

ROGER MCGUIRE

Interviewed by Dorothy Joynes

January 13, 1994

Dorothy Joynes (Joynes): When did you join the Unitarian Church and what is your impression of this church in comparison with the one you came from?

Roger McGuire (McGuire): The first Unitarian church we joined was in Park Forest, Illinois, probably in 1954 or 5. We were members of that church until we moved to the north shore of Chicago in 1960 and joined the North Shore Unitarian Church. One of our distinguished members was Adlai Stevenson. Then in 1964 we moved to Grosse Pointe, Michigan and were members of the church there after Bill and Tracy Pullman had been there. We moved in 1966 to Birmingham, Alabama and joined the church there that had been a staging area for the bus riders that went to Selma. People gathered there and went to the Selma march. The church had been very active in civil rights. It was a very strong church. Pat and I were both officers of that church. She was the chairman, I believe, and held a major office. Then, when we moved to Asheville in 1980, we joined this church. I must say that we are strong Unitarians in spirit; our physical presence has not been very regular in this church, but we contribute to it financially and believe in Unitarianism and want to support.

Joynes: Do you find much difference between the churches that you've been a member of?

McGuire: Grosse Pointe, Michigan would have been the one that was really different from the rest. It was a more formal church. They were very well off financially because of the nature of the community. We were there for just two years and did not get very active, although we attended services fairly regularly. I'd say that the social action was less significant in that church than it had been in the Park Forest Deerfield, Illinois and Birmingham churches. Although we have not participated in any depth, our sense of this church has been that this is not as strong a church in terms of social action as the church in Birmingham and the church in Park Forest were. That could easily be wrong.

Pat moved around the country a lot when she was a youngster and her family always belonged to the Protestant church that was nearest to where they settled. I guess I have a more checkered religious background. My father was born a

Roman Catholic and left the church when he was having some emotional struggles when he was about twenty years old that he didn't feel that the church was speaking to. My mother was a Southern Baptist who grew up in Lee County, Virginia, the westernmost county in Virginia, only about 100 miles from here. So a Catholic and a Southern Baptist settled, naturally, on being Christian Scientists. I was raised a Christian Scientist and found some inspiration in the Christian Scientist beliefs about the importance of mind as well as body but did not feel good about the deification of Mary Baker Eddy and other aspects of the religion. It was a great revelation to us that there was a Unitarian Church that tried to bring together the strands of many religions and was free and willing to explore the spiritual life according to ones own needs.

Joynes: Tell me how you happened to come to Asheville.

McGuire: My career of about thirty years was with the Progressive Farmer Company, which published a regional farm magazine for the South and then started *Southern Living* in 1966. We moved from Detroit, where I'd been in an advertising sales office to Birmingham. During the fourteen years that we lived in Birmingham, my job took me to every nook and cranny of the South, as well as travel in other parts of the country, so I had a good chance to get to know the region. Pat when on a number of trips with me. We loved the South, warts and all, and loved the fact that its history is intense and loved the special character of the people. We were products of the mid-West, which is vanilla. It has many fine qualities and many fine people, but we were captivated by the South. Pat was terribly afraid to move south and felt that everybody was like George Wallace, who was then Governor of Alabama. Finally, after a couple of years after we moved to Birmingham we got beyond looking for enclaves of northerners and began to meet Southern people and discovered that there are many wonderful people everywhere. We really began to care about the South and enjoy the richness of its history and culture. So when I learned in 1978 that I was a diabetic and tried to do my job and deal with the intensity of it all along with a lot of travel and all, as well as insulin injections. I was beginning to repeat myself. I was executive vice-president of the company, and they said that I was going to be

president some day, but I knew that was going to be a long time off. The great excitement of launching a new magazine in 1966 had sort of become a routine by 1979. So we decided to retire and had just enough income from some stock we had in the company and some profit sharing to be able to do it. But it was kind of a risky thing that we did.

