

Nevada Test Site Oral History Project
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Interview with
Rosemary Lynch

June 8, 2004
Las Vegas, Nevada

Interview Conducted By
Suzanne Becker

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[00:00:00] Begin Track 2, Disk 1.

Suzanne Becker: *So I guess if we could just begin with your background, your family background, where your family's from, where you grew up, that sort of thing.*

Rosemary Lynch: Well, I was born in Phoenix, Arizona when Phoenix was just a small town, actually in 1917. So there wasn't much of Phoenix at that time except a little kind of oasis like small city in the middle of the desert. And of course at that time the Arizona desert was so beautiful, so unspoiled, the air so clean, so lovely. And I have to say we loved our state, we loved our city so much. And I had the privilege of exploring so many things, the beautiful desert. Like I say, the city itself was very small. And you could go to the mountains. It was easy to go around the desert, and we found all kinds of interesting things, pottery shards and Apache tears. I learned how to recognize all kinds of stones and relics. And some of the things that we brought home, my mother was wise enough to keep them, and later a curator from the Smithsonian university visited our home, and my mother gave him the whole collection, artifacts that we had picked up and found, just strewn around. We never destroyed anything to take it, but you just saw a jaw bone with a perfect set of teeth lying under the piece of cactus, you picked it up and brought it home and showed it to my mother.

And also at that time the Indian women—Apache, Papago, Pima women—would come into the town, little small city, and on the sidewalk in front of the one or two department stores we had, they would lay out their rug and put out their beautiful pottery and baskets and everything and sell them, and so inexpensively. So I grew up surrounded by these beautiful

things. Our wastebaskets were beautiful Apache baskets, and on the table you had a lovely Hopi pot or something. Everybody had these things. And lovely Navajo rugs. Things that people only dream about having today.

So I consider that I was really privileged. At that time I didn't understand it, I was so small, but growing up I grew to understand really the value of the collection that my mother had made as a young woman and the appreciation that she had, she passed on to us. So I loved the desert. So I had a very nice opportunity to grow up that way.

I also had the opportunity to study, and later I became a school teacher. I entered the Franciscan order and became a Franciscan sister.

What age did you do that?

Nineteen thirty-four. And I had the opportunity to study and I earned a master's degree at Loyola University in Los Angeles, Playa del Rey, which at that time also was a small university. It was a wonderful place to study. And I taught school for many years. I taught in the elementary school and later I taught in high school.

Where did you teach?

I taught in the Los Angeles area, Conady High School. I taught up in Havre, Montana near the Canadian border. That was also a wonderful place to be, and there I saw all these marvelous weather phenomena that I had never seen before, the aurora borealis and other, lovely things that I saw. It was extremely cold; it was right up on the Canadian border. But I appreciated my time. I loved it. I have to say that any place I was, I learned to appreciate what was there and to enjoy it and profit from it.

In 1960 I went to an international meeting of my community, because I'm a Franciscan sister, in Rome, and at that time I was elected to the central administration of the Franciscan

sisters. And as a member of this five-person team, part of my work was to visit the various [00:05:00] countries where our Franciscan sisters were working. So those travels took me to many states in this country; also to Indonesia, to several of the Indonesian islands—Java, Bali, Sumatra, those interesting, beautiful places. Also to Mexico; I was in several states in Mexico. And to Africa; I was in two or three countries in Africa where the sisters were living and working.

And so I had an opportunity for kind of a world-wide perspective. And I have to say that all this changed me so much. You know, I grew up, I was a typical product of the U.S. culture after World War II, that we were the greatest and practically the only place where God let the sun shine. And it was only when I went to Europe that I began to really, I will say, learn, and I made many discoveries and one of the discoveries I made was that not everybody in the world looked upon my country the way I did. I went to some of the United Nations-sponsored events with an agricultural organization that has its center in Rome and I learned that we were looked upon as an oppressor nation, that we were not this great home of the free and the brave such as I had always imagined, that the big American fruit companies were exploiting banana workers in Guatemala, and the big mining companies stealing original materials from other countries and so on. So I went through kind of what I later referred to as my anti-American period because I was so disappointed to learn these things about my country.

At the same time I was learning so much in these various international organs. I had already grown up kind of learning Spanish because of the situation of southern Arizona at that time, had a large Mexican population. I went to school with Mexican kids, and I later studied the Spanish language even to the point where I could teach it. And so I easily learned Italian, and I

realized that the best thing I could do would be learn some other languages, so I also learned French, Dutch, and German in addition to Italian. And those things have helped me enormously.

Are you still fluent?

Yes, I can still—I've given lectures in practically all those languages. I love language. It's the key to understanding the other person and their culture and so on. And I still have contacts in many of those countries.

So, like I say, I went through this period where I was so disillusioned by the conduct of American business and what I saw as oppression of people in other countries, which *is* very real oppression, economic oppression, that when I came back to this country I decided I wanted to work somewhere where I could put this background of knowledge and experience to good use. And at that time I came with Klaryta [Sr. Klaryta Antoszevska], who was invited here also to come to this country. She is a professional philologist; she knows many languages, including the Slavic languages, Russian and Polish, and various interesting things. So between us we can have contact with a lot of people.

The world.

Yes, kind of. I never learned an Asian language, which I consider a hole in my education, but I never had the opportunity to do so. I did visit Indonesia and I learned enough Indonesian when I was there to deal with the people, but after I came back to this country I never had any further contact with that language, so I can't really claim it. If I'm in an extreme situation, I can help myself a little bit.

So Louis Vitale invited us both to work with him here. It was in the early days of what they just called the Franciscan Center. It was a group of Franciscans that were kind of getting

together, got a little piece of property over on the Westside, which was a very contained black ghetto at the time, and still is to some extent.

Here?

Yes, in Las Vegas. And Klaryta and I got an apartment in the public housing apartment, which [00:10:00] was later condemned by HUD [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development] as one of the ten worst in the whole United States. That was another big chapter in my education. We were the last white residents, which didn't make any difference to me because we had many wonderful neighbors. But that opened my eyes again to the tragedy of the extremes to which poverty can drive people, and we saw every form of tragedy, of child abuse. These things happen also in the best of suburbs, we know that, but we were very close to it, living there. And so that went for fifteen years. Later the whole apartment complex was condemned by HUD because of asbestos danger, but so far we both have survived.

So we moved out. And actually we moved out about three days before the Rodney King riots. And that was very interesting because our black neighbors came to us, one of them especially. We didn't realize that anything was brewing and he said,

You know I have a gun and I'll always protect you.

We said, Why would you want to have to protect us?

He said, I might have to.

Well, that gave us a clue. We said, We don't ever want you to shoot anybody on our behalf or anything.

Well, he says, It's going to be dangerous.

So we moved away. And sure enough, in our apartment complex they burned down four buildings and had a lot of big problems. So had we been the only white residents there, and thanks to this kind neighbor who warned us, we got out.

So those things kind of contributed to the building of our social conscience, I will say. And one of the first things I learned when I got here was that we were sitting on the rim of the Nevada Test Site. Now I had never heard about this place, and I guarantee you that at that time 99.5 percent of people in the country had never heard of it either. Because the policy was if you want to do something that you don't want anybody else to know about, locate it far out there in that desert and don't talk about it. And so that's kind of what happened.

