we were approaching some people to see who else was interested because we didn’t have that big of a group since most of the Beaver 55 were from out of state. And some people began approaching us. I remember Bill Tilton—there was a rally at the campus. He was vice president of the Minnesota Student Association at the time and he said, If you’re planning anything else, count me in, or something.

So there were people that approached us and we approached other people but when we were trying to get involved for the Minnesota 8, we had way too many meetings.

PS: As we were called later.

CT: As we were later called, that’s right. We were calling ourselves the Minnesota Conspiracy to Save Lives, which again was modeled after another group. There had been a group that destroyed files called the East Coast Conspiracy to Save Lives. The notion of calling ourselves a conspiracy, again, was—it kind of sent a dual political message that it’s weird that you have to conspire to save lives and also that there was some massive conspiracy. And we actually—in the statements that we were going to release to the media after our Minnesota 8 action—which eventually happened in July 10 and 11 of 1970, in the statements to the media, we called ourselves the Minnesota Conspiracy to Save Lives. But the media always kind of makes up their own name and they called us the Minnesota 8 because there were eight of us that ended up getting arrested. So that’s the name we ended up being called.

PS: Talk about the meetings.

CT: But in preparation for that we had too many meetings. Too many people were coming in and out. There were simply too many people that knew that some action was going to be—

And I was the one who was primarily the one who was recruiting people for it and it was just too many. We had meeting after meeting about surfacing, about—incidentally, in the Minnesota 8 action, I should mention this. Of the twenty-two people, two of them were women.

PS: You mean of the twenty-two people of the Beaver 55 action.

CT: Beaver 55, yeah, my mistake. And so women tended to see this as more of a communicative act rather than an act that’s trying to destroy the military machine because both of the women were among those who surfaced, Joan Francis and Nancy Saunders. In the Beaver 55 action there were some women who were coming to the meetings, but this was—

PS: You mean the—?

CT: Yeah, the high—the Minnesota 8 actions. There were women who came to the meetings but not—there were fourteen people who ended up—who were going to destroy

00:25:00 files. One of the draft boards was called off. At three of the draft boards we got arrested; there

 were eight people and at the one where they got away, all of the people—

PS: Succeeded.

CT: Yeah, succeeded, maybe there was a woman or not but at the others it was all men. So this was kind of a macho thing to do. Draft board raids around the country were mostly men. I don’t know if it’s the same motivation that young men get involved in illegal activity, criminal activity, drinking, carousing, or what, but I think it’s part—

PS: Or war-making.

CT: Or war-making.

PS: It’s not that different. It’s like commandos.

CT: No, absolutely. So I think that, yeah, I mean, I heard someone talking about his father, who was in the military, some professor at the university was in a videoed interview—was talking about how he grew up with the military family, this stuff about duty, honor, country, courage and loyalty and it struck me that all five of those adjectives, you know, nouns, duty, honor, country, courage and loyalty were sort of—could have been adopted, maybe with a slight twist on the meaning of them, by people who refused induction. It was—that was kind of a macho thing, too. But especially destroying property. It seemed to be that there was a male thing about it.

So, I mean, I think that as a resister, I think I have a lot more in common with people who enlisted into the military, thinking it was the right thing to do, thinking in terms of duty, honor, country, loyalty, courage—I think I had more in common with them than I actually did with those who went to Canada.

PS: Or who simply refused.

CT: Yeah, or who simply—

PS: Or who simply refused induction. I mean, is that sort of a distinction do you think?

CT: No, I feel as a refuser of induction, I had more in common with the people who believed what they were doing—who were following their conscience by enlisting.

PS: By enlisting, okay.

CT: A lot of the enlistees in that era, of course, we don’t know how many of the enlistees were actually enlisted—actually enlisted because they were going to get drafted—

PS: Anyway.

CT: and they thought they’d get a better placement or it would be less likely they would be sent to Vietnam. So, yeah, if you look at the numbers of enlistees and draftees, it doesn’t really tell the whole story because a lot of the enlistees were actually forced to that conclusion because they were about to be drafted or would have been drafted.

PS: Right, in any event, you were a volunteer.

CT: Yeah, that’s what I mean. They were volunteers and were following their conscience. So I feel I have more in common with those enlistees, at least, than I do with the people who followed their conscience and went to Canada, although they followed their conscience, too, certainly, and they paid a price for heaven’s sakes. Some of them are, you know, didn’t come back to the country. They keep the—a lot of them became full-time, you know, they became Canadian citizens who couldn’t have come back to the country until amnesty was granted by the Carter [U.S. President James Earl Carter Jr. (1924-)] administration.

But, yeah, I don’t know what it is—why I feel—I don’t know what it is—why I feel this commonality with those who enlisted thinking it was the right thing to do.

Well, anyhow, we had too many meetings and because of that, the government got wind of us. I think it was because we had too many meetings and too many people. I read recently that the Chicago 15, which is a group that did a stand-by action in Chicago, had two meetings before they did their action.

PS: Just two and we had several.

CT: Two meetings and they did not know each other either beforehand. You know, we had more than several, and, you know, they ended up tapping our phones because the four of us had surfaced and we were careful what we said on the phones but who knows why? Who knows what?

PS: Well, it was reported that—I’ve heard others say that there were—the Twin Cities were flooded with FBI agents and others after the Beaver 55 raid because they wanted to catch those people and so there were lots of—there was lots of surveillance or attempts at that going on after, you know, starting in March of 1970.

CT: I think I read someplace that there were a hundred FBI agents sent here as a result of that raid. No one ever got arrested for that. Those of us who surfaced, they didn’t even call us in for questioning.

PS: No contact, huh?

00:30:00 CT: No contact at all. At least, I didn’t have any. I don’t know about the other three. No

 one contacted me about that.

So the Minnesota 8 action finally—it took place on the night of June—by this time everyone in the group had decided no one was going to surface; that it had been explained well enough to the public what the motivation of these kinds of actions was and why it was necessary to do them. So no one was planning to surface for that, but as it turned out, eight of us sort of surfaced because we got caught in the act in the middle of the night in draft boards in Alexandria, Minnesota; Winona, Minnesota; and Little Falls [Little Falls, MN]. Two of us were in Little Falls and three each in Winona and Alexandria. I was one of those in Alexandria and I remember the FBI coming in the room but I didn’t know it was the FBI. This guy came into the room—they let us fiddle around in there for five, ten minutes. They had removed the files it turned out. We couldn’t find any files and we were in—I don’t know if they wanted to see what we would do in there. So, we were trying to steal the files and we were going to sink them in the river, I think, other groups—others of the groups had similar tactics. We were not going to stay in the room and rip up and spray paint files because these were just, you know, single county draft boards so we could actually carry them out we thought.

And so we were in there for five or ten minutes and someone—a group of people burst into the room and the first guy I saw was a guy—he had a cutoff sweatshirt, sleeveless sweatshirt, jeans—he had loafers with no socks—and he had a gun pointed at me. And he said, “Move and you’re dead.” That’s all—I didn’t remember him identifying himself as the FBI. I didn’t know if these were vigilantes from Alexandria or what. And it turned out I didn’t move. So I am not dead, yet. And I remember my whole future life flashed before my eyes at that time.

PS: Your future life?

CT: My future life. All flashed before my eyes. And for some reason, I pretended that I didn’t know the other two people. I really didn’t know one of them very well. The others in the Minnesota 8 had come to many, many meetings, but one of the people that I was arrested with, Cliff Ulen, had not been to very many meetings. Maybe it was one or two at the most and someone in the group, who was arrested in Little Falls, had vouched for him because they had lived in the same house as a group for several months, or in a group with others for several months. And his name was Cliff Ulen and for some reason we pretended not to know each other. I remember getting back—it was at the county sheriff’s—

PS: And the third of you there?

CT: Oh, the third one was the vice president of the Minnesota Student Association, or he had been the vice president the previous year, Bill Tilton. And for some reason I pretended not to know these other two guys. I don’t know what that was all about. I don’t know why, I mean, that was just insane.

PS: Don’t admit to anything, huh?

CT: Yeah, yeah. And I remember when I heard Bill’s name at the—either the sheriff’s office or back in Minneapolis at the FBI office or whatever they took us, and I heard Bill’s name and I said, “Oh, you’re Bill Tilton. You’re the one that kept the campus nonviolent during the student strike on campus.” The student strike I was referring to was the strike that happened on campus after the invasion or the bombing of Cambodia, which had been revealed at the end of March 1970 and the Kent State [Kent State University, Kent, OH, May 4, 1970] killings—four students were shot in a demonstration at Kent State and killed in early April in a demonstration that was in response to the Cambodia invasion. And I don’t know why President Nixon [U.S. President Richard Milhous Nixon (1913-1994)] initiated all these major steps right in the spring of the year when college campuses are ripe to erupt when there’s all this energy; when the weather’s nicer on the college campuses. It was strange that he did that. But anyhow, there was a student strike at the University of Minnesota and Bill, who was the vice president of the Student Association, was credited by the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* in an editorial for helping to keep the campus nonviolent during the student strike. So

00:35:00 we kind of razzed Bill about that after that. And so when I met him, quote met him, at the

 sheriff’s or FBI office, I said, “You’re the one who kept the campus nonviolent.” So I was a

 little wacko I think; I was a little nuts.

So they—we ended up going back to the Hennepin County Jail [Hennepin County Adult Detention Center, Minneapolis City Hall, 350 South Sixth Street, Minneapolis, MN]. They kept us till the morning; I don’t think they gave us our phone calls till the morning. And I called my parents because I had used my dad’s car to get up to Alexandria and his—the following morning—

PS: They didn’t let you drive it back.

CT: No, this was now Friday night and my dad needed the car to go to Synagogue services the next morning. He went every Saturday to services. And so we called them and my mother’s birthday was coming up. She was born on July 13. I think now they might have been used to my shenanigans, maybe not.

And we ended up—they set a bail for each of us of fifty thousand dollars, which was pretty hefty. The—in today’s dollars it’s about six, seven times that, maybe three hundred fifty thousand dollars each. And they were charging us with attempted sabotage of national defense material. This was part of the Espionage and Sabotage Act. Draft board raiders hadn’t been charged with such a serious offense in the past. This was something that could have gotten us ten years and who knew if we were going to be charged on state charges as well. State charges, you know, breaking and entering, burglary, those are state type charges. Federal type charges are destruction of federal property and put this charge under the Sabotage and Espionage Act.

But they—several weeks—oh, by the way, we ended up getting out on bail because we had a reduction of bail hearing and the judge, or the magistrate at that hearing, actually lowered the bail to ten thousand dollars each but allowed us to put up a thousand dollars of the ten thousand dollar in a deposit with the court, not going through a bail bondsman or bond—are they called bondspersons nowadays? I don’t know. But not going through one of those bail outfits and you’d get the whole thousand dollars back so in effect, it would just be—the bail got reduced in effect to one thousand dollars for each of us. So we put that—we did bail ourselves out. I don’t think we had a discussion about we wouldn’t allow ourselves to be bailed out unless other prisoners would be bailed out for similar amounts. I don’t think we had any discussion about refusing bail. We were only in the county jail, Hennepin County Jail, for six days.

PS: But when we bailed out, we were still at that thousand dollars deposit, we were still charged with sabotage.

CT: We were still charged with sabotage so they lowered the bail—

PS: It was a pretty good deal.

CT: considerably from fifty thousand to, in effect, one thousand, and kept the charge. But in order to be brought to trial in the federal system for a felony, you’ve got to be indicted. So a grand jury—they called a grand jury to meet. It was several weeks later that we got indicted and thankfully, we didn’t get indicted for attempt to sabotage national defense material. I don’t know what the reason was but I’ve read the sabotage that the Espionage and Sabotage Act one time, and I think that portion of the act required the United States to be “at war” and that might have been the reason because if it required the U.S. to be at war, we could have brought in all sorts of evidence about the war as it had never been declared; it was ambiguous whether we were at war, as it has always been since. We go to war without declaring war, according to what the Constitution says.

So we ended up getting charged by or indicted for attempted interference with the operations of the Selective Service System by force, violence and otherwise. I don’t know what the otherwise is, but—and that is a provision of the Selective Service Act—the same act that I would have been charged with for refusing induction so it had the same penalty. It was a maximum of five years, five years in prison. So that was considerably better.

PS: And in the end, you never did get charged with refusing induction the second time.

CT: I never did and I think that was probably—they could have piled on. They could have

00:40:00 piled on and given me consecutive sentences, you know, for the eventual sentence I got for

the Minnesota 8 action. And they simply ignored that other one. Maybe they thought if I had the potential of that charge hanging over my head, that I’d behave myself, thinking that if I got in any other kind of trouble that they might be more likely to charge me with that. I don’t think so. I think they figured they just got me for the more serious action although it was under the same law that we were being charged. Yes.

PS: So during that period of time between our arrest and our indictment—

CT: Right.

PS: that’s when we were still facing the possible sabotage charges; first time that had ever been laid against draft board raiders. So that was kind of a big deal and we were trying to figure out how we were going to respond to that. Talk about what you recall about our trying to select or talking about different attorneys and tactics and things like that. I mean, we had a change of direction once it turned out to be just the Selective Service charge, right?

CT: Yeah. I don’t remember that as well as you do. Your memory is that there were some national lawyers. I think we were looking at a national lawyer regardless of what the charge was. We were—there was a lawyer who had been one of the two major lawyers in the defense of the Chicago 8. The Chicago 8, which later became the Chicago 7 because one of the defendants was removed from the case, those were the people who were charged with conspiracy to riot as a result of the demonstrations around the Democratic National Convention in the fall of 1968, maybe it was August—September ’68. And one of the—the two major lawyers were a fellow named Bill Kunstler [William Moses Kunstler (1919-1995)] and the other lawyer, who apparently was the lawyer who did most of the legal work—Kunstler was very good with the political type work on the case but the one who did most of the legal work was Leonard Weinglass [Leonard Irving Weinglass (1933-2011)]

And we—he was interested in our case and we met with him and, as it turned out, no—I don’t think it was. By the time we went to trial and got indicted, Weinglass was still interested. By the time we got indicted for the Selective Service charge, Weinglass was still interested. I don’t know if he just didn’t want to back out at that time but our lawyer[Ken Tilsen] asked for a continuance because Weinglass was finishing up a trial somewhere else.

We were actually tried in three different groups, the three groups that we were arrested with. I was tried with the Alexandria group. You were tried with the Winona group and the two others were tried with the Little Falls group. That was the government’s decision. We didn’t make it—we might have made a motion to consolidate the cases—

PS: We tried is what I remember but they wouldn’t go for it.

CT: Yeah, they wanted to keep us separately. I don’t know why.

PS: Well, it’s because it would make such a big splash.

CT: Yeah, that might have been—

PS: There were all these other group trials that were notorious and in the news all the time. This way we could spread it out.

CT: And, as I remember, the lawyer—each trial had some people defend themselves and some people defended by a lawyer. And the lawyer that we had in all three cases was Ken Tilsen [Kenneth Earl Tilsen (1927-2013)] and I recall him making a motion in our case for a continuance so that Len Weinglass could finish his case and join the defense team. And Judge Devitt [Edward James Devitt (1911-1992)] would not grant that continuance. We had a judge who was the—for the trial I was involved in, the Alexandria group, who was the chief federal district judge in Minnesota. He had been a member of Congress. He was a Republican; the president was a Republican at that time, Richard Nixon, and I think it was in May of that year, shortly before our action, in May, a judge from the eighth circuit court of appeals, which is the circuit that includes Minnesota, had been appointed to the Supreme Court and his name was Harry Blackmun [Harry Andrew Blackmun (1908-1999)], who later became famous or infamous, depending on your position, for writing the Roe. vs. Wade decision when he was on the Supreme Court.

00:45:00 PS: And he was from Minnesota, too.

CT: And he was from Minnesota. And it’s sort of a loose tradition that when a judge is appointed who came from a state, appointed from an appellate court to the—to a higher court or retires or dies from an appellate court—that seat is traditionally—it’s filled by someone from the same state. So I think our judge, who was the chief federal district court judge in Minnesota was bucking for that spot.

The first time our lawyer—our attorney went in for pretrial motions, or for—our first appearance in front of Judge Devitt, the judge gave him seven days for pretrial motions and our lawyer Ken Tilsen calmly—he stood up and calmly says, “Your Honor, I believe the federal rules of criminal procedure require a minimum of ten days for pretrial motions.”

So, I mean, this was the chief federal district court judge—he knew of the federal rules of criminal procedure. I have no idea why he did that.

PS: And he’d written a textbook about these civil procedure rules, right?

CT: Or criminal procedures.

PS: Criminal procedures.

CT: Yeah, I think he did. He wrote some manual.

PS: I heard that—that he was regarded as an expert. And his name was Edward Devitt.

CT: Edward. What did I call him?

PS: You just called him Judge Devitt.

CT: Oh yeah, Judge Devitt, Judge Edward Devitt. So he—I mean, he gave us the ten days but that’s all he gave us was the ten days for the pretrial motions in our case.

And by that time, one of the defendants in the Alexandria group, Cliff Ulen, had sort of disassociated himself from the members of the group. We never really found out why. Some people think he was the person who informed on us but at the same time, his family was putting all sorts of pressure on him to get a lesser sentence or whatever by disassociating himself from the others in the group. He never even wrote the member of the group who he lived in the same house with, sort of in a commune for several months. He never even wrote that fellow when he was in prison. That was Mike Therriault, who was at Little Falls.

So Cliff Ulen did listen to his attorney, did disassociate himself from the group and after—

PS: He had a separate attorney altogether.

CT: That’s right and he decided to plead guilty and I think it was after the first five of us were in prison—we went into prison at different times because we had two different judges, the third group. Two of the groups had—Pete’s group and my group—your group and my group—had the same judge, Judge Edward Devitt. And the other group had a Judge Philip Neville [Philip Neville (1909-1974)], a more liberal judge. And their trial was—went on—was conducted later, started later and their appeal lasted longer so they went to prison six months after the rest of us had already been in prison, gone to prison. And when we went to prison, I think, Cliff Ulen—the five of us were already in prison when Cliff Ulen was sentenced and he got probation. And one of the TV editorialists, the news shows had local editorialists every day—his name was Dave—Don Austin—not Don Austin.

PS: No, Al [Al Austin (1935-2018)].

CT: Al Austin. I remember him giving an editorial on TV—I don’t know if someone just sent me a copy of it or actually—it must have been sent to me. And he said that here were seven young men who decided—who did what they thought was the right thing to do because we never said, Well, we thought—we never told the judge, Yeah, this was a terrible thing we did.

PS: We never apologized.

CT: Yeah, and it wouldn’t have made any difference in the sentence I don’t think. But Al Austin, [WCCO] TV’s editorialist, commented, Here were seven young men who did what they thought was the right thing to do and they got five years in prison and here’s one young man who did what he thought was the wrong thing to do because you’ve got to show remorse when you plead guilty in order to get your plea bargain deal, and he—and Al goes, and he gets probation. Which is kind of an interesting twist on it I thought. But it’s just like the same thing—show trials in the Soviet Union. You had to express remorse. It’s all some weird theater game.

PS: You mentioned that Cliff and Mike had lived together in the same house at least for a while. Did you ever live in any kind of a community, you know, group house, commune, anything like that during these years?

CT: No.

PS: You weren’t part of a—?

CT: No, I didn’t do drugs. I was not part of this movement.

PS: So you knew a lot of these people, worked with, associated with them, but you didn’t

00:50:00 live at Colfax House [Twenty-sixth Street and Colfax Avenue, Minneapolis, MN] or any of

 those sorts of things?

CT: No.

PS: Okay, just wanted to back up and clarify that. Okay, so—

CT: For a time I was living with my parents in St. Louis Park [St. Louis Park, MN] and after the Minnesota 8 were arrested there were tons of letters to the editor that were very critical of us and a reporter for the *Star Tribune*, who later went on to become the editor of the *Texas Observer* [*Texas Observer*, Austin, TX, 1954-Present], and of some national fame, named Molly Ivins [Molly Ivins (1945-2007)], wrote a very favorable article about the eight of us pointing out our academic and our sterling records in our past and she said in her article that I had graduated as valedictorian for St. Louis Park High School [St. Louis Park High School, 6425 West 33rd Street, St Louis Park, MN]. Simply not true. I never went to St. Louis Park High School but my address—I think my address officially at the time was at my folks’ place in St. Louis Park.

Incidentally, after we were arrested, there were some strange—people were painting very well stenciled signs underneath bridges, “Hang the 8.” There was even one letter to the editor of the *Star Tribune* saying that all these [unclear] folks want is attention. Let’s give them some attention. Let’s hang them during the Aquatennial. This is from some fellow in Minnetonka. His last name was Dahlberg.

PS: I thought he was in St. Louis Park too.