So we moved here. We have four children; our youngest, our daughter Kim, who is a member of this church, was a senior at Chapel Hill at that time. We had traveled a lot in the South and had been back and forth a lot to see Kim from Birmingham to Chapel Hill and we'd stopped in Asheville several times. Like the story of many other people, we fell in love with the mountains. We knew that we didn't want to live in a monolithic retirement community; we wanted to live in a diverse place, a real city where we could participate in the life of the city and have all kinds of friends. We spent a few days in Chapel Hill and a few days in Austin, Texas, which is an interesting city, and ultimately decided that Asheville was for us and moved here in 1980.

Joynes: Tell me about Asheville when you came. You saw that there was a lot that had been done, and it was in the process of a lot of changes.

McGuire: We learned, as we moved here, that Asheville was a place that had had a long history of struggles and ups and downs. It had been a booming area. First of all isolated longer and later than most American towns and cities because of the mountain fastness and because it was a struggle, until very recently, to get here from the east. We learned that hard times and harsh winter weather and rocky soil and the conflicts of interests and beliefs between the native population and the visitors who had been coming here for many years. I knew that it was a place that had great promise, lots of problems and a history of ups and downs. So we bought our farm ten miles northeast of Asheville and began raising sheep. Some of my growing up had been on a farm and I had really done that, but Pat had the foresight to know that with four children who were going to have families and their own children, that if we lived in the country there would be attractions there for our youngsters and their children to visit. And it has certainly turned out

that way too. The four now live in Asheville. So we settled in the country. But we were very much interested in the city itself.

Phil Morris, who is Executive Editor of *Southern Living* and now Editor-at-Large and our closest friend within the company, whose interest is in cities and urban design, had told us that Asheville had a great deal of promise. He said, "It's like a delicious doughnut, with the Blue Ridge Parkway, the beautiful mountain setting, the Grove Park Inn, the Folk Art Center and the Biltmore Estate, with a hole in the center. If that city can do the right things about its downtown, about its city center and become whole, so that it has a gathering place for the entire community in the center and a place that will be magnetic to all the visitors to Asheville who are looking for more than just a visit to the Biltmore Estate and a drive down the Parkway, it will indeed be one of the great cities in North America."

So that was pretty stimulating, and we began to find places to dine and places to visit and things to do in downtown Asheville, going to Symphony and so on. The number of empty storefronts was very depressing in 1980. It's amazing how much has been accomplished in the past thirteen years. There were lots of empty buildings and leaky roofs, broken windows, and grimy storefronts. In 1978 or 9, before we came, the City of Asheville had established a Revitalization Commission. The Commission did some serious planning for the redevelopment of the downtown on a door-to-door, block-by-block basis, using the existing building stock. Asheville has been considered by architectural historians as a place that has remarkable Art Deco architecture and a collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings. So the city said, "The building stock is here, here's the plan, we'll have the Lexington Park neighborhood, the Haywood Street downtown neighborhood, Biltmore Avenue, the Square, and gradually we will be brought back to life with the encouragement of the city."

That all looked terrific when we moved here, but a few months later, Strauss Greenberg, a developer from Philadelphia arrived and wooed the city and the Chamber of Commerce with the idea that about sixteen square blocks of downtown Asheville should be leveled, and a "modern shopping mall" should be

built in the center of the city, and that would be the answer to the revitalization of our city center.

It was just a terrible idea. Our friend, Phil Morris and others whom we considered thoughtful on the subject of cities and how to redevelop them said, "That's the worst thing that could happen." It would turn its back on the city rather than embracing the city and stimulating it and helping it flower.

So a gigantic battle ensued. There was a fourteen million dollar bond issue required to backstop the parking facilities that would be a part of this complex. Conservatives, liberals, anti-tax groups and every imaginable kind of strange bedfellows pulled together against city hall, the Chamber of Commerce, and the banks and whipped that bond issue by a margin of about three-to-one. It was the right outcome, but it reminds me a little bit of this recall movement that we're now involved in. The cure maybe will be as painful as the disease. The bitterness that will ensue from a successful recall (although I am in favor of it) will remind us of the bitterness that followed for a couple of years the defeat of the mall project for downtown.

Joynes: All the energy goes into the negative.