Can I just ask you roughly what time frame this was?

Yes. This was in 1977. And as the summer went on, Jimmy Carter was arguing in Congress to get the funds for the neutron bomb. And we kind of learned that this was the bomb that would kill people but leave buildings standing, and we thought that was just awful. So that's how we started really going out to the Nevada Test Site because we, through a leak, through some friends, we discovered that not only had this bomb been developed, it had already actually been exploded out at the Nevada Test Site. So we went into action, and on Hiroshima day that year, that was my first visit out.

To the test site?

Out to the test site. And we went out early, early in the morning, just a little handful of us, and at that time you could go right up to the gate. There was no fences, no barbed wire, nothing, right where the workers went in. And we held like a little prayer hour. We went out early, early, before the sun came up, because I don't know how they're doing it now, but at that time most of the workers were taken out at a very early hour. And in that period, as I later learned, there were something like eleven thousand people that were employed either directly at the site or in support offices around the city, whatever. There was a lot going on.

Do you remember who all went out with you? You said it was a fairly small group?

Several of them have passed away. There were a couple of liberal Protestant ministers, all of whom have left town and are gone away.

I was just curious.

Let's see, I'm trying to remember. Klaryta was there; the two of us went. Most of them have either moved away or passed. It was just such a small group and that's so long ago.

[00:15:00] And I saw the sun come up. It was so beautifully illuminating the desert, and it broke my heart to think of what I had learned was happening back there. So it was as though I got another calling in my life, and I thought, whatever I'm going to do for a while is going to be concerned with this place. And I didn't exactly know how.

So a little group of us got together, and it was around that time that these various alliances were springing up around the country: the Clamshell Alliance back in New England and different groups, environmental groups of one kind or another.

Alliances in—?

For environmental groups or, you know, social groups of some kind.

But not directly involved with the test site? Just different groups.

No, no, all over the country, for whatever their project was. So we decided to call ourselves the Sagebrush Alliance. And that's not to be confused with the later group that came up about real estate. But this was a peace group, just a tiny group together.

OK. Here, locally?

Locally. And then we became part of a little coalition of groups that were around New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, a few from California. We called ourselves the Cactus Alliance because they were all groups that were struggling against some nuclear tomfoolery in their own localities. So for a while we had this, oh, kind of western group.

And then I would say another big thing that happened was that the MX missile came under discussion, and it seemed to be destined for Nevada. And the route of the MX missile was to come from wherever it was coming from, down through Utah and into Nevada, and they were going to build this huge rail system around in Nevada, in our state. So a little group of us got together. We were already, like I say, semi-organized, going out there. And we had a coalition of really unlikely groups: the Sierra Club, the Off-Road Motorcycle Riders, and the Audubon Society, all of us big political groups, the Franciscan Center. We got together and called ourselves Nevadans Opposed to MX. And we abbreviated that, the "N" and the "O" to say NO MX. So for a while that was our big focus, and that's when we started getting better acquainted with groups again in other states that were also fighting this whole thing.

And this was still late 1970s, early 1980s?

Yes, around in those years. And that's when I became acquainted with another person who was very significant in the whole struggle against military incursion all over the West, was Doctor Edwin B. Firmage. He was a Mormon and persuaded the Mormon Church to also become active in that in Utah. And I met him actually in New Mexico, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Now he's a big professor, head of the law school at the University of Utah. And he was invited to give the main address at an event at which I was invited also to give a keynote address. And in fact I gave the opening address.

At which event?

And that was in Santa Fe, New Mexico. And so we met at that conference and after that, that helped us join forces with a lot of folks in Utah, to oppose [the] MX missile and to engage in other peace activities over the years, so that's been a very nice connection. [pause]

Then in 1982, what we call the Franciscan family around the world—you know I'm a [00:20:00] Franciscan sister—our patron is Saint Francis of Assisi, the saint of peace. He was born in the year 1182, so the year 1982 was going to be a big anniversary, big centennial of his birth. So together with some other Franciscan groups in California and here, we decided that the best way we could celebrate Saint Francis as a saint of peace was not to have a big celebration, but that we would go out into the desert and we would spend the whole of the season of Lent out in the desert, and we would invite people from all over to try and come and join us to do that. Anybody who loved Saint Francis and who honored Saint Francis. And at that time there was a young man named Michael Affleck who had just finished at the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley, and he was very interested in it. Maybe you've heard his name.

Yes, I—boy, I just drew a blank on the name, but Ken Butigan—

Ken might've mentioned him.

Yes, wrote a book, Pilgrimage Through—

Through the Burning Desert. [Through a Burning World]

Yes, and he's—

He's mentioned in there.

He's mentioned throughout the book, as are you.

So the Franciscans got Michael to come here from Berkeley, and he and I worked together. We traveled all up and down the California coast together and talked to groups all over the state of Nevada, California, and all around to interest them in coming to the desert in 1982 during the whole of Lent. We were going to have during this Lenten season; we were going to hold a vigil out there in front of the test site.

And so I have to say that was a fantastic time, even though it was a difficult time. We started the day every morning early, early in front of the federal building. We had vigils and we went out—or first—no, we first started out in the desert, then we'd come home and we'd have vigil in front of the federal building. We were making flyers and got a lot of good information about the test site. But we went out every day during the whole of the Lenten season.

And during that time, another interesting thing happened. To prepare ourselves kind of spiritually for that, we did go over the life of Saint Francis and the teachings of Jesus on nonviolence and so on. Even though everything we've done has always been very ecumenical, believers or nonbelievers or whatever, but it has had a spiritual motivation. And I have to say here as a comment, that I have learned that any groups that came without some kind of a spiritual component never lasted. It was just too much for them.

“Too much,” how?

They got discouraged. Their candidate didn't win. They didn't stop nuclear testing. The military budget kept growing. They gave up. We never gave up, to this day, because we have that spiritual faith and that gave us some strength.

So looking at the life of Saint Francis we said, well, he was such a saint of peace, and he lived at a very disrupted period in world history. When Francis was only five years old, the city of Jerusalem fell to the Saladin, who was the king of the Moslems and so on, and this was the period of the great crusades in medieval history, and all Europe was shocked that the holy places were now in the hands of the “infidels.” But that's how it was. And so then the crusades came along, just a big epoch in European history, and at first Saint Francis wanted to be a crusader. I don't want to tell you the whole story here, but he decided then, he had already started to follow the gospel of Jesus more closely, and through many episodes in his life he decided that he would

not go to fight; he would go to visit the sultan who was the head of everything. And he actually did. And the story of his encounter with the sultan, first of all he [00:25:00] took a brother with him. I always say I've always wondered if this poor guy was a volunteer or he got drafted. I don't know. But anyway, they went together through the Moslem camp, they crossed over at Damietta in Egypt, they got roughed up on the way, and they actually succeeded in getting to this elegant tent of the sultan, a great sultan, Malik el Kamil. And the story is that he stayed with the sultan for a week, and the sultan became so impressed with his brotherly attitude and goodness—and this is historical fact, the trip of Saint Francis and the encounter with the sultan—that the legend says that when Francis left the sultan, the sultan first of all tried to weigh him down with all kinds of gifts, which is the beautiful Arab custom, and he didn't take anything except he accepted a little horn that was made of an animal horn because, he said, Three times a day, the Moslems use this horn to call their groups to pray, and they do that, you know, six o'clock in the morning, midday, and six o'clock in the evening. So that was a beautiful gift for him, and he accepted that. And these things are fact, but the legend says that when he left, that the sultan wept and said, Woe is me if the knights of the West come armed only with love like this brother. If they come with their weapons, we can defeat them, but we cannot defeat this love. And so that has always been such a lesson to me in my life: that we cannot defeat evil with more evil or power with more power, and we're learning that bitterness again. And so it has stayed with me so much, that people don't need bombs; they need bread, they need food, they need medicine, they need care, they need help.