CT: Yeah—St. Louis Park. He was from St. Louis Park. You’re right. And I don’t know if he meant hanged during the Aquatennial Parade, or hanged as a separate event. The Aquatennial then—now it only lasts for about four days—it went on for ten days at that time in the middle of the summer. So I don’t know if it would have been a separate event where we’d be hanged or just on a float during the parade. I never rode on a float. It might have been fun. I don’t know.

But in response to that, curiously—

PS: So this was a letter to the *Star Tribune*, to the *Tribune*? *Star*? What—?

CT: I think it was to the *Star*.

PS: That was when there were two newspapers, still.

CT: Yeah, and in response to that, someone who none of us, I don’t think who none of us had ever met, who was quite the star among poets in the country and won the Pulitzer Prize for a book of poems he wrote called *The Dream Songs*, [*The Dream Songs*, by John Berryman, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1969] what was his name again? My gosh!

PS: John—?

CT: He was famous.

PS: John Berryman [John Allyn McAlpin Berryman (born John Allyn Smith Jr.,1914-1972)].

CT: John Berryman! In response to this letter calling us—for us to be hanged. He wrote a poem, a sonnet, I think. Was it a sonnet or it wasn’t a sonnet. It was more lines than are a sonnet. He wrote a poem as a letter to the editor of the *Star Tribune* and they printed it. This was not—he didn’t even know any of us. None of us—a lot of us had hung around the campus quite a bit but I don’t think any of us had ever taken a course from John Berryman or any of us knew him. And coincidentally, while we were in prison, he committed suicide by jumping off the Washington Avenue bridge. Yeah, that was kind of a thrill for someone of that fame to write a poem in our honor, responding to this person who thought we should be hanged.

Well, anyhow—

PS: That poem was called *The Minnesota 8 and the Letter Writers*.[[2]](#footnote-2) That’s how I remember that.

CT: And he referred to this person from St. Louis Park—that’s why I know you’re right. It was St. Louis Park. In his poem he referred to the guy from St. Louis Park, yeah.

Where was I? Was I in our trial? Oh, yeah, so when we were preparing for trial, our lawyer came up with a very interesting defense called the necessity defense. And the necessity defense basically is that you—the evil that you were trying to—you were trying to prevent an evil that’s greater than the evil the law was trying to prevent. So the theory is you can break—and you reasonably believe that it was necessary to commit the evil that you do commit in order to prevent this greater evil. So to make it more concrete, you can break—you can commit trespass or breaking and entering into a burning building if you’re trying to save someone’s life that’s in the burning building. And our claim was that this was that type of emergency, the war was. The other methods had been tried, that we reasonably believed it was necessary to do this kind of action to prevent the greater evil of the war and the draft and all that was going on.

The lawyer—the judge did not—it would have been a stretch for him because it was a stretch

00:55:00 of a metaphor and the judge was not going to allow that defense. And we had planned all sorts

of witnesses to call and some of the witnesses that we planned to call over the summer—one of the witnesses that we met with—his name was—he was someone who had worked at the RAND Corporation [RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA] on various government projects and been an assistant in the—assistant to the assistant secretary of defense for a time, a very high level position in the defense department. And he came and met with us at our lawyer’s home by the St Croix River and his name was Daniel Ellsberg [Daniel Ellsberg (1931-)]. And at that time, he was not a particularly well-known rebel. He had written a letter to the editor with another fellow named Russo, to the *New York Times*, I think.

PS: Anthony Russo [Anthony J. Russo Jr. (1936-2008)].

CT: Anthony Russo—in opposition to the war. And he was becoming very much antiwar and he knew—we interviewed him. Very fascinating fellow—someone would ask one question and he’d go on sort of like this interview. He’d go on for twenty-five minutes talking and we didn’t know who this guy was, if he was some CIA guy or what. I remember we had some conversations—Who is this guy? So he was one of the witnesses we might have called in if we were going to be allowed to present this necessity defense.

Well, the judge in the first trial, Judge Devitt, was not going to allow any reference to the war—the war or the draft. It was irrelevant. Now he wasn’t saying the war is irrelevant. He was saying for the purposes of this trial, the war is irrelevant. It’s not that—he was not saying that that’s not something that shouldn’t be on people’s minds at all, but he was just saying that the war and the draft was irrelevant. It was irrelevant—what was on the files—what the files were to be used for. It was just enough that they were government property.

So in the first trial it was clear we weren’t going to be allowed to say anything and after the government rested; the prosecutor rested; our attorney thought that it was possible that the case hadn’t been proven. So there was no need for us to take the stand even or even to provide any defense. He was going to make an argument that the government hadn’t met its burden of proof.

PS: So the first trial was your trial, you and Bill’s?

CT: Yeah, it was just Bill and me because Cliff had separated himself off. He had gotten his own attorney. And I was represented by Ken Tilsen and Bill represented himself, Bill Tilton represented himself and Ken Tilsen was my attorney. And so our attorney—Ken just made an argument to the jury that the government hadn’t proved its case. In particular he made the argument that they hadn’t proved what our intent was in going into that office.

PS: Because you hadn’t actually destroyed anything except broken the glass on the door.

CT: We hadn’t. Bill had bent one of the “A” keys on the typewriter. That had happened.

PS: You got that far?

CT: For this, under this provision of the law, there are some laws where you’re assumed to have the intent [unclear] if certain events will follow if the natural and probable consequences of your actions are such and such, it’s assumed that you intended such and such. That’s in general how intent is brought in to the law in our court system. But there are certain laws that are specific intent laws where it’s written into the law that you have to have this intent.

PS: This particular intent?

CT: That’s right. And this happened to be a provision of the Selective Service Act that it was a specific intent crime. It said something in there about, “with the intent to interfere with the operations of the Selective Service.” So they had to prove our intent was—it couldn’t be, just, that’s a natural and probably consequence of people breaking into draft board offices—that they’re trying to interfere with the natural, with the Selective Service. You couldn’t say that; you couldn’t argue that. You had to prove they had this specific intent to interfere with the operations by force, violence and otherwise.

And so Ken argued that he hadn’t—the prosecutor, who was Robert Renner [Robert George Renner (1923-2005)], the U.S. for the—the U.S. local [district] attorney, hadn’t proven his case. And my sister came up to me after the closing arguments and said, “You know, even I would have

01:00:00 voted not guilty after Ken’s closing,” which was quite a compliment to Ken because she—

 because we were quite the rivals as I said. She likely would have voted guilty.

PS: Plus she knew your intent anyway, right?

CT: Plus she knew my intent. Well, the jury was out for about what? Twenty minutes? Twenty-five minutes?

PS: Hardly anything.

CT: Incidentally, in federal court, usually in federal court, the judge asks the jury, the prospective jurors, the questions to ferret out their biases. Usually in state courts, the attorneys get to do that and they get to follow up with questions and go back and forth with the prospective juror and some people believe that’s why the conviction rate in federal courts is much, much higher than in state courts.

The judge in our case asked us to submit questions and we submitted some questions we would like the prospective jurors asked. He—I mean, you hear about this process is called the voir dire process. You hear about cases where it goes on for days, for a week or two weeks. I mean, in the O.J. Simpson [Orenthal James Simpson (1947-)] case it lasted for a couple weeks for the selection of the jury. Our jury was selected in an hour. And the judge had adopted one of our questions which is the one question we shouldn’t have asked him to ask. We asked how many of the jurors are under the age of twenty-six because twenty-six was the magic age. That was the age that you were generally put into another category. They had to draft everyone under the age of twenty-six before they would draft any single person over the age of twenty-six. I don’t know if they reclassified them or something, but even if you were 1A over the age of twenty-six, you wouldn’t get drafted. If you reached your twenty-sixth birthday, you were generally free from the draft.

So we asked how many of the prospective jurors were under the age of twenty-six and six people raised their hands. Well, in the selection of the jury, each side gets some automatic strikes where you can just—you don’t have to show their

End of Recording 2

Recording 3

00:00:00 bias. They’re called peremptory challenges.

PS: So you can exclude it for the jury for no particular reason.

CT: Usually you get a whole panel approved and you subtract from that panel the ones that the prosecutor can challenge for no reason and the ones that the defense can challenge for no reason. And then you end up typically with your twelve jurors, maybe fourteen if you have two alternates in case something happens to one of the jurors.

Well, it was six people who raised their hands and we had something—the prosecution had something like six peremptory challenges and since we had two defendants I think the judge gave us something like ten peremptory challenges. And the prosecutor, of his six, five of the six he used on the people who were under twenty-six. The one question that we wanted the judge to ask that he did ask, was the one that screwed ourselves.

PS: That’s hilarious. [laughter]

CT: And we struck the sixth one, under twenty-six, because the way he had answered some other questions was terribly bad, we thought. We thought he was biased against us. So we cut our own throats there.

So then there was the second trial—

PS: So you were convicted in fairly short order?

CT: Yeah, very short order. And there was a second trial and the second and third trials, you’re going to talk to other people. They can describe those trials to you. I think the third trial was one where the judge let in this necessity defense. He had witnesses of veterans from Vietnam; people who were experts on biological warfare and ecology; people who were experts in civil disobedience and its effect on government officials. This fellow, Dan Ellsberg, who sometime later, in July [in fact June] of 1971, was the person responsible for the release of the Pentagon Papers, he was the government official or RAND Corporation employee who had stolen those along with Anthony Russo, this fellow he had written this letter to the *New York Times* with before he met with us. And he was one of those who was going to testify at their trial. And so they had this slew of witnesses and—

PS: All ready to testify, justification essentially.

CT: Exactly. And Judge Neville, the more liberal judge, let all of that in. He let it all to the jury, hear all of that evidence on a provisional basis and then at the end the prosecution had a standing objection to all of that kind of testimony. At the end he—Judge Neville told the jury you can’t consider any of that kind of stuff that you heard. He ruled it all irrelevant. And so they were—their jury was out for slightly longer period of time because—well, Frank will tell you all that story.

So we got convicted and then they do a pre-sentencing investigation report on you and several weeks later we got sentenced along with the other three who had since been convicted from the Winona raid. That would be Pete Simmons, Brad Beneke and Don Olson. And we all got sentenced on December 28, I think it was, three days after Christmas—I remember the date—of 1970. And Judge—I remember the judge asking if you would do it again. He said, “I don’t want to jeopardize your appeal rights.” That is, you wait until you’re sentenced before you actually make the appeal in a case. And the appeal in our case was that the government hadn’t proved its intent so we weren’t going to say what our intent was. And he said, “I don’t want you to know—to jeopardize, you know, what you’re going to— the arguments you’re going to make on your appeal,” but he kind of asked, Would you do it again? Or, Would you do anything differently? Would you do anything differently? Or something. And virtually all of us said we would. I think Pete said that he might have done it less clandestinely or something like that. But virtually we all said, No, we wouldn’t have done much different.

And it was at that point that I asked him if he would have done anything differently, if he would have made the same decision—that the war and the draft had nothing to do with this trial. And he answered me. He looked at me and he said, “Yes,” he would have made the same decision.

Now I had said in my pre-sentencing statement to him, I had made the argument that the files, you know, it kind of didn’t make a lot of sense to say the files—what the purpose of these files was irrelevant. The argument I made was, “If these were lists of fugitive slaves to be

00:05:00 picked up and we were facing charges under the Fugitive Slave Act, which was a law, would

it have been irrelevant what those lists of names were going to be used for if that’s what we had attempted to destroy or allegedly attempted to destroy?”

And then I asked him, “In Nazi Germany, if there were lists of Jews would it have been irrelevant what was on those files if we had tried to, or allegedly tried to destroy those?” And the third thing I asked him was, “If they were lists of U.S. federal district court judges to be assassinated, would it have been irrelevant what was on those government files?” And I believe maybe I should have left off—

PS: That last one?

CT: But I don’t think it would have made any difference. There was a rabbi at the Hillel House on the campus, Rabbi Milgrom, he said, “You all should have pled guilty and said you were sorry. You would have got probation.” He pointed to Cliff Ulen who did that. I said, “No, I don’t think the judge was about to do that with all of us even if we pled guilty and said we were sorry.”

So the judge gave us the maximum sentence. He started out our sentence by saying, “These five young men come from very fine families,” and whenever judges start out with that, you know that they’re going to end up some place else. And I remember nudging Bill Tilton with my elbow standing next to me and opening my hand and five—and indicating we were going to get five years.

PS: Five years, five fingers, yeah.

CT: And he gave us the maximum sentence and, in fact, he gave two of the defendants, who were under age twenty-one, I think, and eligible to be sentenced under the Federal Youth Sentencing Act or whatever it was—

PS: Youth Corrections Act.

CT: Youth Corrections Act. And they got six years, even though the law was that the maximum sentence was five years. I don’t know how they got up to six years. And we were all sentenced under a provision that enabled us to—it made us eligible for parole immediately upon entering the prison. It was—he gave us, which was nice of him—it was called, I think it was called an A-number sentence and because of that, several of us—I think all of us—went up for parole when we were in prison at the first opportunity. And then, not expecting to get paroled, but to get what was called a set-off, meaning the time after which you could go for parole again. And because of that, because you get a set-off, you could tell roughly how much time you—they’d give you. And it was roughly two years for all of us although five of us, the five of us who went in on that date, or not—a few days later actually.

PS: But who were sentenced at the same time.

CT: Who were sentenced on that day. We didn’t go into prison at that time.

PS: We appealed.

CT: Right, we appealed. We were out on appeal bond for ten, eleven months. We didn’t go into prison until November, November 29, 1971.

PS: Yes.

CT: So it was almost—it was eleven months after we were sentenced, the five of us. And so we all got set-offs, the five of us who went up for parole immediately, of roughly it was going—we were going to end up doing about two years, which was roughly, I think, what people refusing induction at that time were getting for the most part although it varied. Some were getting harsher sentences; some were getting lesser sentences.

Although the ones that came into the prison where I—the prison where I ended up spending most of my time, Sandstone [Federal Correctional Institution, Sandstone, Sandstone, MN], they seemed to be giving from six months to a year sentence by that time. We had some come in with three-month sentences for the draft. But they wanted—because when you got drafted, that’s how long you had to serve in the military. So two years—

PS: So it was about two years.

CT: Yeah, two years is roughly the—

PS: Although that’s a guess. That was not any kind of a guarantee or a promise because they were not bound to let you go after the first denial hearing or parole hearing.

CT: Yeah.

PS: It would depend on what they thought about your offense and how you behaved and things like that. There was no implied promise there, right?

CT: Yeah, I would have been shocked if we didn’t get out the second time we went up for parole. And as it turned out, because the two defendants who came in after us—they came in six months after us because they were out on appeal for longer than us. Their trial had, first of all, taken place a couple months after ours but their appeal lasted longer and they didn’t come into prison until six months after we had started our sentence and they had a harsher sentence. They had to do a year before they’d be eligible for parole so they went up for parole after a year and got immediate parole for sentencing—a parole date of after fourteen months. Well,

00:10:00 the rest of us who had similar records, identical records, none of us—I don’t think any of us

had real criminal records.

We went on—so we made a motion in court saying, Hey—and in fact, I—when I had gone up for parole, I was part of an experimental program where the parole board was giving reasons why you were denied parole from a checklist. And the reasons why I was denied parole had to do solely with the nature of the offense. They could have checked stuff, saying I wasn’t rehabilitated but the provisions that they checked were, His release, in the opinion of the board, would promote disrespect for law or would depreciate the seriousness of his crime. Nothing about me not being fit to live in society.

PS: Not your behavior afterward or anything.

CT: Yeah, right. So that made it an even stronger argument that we should have got paroled at the same time as those two who had come in six months later. And so our lawyer went to court. He went to court on behalf of all of us and the parole, the parole board, does not like federal courts interfering in their domain so they immediately changed their decision after we had a court hearing. We didn’t get to attend the parole hearing either.

PS: No, we were elsewhere.

CT: And they gave us parole dates for the exact same date that the other two had, the two who had ended up doing only fourteen months. So the rest of us didn’t even have to go up for parole again. I was scheduled to go up for parole in September of 1973 or October of 1973 and here I ended up getting out in July of 1973, just because the parole board didn’t want the federal court to rule on this motion that our attorney had made.

So I don’t want to talk too much about prison. What can you say about prison?

PS: You told me once about an interesting person that you met there.

CT: You want me to tell that story?

PS: Sure.

CT: Well, as I told you before, I played table tennis throughout my college career and I ended up going to national tournaments. After I got out of prison I even went to the—to a two-week camp at the Olympic Training Development Center in Colorado Springs [Colorado Springs, CO].

PS: Well, I didn’t know about that.

CT: Yeah, played at table tennis camp. They had a lot of money and I was kind of thirty years old even when I went to that, maybe older.

PS: Before when you were younger, I mean, you were ranked in the state, right?

CT: Yeah, I was ranked third one year but that was a fluke because you had to play in so many tournaments to get ranked, but I was in the top ten in the state. At one time I made it to the top hundred nationally but that was also a fluke. I had one real good U.S. Open Tournament. But anyhow, I was in the top five hundred nationally out of maybe ten thousand who played tournament table tennis.

But anyhow, in prison they had table tennis tables and I met this guy named Jacques Vermeulen.

PS: Can you spell his last name?

CT: V-e-r-m-e-u-l-e-n, I think it was. And Jacques was a table tennis player. He had been on the French Junior—National Junior Table Tennis Team. France was much better than the United States at that time. They were much better at table tennis in the late sixties, early seventies when I was playing. France had some—two top ten players in the world. United States barely had any even in the top fifty in the world.

But Jacques was in prison for—to clear a false declaration of his name and a false declaration—no his name on his passport and his name that he used at customs, where he used the same fake name—but they gave him two consecutive five-year sentences so a total of ten years for using a fake name, the same fake name twice. What they really wanted Jacques for was for heroin smuggling but they apparently—they couldn’t get him on that so they got him on this stuff. When *The French Connection* [*The French Connection*, directed by William Friedken, 1971] movie played in prison, he sat behind me and he told me how it really was. I mean, he knew these guys on a first name basis it seemed.

And Jacques—so when I told Jacques that I played—he was much better than me at table tennis. He was a defensive player. So we ended up playing table tennis a lot and we actually got paddles sent in, sponge type, you know, tournament type table tennis paddles sent in to play with and Jacques it turned out had left the French Junior National Table Tennis Team to

00:15:00 go into the military. And I asked him why he did that and he pointed to his upper arm

and he pointed to [unclear]. Oh, stripes—sergeant. And he said yeah—he had this beautiful French accent—and Jacques was sent to Vietnam and this was in 1947.

PS: So he was a good deal older than you.

CT: Yeah, he was in his forties at that time. And this was twenty-five years later. He had lied about his age to get into the military. And this was twenty-five years earlier. He had gone to Vietnam to fight basically the same war—I mean, our involvement in Vietnam, which is a continuation of our support for the French who were trying to regain their colony after World War II when Japan had taken over Vietnam, and allowed the French to administer it to some extent but the French wanted back their colony and we supported those efforts. And when the French left, when Vietnam was divided in two in 1954, and it was supposed to be reunified with elections two years later, we didn’t want those elections to occur so then we were the ones who got involved. And that’s what led to our involvement in what’s called the Second Indochina War [Second Indochina War, 1955-1975], but it was basically continuation of the First Indochina War [First Indochina War, 1946-1954] which the French were trying to regain their colony for. And that’s what Jacques had fought in. He had fought in the French Indochina War.

And I asked him—Jacques always told me he says, “Me? Communist” He was talking about himself. He would point at himself and say he was a Communist. Now the French Communist Party was kind of a little bit to the left of the Democratic Party in the United States, but, you know, I asked him if his experience in the war or why he went to the war. Oh, that’s when he told me, “Oh, stripes. Sergeant,” when I asked him why he went to the war if he was a Communist when he was fighting against the Communists basically. The Communists were the nationalists in Vietnam.

So that was interesting. Jacques was a Vietnam veteran. He was the first Vietnam veteran I met in prison but he was a Vietnam veteran from 1947.

PS: So he went there for advancement?

CT: Yeah.

PS: Yeah, well.

CT: Jacques—I think they deported him after he got out of prison probably—probably just a very nice guy. Some of the people in prison were so mellow. Joe Ferriola [Joseph Ferriola (1927-1989)] later became a Chicago crime boss and he was known as—I read online since—he was known as being very tough when he—cold-hearted—when he was working his way up the hierarchy of the organized crime family in Chicago and he later became—this guy could not hurt a flea from the guy I knew. This guy was so mellow from what I saw of him in prison.

And then the other notorious mobster in our prison was Don Angelini [Donald Angelini (1926-2000)], who was in the same Chicago crime—they had some name—same name, this family, this organization, this mob organization and he was in the same one in Chicago. He got sent out to Las Vegas [Las Vegas, NV]. He was very good with numbers. He got sent to Las Vegas for running—to keep an eye on their gambling efforts in Las Vegas. He played bridge all day in prison. He would laugh at all the people he called the COs. Everyone in prison, whether you were a Conscientious Objector or you refused induction or you were in their for destroying draft files, was referred to as a CO, which stands for Conscientious Objector. And he would laugh at us and say, “Why would you do that?” He just couldn’t see it. He said—but he was a mellow guy, too, Don Angelini. I was going to look him up. His son is a lawyer, handled a case, too, for the mob I found online. And I was going to call his son up and tell him what I remembered of his father. His son is not in the mob, I don’t think but he has defended people who were in organized crime in Chicago.