McGuire: Yes, all the energy goes into the negative. People have trouble speaking to each other for a long time. So, that set back the renaissance in downtown Asheville. Going back a little bit, the Revitalization Commission came on the heels of the 1976 burning of the last bond from the Depression. Asheville had the highest per capita debt of any city in the United States in the 1930s as a result of the tremendous over-expansion of the city in the 20s. Thomas Wolfe, in *You Can't Go Home Again*, said of his hometown. "They built streets and sewers and water mains and sidewalks for a city of a half a million, bankrupted themselves and their children and their children's children." And that's exactly what they did. It was wild and wooly. The debt was over fifty percent of the assessed valuation of the entire community following the Crash. Now the state has a law that limits municipal debt to eight percent of the assessed valuation, and Asheville now is at a level of two or three percent, which is this terrible imagined recklessness of our present city government.

A friend of mine, and Jack Woodcock, who worked for Ben Holden as I did at Warren Wilson College. (Jack now is about 90 and failing badly. In the late 70s he was considered one of the leading businessmen in town and had done many good things civically and otherwise. The auditorium of the Civic Center was filled up for the bond burning in 1976. Jack was called up on the stage to burn the last of the Depression bonds. As Jack told me the story, as I was questioning him, as I frequently did, about the history of the city, especially about downtown.

“Roger, he said, they called me up there and they handed me the bond and they handed me a book of matches. I struck the match, held it to the bond, and the damn thing wouldn’t burn.”

Well, that was the persistence of Asheville’s Depression troubles. So it was three years later when the Revitalization Commission made its report. For years and years the city was stymied. Yes, they had an airport, and yes, they built a civic center in the late 60s, but the Civic Center was a terribly compromised thing. They had to have three separate bond issues. Inflation was moving faster than they could raise money, and the art museum, and the mineral museum, and the Asheville Community Theater were supposed to be handsomely housed in the Civic Center. They all got compromised. ACT was thrown out on its own. The art museum and the mineral museum went to the basement in quarters that they found unsatisfactory for many years until we started Pack Place.

We got more interested in downtown after that bond issue for the mall failed. Every time there was a meeting about how we can get our downtown regenerated, we went to it. I was at such a meeting when we planned a trip to Roanoke. It was a study, I think, sponsored by the Junior League and the Community Arts Council about 1981, which said that Asheville is not now ready for new cultural facilities. It desperately needs them because museums and theaters in out-of-the-way places need better venues. But the study by the fellow named Miller, head of the Charlotte Arts and Science Council said that the community desperately needs the facilities, but this is not the time. First of all, you have to get the corporate community bought in to the arts. Second, you have

to have a united arts fund that will raise money in the community from corporations, and third, you have to have some serious sign of downtown development momentum before you should undertake building these facilities.

By 1984, all of these things were beginning to fall into place, and a group of us planned a trip to Roanoke to visit the Center in the Square up there. By then the city was making a deal with the Schneider Group of Ann Arbor, Michigan for the redevelopment of the block on the south side of Pack Square. The city had told the Junior League and the Arts Council that it was about time maybe to think about what could be done with the old Plaza Theater and the old Pack Library, which were not going to be fit for office or retail development by the Schneider Group. The Schneiders were willing to give that property to a civic group that could develop it for cultural purposes. So, we were going to have this bus ride, but we didn't know what we would find or what we might do. So we rode the bus to Roanoke, spent the night there, treated very well by the Roanoke people, who had a reception for us at the Center in the Square, their center that has an art museum, a science museum and a theater that used to be in out-of-the-way suburban locations. It brought them in, and that became the hub of their downtown revitalization. It had been open for about a year when we got there, and everyone was very excited. There were about a hundred new businesses that had developed in downtown as a result of the promise of Center in the Square. The same thing has happened here. We now have about seventy new businesses within three blocks of Pack Place that are there because Pack Place provides a centerpiece for it. So we saw what could be done up there, and on the bus coming back, somebody said, "But where would we ever get the money?" Someone else said, "Don't even mention the word money until we think about how we might put this together and what it might be." Then maybe somebody would fund that vision.