And so that has been the philosophy that you've taken out to—?

That's been our philosophy—

Particularly to the work at the test site?

Exactly. And so in the view of that, the group asked me if I would try to make an appointment to visit the head of the test site. The test site is run by civilians but they were all—I don't know how it is right now, but they were all ex-military, being ex-generals and ex-admirals, but they had returned to civilian life. So the manager at that time was General Mahlon Gates. And so the group asked if I would go to visit him in the same spirit that Saint Francis went to visit the sultan. They said he's like our sultan. So I did call up and I managed to get an interview. I called and I tried to explain who I was and how I wanted to see General Gates.

And were they receptive?

Well, they said I could have five minutes. I kept insisting I really had to see him about something important. I was met by two guys with guns at the gate, the door, in this federal building and escorted to his office.

And was this up at the test site or was this—?

No, this was in town. They had moved away from that office where they were at that time. And at the beginning he was a little bit nervous, but he was a very good man. And instead of five minutes, my interview with him was over an hour. He told me many things about his life, and I told him how I happened to come to this position and my Franciscan philosophy and everything, and I told him we were going to carry the cross out to the test site and that we were going to plant the cross out there and I hoped that it wouldn't be desecrated or taken away, and he said, I guarantee you, I will order that no one touch the cross. And he did. And so the cross was out there for a long time.

Wow. How long?

Oh, a few years, and then I don't know what happened to it. But he ordered that that cross be left there. And also he wrote a letter to all the employees—and at that time, like I say, there were a

lot—telling them that there was going to be this group out there, that we were good people, they were not in any way to hassle us, they were to show us respect. He put the Porto-Potties out there [00:30:00] for us, which was a big gift, and he put fresh water out there every day for us. So you see how good he was? And I always appreciated that, and in fact he invited Michael Affleck and me and we went on a VIP tour of the test site. We were taken with representatives from all the higher offices and everything.

And what did you think of the test site, and did you learn anything?

Oh sure, we learned. I came out more horrified than I went in. But we went to parts of the test site that no one ever goes to, because they had like the governor, mayor, people like that, were on this bus. It was called the VIPs of Nevada. And Michael and I were picked up off our line as the bus was going into the test site, off of our protest line, or our vigil line.

Can I ask what parts you got to go see?

Well, they took us all over. We went into their main building where they have all the controls. We went out and we saw all those craters around, you know, where the test—we saw from afar one part which is closed off in perpetuity; it's guarded in perpetuity, no human being can ever enter there because it's so contaminated. We saw that from far away. So we had a really first-class tour, and in fact we went down first to the DOE on the first day and had a special lecture with films and everything, explaining the whole history of the development of all of it. And then the bus drove by and picked us up off the line and we went in with all these illustrious celebrities. But that was an experience.

But other than that, I give you that example to show his courtesy and his friendship to do this. And later he and I were invited to be on a Channel 10 TV thing together, and that was kind of interesting because—

Gates and you.

Yes. Because when they turned the cameras on, General Gates said, Well, Sister Rosemary and I know each other from the Nevada Desert Experience, and I thought, that's so nice that *he's* the one that says that. So we became friends that day and, it shows that we can't ever hate anybody. Nothing is accomplished by that. Never.

Right. Did he talk to you at all about how he felt about the test site and the work that he was doing?

Yes, but also a very remarkable thing happened. During the six-and-a-half weeks that we were out there, not one bomb was exploded. And he put a moratorium on it for the time that we were out there. And that was in the period when they were exploding bombs maybe once every two weeks or so. But for that six-and-a-half weeks, nothing. So you see, many things are possible.

And so, anyhow, we had thought of this Lenten Desert Experience in 1982 as a one-time thing. We never thought that it would continue. But people were so enthusiastic for it that after that, they started gathering every year for the Lenten Desert Experience, and it became known as LDE, LDE-1, LDE-2, and so on. And from the beginning, another nice thing was that it was ecumenical. The Episcopalians would have a service, the Presbyterians would have a service, we would have a service, and you know, there was always such a spirit of inclusion.

And the arrests continued, and we went on trial. But I have to say, we never got those terrible sentences like some people did.

What types of sentences were they?

Three days, something like that, and sometimes they were suspended. You got community service or whatever.

Right. Right. And you've been arrested?

Oh yes. And so gradually as the numbers grew, the number of arrests grew, and finally one time—and then other groups began organizing. The Nuclear Freeze group came up and they came out and so, they were out here for a while. They had some funds; we never had any money. We were just a little kind of small group going out there, spiritual group, praying and resisting and making signs and writing articles and letters to the news. There was a [00:35:00] lot of publicity. If you go back to the *Review-Journal*, to their archive, you can find quite a few things. And I remember the first time I saw somebody that I didn't know that came out to vigil. Otherwise they were all people that I knew, that I had talked to or had had contact with. The first time I saw a couple of strangers come, I thought, boy, we're making progress.

So that's kind of how things went on, and then like I say, other groups got interested, the Nuclear Freeze people came, but I did notice, really and truly, that any of them that didn't come with some spiritual power or motivation—not obvious, not laying it on anybody, but in their hearts, the desire to make peace, the desire to—as the numbers grew, we always insisted that anybody that wanted to commit civil disobedience would go through our nonviolence training, and Louis and I did a lot of that nonviolence training.

Do a lot of it locally for different groups?

Yes, we did. Whoever came and said they wanted to be arrested, we would say, well, you have to go through this little afternoon training first. And we kept saying, they're not our enemies; they're our friends. And we had wonderful examples, too, of the cooperation and the friendship on the part of the authorities. At one time we had the people standing—and when you go into the test site there's a kind of a curve in the road, and one of the authorities at the test site, they were called back to Washington and said, Well, you have to do something about these protesters, because they had put up a sign, "Caution: Protesters on the road."

So in other words—

Yes, they didn't want us to get hurt, and when this one authority from the test site was called back to Washington, D.C. he said, Well, we have to have the sign because there's a curve in the road and some of them might get hurt.

So in other words, this was a blind curve.

And they said, Well, and he said, Not our protesters. We had become "our protesters." You see, we had that bond with them. And so in some I will say almost unique way, they were protecting us while we were protesting the activities because they saw that basically we wanted the same thing they did, a safer and happier and more secure country, and we just figured that's not the way to do it, to go bombing around.