Incidentally in Sandstone, the education department was planning a program where some of the prisoners were going to get to go out into Sandstone Elementary School to tutor kids. And I remember the head of the education department saying, “You know, everyone who’s good for this program is either a CO or an OC—OC was Organized Crime; CO was Conscientious Objector. [laughter}

And, as it turned out, one of my co-defendants was the first person to get out to do that and

00:20:00 did that for a good portion of his stay in Sandstone and I was to be the second person to get

 out. The day I was getting out someone who identified himself as someone from the John

 Birch Society—they proudly signed his letter to the editor—had a letter printed in the

 Alexandria newspaper saying how terrible this was that these prisoners are going into the

 schools in Sandstone.

PS: In Alexandria?

CT: In Alexandria, yeah, yeah.

PS: That’s a long reach.

CT: It really was and so I didn’t—never got to—although it was hard on the—Frank [Frank Kroncke]—

PS: That pre-empted you, huh?

CT: That pre-empted me. Frank I—it was hard on Frank going out and coming in every day or he said it was hard.

PS: So that was a sort of a specialized work release?

CT: Yeah.

PS: So not to dwell on prison experiences too much if you don’t care to but you didn’t start out at Sandstone.

CT: You’re right. You didn’t start out—oh, you started out where you ended up.

PS: Yeah.

CT: But we ended up getting sent to five different prisons. In fact, three of us were in the car going down to Kansas City County Jail, which was a dump. This was—county jails are always much worse. Prisoners who are awaiting trial or who are spending months and months in county jails awaiting trial, they are under the worst conditions. Prisons are much, much better conditions. County jails are just atrocious. And this was a dump. The Kansas City County Jail was just pathetic.

PS: Jefferson County?

CT: Is that what county it is?

PS: Jackson County? [Jackson County Corrections, 1300 Cherry Street, Kansas City, MO]. One of those. Yeah, it was horrible.

CT: And Pete and Don and I we were all three in the same car. We didn’t know where we were going together. We didn’t know if we were going together; we didn’t know where any of us were going and we ended up getting sent from the Kansas City County Jail into three different directions. They sent me further south to Oklahoma. They sent Don Olson—they sent me to El Reno, Oklahoma Federal Correctional Institution, El Reno, [El Reno, OK].

PS: El Reno, right?

CT: El Reno, a federal reformatory it was classified at the time which meant you had to be coincidentally under twenty-six at the start of your sentence. Twenty-six is an interesting age. They sent Pete to a federal youth center in Englewood, Colorado [now Federal Correctional Institution, Englewood, Littleton, CO], and they sent Don to the federal medical center, federal prison medical center in Springfield, Missouri [United States Medical Center for Federal Prisoners, Springfield, MO]. Now there’s one of those medical centers in Minnesota for the federal system in Rochester [Rochester, MN]. At that time the federal system had twenty-two thousand prisoners. Now it has one hundred eighty-nine thousand. At one time it was two hundred twenty thousand. So it was up by a factor of ten at its greatest from that era.

So there weren’t all that many federal prisons but you’re supposed to—we were eligible, based on the security restrictions and the length of our sentence, we were eligible to have gone to Sandstone and I tried to get to Sandstone immediately. And the two others of the five of us who went in initially, Bill Tilton went to Milan Federal Correctional Institution [Federal Correctional Institution, Milan, York Charter Township, Michigan]—

PS: That’s in Michigan.

CT: in Milan, Michigan, and Brad went to Morgantown Federal Youth Center. Was it called Morgantown?

PS: No, that’s—well, Morgantown’s in West Virginia but he was in Kentucky [Federal Correctional Institution, Ashland, Boyd County, KY].

CT: Yeah, where is it? What’s the name of it?

PS: I always have trouble remembering the name of that.

CT: It started with an “M.”

PS: I don’t think so.

CT: That’s interesting.

PS: Well, Brad will correct us later if necessary.

CT: So he and Pete, who were both sentenced under the Federal Youth Corrections Act, went to federal youth centers.

PS: Yeah, there were just two of them then, the one where I went on the outskirts of Denver [Denver, CO] and the one where Brad went in the town that we can’t be sure of right now.

CT: Yeah.

PS: There was just one for the east and one for the west of those youth centers.

CT: Okay, gosh, why can’t I remember the name of that prison? Well, anyhow, after I got out of prison I got my prison file as well as my FBI file. I got my prison file and in my prison file it says that the warden in Sandstone asked that no more prisoners, not of our type, of that type, meaning draft resisters, or people who were in on draft-related charges, be sent to Sandstone because Sandstone had just had a work strike and he thinks it was primarily organized by the draft resisters, which might have been true—by the draft resisters in Sandstone. So that warden had asked that we not be sent there. That’s why we were sent to five separate prisons around the country, although Pete and Don—or Don and Brad might have been sent to youth centers anyhow.

But I had put in for a transfer to Sandstone and they told me, Oh, it can’t be done for at least a

00:25:00 couple months or something. And then it turned out there was going to be a strike at El Reno

 and I wrote in a letter that the warden had been presented with a list of demands and there’s a

deadline for Monday at noon and we’ll see what happens and I’ll write you more about it. Oh, I was not supposed—your outgoing mail is all censored unless it’s going to a government official or your lawyer. And I knew the letter was going to be censored but the captain of the guard called me in and he had my—the letter underlined all over it in red. And he said things like, Thank god for these crazy fences. Thank god for the beautiful fences. They help keep the crazy Okies out. And he said, You can’t say that. Well, the censoring of the mail—the purpose is not to tell you what you can and can’t say but for security purposes. They don’t want you planning escapes.

Now I don’t know if he thought that was in some code or something but he said, You can’t say that. And so I asked him, “Well, could you tell me who I addressed that letter to?” And he read the name and it was Miss Androff, my eighth grade French teacher, who had sent me a card. She had seen my name in some antiwar list and so I was answering her. And I said, “Well I think Miss Androff would have understood that I meant that as a joke. It’s humor.” And I said, “If I had written this letter to you, I might have worded it differently.” And then he asked me, “Well, what are you going to do at twelve o’clock on Monday?” This was on a Saturday, I think. And I said—

PS: Which was when the strike was supposed to—?

CT: When the strike—if the warden hadn’t responded for to the demands the prisoners intended to strike. And I said, “Well, I’m going to wait till Monday and see what happens.” And he says, “Well, we’ll see what will happen right now. I’m going to lock you up.” And he’s, “I’m going to put you in the hole.” He put me in the hole and six days later I’m on my way to Sandstone, something they told me that I couldn’t get to for at least a couple months.

PS: Well, that was fast. That letter really worked wonders probably.

CT: It’s still sitting in my prison file against their rules, the original is in that file. They—if I—I mean, the copy of it appears in my—when I asked for my prison file, I can see that the letter’s in there but they’ll claim they just have a copy of it. They don’t have—the original never got to the recipient of that letter. The rules had required them to return all mail to you with the reason why it can’t be sent or to let it go with the normal flow of the U.S. mail. So they violate the rules in there whenever they see fit.

PS: I’m shocked, shocked.

CT: Yeah, this is shocking. So on the way to Sandstone I got to see Leavenworth [United States Penitentiary, Leavenworth, Leavenworth, KS] for ten days because that’s where—

PS: Stopped over there?

CT: Leavenworth is—the federal prison system has an elaborate bus transportation system and Leavenworth is sort of the hub of that system and we got to stay in administrative segregation, which meant we were locked up pretty much like you’re in the hole, which is solitary for the ten days but we got out for meals and we got out for movies. We got out to see a couple of movies. Other than that, we were just in the cellblock there in Leavenworth. So we didn’t get to see much of the place. But while I was in there, someone escaped from there, took off from the prison farm, which was kind of—

PS: I didn’t know they had a farm at Leavenworth.

CT: Yeah, they have a farm. Leavenworth was kind of interesting because they had the federal military prison; they had the farm and I think I heard there was a state prison there. I don’t know—I looked that up once and I couldn’t find a state prison there, but virtually everyone in the town works in one of these prisons it turns out.

So then I eventually got transferred to Sandstone. I got—I went into prison on November 29—I got to Sandstone at, I think, early February. When I came into prison—

PS: So this would have been in 1972.

CT: Yeah, ’72 already.

PS: Yeah.

CT: Yeah, when I went into prison, I’m Jewish and they give you five Christmas cards to send out. I don’t send out Christmas cards. So I sent my Christmas cards; I signed them. I used the shoe polish and signed them with my fingerprints in shoe polish on them and I sent them to the U.S. attorney who prosecuted me; sent it to the U.S. Marshal, who I’d had a lot of

00:30:00 interaction with because while we were out on an appeal bond and before our trials, we had to

sign in twice a week in the federal marshal’s office [now U.S. Marshals Services, 300 South Fourth Street, Minneapolis, MN]—

PS: Which is the building incidentally that we’re doing this interview in in downtown Minneapolis.

CT: Oh my god! Oh my god! No wonder I felt like home. [laughter] and I said, “Wish you were here,” or something like that. It was a nasty card. And later when I ended up at Sandstone, the U.S. attorney who had prosecuted us, Robert Renner, who later became a federal judge, was out on tour with a grand jury. He was leading a grand jury to the prison and he saw me in the library and one of the other people—this fellow refused Conscientious Objector status—saw Renner leading the jurors through the library at the opposite end of the library—shouted out, “Bob, what the fuck are you doing here?” [laughter] That was Dave Pence [David Pence (1946-)], who shouted out to Robert Renner. And Renner later came by and talked to me and he was very nice. I felt so bad that I had sent him this nasty Christmas card. And he was so nice. He said that it wasn’t personal or anything. I don’t know if he said he was just doing his job but we had a nice little chat.

PS: I remember that at the close of the year in which we were convicted, there were the five of us, you know, not Mike and Frank, but who were all convicted in Devitt’s court and Renner was the in person prosecutor. He wasn’t—I mean, he was the one who was in court for both of our trials all the time plus being the federal district attorney for the state so this was a big deal trial. He said at the end of that calendar year that two things he was most proud of for that year was convicting—was the convictions of the Minnesota 8 defendants and the Hell’s Angels, who he prosecuted for some bunch of racketeering and drug smuggling and things like that.

CT: Isn’t that—I never knew that.

PS: And I thought at the time, Well, I’m glad that you got Hell’s Angels, too. I think that that was great.

CT: Isn’t that interesting.

PS: But I never sent him a card about it.

CT: The U.S. attorney Renner did not prosecute the third trial where they actually were allowed to bring in witnesses. It was an assistant U.S. district attorney, I think, Thor Anderson [Thor Anderson (1937-)], who prosecuted that third trial. It’s curious why he [Renner] didn’t prosecute in front of Judge Neville. U.S. attorneys typically do not do the prosecutions so they only take on the high profile cases and that’s why he wanted to prosecute.

PS: The star attorneys, right?

CT: Yes, later when he became a judge—there’s a journal, an old maybe seven, eight years ago, who came out called the *Journal of Minnesota Law and Politics* [*Minnesota Law & Politics*, Bill White, publisher, 1990-2010] or something like that. It came out with a list of the one hundred most influential attorneys in Minnesota history with a little blurb about each one of them. It mentioned—one of them was Robert Renner and it said when he became a judge he went very soft. He was very lenient on draft cases. Well, I contacted the editor of that and found out that when he became a judge there was no draft.

PS: There weren’t any cases.

CT: There were no cases so I don’t know where someone had convinced you that he ran lenient on draft violators but—

PS: Well—

CT: So—go ahead and ask.

PS: I want you to talk a little bit about after we all got out. And we all got out on the same day. After we all got out what was life like for you? What did you do, as much as you want to talk about that in the years afterward, because, of course, we’ve all been out for way, way longer than we were in? And, you know, life takes all these turns and it’s not necessarily governed by the things that got us into jail.

CT: Well, you have to have a parole plan or at least we had to have a parole plan—

PS: That’s true.

CT: to get out. And we didn’t go to a halfway house or anything. They sent us right to the streets and my parole plan was to go to law school and I had started law school, as I said, in 1969. I lasted two weeks. Then I started law school again in 1970. My—the trial that I had, the first trial, was actually the first quarter of my law school. I lasted that whole quarter in law

00:35:00 school, fall quarter of 1970 and I don’t know how I passed the courses when I went to the

trial. The trial only lasted about four days but I missed those four days. I did realize that that was actually when I was in law school.

Well then we had no idea how long we’d be out on appeal bond or how long the sentence would be or if I’d get yanked out of law school in the middle again so after that first quarter of law school—it was on a quarter system then—I dropped out of law school. And then my parole plan was to go back to law school, to start basically again, but in order to do that I had to take the Law School Admissions Test again. They’re only good for five years. I had taken it my junior year of college, 1967. And they’re not going to let you out of federal prison, at least not in that era, to go take the Law School Admissions Test.

So this was the pre-Internet age. I had to get the prison declared a test center in order to take the Law School Admissions Test in prison.

PS: To take the LSAT, right?

CT: Yes, the Law School Admissions Test. And I got—I don’t know how I did it by snail mail but we got the prison declared test center one thousand. Sandstone’s address is Post Office Box 1000. I was the only one who took the test at that particular test site but the head of the—

PS: Probably ever.

CT: There was someone in the education department—it wasn’t the head of the department—he had one of his teachers or whatever they were called—come in to administer the test. And he was very pissed off at me. He said if you could get this declared a test center, why couldn’t you get the day changed from Saturday to a weekday when I’m working? [laughter]

PS: Because he had to come in and be proctor.

CT: He had to come in and administer the test and monitor. We were not allowed to have wrist watches in prison. I don’t know what it’s like now. Now—we couldn’t make phone calls. Now phone calls—the only issue is who pays for it. They can get constant calls. The federal system where I was, both of the prisons, El Reno and Sandstone, didn’t allow phone calls unless it was an a dire emergency. And we were not allowed wrist watches and I was in a room taking the test without a clock on the wall to boot. So there was a slight disadvantage of taking it there. But I had this whole thing with it spread out on so there was a slight advantage there.

So at that time I took the Law School Admissions Test and I got into the University of Minnesota and to Berkeley [University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA]. Berkeley started classes in early September at the time. University of Minnesota late September. We were getting out on July 23. It would have been five weeks before I would have had to start at Berkeley. They didn’t want to tell me if I was going to get out of state tuition waiver, non-resident tuition waiver. I’d have to find a place out there so I made a mistake and I went to the University of Minnesota Law School again. I later found out there was one professor who’s still teaching at the University of Minnesota, who thought that someone else should have been admitted for the first time before I was admitted for the fourth time.

Now he says admitted for a fourth time was because when I went to VISTA to become a VISTA volunteer after my—after I graduated undergraduate in ’68, I had applied to law school and got accepted but I turned them down.

PS: You never went.

CT: Yeah, because I—yeah, I didn’t go at all because I didn’t know whether I’d get—because I knew I wouldn’t get deferred at that time and I was planning to refuse induction anyhow.

So I ended up going to the University of Minnesota Law School while I was on parole. That was my parole plan and I stayed for three years. We were—I was let off parole in May of my senior year although that was several months before I was eligible. I don’t think I would have been eligible till November of my senior year or November after I graduated. But I almost went all the way through law school on parole. Then I went to take the bar exam and they told me—I had gone to the Board of Law Examiners before I started law school and I said, “Am I going to have any problems applying to take the bar exam?” And they said, Well, go to law school for three years and we’ll rule on your moral character as of the time you apply to take the test.

So I went to law school; I applied to take the test and they said, No, you can’t take the test. You don’t have good moral character because of this felony. And at that time the Board of Law Examiners had nine rules, thirteen pages, and all of the members were lawyers. Lawyers are kind of attuned—to when they have to give you a hearing. You know, can we kick you off welfare without a hearing? Can we kick you out of school without a hearing? It’s a due process issue that comes up in all sorts of situations. Lawyers are kind of attuned and watchful for when someone has a right to a hearing.

00:40:00 Well, lo and behold, those nine rules on thirteen pages had a rule that said before you can

deny someone permission to take the bar exam because of lack of good moral character, you have to give them a hearing. And they were all lawyers.

PS: And they missed that somehow.

CT: They had to give me a hearing so I pointed this out to them and a week before the bar exam they gave me a hearing. It was a Saturday the week before. And I went in for the hearing and the rules said that I’m entitled to make such explanation as I chose and my explanation was a film called *Hearts and Minds* [*Hearts and Minds*, directed by Peter Davis, BBS Productions, re-released in 2009] about the War in Vietnam that had come out recently and the producer of the film was thrilled to ship it to me and let me use it for free. I rented a projector, brought it in to the room and at first they wanted to ask me a bunch of questions. They asked me questions like, Would you ever break the law again? This is from a lawyer from Duluth [Duluth, MN]. And I said, “Well, I could see circumstances. I mean, if circumstances happened like say in Nazi Germany, then I might violate the law again, yeah.”

And this guy, I believe, would have answered the question, Absolutely not. That was the proper answer. And one of the other lawyers who was on my side said, Well, your threshold is higher now. Would you say that’s correct? Your threshold at which you would break the law? And they sent me out of the room. I thought we were going to wait—I thought they were waiting to decide whether they wanted to watch this ninety-minute film but they weren’t. They ended up talking about the—deciding that I would be allowed to take the test. Well, I wasn’t prepared for the test a week later so I failed. I knew I wasn’t going to pass and I told them.

PS: So they never saw the film?

CT: They did not watch the film.

PS: This is the movie that took place mostly, or was produced in Madison, Wisconsin, right?

CT: Was it? I don’t know.

PS: I sure think so.

CT: Oh no, no, no. It took place in Madison. You’re right.

PS: And it was recently re-redone, re-released something like that. I think it’s going to be around again. But keep going.

CT: It was a propaganda film with the—tied the war to our attitudes about sports and football and it was very—it was interesting; it was well done. I think it was nominated—it was an Academy Award nominee, I think, for documentary.

But anyhow, a reporter from the *Star Tribune* had asked if he could sit in on this hearing because he heard about it and he came about ten minutes late but he sat in the parts of the hearing and then he wrote up a little article in the *Star*—right on the front page telling about the hearing and I don’t think they liked the publicity. This time I flunked the test. There’s no doubt I shouldn’t have passed. The next two times I took it I thought I might have passed. I ended up with a 69.7; 69.8 when you need 70 to pass. So I don’t think there were shenanigans going on. But you have no appeal so there might have been shenanigans. Who knows? I don’t know. I don’t think I wanted to be a lawyer anyhow.

So I never became a lawyer and I never—well, I worked a little bit for legal aid doing things like I did administrative hearings, you know, similar to what a lawyer would do. And it was just too much pressure for me. I would have to go to the bathroom four to five times before each of those administrative hearings. I never lost one of those administrative hearings that I had to do but there was—it was just like—I ended up working there for a year or a year and a half as a legal assistant. Ended up starting in the office at the St. Paul American Indian Center [St. Paul American Indian Center, formerly Payne Avenue, now, 811 University Avenue West, Saint Paul, MN] which they started up. Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, SMRLS, which was the legal aid office in St. Paul starting this office and so I was part of—

PS: So this was part of legal aid as well?

CT: Yeah, yeah. And so they set up a branch office at the Indian Center there so I was involved with that but then that didn’t work out. And so I was a bum most of my life. Sometimes I’d get mad about something; I’d get involved in political activities; worked odd jobs; never had a career.

PS: Didn’t you work for the post office?

CT: Oh, I worked for the post office for about eight years. How in the heck did they hire me for the post office when I destroyed files, tried to destroy unsuccessfully other files, had a criminal record and then I went and took the test for the post office because they were giving the test. I didn’t get the veterans fifteen bonus points but I came out near the top of—it was an interesting test about sorting, remembering—

PS: Yeah, lots of numbers.

CT: Yeah, I ended up working for the post office for eight years but I was basically a bum most of my life until I retired.

PS: Now you’re a retired bum?

CT: Yeah, I’m a retired bum. I don’t know how I became eligible for Social Security. I don’t know because when you work for the post office you’re not in the Social Security System—

PS: Yeah, that’s a different system.

CT: at that time. Yeah, so I don’t know. I guess I worked enough—I don’t know how that

00:45:00 happened.

PS: You said before that you actually were released from parole supervision a little bit early, a little bit before the end of your actual sentence?

CT: I did.

PS: Do you know how that came to pass or did that make any difference for anything down the line?