So we built up these relationships. And we had many contacts. I remember the first time the Western Shoshone came out, and that was also wonderful. Bill Rosse, Corbin Harney came, and they said, I still remember, when Bill Rosse came—he has since passed away—

He said, I know who you are.

I said, Well, how do you know who I am?

And he said, I have seen you at the gates of the test site. And he said, We should've been there with you. This was a few years after we'd been out there, but he says, Now we want to come.

And so then they did this wonderful thing. We said, Well, we know the land is yours. We know this. And so then they gave us a little passport to the land of Newe Segobia, which is, when you look at the map, their land that they claim as their homeland is almost coextensive with the state of Nevada. And the name of it [is] Newe Segobia. And he started giving us a little passport, permission to enter the land of Newe Segobia. So after that, whenever we were arrested, I'd say, But I'm coming in to this land—, see, they'd arrest us if we go in some

forbidden part of the test site. And they kept moving it back, back, back, so we couldn't go close where we used to go, and putting up fences and everything. That didn't help; we went under the fence or over the fence or something. And if we came to walk in we said, But we're entering with our passport given us by the lawful rulers of this country, the country of Newe Segobia. We're here with our passport, you know.

[00:40:00] *And how did they respond to that?*

Well, how could they? They said, We're sorry, we can't recognize that. It's not the United States of America. We said, Well, we recognize this country as another country and we have our passports. So it was really wonderful. And I have to say that most of the officers were very good to us. We made friends with them.

Yes, I was going to ask how they received you guys.

Oh yes, they never roughed us up or anything because we always treated them with so much respect, and I would always say, We know you're only doing your duty and if you have to arrest us, we understand. We're not going to interfere with your performing your duty. And I remember one police officer, he was crying and he said, This is a happy day for me because your protest is so peaceful. I said, OK. He's putting handcuffs on me. [laughter] But there are all those experiences. And one police officer, he was the head of the division out there, he later sent me a Christmas card, which was so friendly and nice, you know, to show that we had this bond. Oh, and then also another interesting thing happened one time that one bus with the test site workers was going by and the bus stopped, and this was early morning, like I say, we went out there so early, and one guy jumped out with a box of doughnuts and hot rolls for us. He had bought them and the bus driver actually stopped and let him get out and give it to us. So you see, we had these relationships. And that, I think, is what made our vigils unique.

Did you ever encounter any non-peaceful activity or demonstration by other groups that came in?

You mean on the part of the police or—?

Well, on the part of perhaps other groups that came to protest or—

A few times we did but like I say, we tried our best because in the end we didn't own the place. Any group could come. But if they wanted to associate with us, because we knew so much and we knew the ropes and how to do—most of them that came wanted contact with us because through us they got an "in" to it. But here and there, there were a few that showed off and goofed off a little bit. But I will say, in general it was a pretty peaceful type of protest. Here and there, there were a few that were kind of idiotic.

Yes, sure, as in any group.

So those are just a few memories.

Yes. That's great. And interesting. Now I know you've—

And then we began having some more illustrious people that came out.

Yes. Martin Sheen has been out there, I understand.

Martin Sheen has been out there many times.

Did you ever meet him?

And, oh, what's his name, the guy that, oh, he has since passed away. He wrote all those books about the stars.

Sagan?

Yes.

Carl Sagan?

Carl Sagan was here. And, oh, we had various other people who were quite well-known. As time went on they came.

I'm curious, I mean one thing I find very interesting is just your appreciation and love for the land and—

Oh, we had the cactus planting one year. That was also beautiful.

Right out by the site?

Yes. We found a place in the desert and everybody that came brought a little cactus—

Are those still there?

—and we had a cactus planting ceremony. And then we also had, this was kind of sad. An artist made two figures, a black child and a white child, out of some kind of plastic material. Beautiful. And we went far up into the mountain area out there, and we had this ceremony. We called them the *Shadow Children*. And with time and rain and wind they disintegrated, but somewhere I have the photo of that, just that unknown monument to the children who had been hurt through nuclear testing. And like I say, we made friends with the Downwinders, those various categories of radiation victims, the servicemen, test site workers. [00:45:00] We made friends with all of them, and we actually started an organization called Nevada Test Site Workers Radiation Victims Association. And I visited the widows, and I visited many of them who were already sick, and I gave a lot of their original letters and beautiful photographs, I've given them to people who always promised to return them to me and I still don't have them back. I called one lady and she's in Reno this week, I said, Maybe you would have some of those pictures that I loaned you, you could bring them back.

Yes, absolutely. Those would be good to help out.

I hope I get them back. And we helped them go to Washington, D.C. to represent their cause.

And of course the government was very, very slow to recognize them as victims, but in the end

they did get some small compensation. And that was only their goal, was to get a little bit of compensation, to be recognized as victims.

Right. Well, I think that's the biggest step.

That was the biggest thing. And then we had the congressional hearings here at one time, and several congress people came out, and that's when we heard from many of the people who had been at the time that the bombs were exploding above ground, and that was before my time.

Although one accident happened after I was out here, the Baneberry test [December 18, 1970] when the desert floor split open and the mushroom cloud came out and exposed hundreds of people. And we have a friend, another Franciscan sister that works in Indiana, in LaPorte, she came out and I took her around up to Utah, because she's an oncologist, to meet some of these people and we heard their stories of how the cloud was carried by the wind. They always exploded in the days—this was before I came, when they were having the above ground tests before the partial test ban treaty put the tests underground—when the wind was blowing in kind of a northeasterly direction. They didn't want it to blow west over Los Angeles or blow over Las Vegas. There were people living in little towns and farms and settlements all the way up there, and many of them had terrible suffering. They had congressional hearings and many of them came down to Las Vegas for that. They talked about the particles falling down. The women said they would shake it out of their hair. And they had deformed children and their water was poisoned, their land was poisoned, and many tragic cases. So when our friend, the Franciscan sister from Illinois, came out—she's an oncologist and we went up to Utah and interviewed many of the people who had been under the cloud. And there are a lot of books that are written about that period. And that was before my time, although the Baneberry test did explode in the early 1990s, I think it was, and I was out here at that time.

Do you remember any of the—it sounds like most of the above ground testing had happened prior to you moving out here.

Oh yes, that happened before we came.

Do you remember hearing about any of that?

Oh yes, they all were talking about it, all those people who were born here and grown up here.

Last December a friend of ours died that had been a small child during those years and she developed awful kinds of cancers, and the doctor thought it was related. She was drinking milk maybe from contaminated cows. These things show up years later.

And the Department of Labor, I believe, now have compensation programs for folks.

Meager as they are.

Yes, I agree. But it seems like there is an attempt to do some sort of outreach.

Soldiers were in trenches and they had to watch the bomb is going off over there, and they were instructed to put their hands in front of their faces. They say their hand was like X-rayed. They saw the skeleton, the bones of their hands. There are a lot of things written about that, and I talked to many of those survivors.

I was going to ask if you were ever able to talk to some of those people.

Oh yes, I talked to a lot of them, and many of them had cancer. The Atomic Veterans under Anthony Guarisco, I knew a lot of them, and I knew a lot of the test site workers. Like I say, I helped organize them to go back to Washington, D.C. And the Downwinders, a woman named Janet Gordon up in Utah, I organized a lot of them. So those were all things that happened over the course of the years.

Which is quite a bit.

That is a lot.

[00:50:00] I know you have a, great love for the land and the earth, and we were fortunate enough to—I think fortunate in that we got to see it—have also a tour of the test site, and the thing that struck me the most is just how absolutely beautiful that land is out there.

Oh yes, it is. It's heartbreakingly beautiful. If you're out there before the sun comes up and you see the site, it casts a golden glow over the whole desert. It was so beautiful.

Do you at all feel that the testing that has gone on and the actual test site being located there has changed that? I mean the land is still beautiful but it's—

Oh, of course. But it's contaminated. And they had the tragedy, and this was before I came, of the sheepherders. You probably heard about that, that one morning they come out and practically their whole flock is lying dead on the range. And the milk from the cows was contaminated. That all happened before I came, but that was all a result of contaminated land. And we still have the cluster of childhood leukemia in Fallon and places like that, and that's because the ground water's been contaminated.

Yes. In the interview that you did with KNPR, you talked briefly about the story of Jesus being taken up onto the mountain and being shown what could possibly all be his, and sort of drawing a comparison between that and the bomb. Could you talk a little bit about that and your thoughts on that?

Yes. Well see, when we had the first big organized things, it was during the season of Lent, and of course that gospel comes when the devil tempts Jesus, and of course the desert has always been a place of temptation. If you look all the way through scriptures, and not only Christian scriptures, but it's been a place of testing which has a connection with the word "temptation." You're tested. So ironically, there have been spiritual tests too. I think the whole thing was a spiritual test for this nation. We sold out. We failed that. And since we went out during Lent, and

that's one of the gospels that's read early in Lent, that the devil shows him and says, "All this can be yours, but falling down you must adore me." And that's when Jesus says to him, "Begone." Because it wasn't worth all the kingdoms of this world. Well see, I think that this kind of more mystical meaning, that was another thing that really took my soul, was that meditation, that did we do this so that all the kingdoms of the world will be ours? Look what's going on in Iraq right now. The fact that we were taken in by lies, which we knew from the beginning. I keep saying if I knew, how come they didn't know?

And I keep saying the same thing.

Yes. But see, is it going to help us now? What's happening? The tragedies that are connected with this war. From the first Gulf War, the Gulf War disease about which we hear so little. There's one professor from Salt Lake City that I know so well. He went over to Iraq after the first Gulf War and he told us with tears how huge expanses of the desert sand have been turned to glass under the heat of our bombs; that so many things were contaminated with depleted uranium; children born with terrible birth defects because the women with their long skirts stir up the dust a little bit when they're pregnant and they were contaminated; children born with extreme defects. The servicemen, we never get the true account of how many veterans of the first Gulf War have had children with bad genetic defects from this depleted uranium.

So you see, it isn't worth it. But again it's that extreme test: All these kingdoms of the world you can have, but at the cost of your own soul. And has our nation really fallen victim to that again? We've got this idea of empire. Don't think we went over out of any altruistic motives. Absolutely not. And see the bomb and all that testing, it all hangs together. And we're [00:55:00] willing to sacrifice not only—we don't even know how many people we've killed. I was over in Europe when the war broke out in Baghdad, when we entered Baghdad. And the

pictures and the reporting. I was invited to be on a few radio programs too and one TV program. I was invited to be on a TV program with an Iraqi woman and we sat there together, and in this studio they have these huge walls and you could see the American planes going over Baghdad, and I'm sitting here holding the hand of this Iraqi woman and seeing her city being bombed by my country's bombers, and we're being interviewed together, and it was really a powerful experience. I saw the newspapers in Italy, showing what was happening. When I came home and saw what was in the papers here, I said to Klaryta, we're talking about two different wars.

So there it was much different coverage and much different—?

Oh, the coverage. The coverage. And our government actually made CNN [Cable News Network] break its contract with *Al-Jazeera* because they were showing too much of what was happening. And also it was very interesting because we got the Italian daily paper and there's an English paper that's also published in Rome, and you see the two different accounts. Here in our English paper we have the heroic U.S. soldier carrying a little wounded Iraqi child. Of course you want to say, what were you doing over there to wound the kid in the first place? But that's why we can't go by what we're seeing here. Our news is so filtered, so screened, so skewed up. War is bad. And we were taken into the war on the basis of lies and it's resulted in profit for a few and in tragedy for many. But it's again the mountaintop. All this you can have but you have to kneel down and adore me. We cannot have this empire that we're talking about and expect to have happy and healthy and wholesome and well-educated people. We already have one of the highest rates of mental illness in the world. We already have. And how many people of conscience now are so distressed over our conduct in this war and over their disillusionment? If they believed in the beginning, now they discover the whole thing was a big lie So this is not good. And that's why I think we're in the same situation Saint Francis was in. We have to find

the way to express love, forgiveness, generosity, help, and get over these imperial designs. I'm convinced there's enough in the world for everyone if we would stop grabbing.

So why—I guess your personal thoughts on why you think the test site, something like the test site, how obviously it contributes just simply by being. And they're looking at making it active again.

Well, I think it made possible a lot of these things. When the tests went underground, that was supposed to have been a great big step forward, but they continued testing. Now we were supposed to have this test ban treaty but there was a lot of fine print, and it allowed what we call subcritical tests, which is all they needed for the new weapons. So it really wasn't—I could never be so happy. I know all my friends were saying, why aren't you happy about the test ban treaty? I said, Because you didn't read the fine print. I'm not happy about it. It's allowing them to do everything they wanted to do in the beginning. So we have to keep up our resistance, our struggle, we have to understand that lies, fear, and all this kind of stuff is not what creates a healthful and happy nation. We will suffer for this. There is no doubt. If we didn't take the warning of September 11th seriously, and we think that we're just going to have more Patriot Acts and that kind of stuff, nothing can protect us. Nothing can. The only thing that can protect us is to join the family of nations, *family* of nations, where we share, where we cooperate, where we collaborate. Where we don't get the idea that we have to be [01:00:00] boss of the world and that everything really belongs to us, and the sooner you catch on, the better for you.

Why do you think that persists?

It persists because of greed, because of selfishness, because of arrogance, and because we have never had the courage like Jesus had when the devil said, "All this you can have if falling down you will adore me." We say, gee, all this I can have? Is it so bad if I adore this god of metal? Is it

so bad if I do that? You know; it's human weakness, human failing, human pride, human arrogance. Now we're talking about this American Century when we're going to control the world. Forget it.

Yes. Are you disappointed that this has still persisted?