CT: I don’t know if this was decided on an individual basis depending on who our parole officer was who we were reporting to. We reported once a month. We came in. He said, “You still in law school?” “Yeah.” “Goodbye.” I mean, it was just—it was probably just extra work for him and I don’t know about the other guys. The other guys—see I never did drugs. The other guys got involved in some drug shenanigans. Why when you’re on parole? I would have said, “Lock them up, lock them up again.” [laughter] But I don’t know if he was just bored or I don’t know if we all got off parole at that same time but I got off in May of my senior year of law school. I got a notice.

Incidentally, after I was done with law school; I graduated law school in 1976—sometime in 1977, might have been’78, I got a letter from President Carter, inviting me to apply for a pardon.

PS: This was the amnesty, right?

CT: Yeah.

PS: Or so-called.

CT: And I didn’t check it at the time but I have checked it out since and it specifically excluded people who were involved in violence.

PS: I got one of those letters, too.

CT: The only reason we got them is because we were charged under the Selective Service Act. They just sent it to everyone who was convicted under the Selective Service Act. Some people who did draft board raids were charged under burglary or destruction of property statutes, but we were charged under the Selective Service Act so they sent us a big—it was a mistake. So I wrote President Carter back and this is not email; this is regular mail, and I said, “Dear President Carter, I think you made a mistake. I think you meant to be applying to me for a pardon rather than me applying for a pardon from you.” And I didn’t tell him that I was open to him applying—I would probably not have been open at that time to him applying for a pardon from me. But I never heard back from President Carter.

PS: A pardon over?

CT: A pardon for the crimes they committed in Vietnam.

PS: Oh, so on behalf of the government—

CT: Yeah.

PS: him personally.

CT: Yeah, I mean, he got it backwards. And so then it wasn’t until President Obama [U.S. President Barack Hussein Obama II (1961-)] visited a federal prison and this blew my mind. This—when President Obama was in office he was the first president while in office to have ever visited a federal prison. The federal executive, part of the executive department is the Bureau of Prisons, which is part of the Justice Department. You would have thought a president at one time or another, although there are not a lot of votes to be had there, would have visited a federal prison. Obama was the first one and lo and behold the prison he visited was El Reno, which is now not a federal reformatory but a federal correctional institution which was the general category for having—

PS: It’s sort of more intermediate right?

CT: Yeah, inter-ages and length of sentence. The federal penitentiaries are the ones for the most serious crimes, the longest, yeah.

PS: The long timers in places like Atlanta [Atlanta, GA] and like that.

CT: Right. When we were in Sandstone, Milan at the time, where Bill did his sentence, when we were in Sandstone, that was a federal correctional institution.

PS: Yeah, a CI.

CT: Yeah. So he visited El Reno. I was so thrilled. So I wrote him a letter. I said, “You know, back in President Carter’s term he invited me to apply for a federal pardon and I wrote him a letter saying that I think he made a mistake. He meant to be applying for a pardon to—for a pardon from me.” And I wrote President Obama saying that, “I don’t want to die holding this grudge.” I don’t want to—I said, “I’ve watched some films about the forgiveness. I did watch one about the Serbenicia [Serbenicia Massacre, July 1985)], the genocide, the killing of civilians in Serbenicia, and someone went back and was very forgiving of what had been done there, someone who had lived in that area.

And I said, “God, I’ve seen some films about this,” and I said, “I don’t want to hold a

00:50:00 grudge.” And I said, “I’m now willing to offer you the pardon that I was really unwilling

 to offer President Carter at the time. So, on behalf of the federal government, since you’re the person responsible for the U.S. foreign policy, I’m making this offer to you.” I told him that he should be specific. We don’t want to say something like President Nixon’s pardon which was for any and all law violations that he may or might have committed or might commit in the future. I said, “We’re going to be specific so list a specific crime that the government did in Vietnam.” And I said, “I don’t have any forms because I’d never offered this pardon before.” I said, “So if you apply for a pardon I’ll rule on it before the end of your term, unlike your Supreme Court nominee,” which at that time was being held up by our favorite Senator McConnell [Addison Mitchell McConnell Jr. (1942-)] in the U.S. [unclear] in the U.S. Senate. And I never heard back from President Carter either.

PS: You mean Obama.

CT: President Obama. Why do I get these names mixed up? It’s because they’re all alike. So finally I saw there was a U.S. Pardon Attorney that was appointed, U.S. Pardon Attorney—that is the person. The U.S. Pardon Attorney was recently appointed by, a couple years ago, by President—what’s the guy’s name? Trump [U.S. President Donald John Trump (1946-)].

So I wrote him saying, “Well, you’re the U.S. Pardon Attorney. I’m going to offer—I didn’t hear back from Carter or Obama so I’ll offer you the same deal or you should contact someone in the government who can apply for a pardon on behalf of the United States.” I said, “This pardon will not be on behalf of the Vietnamese. It will just be from a single individual. I don’t represent all of the people who were in prison; all of the U.S. personnel who were killed; the three million Vietnamese who were killed; any who were maimed; any who are—have been maimed or are killed by our bomb munitions that are sitting over there since that time; any of the people who are suffering from the effects of Agent Orange.” I said, “I can’t offer a pardon on behalf of any of them so I’m only offering on behalf of one individual.” But I said, “Maybe if you’re pardoned by one individual, the saying goes, ‘If you save one individual, you save the world.’ Maybe if you get a pardon from one individual you could consider as having gotten it from the world.” And so I wrote to the U. S. Pardon Attorney and they responded back explaining how I should apply for a pardon.

PS: How you should apply for a pardon.

CT: I said, “I’m not applying for one.” And in fact, the link that they provided for frequently asked questions about a pardon comes up with this page doesn’t work. So I wrote them back saying, “You made a mistake. I’m offering you, my government, the chance to apply for a pardon.” And again, they sent me the same thing. And the link still didn’t work. They didn’t correct it when I told them about it the first time. I don’t think it works to this day. So I don’t think I’m going to be able to give my government a pardon about this.

PS: Do you think that means you need to have special access somehow to even conventionally apply for a pardon since the page doesn’t work?

CT: The frequently asked questions page doesn’t work.

PS: Oh, okay.

CT: I don’t know. I think you can access the form somehow but maybe not, I never tried. I was never interested in the pardon.

PS: I remember when that amnesty and pardon program was happening that David Harris [David Victor Harris (1946-)], who was a well-known West Coast draft resister, said, in response to these offers for pardons, he is reported to have said, “I’m holding out for an apology.”

CT: Good for him. I read his book recently or a book that he wrote about his Vietnam War experiences [*Our War: What We Did in Vietnam and What It Did to Us,* Random House, 1996] and I didn’t remember that; I would have noticed that. He writes very well. He’s an excellent writer.

PS: I may have that wrong, but it’s the sort of thing that you would expect from a clever guy like that.

CT: Yes.

PS: So I feel like we’re sort of getting close to the end here but I want you now to try to reflect back on all this, especially what happened fifty years ago, or nearly, and how it seems to you now—what it feels like in terms of, you know, effectiveness or the moral issues involved and do those things seem to matter anymore or just do you have any regrets? Do you think that it made any public impact? What was it like doing public speaking then and do you think that—just how that seems, reflecting back on all those things after all this time?

CT: Okay, well, I think it was worth it, doing it, although I mean, these kinds of actions people refusing induction; the hundred thousand, fifty thousand to hundred thousand that went to Canada; it all had an effect on ending the draft. And we were successful in ending the draft

00:55:00 but there are side effects to ending the draft. The military still has to get their soldiers and

their sailors and their Air Force people and so they’ve got to pay more; they’ve got to infiltrate the high schools more. Now, I mean, we ended the draft but there’s still a Selective Service System so now everyone in Minnesota, for example, who applies for a driver’s license is all automatically registered for the Selective Service System. We don’t have a draft but eighteen-year-old males still register. You have to register to get certain federal grants for college, I think, is a requirement, too. But they’re officially registered when they apply for—or their eighteen-year license now. (phone rings)

PS: Back again after a telephone ring.

CT: And because they still need their people power, their men and women to go into the military, they have become much more—American society has become much more militarized in a sense as a result. Even though we don’t have eighteen-year-old males under the stress and this pressure of, Am I going to get drafted or be forced to kill? against their—and be killed against their will, we have the military much more involved in the entertainment industry. We have the military (phone rings)—

PS: Back again after another brief interruption.

CT: And the military’s involved in the video game industry like I had no idea they’d been involved. Some of the most popular martial arts games—I don’t play video games so I don’t know what these are—are manufactured by the military.

PS: By the military itself?

CT: Yeah, every branch of the military has an entertainment division now so they consult on films. I saw an interesting book, written by a fellow named Turse, T-u-r-s-e, [*The Complex: How the Military Invades Our Everyday Lives*, by Nick Turse, Metropolitan Books, 2008] about how the military is so much more embedded in our society than you would imagine nowadays. They have become so entangled with sports, I mean, the University of Minnesota played a basketball game on an aircraft carrier. They have planes flying over the footballs games. If you watch golf on TV you see military on some events—the military is there to shake the golfer’s hand on every green. They’ve got to advertise on these sports to get adolescents to sign up for the military.

So because we ended the draft we didn’t end the military and I don’t know it’s a little bit more—it’s a little scary or something. On the other hand, I wouldn’t want the draft brought back because people should not be forced to—I mean, when you think about it, because the military is so much more visible now with all these wounded warriors—how we have to respect our veterans. That’s all a pre-planned propaganda in order to make future wars more palatable to the American public.

And because we have that, I think we are much more nationalistic now. We’re much less likely to question our government when it goes to war. I think that—well, there was a time when some, a lot of people would believe, but I think it’s many more now that if the United States goes to war, it can’t be wrong. It can’t be on the wrong side. That’s unthinkable. I mean, you talk about the political polarization and this tribalism, there were some people who saw us as a tribe back in that era. They couldn’t conceive—the United States is at war in Vietnam, therefore the United States was involved in a just war and on the right side of that war. And then there’s other people who think, Well, we may be on the wrong side, but I’ll go in if I’m called. Yeah, which is—might be scarier. Yeah, I think that might be—I mean, they’re conflicted about it but they feel they have a duty to their country if called.

And then there’s the third group who, I mean, if they think the war’s wrong—I mean, we were

01:00:00 asking for our soldiers to be returned home. I mean, it wasn’t anti our soldiers. But I thought

we were on the wrong side of that war so if I thought we were on the wrong side, I want the other side to come out victorious, you know, it’s [unclear]. And yeah, I’m an American citizen so am I calling for American soldiers to be killed, you know, if it’s either the American soldier or the Vietnamese, it’s a very schizophrenic position to be in to oppose a war that your government is involved in. So I do understand why veterans think that the protesters were against them although they exaggerated all the stuff that they were spit upon. There’s a fellow who wrote a book trying to document a single case; couldn’t find a single case where that was reported anywhere. [*The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory and the Legacy of Vietnam*, by Jerry Lembcke, New York University Press, 1998].

PS: But now you can hardly find any evidence of genuine opposition unlike fifty years ago.

CT: Yeah, I guess that’s true. I mean, there’s some people who—

PS: Talk about nationalism and militarism and—

CT: Yeah, I mean, there are some people who are involved in actions like ours who believe—I’m not one of them—who believe we should have national service and you’d have an option to go into the military or doing some kind of civilian service instead—that everyone should do that. I’m not one of those but they think that—there are others who argue that if that were to be enabled, that would help create an antiwar movement, either by the people who were called or by their parents. I don’t think you should put eighteen-year-olds in a position to build your antiwar movement if you can’t build your antiwar movement on the arguments. But it’s true. In the Vietnam War the numbers of people who were opposed to it kept increasing as the war went on.

End of Recording 3

01:02:08

Beginning or Recording 4

00:00:00 In the Iraq War and Afghanistan the numbers who were opposed to it kept decreasing as the war

went on. Before the Iraq War, before the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, there were some of the most massive worldwide, in terms of numbers, demonstrations that a war that the United States was going to become involved in ever occurred. There was massive opposition to it.

PS: Yeah, worldwide.

CT: Yeah, it wasn’t just in this country. So I don’t know how we’re going to end war. It’s kind of—I still go to the University of Minnesota and you know what? They rebuilt that Armory building that we marched around and destroyed and it looks exactly the same as it did before we marched around it. So no one questions on campus anymore whether ROTC should be on campus; whether we should be engaged in an outfit that teaches people how to kill—whether that makes sense in an institution devoted to finding the truth and to enhancing the human mind, no one questions whether that should exist on a university campus anymore. So that’s frightening.

But we got bigger problems. We’ve got ecological problems. Our generation that was going to save the world—look where we’re driving the planet in terms of climate change. It’s frightening. So it’s true. No one questions it. Everyone, yeah, everyone says, Well, we can’t talk to Russia. I mean, the response to Trump giving—like I can understand when you’re getting out of Syria. Once you’re in—I wouldn’t have gone into Syria, but once you’re into something like Syria, like once you put the knife into someone, you don’t pull the knife out. You’ve got to do that with care. A doctor will not just pull the knife out of someone.

Sometimes in similar—you have to withdraw—you can’t put the Kurds in danger, Kurds who have been fighting for us. You know, I remember a guy—some people like the Socialist Worker’s Party advocated people going into the Army to organize from within the Army and I knew a guy, college graduate, after he graduated college.

PS: You mean, years ago?

CT: Yeah, after he graduated college, enrolled, enlisted in the Army to go to Vietnam, to go to the Vietnam War. And I heard him give his talk recently and I asked him, “What if you were involved—?” Because he thought that the people we were fighting against in Vietnam were the right side. And we were on the wrong side and there were some Vietnamese on the wrong side, but, you know, it was both an imperialist and it was in some sense partly a civil war. But the other—the side that we were supporting—if we hadn’t supported them, the war would have been over very quickly. But he went in and I asked him, “Well, what if you were ordered—what if you were involved in shooting, you know, in a war? You would have a soldier at your side who’s depending for his life on your shooting your gun at the Vietnamese that you think are the right side of the war?” He said, “You know, I hadn’t thought about that.” God, this guy was a college graduate. He hadn’t thought about if he was going to be ordered to shoot at the Vietnamese.

So I don’t know. I don’t know if things are better or worse. I think people are less trusting of the government although the current president might have contributed to that. But everyone thinks that the current president is this huge, huge, huge anomaly and he is a wacko but he is— most other presidents have lied to us consistently, too. We just didn’t realize it at the time.

PS: They didn’t rub our noses in it.

CT: Yeah. So I don’t know. I don’t think we’re going to solve this—I don’t think we’re ever going to—we’re going to be—I think as a super power. We’re going to assert our power and we’re going to assert the power militarily around the world for the foreseeable future. I think what—we got to—what we got to do—I don’t want to get into this.

PS: Okay.

CT: But we’ve got to create alternative methods of this [unclear] that we issued around the world. We’ve got to create alternatives to a United Nations. We’ve got to create some united people’s movement so that we can mediate disputes before they get into warlike situations.

00:05:00 But we haven’t begun to do that I don’t think. I wouldn’t know how to do it.

So I’m a pessimist, so talk to me again in another fifty years.

PS: Okay.

CT: I will be one hundred twenty-two at that time.

PS: I’m game.

CT: I don’t have any things to say.

PS: Well, let’s pause here for a little bit.

CT: Oh, wait—let me say one other thing.

PS: Okay.

CT: We used to characterize our—these draft board raids as nonviolent. We used to say they’re part of a nonviolent movement. We’re destroying property, not people. I don’t know if I mouthed those kinds of sayings at that time, statements at that time. But it was violence. I mean, destruction of property is violence. If you even—if you blow up a building and you know that it’s empty and that everyone is out of it and it’s not your building to blow up, that’s violence, that’s violence. So what I did—what we did—I mean, if you blew up rail lines leading to the gas chambers in Auschwitz [Auschwitz Concentration Camp, Oświęcim, Poland], and someone said to you, But that was violence, I would say, “You’re nuts.” That’s irrelevant in that situation. And I think it might have been kind of irrelevant in the situation that we were involved in. So we engaged in violence, sure.

And I’m not sure that maybe we should not have escalated the violence but I’m not sure. The war went on for so many years maybe these actions had an effect. We did end the draft. Maybe they didn’t have an effect. I don’t know. Of course, after we did end the draft, the United States did turn it over to the Vietnamese so I don’t know if the lack of access to that ready manpower was a card that was—was a factor that caused the U.S. to turn the Army over to the—there were many of tens of thousands of Vietnamese died in the two years after the United States got out before the war ended. And then it led to—I mean, our involvement in Southeast Asia led to horrific situations in Cambodia that led to a genocide, too. I mean, we don’t have—but we’re not free of responsibility for all of those things as well. But I might have escalated it. If I had it to do over again, I don’t know. If I had it to do over again, dot, dot, dot. [laughter]

PS: Well, fair enough.

End of Recording 4

00:07:58

Beginning of Recording 5

00:00:00 Okay, starting over.

 CT: Alright, this is Chuck Turchick again. Pete did an interview with me back on October 10 and that I understood was going to be a practice interview and I didn’t get information at that time to use that interview as part of this project. But now I think it might be useful so I’m going to retract my restriction on not using that interview and I’m going to give permission to use the October 10 interview under the same terms and conditions that I granted to use this interview. Is that okay you guys?

PS: I think that will work for now. Thank you Chuck. And we’re going to be doing a separate written release for that interview dated today still, January 17, 2019.

End of Recording 5

00:00:55

Beginning of Recording 6

00:00:00 PS: Okay, the recording is on. So this is October 10, 2018, and I’m interviewing Chuck

Turchick for the Minnesota Vietnam War Draft Board Raiders Oral History Project. This is not a recording for the sake of transcription. It is entirely for the sake of the interviewer’s practice and self-training. It’s not for permanent storage or archiving in any location or for any other kind of permanent record.

My name is Peter Simmons and I have also been a draft board raider in the past, or attempted to do that and I will be conducting the interview today.

Now, first of all, please Chuck, would you start out by saying a few words about your past. I know that you were involved in Minnesota Vietnam War draft board raids years ago and I’d like you to say a few words about what those actions were. We’ll come back and get plenty of detail later but if you’d please outline what you did in the past that is the point of your being here talking with me today.

CT: Okay. I was involved in two groups. The first group I was involved in was called the Beaver 55 and that group raided draft files, the 1A draft files at the state headquarters of the Selective Service in St. Paul, all of the St. Paul draft boards and all of the Minneapolis draft boards. And that happened on February 28, March 1 at night in 1970. And four people claimed moral and political responsibility for that action so that we could explain why we thought it was the right thing to do to various audiences. And I was one of those four. And then subsequently, on July 10 and July 11, 1970, I was involved with a group that attempted to raid draft boards in outstate Minnesota in five places. And in three of the places we were caught in the middle of the action and that was a no, no. They sent us to trial and sent us to prison.

PS: All right, so, before getting into any of those details, I’d like to find out a little bit about your background—your family background, where you grew up, things like that. You’re from Minnesota? Grew up here?

CT: I did. I grew up in Minneapolis, spent most of my life there, north side of Minneapolis.

PS: And went to high school where?

CT: I went to Minneapolis North High School.

PS: And when did you finish high school?

CT: I finished in 1964.

PS: So was there anything in particular that stands out for you in your youth during and pre-high school that might have been a particular influence on you and the directions that you took in later life, whether it had to do with the draft board raids or not?

CT: I don’t think so. I don’t think I was a particular rebel in high school. I remember there were some protests about people involved in and being allowed to wear Bermuda shorts to school. I didn’t get involved in that in particular. I mean, I wasn’t really that politically involved. I followed the news. I followed what was happening in the beginnings of the civil rights movement but I wasn’t—I came from a fairly apolitical family. My parents were—they voted straight DFL, Democratic Party, all the time, but they weren’t really involved politically. So no, I don’t think I was a rebel in—but I do remember I went to Boys State; I was the school’s representative to Boy’s State and after—that’s in the summer of your junior year—and in the fall I had to go give a thank you talk to the American Legion.

PS: Back up a second. So Boys State is a statewide activity?

CT: Yeah, now it is. Yeah, it’s supposed to encourage young men to get involved in

00:05:00 government I think. It’s a weeklong thing that was held on the St. Paul campus [University of

Minnesota, St. Paul campus]. I don’t even know. I can’t even describe what the purpose of it was.

PS: It was a civic engagement kind of exercise.

CT: Yeah, it was an honor to have been selected by the school and when I went to give the speech to the American Legion, I remember feeling that I did not have very much in common with the American Legion. I felt strange. I mean, I felt like weren’t politically in sync. So I must have had some political thoughts back then. This was in my senior year.

PS: So this was in 1963 or ’64?

CT: Early ’64, yeah, fall, probably the fall of ’64. But that’s— I don’t remember getting involved. I remember saying something in a class in the ninth grade about—there was a question about whether the U.S. should get involved someplace and I thought it was absurd and I made some comment. You know, not like I typically might make the comment nowadays. And the teacher was shocked that I had said something like that. But no, I seriously was not all that political—I wasn’t a political person back then.

PS: Okay. Well, after you finished high school, what did you do then for the school or go elsewhere? Talk about that a little bit.