Well, I went through, like I told you, my anti-American period, and I got over it in the sense that I realized I couldn't go forward and work if I was so lamed and crippled by my disappointment, by my disillusionment, by my sorrow. I couldn't allow myself to be handicapped by that. So I thought it either will handicap me or it will energize me, and I let it energize me to do as much as I could in whatever way I can. I still do some writing. I still work with *Pace e Bene*, with the nonviolence group, and I still have many young friends and I try to talk to them and, you know, not pushing my ideas on them but they kind of like to talk to me and hear about some of those early days, and I say, *We can do this. We can make this nation better. It's not that I don't love the country. I love the country the way you love your mother when she's sick. You have to help her get well. And that's how I feel about this country. I think there is so much good, so many people living under the illusion. But we can't live under illusions. We have to live with truth. Jesus also said that truth will set you free, and that's the only kind of freedom we can have. All this phony stuff that we get from the top has nothing to do with truth or freedom, and they throw those words around until you don't want to hear them anymore. Like I like that old saying that even the wool they pull over your eyes is half cotton.*

Well, Suzanne, I talked a lot. I hope it's helpful to you somehow.

It's very helpful. I know you came to the test site in the 1970s but I've heard about the Quakers in the 1950s as being some of the first, I guess, religious-based protesting and just people acknowledging that. Do you know about that at all?

Yes, I do, and in fact I actually met one or two of the survivors of that original group. As soon as I learned what I learned when I got here, I went to the library and I started researching anything I could find about the test site, and I learned about this group of Quakers that came. They called themselves the Atomlopers. And you can still go back to the library and look up the early articles about them. And they were actually out there during the time of an above ground test. And they had a little office here in town too. And they bravely camped out in the desert and they saw the mushroom cloud go up. Later some of them came to the test site when we reactivated, the people who were there in the original early days. And so we considered ourselves kind of like heirs and heiresses of their wonderful early action. And it was very interesting to me that even the authorities at the test site, when I pointed out we're not the first ones that are out here; they didn't even know about those early protests. They'd never bothered to look it up. So you can really go to the library, you can go and look up those early protests. Again, I had a whole archive of that which I loaned to somebody and so far I've never gotten it back. But it's all available, I'm sure, somewhere or other in the *RJ* [Las Vegas *Review-Journal*] because—

Yes, I'll probably have to go way back into the archives.

[01:05:00] And in fact our going out in 1977 was kind of on the anniversary of their early going out. In 1957 I think they went out the first time and camped out there.

Wow. And there was no recollection of them from the test site standpoint.

No, no. No, they didn't even know about them until I was telling them about it.

Do you know how large of a group it was?

It wasn't a very large group. It was a little group of Quakers.

I wonder if we could just shift gears a little bit and if you could talk about Pace e Bene a little bit and how you came to do that.

Well, after so many years of sitting out in front of the test site with my sign and being arrested so many times and getting sentenced and one thing or another, and they kept on doing what they were doing, we began to talk over and we said, what about those bombs that are continually exploding in our own hearts? Should we maybe for a while pay more attention to this? Because that's where it all starts. So there were really three of us: Alain Richard, a French Franciscan guy, he went back to France a year, year-and-a-half ago; Louis Vitale; and myself. Those two were in California and they called me up and they said, If we come back to Las Vegas, will you work with us and we'll try to think of something new. I said, Well sure, I'd be happy to, because all this stuff we're doing isn't working, and I'm trying to think too. So those two came back to Bartlett Street and we sat down together and decided that we would focus for a while on the spirituality, and practice, but for a while we'd focus on the spirituality of nonviolence of all the great teachers: of Martin Luther King, of Jesus, of Gandhi, of Dorothy Day, of many others. And we would try to say, until we understand the violence in ourselves—now we all have it but just don't always acknowledge it or we don't always know what sets it off—maybe we just need to think of what we can do to transform our hearts and slowly work on the transformation of the society instead of so directly opposing the bomb, the testing, the war, and so on. So for a while the three of us thought and thought, and then we invited Julia and Peter. They were kind of like second circle. And they weren't exactly on the staff but they were like our advisors and supporters and everything. And we didn't know exactly what to call ourselves, and I was the one that kind of argued for this Italian name, *Pace e Bene*, because I said it was at the time when we were having *glasnost* and *perestroika*, and I said, If we can learn those words why can't the people learn to say *pace e bene*, which means 'peace and good'? And it was the greeting that Saint

Francis used to give his people. So I don't know if it was wise or not, but anyhow we became *Pace e Bene*. Peace and good. And so yes, I said, After one lesson everybody knows it.

And so we started looking more at the gospel of Jesus, at the life of Saint Francis, at the lessons of the great heroes and heroines of nonviolence. And we said we have to do this out of a more spiritual, transformative model. And it wasn't that I'm downing the activism, because I loved it and I look back on my super-active years with great joy. Also what we did during those years was every time we heard about a test—and sometimes they only announced it on the very morning. We had this treaty with the ex-Soviet Union that they had to announce the tests. Well, sometimes they announced it at six a.m., they're going to have the test at seven, but they announced it. Technically they were clear. So we immediately rustled a little group and if we could, we went out to the test site. For years we did that. If we couldn't make it out to the test site, we also went to the federal building. Every time there was a test we had a little vigil.

[01:10:00] And we began to think more and more about the transforming power of nonviolence and how this [was] operative in our own lives, and we began looking, like I say, at these greats. Gandhi brought down the whole British Empire through nonviolence. You've seen the movie of Gandhi?

Yes.

You remember when he's standing there with his little skinny body with his little cloth in front of this viceroy.

And this viceroy is saying, Mr. Gandhi, you surely do not expect that we British are just going to leave India?

And Gandhi says, Yes, I do.

And he said, Well, how do you think we're going to do that? How are you going to do it?

He says, *With your help.*

And it turned out to be that way. So we said, let's take those. Let's learn as much as we can about the study and the practice of active nonviolence. And it was around that time that Ken Butigan came on board. He wasn't one of the originals but he came on after a year or so. And so we three—

And again what—I'm sorry, what time frame was this?

Pace e Bene, I think it was around 1988 or something like that.

OK, so late 1980s?

Yes. That we started. And Louis and Alain came from California especially here to Las Vegas, and we had our meetings and we gathered some people from around the country that had some experience, and Ken had been working on this project for Nicaragua or something, we invited him, we invited quite a few people, only to have a weekend in reflection on how we might work on actively practicing nonviolence. The idea was, it would be personal and societal transformation, and if we could work on this, then we wouldn't have any need of all those bombs and so on.

So we started and we began doing some study. We sponsored a few like conferences, and Louis and Alain, we had an old Dodge, they made a little trip around the country and talked to a lot of groups to see if there would be interest in something like that, and everywhere they went they made friends and discovered that it would. Then we held a little conference here in Las Vegas, and that's when Ken came to the conference and he was enthusiastic.

And so slowly we developed this that we would really look at the spiritual component of personal and societal transformation. And I elaborated some of the ideas into what I called a *Decalogue for the Spirituality of Nonviolence*. I can give you a copy of that. Some principles of

nonviolence that I thought were transformative. I hope I can lay my hand on it, in the super order that I have in my file.

[01:13:24] End Track 2, Disk 1.

[00:00:00] Begin Track 1, Disk 2.

[00:00:18] End Track 1, Disk 2.

[00:00:00] Begin Track 2, Disk 2.

(Conversation resumed a moment before recording) —Retreats and weekends, and people liked it a lot, and this was another program that I evolved, [sound of paper rattling] excuse me, as part of the spirituality of nonviolence.