CT: A good middle class Jewish boy. Of course you go to college. There wasn’t even the thought that you don’t’ go to college for god’s sake. So I went to the University of Minnesota. I thought I was starting out in math but I ended up in philosophy after going through a couple of other majors. So I started that in the fall. I was a commuter so I lived at home and I went to college starting in the fall of ’64.

PS: So right after high school?

CT: Yeah, and I don’t know if it was in my freshman year—it might have been in my freshman year; it might have been in my sophomore year—I got involved in something the college—it wasn’t called the College of Liberal Arts. I think it was still called Science and Liberal Arts [Science, Literature and the Arts]. It might have been CLA—the CLA board. And someone who was very involved in that was someone named Sandy Wilkinson. And he had just come back from going south to Freedom Summer in Mississippi.

PS: That was in 1964.

CT: This was in 1964 and I had been so impressed with that. I don’t know if that was—that started to wake me up politically or what. But I remember that was either in my freshman or sophomore year. I think I was in a class with Sandy, too. And Sandy later became one of the full-time draft counselors at the Twin Cities Draft Information Center, which was sort of the local headquarters, not only for draft counseling but for draft resistance activities.

PS: Okay, so your recollection is that Sandy was maybe the first person who awakened you a little bit or started to influence your thinking along the lines that took you where you wound up going?

CT: Yeah, sort of a jolt to the brain.

PS: Were there others, like maybe clergy people or anything like that? Once you were at the university, were there other things besides the college board that you might have been involved with or off campus organizations?

PS: No, I played ping pong pretty much all the way through college. I skipped classes and went and played ping pong.in Coffman Union. But in my—I think it was in my junior year—it might have been in my senior year, might have been ’68, there was a thing called the Free University, which was sort of an alternative—a format for alternative classes. And it was free to take these classes and I took a class there. It might have been in my senior year. It might have been in my junior year. And it was taught by someone named Fred Ojile and it was about nonviolence, nonviolent—it wasn’t nonviolent direct action. It was just about nonviolence. And he was very inspiring. This—I’m sure this had an effect.

00:10:00 And it’s the weirdest thing. Two weeks ago I watched the video on You Tube of someone

who was in a group called the Chicago 15, who did a similar action to the draft board raids that I was involved in. And he said that he was very inspired by someone who came and spoke that he heard named Fred Ojile. Fred was later in a similar group, before our action, my actions—he was in the Milwaukee 14. And there were differences between these groups. Some didn’t stand by where they—typical civil disobedience—where they waited to be arrested and others tried to get away with it, thinking they should continue doing them. But that’s another story.

But Fred Ojile had me taking this class. Definitely had an influence. I was trying to figure out what to do about the draft at that time because—

PS: So you would have been how old about?

CT: Oh, twenty, twenty-one.

PS: So you’d registered already.

CT: I had registered for the draft and—

PS: Had a student deferment maybe?

CT: Yeah, 2S—is that what it was called? Yeah. And well, well before I graduated I had figured out that I didn’t support the war. I had attended college; I had certainly attended a number of antiwar events. I remember one of them in particular where we marched around the Armory seven times, led by bugles. It was very much like the story of Jericho in the Bible. And the—I saw the walls came tumbling down and there’s—the group that had organized this demonstration on campus was called Students Against Selective Service and their acronym was SASS.

And another group, whose acronym was SPAR, Students for the Preservation of the American Republic—they came by with a wonderful sign at that event. Their sign said, “If the walls don’t fall, God is on our side.” So people had senses of humor in those days. But I just recently—I audit classes at the University of Minnesota and I had a class scheduled in the Armory and it was there. I guess they rebuilt it and it looks just like it did back in 1967 or ’68 when we marched around it seven times after we thought we witnessed the walls come tumbling down. The area was renamed A.J. Muste Mall or A.J. Muste Plaza after a famous American pacifist.

PS: So speaking now—

CT: Now I’m rambling.

PS: This is fine. So speaking of the Armory, right across the street from the Armory was the Newman Center [formerly St. Lawrence Newman Center, 1228 Fourth Street SE, Minneapolis, MN, 1926-1998] which was a sort of a hot bed and also right down the block from the Newman Center was Hillel House. Were you ever involved with either of those or any other off campus entities like that?

CT: I played ping pong at the Hillel House. They had a ping pong table. I played there all the time. I hung out at the Hillel House. When I came to school in the morning that’s where I’d pick up the *Minnesota Daily* [*Minnesota Daily*, University of Minnesota newspaper, 1900-present] but there wasn’t any particular antiwar organizing out of the Hillel House that I was aware of.

PS: Not activism or even a disposition one way or another to speak of?

CT: Not really. And, of course, every young male in college at the time was concerned about the draft when they graduated. Some—you could get deferments for some further education. I think, well, after I graduated, you could no longer get deferment for law school, which was what I intended to do was go to law school. But there wasn’t—there was draft counseling. I know that occurred at the Newman Center, but there was nothing like that at Hillel.

And that surprised me. If Jews—this was interesting. Jews, to me, Jews were at the forefront of all of these progressive movements, the civil rights movement; the three civil rights workers that were killed in the south—the two white ones—Michael Schwerner [Michael Henry Schwerner (1939-1964)] and Andrew Goodman [Andrew Goodman (1943- 1964)]—were both Jewish. James Chaney [James Earl Chaney (1943-1964) was from the south. He was already in the CORE [Congress of Racial Equality], I think or NAACP, [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] in the south. Mark Rudd [Mark William Rudd (1947-)] was Jewish; Rubin, some of the Chicago 7—

PS: You mean Jerry Rubin [Jerry Clyde Rubin (1938-1994)]?

CT: Jerry Rubin. Who was the other yippie?

PS: Abbie Hoffman [Abbot Howard Hoffman (1936-1989)]?

CT: Abbie Hoffman. They all came from Jewish families so Jews were very active in all aspects of the civil rights—of the progressive movements of that era—antiwar and civil rights. And—but not in draft resistance. When I eventually was imprisoned I noticed there was not a single Jew—we had about fifteen draft resisters in the prison at any one time and I must have seen fifty to seventy-five, maybe as many as one hundred, total come through the prison while I was—doing my term. And there was one Jewish fellow and he was in there for bribing his way up to get the higher ranking on the reserve waiting list.

PS: Oh?

00:15:00 CT: He was the only one that was in there for any draft related thing. So draft resistance

was not a Jewish thing. It was a very Christian thing if they came from a religious standpoint, which is kind of interesting—kind of disappointing, too. So there was nothing going on at Hillel it seemed—that I was aware of—that had to do with antiwar activities.

PS: Not even antiwar activities much less draft resistance or opposition?

CT: Yeah, that surprised me, although nationally, I mean, rabbis were—Abraham Heschell [Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972)] the rabbi who was very well-known as being very active in antiwar and civil rights work as well.

PS: But locally, people you had contact with not so much, huh?

CT: Not so much at all.

PS: Okay, so having had the contacts with people that you did who were stimulating or inspiring, what sorts of things did that lead you to be doing particularly that got up to the point where you actually decided that it was time to do something illegal?

CT: Well, sometime in my junior year probably, in college. I had come to the decision that I was going to refuse induction.

PS: If that came.

CT: Yeah, and it—

PS: So that would have been what year?

CT: Nineteen sixty-seven probably; maybe as early as ’ 66 in my sophomore year. My junior year would have started in ’66 in the fall. Probably ’66, ’67.

PS: So you would have been about twenty years old then.

CT: Yeah, and at the time I saw it, not just as an act where I was making a moral statement but I saw it as a political act that if we could fill the prisons with enough middle class white males maybe it would have some effect; maybe it would put some pressure on the government to end the war. So I saw it both as an individual moral act and as a political act. So I knew at that time that I was going to refuse induction. I didn’t turn in my draft card; I kept my 2S deferment. And then after college, after I graduated from college, I—since I couldn’t get deferred for going to law school, and I had been accepted in law school at the university—instead I went into VISTA, Volunteers in Service to America sort of what AmeriCorps is nowadays, the domestic Peace Corps, they call it [unclear]. And I accepted from them a 2A deferment which is an occupational deferment.

And—but I knew I was going to turn my card at that time. And it was in November of ’68 that I turned in my card. I sent it because there was a demonstration in Minneapolis although at the time I was stationed with VISTA in southern Illinois at a job corps center and I sent my card in to be turned in with a group of cards at a Minneapolis demonstration in November of that year.

And that’s illegal. It’s illegal not to have your draft card on your person at all times—your draft cards. You have a registration card when you register and then, as your status changes, your classification card would change and they’d send you. So when I changed from 2S to 2A, they sent me a new classification card which showed I was 2A. And all I could find to send in for this event was my classification card. I couldn’t find my registration card. And since that’s supposed to be on my person at all times it was illegal.

PS: So you were in violation already.

CT: And I had read all these beautiful statements that people made or wrote when they sent in their draft card saying they weren’t going to cooperate with the Selective Service System anymore. But all I sent was one line with my draft card. All I said was, “I regret that I have but one card to give for my country.” So I saw this sort of humorously, but the draft board didn’t see it humorously. They declared me delinquent or reclassified me 1A, meaning eligible for induction and they drafted me. I don’t know if I had completed my year in VISTA by then but they drafted me and—

PS: So somehow it had gotten back to them and they took notice.

CT: Oh, yeah. The cards were turned in—yeah, they—and during my stay in VISTA I was in the job corps center in southern Illinois but we—the three [in fact four] VISTAs ended up getting kicked out of that job corps center for the strangest reasons. We had bought some sleazy paperback books from the drugstore because these guys were all functionally illiterate. And the guys were reading these books in the dorm and these weren’t the prescribed Dick and Jane reading manuals that they were supposed to be—were supposed to be of use to them. And this

00:20:00 was the final straw that got them so upset that they got rid of their VISTA volunteers. It was

 run by former military, the Crab Orchard Natural Wildlife job corps center.

And I got sent for the second half of the year to Milwaukee and lo and behold, in Milwaukee, of the winter of—the spring of 1969, there was a group on trial who had destroyed draft files called the Milwaukee 14. Many of them religious people; some of them were clergy; Catholic priests and but some of them were lay people. And one of—these were people who did it in a civil disobedience manner. They went in in the middle of the day and somehow got access to the files, brought them out and burned them I guess. They used homemade napalm or something—it was the fashion of the day. And one of the people in that group was this Fred Ojile from Minneapolis. So I’m sitting in Milwaukee. I went to most of their two-week trial—I think it was two weeks about, their trial. And that’s probably where I got the idea that someday I might get involved in draft board raids as well. I think that was the first time that I had ever entertained that thought.

PS And the first time you’d been close to any event like that although it was in the aftermath during the trial that took however long it took there in Milwaukee.

CT: I never—I don’t know if I—I don’t think I thought it was wrong to destroy property but I could—up until that point—I don’t think I could have ever pictured myself as destroying property. But yeah, after that yeah.

PS: So at that point you’d already turned in your draft cards before the Milwaukee 14 trial.

CT: [unclear] cards.

PS: Okay and you’d already concluded that you would refuse induction if it came to that and you’d already been reclassified, even though you had been reassigned to this new VISTA location in Milwaukee from Illinois?

CT: Right.

PS: Okay, so you were working in VISTA but you were 1A?

CT: Yes.

PS: Okay, so now this was in the early part of 1969. Your VISTA service lasted until later that year?

CT: Summer of ’69, yeah.

PS: And then what did you do?

CT: Well, then I decided to go to law school.

PS: So you came back to Minneapolis?

CT: Yeah, I came back to Minneapolis.

PS: With your 1A classification?

CT: Yeah, and I don’t—I don’t even remember the first time when I got drafted, if it was before I went to law school or started law school or after I started. But I did get drafted and I went down and I took the pre-induction physical. I didn’t try to flunk the physical although I played games with them. They had questions on the form. Have you ever had shortness of breath? And there’s a line at the bottom that says, Penalty of perjury; you could get five years in prison if you lie on the form. So I checked yes and when they interviewed me, I said, “Don’t take it all that seriously. I have had shortness of breath when I run. Sometimes when I play basketball I get short of breath. It’s no medical condition or anything.” So I was goofing around during my pre-induction physical but I wasn’t trying to get out of it because I was pretty set that I was going to refuse induction.

And then they bring you into this room and they ask you to step forward and I didn’t step forward—

PS: So this is the induction event itself?

CT: Yeah, and the guy said to me, Well, they’ll just keep calling you back to come back at six a.m. again. And I told him, “Well, that’s fine, you know, if they’re just going to keep calling me back for this ritual and not going to charge me with anything.” By that time—by the time I got—in fact, probably in my senior year in college, I had become affiliated with the Twin Cities Draft Information Center. And I think was on their newsletter project even before I went off to VISTA but don’t hold me to this. I don’t remember that. But when I got back I was involved with the Draft Information Center and I would—they had people regularly every day that people were coming to their pre-induction physicals or their induction physicals or to be drafted to the old Federal building in Minneapolis. They had people at six a.m. leafletting people, the young recruits that are draftees as they came in the door. And I participated in that project as well once a week or so.

PS: So that was something that the Draft Information Center did, dispatching people every

00:25:00 induction day to give draftees something to [unclear]?

CT: Yeah, it was sort of an informational flyer about you have options and they were inviting people to come in for counseling, to tell them that there are other options. Their counseling was non-directional so they didn’t say you should resist; they just tell them that that’s an option but they told them all of the legal options as well. So it’s all discombobulated as to which came first and which came later but eventually—

PS: So you got called for induction more than once?

CT: Yeah.

PS: Do you remember how many times?

CT: Well, after I got called for induction the first time I wrote them another one of these humorous letters because I read the Army regulations that govern the physical, taking the physical process and they had violated a ton of the rules. They violate their own rules willy nilly. One of the rules, for example, was a sentence in the Army regulations. If it’s a regulation someone ought to follow it—that at the pre-induction physical to carry your valuables in, they’re supposed to give you a cloth bag with drawstrings to put around your neck. They gave us a paper bag with no draw strings.

PS: Outrageous! [laughter]

CT: So I wrote them—it was like a nine-page letter. I think I pointed out twenty-three different things that they had done wrong on the physical. Well, according to their own regulations. I mean, I wasn’t—and I wasn’t trying to get out of it. And then I got called for another—they drafted me again and for years I thought I didn’t know why they drafted me again and I thought it was because I had sent them this letter pointing out these twenty-three things they hadn’t complied with when they gave me the first physical.

PS: You thought it was because you were being a smart aleck.

CT: Yeah, yeah, I thought—no, I thought they took me seriously so they wanted to make it legitimate. And it never occurred to me that there was a Minnesota draft resister, Dave Gutknecht, who, since I had refused induction the first time, had won a Supreme Court case which said that the Selective Service System did not have the authority to declare you delinquent [unclear] to put you at the top of the list for drafting, for being drafted, the head of the 1A list, just because you turned in your card. They could declare you delinquent, but they didn’t have the authority to punish you like that.

PS: So they couldn’t do a punitive induction—

CT: That’s right.

PS: conscription.

CT: And that’s why they had to draft me again because they had declared me delinquent and moved me to the top of the list.

PS: So this time they did it just for their own procedural reasons to get it right this time so they could legally induct you all over again.

CT: And the second time I remember the fellow asked if there was any questions and I think I raised my hand and I said, “Why do we have to go?” And he gave me a very nice answer. I forgot his name but every—the TCDIC, Twin Cities Draft Information Center, TCDIC people knew this fellow. They had had lots of run ins with him with other people who had refused induction. He was either a sergeant or a lieutenant that they were always giving a hard time to. And he gave a very interesting answer. Well, it’s up to each individual to decide if you want to go. I mean, it was—I was surprised at what he said.

And so I refused induction again. This time they didn’t tell me, Well, we’re just going to keep calling you back, and I don’t know when this was. I think it might have been after I had dropped out of law school. I was in law school in ’69. I started law school and I lasted about two and one half weeks this time. And there was these huge marches being organized, the moratorium marches, one in October of ’69; one in November of ’69, and I swear three-fourths, maybe more of my law school classmates, did not know there was a war going on. They were told. They did not know.

PS: That must have been surprising to you.

CT: Yeah, so I dropped out of law school and I ended up—I don’t know why—I was just a bum. I didn’t—I spent—

PS: So it was after you dropped out probably that you refused the second time?

CT: Yeah, it was probably after that.

PS: So that would have been late ’69 maybe or early 1970.

CT: Probably late ’69. I wish I knew when I refused induction.

PS: Because it was before the Beaver raid then?

CT: Yeah, I was driving some people home from some meeting and I had a Volkswagen was it? I was driving [unclear] and sitting in the back I think it might have been the Sandy

00:30:00 Wilkinson fellow again. And he said that some people were planning a draft board raid and

there was a meeting if anyone was interested. And I don’t know if it was a local meeting I went to or I found out that the meeting was in Chicago. I think, yeah, I don’t know how I found out it was in Chicago. But I took the train down one weekend to Chicago. This was probably in the late fall, maybe the beginning of the winter in 1969 still. And on the train someone comes up to me. He knew I was going to be on the train. I think I knew, too, and he introduced himself and this was Brad Beneke and we ended up talking the whole way down to Chicago on the train. And there was a meeting to organize draft board raids and there were—there must have been maybe thirty, forty people in this meeting.

PS: That many?

CT: It was a long two-day discussions. Phil Berrigan was there. He was encouraging people to do these kinds of actions. And I don’t know if I met—Frank Kroncke might have been there, too. He was eventually involved in the Minnesota 8 action and he was also involved in the Beaver 55 action. But that’s how I got involved in this first action, the February 28, March 1 night where we did the Minneapolis and St. Paul draft boards.

PS: That was over a weekend, right?

CT: Yeah, it was a weekend meeting in Chicago.

PS: No, I mean the raids themselves.

CT: No, yeah, Saturday night, Saturday night and Sunday morning.

PS: Yeah, when they were normally closed otherwise.

CT: Yeah, but it was in the post office building and the post office is always open. So we just walked in through the employees’ entrance to do that action. I don’t know if you want me to describe it.

PS: Yeah, tell a little bit more about that. I mean, how many people were involved in that and what sorts of things you did. I think I remember that there was some controversy about doing certain kinds of vandalism or not others and things of that kind. This was again, a Beaver 55 raid.

CT: Yeah, I was reluctant about destroying property to begin with so I thought we were going to be focusing on the files but—

PS: 1A files in particular?

CT: Yeah, 1A files and the strategy was going to be we would spray paint out the names so we had these, lots of black spray paint, and then we’d rip the files twice. And some of these files are pretty thick. And well, I’ll tell you how we got to that point at first. We went in each—there were twenty-two people involved totally I think.

PS: That you know of.

CT: Yeah, I don’t even know—I couldn’t name more than six of them now today. They came from—they weren’t all from here, very few of them in fact, I think, were from Minneapolis St. Paul. And I think seven, about fifteen and fifteen were in St. Paul because we had two offices in St. Paul, the St. Paul draft boards and the state headquarters which were in different offices in the post office building, and then about seven in Minneapolis. And the strategy was going to be—in St. Paul we went into the building one at a time through the employees’ entrance to the post office, just walked in like—security in those days was nothing like it is nowadays. There was no security industry to speak of, even in public buildings.

So I happened to be the first one in and we were going to walk up the stairs to the fourteenth floor. I don’t think we were going to take the elevator for some reason because that would have been more conspicuous but we walked up the stairs to the fourteenth floor. And someone had cased out the building already where there was an unoccupied, an empty office on the fourteenth floor. And we were going to wait in there until midnight. I went in at about nine thirty or ten in the morning. I was the first one in and anyway, we stayed in this unoccupied office until midnight before we went down to the offices.

And then every half hour or so another person would come in and another person so there were—I think of it now. There were a lot of opportunities for us to have gotten caught but someone had already stayed in that office; someone had cased the place previously all night, more than once on more than the one occasion, I think. And so we stayed up there till midnight and then half of us went down to one floor where the St. Paul draft files were; half went down to another floor and we had the same mechanical training that all of these draft board raids are. It seems that all these draft board raids are in these offices that had doors with the upper half being glass and so there’s some technique where you cut the glass in a triangle

00:35:00 formation; you take—you put tape over the triangle and then you use a welder’s kind of

 butane torch—

PS: One of those little folding ones?

CT: Yeah, to burn the corners and you can just pull out the piece of glass, stick your arm in and turn the knob of the door. And it worked; worked to a charm.

So, as I said, I thought we were going to be destroying files. I—my feeling was that the property that didn’t have a right to exist was the property that was—you could only use for the war effort and that was the draft files. The whole idea of this, the whole idea of refusing induction and destroying draft files is that the government needs money; it needs manpower; it was manpower in those days, not people power; and they need war equipment, material. And if you could interfere with some of those, to the extent that you could, maybe you could make the war machine grind to a halt, at least temporarily or at least as much as you could do in one part of the country. So I saw it both as a symbolic action but also as a real action trying to injure the government’s ability to draft people and hinder the war effort. So my position was that the only property that we should be destroying that couldn’t be used for any other purpose.

Then I kind of didn’t have too much objection, although typewriters could be used for other purposes, legitimate purposes, but it had sort of become a symbolic thing that people would bend the “1” and the “A” keys on the typewriters because 1A was the classification meaning you’re eligible for induction. And the people who did alternative service were 1AO for Conscientious Objectors who were either going to go into the military as medics or do alternative service in the civilian world.

So I wasn’t that bothered when 1A keys were destroyed but I was bothered that there were slogans spray painted all over the walls and I didn’t even know that was going to happen and yeah, that surprised me because I spent five hours in there just spray painting and ripping up files. For the next pretty much most of the next week afterwards, I could barely open my fingers. They were so sore, my fingers, from ripping files for five hours. And it got pretty deep.

PS: On the floor?

CT: On the floor, yeah. And then we went out—I think we went out in groups of three or four at about eight in the morning, right through the employees’ entrance because there were people who worked the night shift. That’s what it was. With the people who worked the night shift we tried to blend in with them when they were all walking out through the employees’ entrance, the night shift at the post office.

PS: So that would have been Sunday morning?

CT: Sunday morning and it snowed—there was a light snowfall on the ground and it occurred to me they’re going to see our footprints, you know, where we were going, but yeah—so that’s what happened as a result of that.

That was a hit and run action. Most of the people had no intention of—none of us intended to stand by, wait to be arrested, and eighteen of the people—I think there were twenty-two involved—eighteen of the people had no intention of surfacing, as it was called, sort of claiming moral and political responsibility.

PS: After the fact.

CT: After the action and four of us had decided that we would do that so we could go out and talk to groups and explain why we thought this was a good thing to do. And we were going to just—claiming—surfacing would be you don’t say enough that they could charge you but you say enough that it was clear you were involved. And of the four people who were going to do that, two of them were women and of the twenty-two, only two were women so the women tended to see this as more of a communicative act than throwing sand into the wheels of the government war machine.

And so four of us, six days later at a rally—I think it was a Friday demonstration at Coffman Union—

PS: On the university campus.

CT: Yeah, University of Minnesota. Joan Francis, Nancy Saunders, Brad Beneke and me declared moral and political responsibility for it. And then when we went out speaking we were joined by Frank Kroncke. He thinks—I believe he thinks that he had been—was one of those four that declared moral and political responsibility but he was not one who surfaced actually. He claims that he surfaced and he might have sort of because he went and spoke out.

PS: But he was at hand that day but he didn’t stand up with the four of you?

CT: No, he did not. He did not. It was not his intention to do that but then he wanted to

00:40:00 speak so much about this that he joined us when we went on speaking engagements and he—

yeah—

PS: Talk about those speaking engagements because that was, from your standpoint, a big part of why you [unclear].

CT: Yeah, I was the wrong person because I don’t like to give speeches. I did a few interviews and stuff. I remember Paul Helm. We were on a conservative talk show host—

PS: Radio show.

CT: Radio show host, yeah. He was sort of the precursor to someone like Jason Lewis [Jason Mark Lewis (1955-) term ended January 3, 2019], who’s now in Congress, who had a right wing talk show. And Paul Helm said we should be declared traitors and shot, yeah—this was not that Minnesota 8—this was the Beaver 55.

PS: Yeah, so during that period of the late winter, early summer, sometime in there.

CT: Yeah.

PS: So backing up a little bit to the event itself of the Beaver 55 raid, that was a big raid, right?

CT: Yeah.

PS: Am I right that that was the biggest of its kind in the country at that point?

CT: I’ve heard that. I don’t know. I’ve heard that—

PS: How would you quantify that?

CT: I don’t know where these numbers come from. Did I hear ten thousand files or some combination? [unclear] In the Minneapolis place they couldn’t get in as quickly as they thought so they didn’t end up ripping up files. They ended up getting the files out of the draft—out of the cabinets and breaking the water cooler, for drinking, and they poured that all over the files. They flooded the place basically after they had strewn the files all over the ground. But they painted on the walls, too. And I know they painted on the walls because coincidentally that very next week I had my first ever meeting with my draft board.

PS: And it was there?

CT: And it was in that office. And I had wanted to talk to my draft board so I had made some phony appeal of my classification or something and I had gotten—I’d gotten to meet with them and I think it was before I even surfaced because the paint was still on the walls. And my draft board clerk, Alice Johnson, pointed to the walls and said something about people who would do that, you don’t know what they could do, you know. And this—Alice took such pride in her large journal ledger which had everyone’s name in it—each one had an individual file but then everyone’s name was in this big journal book that she had and the lines were so meticulously kept horizontally, and she was so proud of that book and we destroyed those as well, both in St. Paul and in Minneapolis.

PS: But not hers evidently.

CT: No, no—we destroyed hers, too. She didn’t even mention that. She mentioned the painting of the slogans on the wall that bothered her. And I think they were even in—when we went into the conference room they—where I met with my draft board for the first time in my life the slogans were on there. They had no idea then. This was before I surfaced. This was before Friday of that first week.

PS: So right in those few days a lot went on for you?

CT: Yeah, yeah. It was just coincidence. So you asked about what?

PS: Well, just the size of this event and it must have gotten lots of attention locally and otherwise?

CT: I think it was in the media that the FBI sent one hundred agents to try and figure out who had done this here. Yeah, I’m pretty sure that that was in the papers, that they had sent in a whole slew of agents.

PS: After you did the surfacing event where you took moral and political responsibility, did anyone ever officially question you about the Beaver 55 raid?

CT: No, it was reported in the media—the names of the people who took moral and political responsibility but that demonstration—the feds probably were still interested but they never questioned us and they never came and talked to us, but as far as the media was concerned, that—our rally actually got overshadowed because there was a split off faction from Students for a Democratic Society on campus called the Progressive Labor Party or something, who were very upset with someone who was doing research on the West Bank in

00:45:00 the Criminal Justice Studies Program and they said he was a front for the CIA. This was a

Professor David Ward. They said that the whole program over there was a front for the CIA and they used the energy of our rally in Coffman Union—

PS: The one where you took responsibility?

CT: Yeah, it was a different issue really, although a lot of these issues are related, to mobilize and encourage people to follow them over the bridge to the West Bank offices of the Criminal Justice Studies Program and destroy files in this professor’s office.

PS: It must have been a sizeable crowd all together.

CT: Yes, it was. I didn’t go over there but I—something like eighteen people got arrested for doing that, some of them who had—they had planned this ahead of time. They hadn’t thought of what the consequences were going to be. A fellow that we both know, Randy Peterson, was one of those who was arrested for that and charged. And later it turned out that the people who had organized this admitted that the Criminal Justice Program was not a front for the CIA or something like that.

PS: They knew that.

CT: Yeah, they admitted it, not right after, but then after they did some more investigation and they realized that they were wrong. So that’s what got the attention of the media—didn’t—our names were sort of buried in the article. Although that is interesting. I never thought why didn’t the FBI come and question us after that?

PS: Nor any of the others of you so far as you know? I mean, whether it was the four who stood up then or not that you know of?

CT: Not that I know of. And we did hear—I don’t know if this—how we heard this or we made this up as well—but we did hear that it actually held up the draft. I don’t know if the draft in Minneapolis St. Paul, the draft statewide for as much as six months. I also heard rumors it held it up for a year. I mean, each state had a certain quota so someone who got drafted in Brainerd might be able to claim they were drafted out of order because someone in the Twin Cities wasn’t drafted and should have been drafted ahead of them. I don’t know if they made that claim or they could. And someone in our group, not me, but someone in the group did hear from people who told them, Yeah, my file was on appeal at the state headquarters. That’s where the 1A files of people who were making appeals of their classification ended up. And I never heard back so—because their file had been destroyed, they didn’t get drafted. So that was encouraging, although all it meant—it was symbolic—because all it meant was that Minnesota didn’t fill its quota for a month or whatever. Someone in Mississippi was going to be drafted instead of them.

PS: Well, it was an impediment for them in any case.

CT: You got it—we—you couldn’t have been—And now I’m thinking I shouldn’t say this, should I? Because I don’t—because the war went on and on and on and I don’t think our actions were all that effective, although, you know, we like to think we—well, you know about all the stories that we tell ourselves. We like to think it might have had an effect on the person who released the Pentagon Papers, which did have an effect on or could be connected to Nixon eventually resigning. We like to think it had these effects but I think the antiwar movement was pretty ineffective and so now I’m thinking maybe we should have been throwing Molotov Cocktails in all these draft boards. We wouldn’t have to do as much preparation, casing of the place and stuff. So now I’m nuts. Now I’m a little crazier. Maybe we could have hit many, many, many more draft boards, recruiting offices. So I’m nuts now.

PS: Ah, well, maybe that has something to do with what you did later in the summer or tried to do.

CT: Oh, yeah, it kind of might have been, yeah.

PS: After the flush of success, then what?

CT: Well, the draft boards in Minneapolis and St. Paul—and the reason we didn’t stand by is because we felt we should continue doing it and so, since Minneapolis and St. Paul draft files had all been destroyed. And they didn’t have backup copies for the Minneapolis and St. Paul ones, which was shocking. So we—

PS: So they were very vulnerable.

CT: Yeah, they were very vulnerable at that time. Every county in the state had at least one draft board and so we started looking outstate in outstate Minnesota and by that time, a number of people had approached us, had approached us and said, If you’re planning any other future actions, count me in or call me or—and we—

00:50:00 PS: Approached those of you who would sit up at events?

CT: Yeah. And there were so many people that we contacted as well, I think, who we thought might be interested because the Beaver 55 sort of dispersed. They were not intending to do, as a group, any further actions. But they came from all over the country, I think. And so primarily Brad Beneke, but others, started casing draft boards outside of the Twin Cities area and there were some discussions about making the draft board raids in outstate Minnesota in the symbol of an Omega, which was the symbol for resistance because Ohms is the electrical unit of resistance is an Ohm.

And Brad Beneke primarily but others, I think, Mike Therriault, who got involved, did some casing, too, cased draft boards in outstate Minnesota, probably a dozen or two dozen at least. And I kept pressuring Brad for—When’s this raid going to happen? But he was doing most of the casing, I wasn’t. And we had so many meetings with people where some people would join and leave and then join and then leave. And it was primarily men; women were not interested. This was kind of macho type activity, destroying draft files, I think. And only one woman was in the final group of fourteen people who were going to destroy files in five outstate boards: Little Falls, Alexandria, Winona, Wabasha and Faribault.

And then on the night of the action we were—the action in Faribault they thought they saw an alarm system. We weren’t going to stay in the draft boards this time and destroy the files. We were—I think most of the groups were going to steal the files.

PS: Take them out.

CT: Yeah, and some were going to throw them into the river eventually but we were—it was going to be in and out very quickly. And in Faribault they thought they saw an alarm system so they called their action off. In Wabasha, they actually got away with it and destroyed the files and in the other three places, Little Falls, Alexandria and Winona, there were eight people involved in those places and the FBI, at least where I was located in Alexandria, let us fiddle around sort of to incriminate ourselves as to what we were doing in those offices. They let us try to break into a filing cabinet. The filing cabinet, I think, was empty that we finally opened. We didn’t get anything done really in Alexandria except I know one of my co-defendants, Bill Tilton, did bend the “1” and the “A” keys on the typewriter.

PS: Back up a little bit. This all happened on the night of—?

CT: July 10 and 11, 1970, Friday night, Saturday morning. In Little Falls, the way we got—in Alexandria the way we got in is we crawled up to this roof on a neighboring building and then we cut a screen and then it was just a short hop from the neighboring one-story building into the building that housed their draft board office. And we cut a screen, went in through an unlocked window, just lifted it up and it went, I think, to the women’s bathroom in the building. And it was the same kind of door with the glass on the upper half and we cut the triangle. And I was with Bill Tilton who was a vice president of the Minnesota Student Association for a couple of years during that time and I was with another person who I didn’t know at all. I had only met at one meeting before we finally did the action named Cliff Ulen. And he was vouched for because another co-defendant who was arrested in Little Falls, Mike Therriault, had lived in the same house with him for quite a while. So I didn’t know Cliff at all.

But we were ten minutes into our action and all of a sudden the door opens and this guy in a cut off sweatshirt—I remember he had jeans on, loafers, no socks but he had this gun pointed at me. He didn’t say who he was or anything. I know he didn’t. The first words I heard were, “Move and you’re dead.” I didn’t know if it was some vigilante or what. It turned out he was with the FBI and they had the local county sheriffs—there must have been a dozen of them

00:55:00 that came into the room eventually. So I didn’t move and that’s why I’m not dead.

And for some reason we pretended not to know each other’s names. I didn’t know Bill’s name. Finally, when we were back at the sheriff’s office and Bill gave them his name and I said, “You’re Bill Tilton. You’re the fellow who kept the campus nonviolent during the student strike.” Because the newspapers had praised him for keeping the campus demonstrations during a student strike after the invasion of Cambodia.

PS: This was in the spring of 1970.

CT: Yeah, late March, early April, which—the demonstrations that led to the killing of the four students at Kent State. Those were because of the Cambodian invasion. And so we always kidded Bill about this so I said, “You’re Bill Tilton.” I don’t know—it was just to relieve the tension or the pressure I guess, I don’t know.

So we got caught in all three places in the middle of the night and they sent us back to the county jail in Minneapolis.

PS: Wasn’t there a stop first before that?

CT: No, we didn’t stop.

PS: You didn’t stop in the Federal Building downtown briefly?

CT: I don’t remember that.

PS: Because I saw Bill there.

CT: In the Federal Building? Oh, I don’t remember that. Oh, they took us back to the FBI offices in Minneapolis.

PS: Yeah, because there were holding cells in the—what was then the new Federal Building.

CT: Oh, I didn’t realize that. So you remember it much better than I do. I don’t remember—yeah.

PS: I mean, I didn’t see everybody there but I saw Bill—

CT: Oh, that’s interesting.

PS: Well, anyway, keep going.

CT: No, that’s interesting. I just remember ending up in a cellblock in the old City Hall [Minneapolis City Hall, 350 South Fifth Street, Minneapolis, MN]. How long did they keep us in the Federal Building?

PS: Not very long. I mean, it was just to process us and I think somehow they got fingerprints from us.

CT: Oh, that’s where they fingerprinted us.

PS: The first time. I think they fingerprinted us at City Hall Jail, too. I think, but I’m pretty sure that they did it at the Federal Building, that the FBI wanted to have their federal fingerprint records that they were going to file in whatever way they did.

CT: My memory—I don’t remember all these details. Maybe I wasn’t arrested. Maybe this is all in my imagination.

PS: Well, I guess there’s no way to tell. [laughter]

CT: Well, anyhow, they took us to the Hennepin County Jail and finally they gave us—someone—and I think it was Frank who was always saying, When do we get our calls—our calls? Finally at—I think it was in the morning, you know, six, seven in the morning before we got our phone calls. My parents were shocked. My parents were shocked actually that I was going to surface. I told them before I surfaced for the first Beaver 55 action and my father is a Hebrew School teacher and he was worried about—He said, “How can I face my kids?” I remember him saying that—his students. And they did harass him after I ended up going to jail. But that sort of freaked them out even though they knew—they even knew I refused induction. They didn’t expect me to get involved in destruction of property. So I think it was my family I called.

And we were—they charged us initially with violating the Sabotage and Espionage Act? Is that what—? Yeah, they charged us with attempted sabotage of national defense material and this was—no one had ever been charged with that for draft board raids before. Some people who had been arrested for draft board raids had been charged with state offenses and when you’re charged with state offenses, you go to state prisons which are much rougher places than federal prison.

PS: That’s what happened to the Milwaukee people.

CT: Yes, they went to state prisons. Federal prisons are interstate transportation of stolen auto, involves drug charges, drug smuggling charges, bank robbers. I mean, there are people on there who have done murders and rapes and robberies, but typically those are state charges. Mail fraud, tax fraud, that type of thing. Many more white collar criminals in federal prisons. So we were charged but we were charged with a federal offense but it was a more serious federal offense. It was one for which we could have got ten years. And they set a bail on each of our heads at fifty thousand dollars. So the eight of us had four hundred thousand dollars bail and four hundred thousand dollars in that—it’s roughly one seventh, sixth or seventh—it’s

01:00:00 probably like close to three million dollars in today’s money. Well, that was—that—they set

that on the first day, I think, we were there, we had a bail hearing when they set it. That was pretty hefty.

PS: Fifty thousand dollars was plenty back then.

CT: Yeah, that was no chump change. And the night we were arrested or the following day—I think this was before they set the bail, but it was a demonstration of supporters at the courthouse [Hennepin County Courthouse, then at 350 South Fifth Street, Minneapolis, MN]. We had intended to call ourselves the Minnesota Conspiracy to Save Lives. Sort of—there was a group who called themselves the East Coast Conspiracy to Save Lives and we were trying to make the government think it was some national conspiracy.

There was a group that had called themselves the Beaver 55 incidentally, too, that had raided draft files in Indianapolis [Indianapolis, IN] and then the following week had gone up and destroyed computer files in Midland, Michigan at the Dow Chemical plant because Dow Chemical was the corporation that was the primary manufacturer of napalm. And they eventually surfaced, all of them, and they got charged but not until they had done both of those actions. And they called themselves the Beaver 55.

So that was one of the reasons we called ourselves the Beaver 55. We weren’t that creative in Minnesota, I guess. And the group that ended up being called the Minnesota 8 by the media, we had intended to call ourselves the Minnesota Conspiracy to Save Lives, sort of a takeoff on the East Coast Conspiracy to Save Lives and it’s kind of a play on words, that you have to conspire in order to save lives. You have to be involved in a conspiracy.

I don’t know if there—but there were already people chanting, Free the Eight, I think, the following morning and I don’t know if it was at that demonstration or was that that demonstration that one young woman took some stick and smashed the—

PS: Flagpole.

CT: Yeah, was it the flagpole and smashed the glass windows or door to—

End of Recording 6

01:02:08

Beginning of Recording 7

00:00:00 the City Hall and they took down the American flag and raised the flag of the National

Liberation Front of Vietnam called, the so-called the Viet Cong flag, and that didn’t get the greatest publicity, I don’t think. Were there people—there were people who were arrested at that—there might have been only a couple people. Oh, the young woman who did that later became very internationally known for how to handle, the Minnesota Protocol, which is a protocol on how to handle domestic abuse incidents. She was very well-known, Ellen Pence, and in fact, her brother was a draft resister who refused alternative service and ended up going to prison for refusing alternative service. He was one of the earliest draft resisters in Minnesota but then his, for some reason, I think he might have won on his case because of the Gutknecht decision, too, so they had to call him again for alternative service. He ended up being in prison the same time that I was in prison at Sandstone.

Did fourteen people get arrested at that initial demonstration?

PS: I don’t remember.

CT: Yeah, one demonstration, two people got arrested and one of them for not following the police officer’s instructions. One of them was a Catholic priest named Harry Bury [Harry J. Bury], who was the chaplain or the head of the Newman Center at the Foundation—Newman Center at the University of Minnesota that you mentioned earlier. And he was a fellow, very interesting fellow, still alive in his late eighties, I think.

PS: He went to Vietnam.

CT: Chained himself to the U.S. Embassy-- the gates of the U.S. Embassy in Vietnam and was arrested in Vietnam. I don’t know how he got out of it and I don’t—I think I asked him once and he said that they ended up not charging him for that in Vietnam. But he was engaged in some very risque activity, Father Harry Bury. He was one of those that got arrested for not following the instructions of the police officer. It was either at this initial demonstration the morning after we were arrested or at our—at a demonstration where people marched to the courthouse, I think they marched down the Nicollet Mall on the second one, but I’m not sure of that.

PS: We weren’t there to see it.

CT: Yeah, and that was a hearing to lower our bail, to get our bail lowered six days later, which they ended up doing. They ended up lowering our bail to ten thousand dollars each and they had it under some kind of bail provision where we only had to put up a thousand dollar deposit with the court and you’d get it back after your trial. And so it was—in effect, you didn’t have to go through a bail bondsperson. So you didn’t have to settle—the money was raised—the families put up the money and we went out on bail six days. So we were only in the county jail six days.

I don’t think we ever discussed in there whether we should stay in there until other people were bailed out, too, at similar expense. We never—I don’t think we ever discussed it. County jails are not pleasant places to be so I think we wanted to get out of the county jail. That’s all I know.

PS: Oh, come on.

CT: That’s all I know.

PS: Well, let’s talk about what happened later, after that. I mean, we all went to trial—

CT: We did go to trial.

PS: separately, in different groups, and we were all convicted and all went to prison so talk about that. In particular, talk about what your courtroom recollections are.