Can I keep these?

Yes, you can keep them if you want. This has the *Decalogue* on the other side [sound of paper rattling].

OK.

This had a few typos so I didn't ever use this.

Oh, that's fine. Great. Thank you.

But like I based some weekends on those principles and people liked it a lot.

Yes, they're good principles. Yes, you can base a lot on these principles. Thank you very much.

You're welcome. The *Decalogue* for some reason has kind of found an echo in people. It's been translated into about twelve languages that I know of, including Swahili in Africa and somebody sent me a little bulletin from Sri Lanka and it was translated into that language.

Now when did you develop this, do you remember?

Oh, when would it have been? I don't have any date on there? Let me see.

Well, this side says 1996.

Yes. Well, the *Decalogue* came a little bit ahead of that. I was in Italy actually—I've been invited to Italy a lot—and I gave this program, and it was a friend of mine in Italy who said he published it in a *Pax Christi* newspaper, and so it was written originally in Italian, and he's the one that gave it the name, the *Decalogue*.

How did it come about? How did you come to write this?

Oh, I just, like I say, when we—I composed it actually in Italy. I was invited to give some lectures there. And they were so enthusiastic for the lectures that they asked me to write it down. And so I began thinking I could write it down in like a series of kind of like points. And it was published in an Italian magazine called the *Mosaico*, the Mosaic. And the people were so enthusiastic about it, and so when I came home I thought well, I could use it here too, so I translated it for myself back into English. [laughter] And then I showed it to Alain, and I was working with him at the time, and he made a few good, positive suggestions, so I said, well, I want your name on it too, because he helped me with it then.

And I guess since we're on tape, if you could just briefly explain the Decalogue.

Well, it was like I said, that I think we can't accomplish anything except through love and forgiveness. And that's why going around bombing in the world is really not helping anything. We create more enemies. And so until we begin to understand that we're part of a whole, that we are part of this magnificent and beautiful creation, and that a child born anywhere is a precious gift—and this is based on the teaching of Jesus, on the teaching of Gandhi, on the teaching of Martin Luther King, on the teaching of many of the other greats out of history. We discovered that we don't make friends by bombing them off the face of the Earth, and that if we want to have any kind of effect on the transformation of the society, we have to be simultaneously

transforming ourselves. And this is the story of every true transformation. And so I gave this talk where I talked about these various points. And then this friend who had invited me to Italy, Gianni Novelli, a big peace worker in Italy, he's the one that called it a Decalogue. He's said, You've written a Decalogue for nonviolence. And so I brought it home and I showed it to Alain that I was working with at the time and like I say, he made some positive suggestions about the revision of it. So I said OK, I think since he helped me work on it, that I put his name on it too. That's how it evolved.

[00:05:00] So they're like principles that have nothing to do with any particular religion, but they are spiritual, psychological principles, like to learn to recognize and respect the sacred. The Quakers say, "That of God exists in every piece of creation." And if we can learn to see that and to respect—and including in ourselves, that in this way our actions begin to have some power. Because I recognize even in Saddam Hussein, he's created by God. However disfigured, and I don't have the right to judge him anymore than I do some people on this side of the water, [laughter] there is in them—they are the creation of God. And there is in every human being that spark of the Divine that is redeemable. And we've seen the turnaround in many lives, and you've surely seen that in your own experience: the capacity of people for good, for love, for positive action. And we saw that in the case of Martin Luther King and how he sacrificed his life for it. It's a beautiful example of the power of nonviolence. And all the people who opposed him, you can't probably remember their names today, but we all know his name, you see?

And then accepting ourselves, to live with what we call the truth of ourselves. I have certain limitations. I have to live with those. I have to accept them and admit them. I might wish it would be otherwise, but I have to accept whatever I have: my gifts, my limitations, my capabilities, now my age. I can't run around the world as energetically as I once did. I have to

understand that. And I can't have so many delusions and false expectations. I have to live in the truth.

And then I have to understand that I have violence in myself. And if we begin to kind of pay attention to that, like whether or not we're mad at somebody. You can hardly drive your car anywhere without recognizing that. The "road rage" even has a special name. Now they talk about "desk rage," where people get angry and hit the desk and knock things off.

I hadn't heard of that one yet. Wow.

Yes. So we have violence, and I think a deep principle is to—and it's hard to recognize that what I kind of resent in somebody else is because it's present in myself too.

And then the dualism, the "we-they" mentality: we're good, they're bad. We Americans are good; those Iraqis are bad. The "we-they" mentality, immediately sets up conflict. So a basic principle is do "we are one," whether we like it or not. And in every human being, however disgraced and everything, there still is that image of the Divine, that flicker of light, that is present, however much we have a hard time finding it. There is a goodness that can be appealed to.

Is this something that, speaking of a "we-they" philosophy, that has ever been given to anybody on the test site or passed around the test site?

Well, like I say, we tried in the very beginning to make friends with the guards, with the police, with everybody out there because we considered them with the test site workers. They're victims of the bomb just as much as we are. And that was one thing that helped us. We had even groups come from other parts of the country to say, how do you do it? We have such hostility. We face so much hostility. They want to turn dogs on us and everything. Instead of that, they see the police put their arms around us and salute us. And the workers also. They didn't have that

resentment. But we took that approach, that you're going to be hurt. Any bomb that falls is going to hurt you. It's not going to say, 'Well, I'm not going to hurt a test site worker, '. And so we have to understand that.

And then facing fear. Everybody has fears and we can't always have courage but we can try to gradually deal with it with love.

And to understand. Like Martin Luther King used the beautiful expression, "The building [00:10:00] up of the beloved community." That we have to do it together. We don't have this one big solo hero; we do it together some way.

And I think this is a very important one for the environmental movement: to see ourselves as a part of the whole creation. That we have to have a relationship of love for the created world, not of mastery, because that leads us into destruction. And to see that the problem of destroying our planet is a spiritual problem; it's not only a material one. Because we want more, we're greedy, we want more power, we want to cop the natural resources and turn it into wealth and all like that. This war [Iraq War] is obviously to get control of the world's oil supply. So we have to see this as a spiritual problem.

And to accept our own place and our moment in history. It's really hard to live at this time, now this crazy war going on, and we had hope for a while. But we have to accept this and we have to try to do our part for the liberation of the whole human family in whatever way we try to do it. You three are journalism maybe; you do something positive. I think there are a lot of books now coming out about the corruption in our own government. That's a positive thing really because we have to be aware of that before we can go pointing fingers at the rest of the world and killing their leaders.

And to be capable of celebration and joy. I remember there was a very famous peace worker in Italy and he said to me one time, Peace groups in the United States are all

so sober, so serious, so heavy. He said, You have to have some fun along the way. Don't you have some parties? Because the Italians love to celebrate. They uncork the wine and have a good time too along with it. And so that gave me that idea.

And then to slow down, to be patient, and to be forgiving, and to understand that it's not all going to happen fast, and that we have to grow in our capacity to forgive, to love, to be generous, you know, not being arrogant, thinking "if everybody would just do the way we're doing."

So those are some spiritual principles, if you're interested in those words.