CT: Oh, my courtroom recollections. Well, the government wanted to try us—I was involved in Alexandria and one of the three people who was in Alexandria, as I mentioned, Cliff Ulen, sort of broke off from our group. When our trial was supposed to start, I think, it might have been earlier. I was with Bill Tilton and Cliff Ulen and me and we were the group that was going to be tried first. And Cliff disassociated himself from the group. I—we don’t know whether he was—someone informed on us. We never found out who. We don’t know if it was Cliff but his family was putting all sorts of pressures on him to plead guilty and get this behind him so he disassociated himself from the group and told the court that he intended to plead guilty.

We—so Bill and I were the only two defendants in the first trial and the government originally was going to hold it in Fergus Falls [Fergus Falls, MN], which is where there’s a federal courthouse; there’s federal courtrooms in six places I think around the State of Minnesota and

00:05:00 our lawyer made motions that most of the witnesses, our witnesses were down here. Fergus

Falls was closer to the witnesses from Alexandria like the draft board clerk who had to testify. But the FBI were all housed down here and they were going to have to testify so we won that motion to get it transferred. The government had decided to try us in three separate groups. I don’t think they ever found out why they did that. Maybe it was to protect the informant. If they tried us all together maybe they would have had to tell us or charge us with some kind of conspiracy, then they certainly would have had to reveal the informant.

Well, our strategy in each trial was some would defend themselves and some would be defended by a lawyer. The reason you do that is if you defend yourself and you’re a lay person you can get away with saying all sorts of things that you want the jury to hear and a lawyer couldn’t get away with saying those things.

We had an excellent lawyer, Ken Tilsen, and I was defended by a lawyer in our trial and Bill Tilton, my co-defendant, defended himself. And, like I say, with the same result. We both got convicted, which was kind of interesting.

The strategy was we were going to propose a necessity defense which interestingly, just this week some—yeah, but just this week, some people were on trial for opposing the pipeline going across Minnesota. They call themselves the “valve-turners,” I think. And they had cut a bolt in it but it turned out that the pipeline company themselves shut off the pipeline. And they intended to use the necessity defense, claiming that their action was designed to prevent—the evil that their action was, breaking the law, was less than the evil that they were trying to prevent, which was climate change.

And in the necessity defense you have to show that it’s reasonable belief—that your belief that you would have prevented the greater evil was reasonable; that you had exhausted other methods that you could have used to prevent the greater evil. It’s a defense that’s typically used if you break into a burning building to save someone’s life. Your breaking in is committing trespass and maybe breaking and entering but the greater good is to save the person’s life so they don’t charge you with trespassing on someone’s property.

And we tried to use that in a sort of metaphorically—saying that the war was this greater evil, this emergency, and that we had—that other methods had been tried and we reasonably believed that it was necessary—that’s why it’s called the necessity defense—reasonably that it was necessary to break this law to prevent the greater evil. And just this week, these valve-turners, who were intending to use that as their defense, and the judge was going to allow it which is very strange because judges do not allow the necessity defense typically in politically motivated crimes.

PS: It’s almost unheard of.

CT: It’s unheard of for anyone, any—but the attempts have been made for politically motivated offenses and this judge is a state court judge in Bagley, Minnesota, was going to allow it. But then, after the government presented their case, he decided that they, the government hadn’t met their burden of proof and dismissed the charges before the defendants could bring in all their witnesses about climate change and showing what an emergency we were in in that area, environmental emergency. And so they didn’t—they were a little upset that they didn’t get to put on all their witnesses. They had some big name national witnesses who were coming in to testify on their behalf. I think maybe the judge realized he shouldn’t be allowing the necessity defense and maybe dismissed it. He said, “Well, all they did was break the bolt on the chain; they didn’t actually damage the pipeline,” which apparently was the charge—that they had damaged the pipeline.

PS: Couldn’t show that that damage had actually happened is what I heard.

CT: So this was the necessity defense we intended to use and we intended to bring in all sorts of witnesses, one of whom was this fellow whom we had met who had worked in the defense department and at Rand Institute. He had visited us before we went to trial and he had been part—we didn’t know at that time, though, that he had been—he had written a letter to the editor in the *New York Times*. It was clear he had—was against the war and it later turned out that he was the same fellow who a year later released—no, no, not a year—was it a year later?

PS: I think it was a little—it was the next calendar year but it might not have been a whole year.

00:10:00 CT: Yeah, it was in June of 1971, released this study that the government had done about

 the causes and—

PS: The history.

CT: The history of the United States’ involvement in Vietnam up through 1967 or ’68, I think, and that became known as the Pentagon Papers and this was Daniel Ellsberg. He was prepared to testify at our trial. And our judge, Judge Edward Devitt, was the head federal district court judge. Two months before our trial in November—I think it was two months before—Justice Blackmun had just been appointed to the United States Supreme Court. He had just been confirmed to the U.S. Supreme Court. And he had previously served on the federal court of appeals in St. Louis and he was from Minnesota and it’s typical when someone comes from a state in serving on one of the courts of appeals in the federal system, they fill that seat with someone from the state. Our judge, Judge Edward Devitt, had been a member of Congress, a Republican member of Congress, so he was a partisan Republican and the sitting president then was Richard Nixon, who was a Republican. I think our judge wanted that seat in St. Louis.

And I remember when we came in for pre-trial motions and he gave—our first hearing—and he gave our lawyer seven days for pre-trial motions. And our lawyer, very soft-spoken fellow, stood up and very calmly said, “Your Honor, the federal rules of criminal procedure require a minimum of ten days for pre-trial motions.” And our judge knew that. I don’t know why he only gave us seven days. I don’t know if it was a stupid mistake on his part or he was trying to hurry this along so he could get appointed to that seat or something. But he did give us the full ten days for pre-trial motions. Federal courts move along much more quickly than state courts.

I remember the voir dire, which is the jury selection process in our courtroom, in our case. The judge conducts it usually in federal court. In state court the lawyers conduct it so they can have follow-up questions to try and find out who’s biased or not. We submitted questions to the judge for him to ask. He accepted one of our questions, the only question we shouldn’t have asked which was, How many of you members of the jury pool are under the age of twenty-six because they—when you reach twenty-six, that was the magic age to be free from being drafted. I don’t know if you got a new classification on reaching the age of twenty-six but all eligible people under twenty-six had to be drafted before they drafted anyone over twenty-six. And once you reached the age of twenty-six you were home free generally.

And six people raised their hands on our jury, our potential jury pool, and of those six, the prosecution used five of their six strikes to strike five of those young people and we struck the sixth one. You get some automatic strikes that you don’t have to give reasons for.

PS: Those peremptories.

CT: Those peremptory challenges. So it was a question we shouldn’t have asked. And when we got—our judge wasn’t going to allow any evidence on the war; any evidence on the draft. He had decided that this was federal property. All the government had to show that we destroyed this federal property. It was irrelevant what the purpose of that federal property was. He wasn’t going to allow any evidence on that so we used the technical defense. When the prosecution ended its case we claimed that they hadn’t shown that our intent was to destroy files. We were so inept that we were in the offices for ten minutes and we hadn’t actually destroyed any files.

So the way the law was written they had to show we had this specific intent to destroy files. So in the first trial, we rested after the prosecution rested. We didn’t offer any witnesses. And the jury was out for less than an hour and convicted us. And—well, you’ll tell them about the second and third trials. You’ve got to get on tape—someone to talk about the third trial. The second trial had the same judge. Pete, my interviewer, was in the second trial and they tried a different kind of defense, what’s called a character defense. They brought in character witnesses to vouch for their—how—what decent people they were.

PS: How upright and upstanding we were.

CT: Yeah, and that worked about as well as our non-defense of the first trial. The third trial was before a more liberal judge, a Judge Neville, and he was going to allow in the evidence in to prove the necessity defense but only on a preliminary basis so they got all of their witnesses that we had intended to use in the first trial—they had a real trial where all of these witnesses on the war, including Daniel Ellsberg, this person still hadn’t released the Pentagon Papers.

00:15:00 They were tried in February, January or February of 1971.

PS: In Minneapolis.

CT: And he, when he testified, his—the gist of his testimony was going to be the effect of these type of actions on government policy. But at a certain point, I didn’t know this at the time. I didn’t know he had this secret study that he was trying to—having trouble getting Congress to release to the public. And because he was having so much trouble, he felt here was an opportunity for him to be under oath, having sworn to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, that he would actually release the files, the study in this third trial in Judge Neville’s courtroom. I didn’t know about this.

PS: So these things would be introduced into evidence? That was the idea, right?

CT: Yes, and he had a thousand pages and the study was sixty-seven hundred pages or something like that and he had a thousand pages of it in his briefcase that he very conspicuously [unintelligible] when he went up to testify put at his side. I didn’t know that the—I didn’t know anything about the secret study. I don’t know if the defendants in that trial did. I was not involved in the preparation for that trial and I don’t know if the lawyer knew that there was this secret study that Dan Ellsberg was trying to get out to the public.

But it turned out that it was in June of that year—it was a couple months after that trial ended. The judge cut him off before he could get to the study that he wanted to describe about what—why the U.S. is—what got us involved in Vietnam? What our goals were. There were all sorts of documents like that in the Pentagon Papers. But then a couple months later he released them to Neal Sheehan [Cornelius Mahoney "Neil" Sheehan (1936-)] of the *New York Times* and a couple months after that, in June of 1971, they were released to the public and the *Washington Post* and fourteen other newspapers eventually picked them up.

And that is what led, because it was a leak, and President Nixon was paranoid of leaks, that it led him to form The Plumbers Unit [The White House Plumbers Unit] and it was called the Plumbers Unit because plumbers deal with leaks. And it was the Plumbers Unit who, a year later, he revived and they were the raiders of the Democratic National Headquarters at Watergate. So there’s this thin tie between our action, the release of the Pentagon Papers, the forming of the plumbers’ unit, which led to the Watergate break-in, which led to the downfall of President Nixon eventually.

PS: So, fascinating story but getting back to your personal—

CT: Yeah, get back to my story.

PS: experience, talk a little bit about what it was like for you in prison and what happened afterward.

CT: Let me go back to when the guy said, “Move and you’re dead,” all I remembered is—what flashed in my brain, was my whole future life which I didn’t know what it was going to be like anyhow. But my whole future, legal life—

PS: You were still thinking law school at that time?

CT: My god, after we got arrested, on July 10, July 11, 1970, I again started law school the following fall. This time—the time I had started before I lasted about two, two and a half weeks. This time in the fall of 1970, I lasted a whole quarter. The university was on quarter systems. But the first quarter during law school, I was actually on trial, too, so I don’t know how I kept up my classes. Our trial took about three, four days so I don’t know how I managed but I did pretty well the first quarter. I got—I did very well in Auerbach’s [Carl Auerbach (1915-2016)] class on the legal process, yeah, I was—

PS: Auerbach?

CT: Yeah.

PS: Was he the dean?

CT: He was the dean but he taught one class on the legal process which he—yeah, so I did pretty well that first quarter of law school. But then we got convicted during that quarter and I didn’t know how long we would be out on appeal so I dropped out of law school again because I didn’t know if I’d be—the appeal would—and we’d have to go to prison right from a quarter at the university or not. So we were out on appeal bond for—you get out on appeal your life is on hold. We were out on appeal bond for a year, yeah, almost a year and I didn’t go hear the oral arguments or anything but one of the other defendants made his own oral argument. Frank Kroncke in his trial made his own argument to the court of appeals in St. Louis.

PS: Speaking of that court of appeals, Judge Devitt never did get appointed to that seat that

00:20:00 you think he wanted—

CT: No, he didn’t get it.

PS: so he wasn’t in the end sitting on the appeals court when they heard our appeal.

CT: Couldn’t sit on your own appeals court, no, no, no, no, no. The appeals court judges that I had was—there was a Judge Lay, [Donald P. Lay, (1926-2007)] who was a conservative, and then there was a very liberal judge. I forgot his name—from Minnesota, who, when I eventually did graduate law school, the law school was honoring him at our graduation ceremony. They were giving him some Doctor of Letters of Law or something. Judge Heaney [Gerald William Heaney (1918-2010)], and when I graduated law school when I was—this was after prison—when I walked across the stage and my name was called, I had already been denied permission to take the bar exam because of lack of good moral character.

PS: Say that—declared—clarify that a little bit. You graduated from law school—

CT: I’m jumping ahead, I’m sorry.

PS: Well, that’s okay and then next thing that typically happens for a new graduate is that at some point in the not too distant future you take the bar exam. And you had already been told by—what? The State Bar Association?

CT: The Board of Law Examiners. And before I went to law school I went and visited with them, before I went to law school after we got out of prison. And I went and visited with—well, I had taken the law school admissions test when I was a junior in college. In order to—it’s only good for five years. And my five years were up. I had to retake the Law School Admissions Test [LSAT] to go to law school after prison and I had to get—they’re not going to let you out of prison to take the LSAT and to take the LSAT I had to get the prison declared a test center.

So the Post Office Box number at Sandstone Federal Correctional Institution, which is where I eventually ended up for most of my term, was Post Office Box 1000, so they declared the test center as Test Center 1000. This was before the Internet. I don’t know how we did it by snail mail but we got it declared Test Center 1000. They got the—someone in the education department to monitor the exam and I was the only one in the test center, took the LSAT for the second time because my first test was five years old, in prison. And the education guy was very upset because he works Monday through Friday. He said, “My god, if you could get this declared a test center, why couldn’t you get the day changed? “ [laughter]

PS: Because they always did those tests on Saturdays.

CT: Always on Saturday. And I had advantages. I had a big table to spread out on. Disadvantages—they didn’t allow watches in federal prison at that time and I took it in a room without a clock so I didn’t have a clock but I aced it the second time. I did very well the second time so I got into the University of Minnesota again and I got into Berkeley but I didn’t go to Berkeley, stupidly because Berkeley started in early September; the university was still on a quarter system; started in late September. We were getting out on July 23; I wouldn’t have enough time to get established in Berkeley. They wouldn’t tell me until I got out there whether I had instate tuition fees; instate residence for tuition so I ended up going back to the University of Minnesota, starting for the third time, having been admitted for the fourth time. The first time I went off into VISTA then instead. I didn’t accept the first time.

So I went to the Board of Law Examiners and I asked them, before I started law school, “Will I have any trouble taking the bar exam?” And they said, Well, we rule on your moral character as of the time you apply to take the bar exam, not when you’re starting law school. So go to law school for three years and then we’ll let you know if your moral character is good enough to take the bar exam. So I went to law school for three years and I wasn’t too serious about law school. I would have dropped out if I didn’t have to get permission from the parole officer.

PS: So backing up a little bit here, you were in federal prison, more than one location, for a total of how long?

CT: Twenty months.

PS: And starting when?

CT: We started—we went into prison on December 28—I think it was—1971. We were supposed to go in a little earlier but we probably—somehow we hid out for a weekend or something. We told them we—our lawyer told them we were going to turn ourselves in on Monday or some—no, no, no, no, we got sentenced on December 28. That’s it, we got sentenced three days after Christmas which I thought was a nice touch on the judge’s part.

PS: That was in 1970.

CT: Yeah.

PS: Before our appeal.

CT: Yeah, and then our appeals kept us out until November. We went into prison right after Thanksgiving. We stayed out for Thanksgiving. We went in the Monday after Thanksgiving, November 29 or something.

00:25:00 PS: Well, the thing that struck me and others was the day we were ordered to report to be—

 to turn ourselves in—to be in custody was Thanksgiving day.[[3]](#footnote-3)

CT: Was it really?

PS: It was Thanksgiving day—

CT: You’re kidding. These judges have—

PS: and so we were fugitives for a weekend.

CT: We told them, yeah, and they didn’t come and try to find us.

PS: Well, they tried to find Brad.

CT: Did they really?

PS: I think they did.

CT: I wasn’t actually hiding. That’s interesting.

PS: Well, some were hiding more than others. It was kind of a funny experience and then we did this event at Fort Snelling [Fort Snelling National Cemetery, 7601 34th Avenue South,

Minneapolis, MN]. We haven’t talked about that.

CT: Oh, yeah, I suppose the veterans were upset with us but we went out to Fort Snelling in the snow and had—because I mean, by then, my god, probably well over fifty thousand Americans had been killed by then and two and a half—yeah—probably over two million Vietnamese had been killed by then. So we went out to the graves, said what a waste this was, I don’t know, to point out how stupid these wars are that they our species engages in. I don’t remember very much about the ceremony out at Fort Snelling.

But I remember when we went in to—when we turned ourselves in, they put us in the county jail and I don’t know whether we thought we were all going to go to Sandstone or what. Two of the people had been sentenced under the Federal Youth Act—

PS: Youth Corrections Act.

CT: including Pete and Brad, so I don’t know if we thought they might go to a different—I don’t know where we thought we were headed. But it turned out that they put the five of us who turned ourselves in—Frank and Mike, the people who had that trial where they were allowed to put on their necessity defense, their appeal still was pending by the time the first five of us turned ourselves in. And when—and they ended up keeping us for about six days in the Hennepin County Jail—maybe not quite that long—and then—

PS: I was in Ramsey County Jail.

CT: Oh, they moved you over to Ramsey. And then they took Don Olson and me and there must have been a third person in a car, the federal marshals, and we had no idea where they were going to—what prison they were taking us to.

PS: I was the third one in that car.

CT: You were in our car?

PS: Yeah.

CT: Oh, so we picked up someone in the Ramsey County Jail and we had no idea where we were going and we ended up we were going south and Sandstone was north. So we knew it wasn’t Sandstone. And I think we kept asking in the car where we were headed. They wouldn’t tell us. And the way they transport you, I think you’re handcuffed and then you have chains around your waist and I remember being handcuffed to the chain around the waist and your legs are—your legs are shackled as well, yeah. And that’s kind of—that might be connected to the—the leg shackle might be connected to the chain around the waist. I don’t know—it was elaborate but the federal marshals are expert are doing these sorts of things.

But they took us down to the Kansas City, Missouri county jail and that was a dump. Boy, the many—the Hennepin County and Ramsey County Jails were much nicer than Kansas City, I’ll tell you. They gave you a towel with holes in it as your sheet. It was—and we were there for a few days and then they took me to El Reno Federal Reformatory.

PS: In where?

CT: In El Reno, Oklahoma.

PS: Oklahoma.

CT: And it was a reformatory so you had to be under twenty-six to start your sentence there. They took Pete to Englewood, Colorado Federal Youth Camp was it called?

PS: Youth Center.

CT: Youth Center. And they took Don Olson to Springfield, Missouri, to the Federal Medical—Federal Prison Medical Facilities—it’s got some acronym. Medical Center, Federal Prison Medical Center. And I don’t even—I didn’t even know where they took the other two who turned themselves in at that time, who were Brad Beneke and Bill Tilton. They—I later found out that Bill Tilton was sent to Milan in Michigan, Milan, Michigan Federal Correctional Institution, and Brad went to Morgantown Federal Youth Center [CT’s mistake, it was at Ashland, KY]. And I eventually got my prison file and I found out why they had transferred us, sent us to five

00:30:00 separate prisons. There had been a strike up at Sandstone Federal Correctional Institution in

Sandstone, Minnesota, and the warden thought that the primary organizers of that prisoner strike was the draft resisters who were in there.

PS: Because there were others there, not, you know, we wouldn’t have been the first Selective Service people in there by any means.

CT: Oh no, every—there were only twenty thousand or so federal prisoners at the time, maybe twenty-two thousand. Now there’s close to one hundred ninety thousand.

PS: In the whole country.

CT: Yeah, it was over—so it’s ten times more federal prisoners, very similar to the proportions to the increase in state prisoners, too. So there weren’t all that many federal prisons in the country at that time. But every prison at that time certainly had, you know, ten, twelve, fifteen people who were in there on draft charges, although maybe fewer in the penitentiaries, more in the correctional institutions, which is a—not as—the lifers would go to the penitentiaries, not as long a sentence typically, or as serious charges.

And I found out that the warden at Sandstone had requested that no more prisoners of our type—type—that was the word, of that type, be sent to Sandstone. So that’s why we weren’t sent to Sandstone, even though those of us who weren’t youth offenders, at least, were qualified based on the security that they needed—it was a medium security prison, Sandstone, and the length of our sentences. So I eventually put in for a transfer to go to Sandstone. I got transferred with—you don’t want me to talk about prison experiences.

Let me go back to the sentencing because there was something that happened at the sentencing. The judge asked us if we—he said, “I don’t want to jeopardize your appeal rights,” because he knew we were claiming that we were innocent. I don’t know—even though, you know, on appeal, we were claiming that the government, in our case, that the government hadn’t proved its case. I don’t know what Pete’s appeal was based on but he said, “I don’t want to jeopardize your—the position you’re going to take on your appeal, but would you do it again?” And I remember turning the question back on him, that he had ruled the war and the draft irrelevant. I asked him if he would do that again. And he said he would.

But in my statement at the sentencing, I remember I said, “Would it have been relevant if these files were lists of fugitive slaves to be captured and returned to their owners? Or would what the files were for—would it have been relevant if they were lists of Jews to be picked up in Nazi Germany?” And I said, “Or would it have been relevant if they were lists of U.S. federal district court judges to be assassinated?” I think maybe I should have left off that third one. Maybe I should have stopped after two analogies. But, of course, it didn’t have any effect. He intended to give us five years, the max. He started out his sentencing statement, “These five young men come from fine families,” and I immediately knew that he was going to give us the max at that point because that’s typically how judges start off their opinions or their sentences these days. They start where they aren’t going to go.

And the third person, incidentally, who did plead—who was involved in Alexandria—who did plead guilty, did, after we were all in prison, I think, did get probation. So people were—I have a rabbi who I know said, “You should have pled guilty and you could have got probation.” I don’t think if we all had pled guilty we would all have gotten probation. I think they still would have intended to lock us up.

So what was the question again? Was it about prison?

PS: Well, something in general or details about your prison experience overall. And also, what happened when you got out because our time is ticking away, but the aftermath and what you think. You alluded to this before—what you think now about what we did back then, what you did back then, and what it meant to you after prison. Because, you know, the act itself is brief and the time in prison for us has been comparatively brief and life has gone on for decades since then. So, you know, what all, what it was like afterward, both in the near term getting back. I remember you said people asked you, What’s it like to be out? And you would say to them, “Well, I don’t know. I’ve been in. You tell me what it’s like to be out.”

CT: Did I say that really?

PS: Yeah, you did. But, so the afterward experience is—lasts longer than any of the rest of it.

CT: That’s true.

00:35:00 PS: And I’m interested to know what that was like for you.

CT: Okay. Prison I found tolerable, you know, it’s not—

PS: You played ping pong, right?

CT: Yeah, I found a guy who was in Vietnam for the French in 1947, which was the precursor to our continuing that war when the French left in 1954. So I—prison—it wasn’t—it’s not fun, you know, but it’s not—you can survive it. You can—if the situation arose again where I felt that I had to do something illegal that might land me in prison, I wouldn’t be that, all that worried about having to go to prison.

I quit my last full-time job at the time of the Gulf War, thinking when the Gulf War erupted, thinking that I don’t want a job to keep me from doing some action that might land me in federal prison again. After prison, well, after prison, like I was telling before, I—when I did apply to take—

PS: Were you on parole?

CT: Yes, we were on parole—but I was in law school and I made it all the way to May of my senior year of law school before they let me off parole early. I was supposed to be on parole till November. We actually did—I counted up the days that I did. One of the people in the group of five—the two that came in later did less time. They only did fourteen months, but those of us who did twenty months, one of them did a day longer because the paperwork was still—Bill Tilton in Milan. But I counted and figure out that we did exactly six hundred and nine days, which is four score and seven weeks to the day. I thought it was four score and seven days—four score and seven weeks minus a day but then I realized ’72 is a leap year. I forgot that extra day so we did four score and seven days, seven weeks, in federal prison.

And so I planned to take the bar exam after I finished law school. When I graduated and they told me I couldn’t because of lack of good moral character, well, they were all lawyers.

PS: Which is because of your conviction.

CT: Yeah, because of the conviction. They were all lawyers on the Board of Professional Responsibility [Board of Law Examiners]. Now there’s some lay people on it. And they had nine rules governing thirteen pages. And one of the rules said they’re supposed to give someone a hearing before they deny them permission to take the bar exam because of lack of good moral character. And give me a hearing. So here they are all lawyers and lawyers are very attuned to the issue of when do we have to give you a hearing before we can deny you something. Can we take you off welfare before we give you a hearing? Can we kick you out of school without giving you a hearing. I mean, it’s an issue—

PS: Process.

CT: It’s an issue that comes up on appeal all of the time. So neither of these lawyers had read their rules. Maybe they forgot them. Maybe they read them and ignored them or they didn’t read them so they were either corrupt or incompetent is what I told them when they finally gave me a hearing the week before the bar exam. And they gave me a hearing. I invited a reporter from the *Star Tribune*, a guy named Stone, Alan Stone or I forgot his first name—to sit in. He asked me if he could sit in on the hearing and I said, “Sure.” And at the hearing I brought them a film, a film of the Vietnam War. It said—the rule said I was entitled to make any explanation I chose. Well, I chose this film and it’s called Hearts and Minds and I got the filmmaker to send it for free, the distributor, from Los Angeles [Los Angeles, CA] was willing to send it for free. So I had—I rented a projector and I brought in—the films were on these filmstrips in those days. There wasn’t digital, of course.

PS: Yeah, it was a reel.

CT: Yeah, the reel and it was a two-reel film actually. I would have had to change the reels. I don’t know if I would have been able to figure out how to do that. And I’m mechanically inept. And then they wanted—the big question—they [unclear] for a little bit and one of them said, Well, would you ever break the law again? One of them would have—I said, “Well, it depends on the circumstances. If we have circumstances in this country that are similar to circumstances in Nazi Germany, you know, maybe I would break the law again.” But then one of the lawyers on there, who was on my side, who was saying, Well, your—the threshold would be higher wouldn’t you say? But this one lawyer from Duluth, I’m sure he would have said he would never break the law, even in Nazi Germany, which was kind of frightening. And they sent me out of the room when they had questioned me for a while.

PS: So they didn’t let you show the film?

CT: And then they brought me back in and they said we decided not to watch the film. It was a ninety minute film. It was a Saturday morning. They didn’t want to watch ninety more minutes. It was a special hearing. They had to come in from all over the state just for this one hearing.

PS: You troublemaker.

CT: And they said we’re going to give you permission to take the test and it was a week

00:40:00 later. I wasn’t ready for it. If I had passed I would have been worried. I flunked it. I knew I

was going to flunk it. Then I took it two times after that and I thought I was prepared but who knows? Maybe I wasn’t but I got like sixty-nine points, sixty-nine point seven—you’ve got to average seventy. And there’s no appeals on these—and sixty-nine point eight one time. So I don’t know if there was some finagling going on there. It could have been because the guy from the Star Tribune did write an article about the hearing and about me being denied permission.

But when I graduated law school, I mentioned to you before, my classmates knew that I had been denied permission to take the bar exam and they all stood up and applauded when my name was called and I marched across the stage. And so at the reception afterwards, I went up to Judge Heaney and I said, “You probably don’t know why my classmates all stood up and applauded when I walked across the stage.” And I said, “It was because of you. It was because you locked me up in federal prison.” [laughter] And he said, because he was one of the three judges on my appeals panel—on appeal of our conviction in St. Louis, the court of appeals. And he said, “Oh, you’ll be allowed to take the bar exam.” And I said, “No, no, you don’t understand. I’ve already been denied permission.” And I didn’t expect to win at the hearing that they gave me but I hadn’t had the hearing, of course, then. And he said, “Oh, you’ll be allowed to take the bar exam.” He didn’t remember the case I don’t think. It was kind of interesting.

So life after? So I’ve been a bum in life after. Life after prison, I was basically a bum.

PS: Well, you weren’t living on street corners—

CT: I was.

PS: You worked here and there.

CT: I worked for the postal service for eight plus years.

PS: In Minneapolis? Not the one that you broke into?

CT: No, no, no, no. This was a shock that the federal government would hire me for a post office position and I took that test and even though I didn’t have the veteran’s bonus points, I did very well and they hired me at the Hopkins [Hopkins, MN] post office. And then they—the Hopkins post office also governed Eden Prairie [Eden Prairie, MN] post office and Minnetonka [Minnetonka, MN]. Eventually they sent me all the way up to the Minnetonka post office.

And while I was working at the post office I got arrested with the Honeywell Project where we were blocking the doors at Honeywell [Honeywell Corporation, Minneapolis, MN] because Honeywell’s the primary manufacturer of a hideous weapon called an anti-personnel fragmentation bomb and when we got convicted of that, the judge gave us two days and I asked the judge if I could serve it over Christmas because that was the only time the post office where we had two days off in a row. We had split days off. Everyone had off on Sunday and one other day. And, of course, it looked like I was trying to make some kind of a statement to do it over Christmas but I was just a Jewish boy saying, my god—I didn’t tell the judge this is the only time I have two days off. But he granted the request so I got—and Marv Davidov [Marv Davidov (1932-2012)], who was the head of the Honeywell Project, he immediately saw this as a way to make a statement so he asked to do his two days over Christmas, too. And people thought this was a big political statement. But he was Jewish, too, two Jewish boys in the county workhouse over Christmas. [laughter]

And I got arrested for other demonstrations but never ended up going back to jail again. We blocked the Federal Courthouse, the Minneapolis. I think it was over the—it might have been over Pershing Missiles or “Star Wars” [the Regan administration proposal to develop ICBM intercept systems, not the popular *Star Wars* movie]. We sat outside at the front of this very building and I remember one of the people who worked on our defense committee—what was Rosenbaum’s first name?

PS: Whose?

CT: Rosenbaum.

PS: Ron.

CT: Ron Rosenbaum [Ron Rosenbaum (1948-2016)]. His brother was a federal district court judge at that time and he [Judge Rosenbaum] was scolding us as he stepped across us—we were sitting out on the front of the doors here. He was very upset that he couldn’t get into the doors into his office. And his brother had been one of our defense committee—

PS: For the Minnesota 8.

CT: for the Minnesota 8, which eventually became known as the Minnesota 8. I don’t know why we didn’t insist on calling ourselves the Minnesota Conspiracy to Save Lives because that makes much more of a political statement than the newspapers’ referring to us as the Minnesota 8.

PS: Well, we can’t make the newspapers say what we want some of the time.

00:45:00 CT: No, we can’t, yeah, but we ended up putting it on our buttons, too, the “8” and

whatnot. No, I’ve been a bum most of my life. I played black jack for ten years, no taxes—I never did file taxes during that era at all.

PS: Didn’t you work for legal aid more recently, too?

CT: I worked for legal aid, yeah, when I finished law school but as a legal worker they called me. But I actually was doing administrative hearings. Boy, I felt the pressure of those hearings. These drove me nuts but we won them all. We’d take about a dozen of them. But then I left—I worked at the St. Paul American Indian Center on Payne Avenue. I only did that for about a year and a half maybe. But I was a bum. I was basically a bum most of my life.

PS: Okay, so bumming aside for now—

CT: And now I’m retired.

PS: A retired bum. [laughter] The benefits must be great.

CT: Yeah, I don’t know how they—

PS: It must be a lot the same, right?

CT: I don’t know how I have—was eligible for Social Security; how I had enough quarters of work that made me eligible for Social Security. Maybe it was my postal service work although I don’t even—for part of that time, I paid nothing into Social Security [unclear].

PS: Well, in any case, looking back on all—

CT: Oh now, god, you asked if I—

PS: What do you think now about all—?

CT: I also think there’s all sorts of motivations why I got involved with—there’s something about late adolescent males. There’s all this stuff in courses that I learned now. There’s some psychologist at Temple University [Temple University, Philadelphia, PA], who’s done a study about your ability to appreciate your sensations, your sensation level is at the highest as it is like when you’re eighteen years old and your ability to control your impulses is still rising at that time. Rises all the way up to early twenties, maybe mid-twenties.

So your sensation—your ability to feel sensations, your sensation-seeking instinct is decreasing and your impulse control is rising. He was trying to explain why they set the drinking age at a certain age, the age at to agree to have an abortion without your parental consent is a different age. Ability—the age to vote is a different age. And he said all of them make sense if you look at these things. So I think there’s this adventuresome. I think people joining gangs and us aren’t all that different. People engaging in criminal activity, street crime activity. Now I don’t want to diminish the, you know, the social and political causes we were fighting for, but there’s something about late adolescent males that engages in this risk taking behavior, this adventuresome behavior. So I think that was part of it.

I don’t know if this comraderie thing—that people who join the military—the ones who have PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder], they always say that they never felt this sense of purpose, the sense of comraderie that they had felt in the military. I don’t know if that was part of, at least, joining this. Now whenever I see one of my co-defendants they’re in this Minnesota 8 box and I don’t even know the names of all of the other six people who were going to raid boards that night, the three who raided the Wabasha board and the three who called it off at Faribault. It’s the strangest thing, this—there is this tie about people who have been in prison, not even in prison together, but just in prison for the same act like it ended up only four of us who—two of us got transferred to Sandstone and the two who came in later were initially put in Sandstone so they did their whole fourteen months in Sandstone. But the other four stayed where they were. Pete stayed in Englewood and—

PS: Bill.

CT: the other three. Bill stayed in Milan and Don stayed in the medical center in Springfield. They never asked to get transferred to Sandstone. I got transferred to Sandstone from the hole in El Reno. They thought I was part of a group that was involved in having presented a list of demands to the warden. They called me in and they said, Well, what are you going to do on Monday at noon? And I said, “I don’t know. We’ll see what happens when Monday comes,” and the captain of the guard says, Well, I’ll tell you what you’re going to—he said, I’m going to lock you up. That means he’s going to put you in solitary.

So I was in solitary and in solitary I had my parole hearing from solitary. It was the strangest thing. I applied for parole because I had a sentence where you could apply for parole immediately. It was called an A Number Sentence or something and then they give you a set-

00:50:00 off and you know how long they intend to keep you. The set-off to my next parole hearing

was September of 1973, but the two [Frank Kroncke and Mike Therriault] that came in later ended up getting paroled after a year. They had a sentence where they had to serve a year before they go up for parole. They went up for parole after serving a year and got out—got a parole date for release two months later so the rest of us who were in on some of the charges, had similar backgrounds, filed a motion in court saying we should have been let out at the same time. So I never had to go for parole again. They let us out without going up for parole because they didn’t want to hear this motion—they didn’t want to defend this motion in court so they gave up and let the five, the rest of us, the other five, parole dates earlier than they intended to release us.

PS: So you had said before that you had your doubts about how effective this movement, the resistance was.

CT: Yeah, I do, I do.

PS: That’s sort of a political/social judgment in retrospect. How about you? Do you feel—this might be the wrong way to put it but people often think of it like this I think. Do you feel personally like it was worth it?

CT: Well, you see, there are some people in our group who got a high lottery number, who had done their Conscientious Objector service already; their alternative service. One of the group had done that. There were others who I don’t know for some reason they were not liable to get drafted. I know one other did get drafted. Mike Therriault did get drafted and refused induction. So I was headed for prison anyhow. It’s these other people in the Minnesota 8 who are the heroes who risked themselves—like I was headed for prison probably would have served a similar length of time and that would have been worth it, yeah, definitely I think going to prison for refusing induction would have been worth it. And I think going to prison—I think, yeah, prison was the right place to have been during that period of the country’s history, but yeah, I would have done it again.

PS: So it, looking back, it doesn’t feel like a terrible mistake—

CT: Oh, no.

PS: or it did me lifetime damage or—?

CT: No, no.

PS: I mean, it certainly had some effects on all of us but I don’t feel like—

CT: I may have been a corporate lawyer if I had merely done time in prison for refusing induction. I might have—who knows? I don’t know. I might have, yeah, no, I don’t think it changed my life any.

PS: You would have been a bum anyhow.

CT: I was a misfit from the get-go.

PS: Well, you certainly held onto that all these years. [laughter]

CT: And I don’t mean to say by that that the other seven of the Minnesota 8 are also misfits. Some of them did very good things with their lives. I was—I didn’t—

PS: We’re withholding judgment on the rest of us.

CT: Yeah, I don’t want to say that. But I do want to know if Cliff informed.

PS: Or who did, whoever it was.

CT: Yeah, we were kind of loose—with so many people knew when this action was going to happen. And it’s interesting that one of the places that got away so we tried to figure out, Well, who didn’t know—there weren’t anybody who knew all—there weren’t many people who knew all of the places that were going to be raided that night. And Cliff might have been one who didn’t know that Wabasha was going to be raided. Brad knew; I knew. I didn’t even know if all of the eight who were arrested knew—

PS: I didn’t know.

CT: didn’t know all of the places that were being raided.

PS: I don’t think I did.

CT: Yeah, that’s interesting.

PS: I mean, I might have but it’s a long time and I don’t know any longer if I was in on much.

CT: Well, Pete can go—when he interviews himself he can go into—there’s other details with the trial that we had an opportunity to get one of the lawyers who defended the Chicago 8, which later became the Chicago 7, the demonstrators—

PS: Leonard Weinglass.

CT: that were charged with a riot as a result of the 1968 Democratic Convention. And one of those, Leonard Weinglass, and he would have been a very interesting fellow but Ken did a very good job I thought although we lost.

PS: Well, it might not have made any difference who our attorney was.

CT: Yeah, it probably wouldn’t have.

PS: It made a difference who we were. [laughter]

CT: So that’s all I know. It really is all I know.

00:55:00 PS: Well, I think that has been real good, Chuck, and I thank you.

CT: You’re welcome. I went back and forth and babbled.

PS: And I’ll tell you, in spite of your disclaimers at the very beginning and before we ever started this—

CT: I went all over—I went timewise. Oh, I forgot this; oh, I forgot this.

PS: That’s allowed but I’ll tell you that I think that you give a superb interview for a purpose like this.

CT: Oh, yeah, yeah.

PS: I’m not just saying that. I really think that your selling yourself short to think that this is not a good thing for you to be doing.

CT: I tell you—that’s what the guy who was trying to sell me insurance said. [laughter] He’d say, I think you are the ideal candidate for this life insurance. Or was it the used car? It was one or the other. It was someone trying to sell me a used car.

PS: Well, you don’t think I have something to gain from—?

CT: No, no, you’re just an unbiased observer.

PS: Yeah, that’s right.

CT: You’re crazy, Pete.

PS: I have no interest in the outcome.

CT: I’m sorry I babbled so much.

PS: I’m not. I think this was great.

CT: I thought your questions were excellent.

PS: And I learned things about you that I didn’t know or had forgotten.

CT: You kept me, when I was going off track, you kept me on track where you wanted to go for— kept it on track for a natural progression, which I kept violating. I could have gone onto prison stories; those are always fun. Prison—I was having trouble getting stuff, getting letters out from my—I would write stuff like, Thank god for these crazy for these crazy fences, for these beautiful fences. They help keep the crazy Okies out. [laughter] And I got in trouble for that. I got in trouble for the jokes. I got in trouble for jokes because the people who were censoring didn’t know they were jokes. And I told the captain of the guard when I—that letter was sitting on his desk and he says, What’s that supposed to mean? And I said, “Well, who’s that addressed to?” And he said it’s a Miss Androff. She was my French teacher in the eighth grade. She had sent me a card in prison. She saw my name on some list and I said, “If I had—I think Miss Androff will understand that I was joking there. If I had addressed this letter to you, I might have phrased it differently.” And that’s when he decided to lock me up. He said, Well, I’m—that letter is still sitting in my prison file illegally.

PS: It never got out, huh?

CT: Yeah, Miss Androff never got that letter.

PS: An outrage, another outrage.

CT: Outrage after outrage. My government breaks the law whenever they think they can get away with it. Sort of like me. [laughter]

PS: Well, wonderful. Thank you, Chuck—

CT: I’m sorry I went on so long—

PS: for coming here from my “platoon”.

CT: And that stuff about maybe we should blow up some of these draft boards and recruiting stations, I know they still have recruiting centers.

PS: They do.

CT: But I’m not going to go blow them up right now. But I’m just thinking if the war was happening across the street and we were protecting—we could just view it like they viewed it on TV screens, but if it was actually happening right across the street and we were protected; we were not in any danger, we certainly wouldn’t have said, Well, we certainly couldn’t stop the Vietnamese—I had to wait for the next election or I had to convince my senator or representative. I mean, I don’t know—I just, geez, it’s terrible that I think it would have been okay that some innocent people might have gotten hurt in one of these bombings or something, but we should have kept doing it. It’s terrible to really think that way, but how many millions of lives—it’s terrible.

PS: I remember Marv Davidov started to have second thoughts about tactics—

CT: Nonviolence?

PS: A little bit. He was—there was a period when he was so frustrated that he started at least a little bit that, Gee, maybe this isn’t good enough, what he’d been doing and advocating.

CT: Wow!

PS: This was I think before Honeywell Project got so well-developed but there was a period when I think he was—felt frustrated enough that he was having some doubts.

CT: But he wasn’t advocating any violence.

PS: No, but I think this was just in sort of personal conversations that he was that troubled.

CT: But I suppose you could claim people are dying from all sorts of government policies but a war is different I think. A war when they’re killing people in our name.

PS: And just wholesale.

CT: Yeah, yeah.

PS: Well, I’m going to turn this thing off now.

CT: Turn it off. Don’t give it—

End of Recording 7

00:59:52

1. The Barry Bondhus story is told, in part, in *Minnesota Mayhem* by Ben Welter, 2012 The History Press, pp. 142-146, and also, briefly, in *Trials of the Resistance*, The New York Review, (distributed by Random House) 1970, p 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Published in 1970 as part of *Love and Fame*, but only in the first edition of that collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. PS is mistaken here; it was the day before Thanksgiving, Wednesday. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)