Let's just, if we could backtrack briefly when you mentioned at the very beginning of our interview, I guess I'm just curious as to how you found your way to the Franciscans?

When I was young, I was always inspired—I grew up in a—I described where I grew up in Phoenix, and of course the Franciscans were the early presence of the Church and of—kind of the civilizing factor all around in the Southwest. And so the church I went to was a Franciscan church, and I learned to love Saint Francis and all those images, so that when I chose—I loved the idea of being a teacher, being a Franciscan sister, following in this tradition. That's how I happened to become a Franciscan sister.

And then when you say you were a teacher, you were a teacher within the Franciscans?

Yes, within the Franciscan order.

OK. And I'm just curious how much time you spent in Rome. That just sounds pretty amazing.

Rome was my headquarters. Rome was my headquarters for fifteen years.

OK. Wow, you spent a great deal of time there.

But I wasn't always in Rome. Part of my work was traveling around to these different countries, wherever the sisters were working.

So it was just sort of where you were based and then you were—

That was my home base.

Wow. That's fantastic.

Yes. It was a great period in my life.

I bet. I bet.

And I've had many opportunities to go back because I still had so many connections.

Great. Well, I definitely thank you for sharing your experiences.

Well, you're welcome, and I wish you success with the whole project.

[00:15:00] *Thank you. And again just wondering if at some point, would it be OK to call you if*

I've got some questions or need a little bit of follow-up?

Yes, you can call.

OK. Like I said, at some point all these recordings will become actual transcripts and we will give you, a copy of it so you can review.

OK. All right.

But do you have anything else to add or other things that you feel are pertinent, and in particular, maybe in relation to the test site and—?

Well, I don't go out as often as I used to. I still go out occasionally. And I still believe that if we can look at our local situation—like I found myself on the rim of the test site, and there are military installations all over. We have to express our position and we have to have the courage to do this. If we disagree with our country, we have to have the courage to say it. That doesn't mean we're not being loyal to our country. I always say I love my country the way I love my mother when she's sick. You want her to get well. If she has a bad heart disease, you don't say, well, Mother, your hair is so nice and your fingernails are good. You say, you've got a heart

disease. We have to go to the doctor. Maybe you need surgery. You try to see what is the problem and try to correct it. And so I feel that way about the country. I grieve for the way that the country has become through the violence and through this warlike attitude, the idea that we think we have to rule the world and that. For me, that is a betrayal of what I call the essence of patriotism, which is to be a country that is dedicated to the welfare of the people, not only here but as much as we can everywhere. We have tremendous resources. When I went to Europe, I had all these illusions that we were the most generous and everything, and I made these bitter discoveries that we weren't, and that we were in fact quite greedy. And that was so painful for me to discover these things. And there are all kinds of wonderful groups in the country. They cannot be discounted. But they don't always get a lot of support either. So I have great admiration for Fellowship of Reconciliation, for *Pax Christi*, for many other groups, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. And there are many groups that are trying, and I always have the feeling if some way we could all get together, we'd have a real peace movement in this country.

Yes. It seems like there are many factions.

There are a lot but we haven't ever really all gotten together. The nearest thing we came to it was in San Francisco last year when we had that tremendous, wonderful peace march. I know I went over and walked that, Klaryta and I both did, and it was just wonderful. And it was all over the world on the same weekend.

Right. Yes, last year. Last summer.

Yes, last year. It was great. So there are positive signs too, in the fact that you're doing this project, that there are a lot of young people like yourself that want to have something better from

the country and for the country. So we just have to keep at it. They always say that you have to get up one more time, then you fall down.

I have another question. In your experience, I mean, having gone out to the test site now for so many years, and the country has changed and is changing, have you seen a change in the way the activities have been organized out there? In other words, the way maybe the peace movement has organized activities? Has there been a change from when you first began to how things are done now?

When I first began, there wasn't anything going on. And now there are a few things like— different groups came at different times. There was this American Peace Test group that came at one point, and other groups, but most of them didn't stay. They had an action and then kind of went away. Right now the Nevada Desert Experience, which evolved out of our [00:20:00] early actions, isn't real, real active. They have maybe during the Lenten season, during the Holy Week. I know for a few years they've had a walk. From Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, a group of walkers go out to the test site, and then on Good Friday we have the ceremony of the Good Friday Way of the Cross out there. And a few things like that. But there isn't a lot of activity or a lot of organization in it right now. Just isn't. And maybe it's because of the shifting emphasis away from the test site more. People were deceived, I think, by this so-called test ban treaty which really, like I say, I never was happy with it. It allowed everything we so wanted.

It's just they're not actually shooting off—

They're not shooting off the bomb they way they used to because they don't need to. They have other technology now. But it didn't prohibit the subcritical tests and the things that they really wanted to do with this technology. So I never considered that a big victory.

And the test site at this moment doesn't have the same *focus* that it had, doesn't draw—for a while we were drawing hundreds of people. And maybe it's not so necessary to do it at the test site right now. Maybe we need to join international groups and movements or have things like the San Francisco event. There's a little group that I haven't been able to participate just real lately but for months all last year, from twelve to one in front of the federal building once a week we had the little vigil. And now in the heat of the summer, it's really almost too much; you just can't do it. But they'll probably resume again in the fall and I participated in that.

But I think we have to find other ways. Maybe the idea of the mass demonstration. We never did have very many mass demonstrations. The groups were *never* very, very big out there. Only once or twice we had really big groups, and those were exceptional events, wonderful events. But generally it's been a small group. You know, it's far away, it's hard for people to come, and everything like that. Over the New Year, some people still come for the opening of the New Year. For the opening of the Millennium, there was a three-day event.

So there still are some things going on, but it doesn't have like a whole big peak of energy like it did for a while.

And I know that usually things are organized. I know there was an action over the Mother's Day weekend.

Yes, a few things like that.

And there's something coming up in August, the anniversary of—

Yes, the Hiroshima Day we've always had, yes. But there's never any great big participation anymore. They're smaller events, yes.

Do you think that they will make the site active again? I mean active as we know—

Well, it's active already in the fact that they're doing those what they call subcritical tests. They don't need to do the kind of tests that—technology has moved on.

So that phase is done, moved—

That phase, I think, is gone.

So we've actually moved just into a different phase now.

We've moved into a different phase of activity, yes. But they're doing everything they wanted to do.

Wow. Well again, I certainly thank you very much for your time.

You're welcome, and I wish you all success with the project.

[00:24:01] End Track 2, Disk 2.

[00:00:00] Begin Track 3, Disk 2.

I notice that you've received some awards locally? Have you, or no? Was that something that I've misread? Has your work been recognized locally here in Vegas, do you think?

I don't think so, but it's not important to me.

Yes. I'm just curious if it's gotten carried out further into the community.

I don't think so. I mean it's never occurred to me to even think of it.

Yes. Well, not necessarily as being recognized but I mean just by virtue of it existing and happening, has gotten further out there.

I don't think so.

OK.

That's OK.

Yes, it's fine. I was just curious. All right. Well again, thank you.

You're welcome.

And I'm just going to turn this off.

[00:01:08] End of Track 3, Disk 2.

[End of interview]