So we came back and an informal organization was put together to discuss an arts and science center for downtown Asheville in the location that was being offered by the Schneider group and the city. We hired Ralph Burgard as consultant for a feasibility study. We interviewed sixty individuals, business

people and others who were interested in the downtown and all of the cultural organizations that might aspire to a home in this new center. His report recommended just what we are now carrying through. Ten years later, he said that the Health Adventure in the basement of the MAHEC Building, the art museum in the basement of the Civic Center, the YMI is a historic building across the street which needs an infusion of redevelopment, and you need a small theater for downtown Asheville, one with state-of-the art backstage equipment--- lighting, sound, fly loft, everything that could be pulled together. Somewhere along the way---I was out of the room is my story---I was asked to be chairman of this feasibility study committee. That was in the fall of 1984, and with the spring of 1994 just around the corner, and I am still on the Board, trying all that I can to find the trap door that I can use for my escape. My term as chairman was up in July of last year. We have a new chairman, Jim Lesko, who had served as interim director after Vincent Marin resigned as director in 1993. We got off to a terrible start. We had worked so hard, had consumed so much time, so much energy, so much money completing the physical plant that we had never quite gotten our act together and developed the right marketing plan, the right community connections, the right volunteer support. It was a group of thirty or forty people, with a hard core of eight or ten fundraisers with a lot of support from the city, the county and the state, who put this together. When we opened, everybody was supposed to come flocking in, but not nearly as many as we had projected did. So we got into financial problems right away and had to fight like wildcats in the fall of 1992 to raise money to fill the shortfall in the operating budget. We reduced our staff of seventeen people to nine people. We made cuts across the board and got lots of volunteer media support from the newspaper and television stations and the cable people. But along the way we had to pull strings and pull rabbits out of the fundraising hat that first year. The shortfall was in attendance. We had projected that we would have something like 100,000 visitors the first year, and we had 20,000.

Joynes: You already had your good garage in then too, didn't you?

McGuire: The garage is not ours. That is owned by Pack Plaza, which has the office and retail development around Pack Place.

Joynes: But that's very important when you think of going to the center of town and where you're going to park.

McGuire: Oh, yes. It's very helpful, but it just happens that we don't own it. We have a back entrance that's compromised because we have not completed our courtyard. So you have to go out of the parking deck up the street and in the front entrance of Pack Place. But this next spring we have every indication that the courtyard will be completed and the people can park in the parking deck, walk through an attractive courtyard and into the building that way.

Joynes: There's a new bank that's just opened, I was just reading in the paper. Is that in your area?

McGuire: Not that I know of.

Joynes: All your areas are now filled and rented?

McGuire: Pack Place is about eighty percent leased. Practically all of the ground floor spaces are leased. If you look at Pack Square now with all of the business activity on the Square, and you look at all of the things that are developing down Biltmore Avenue to the south, there are about sixty or seventy new businesses in that area. Café on the Square is flourishing; they had to add space last fall. They have a banquet hall and use it for overflow at noon, and then in the evening for their regular clientele. The project that happens to belong to our son-in-law Jim Samsel, our daughter Kim's husband, has his architectural office at 60 Biltmore Avenue on the second floor, and there are other offices there. And he now has that wonderful array of shops: King Thomason antiques, the Blue Moon Bakery, the Asheville Wine Company and Laurie's Catering. And that's just a delicious little example of all that downtown Asheville can be as we fill these empty storefronts.

Joynes: Fill the doughnut.

McGuire: Yes, the hole in the center of the doughnut. And all over town. I had lunch today clear across town today in the Uptown Café across from the Haywood Park Hotel. I talked to a young couple who bought the place two and a

half years ago, and they said that every month since they bought the place business has exceeded that in the previous month. All over town there are small businesses that are thriving.

We are approaching the time when downtown will be perceived by visitors, I think, as a sort of a Mecca. And as they go to the Biltmore Estate or they go to the Folk Art Center, stay at the Grove Park Inn, or whatever their main focus is, that they will head for downtown because of the wonderful diverse places that are there that speak to the real character of the community and are not the kind of synthetic shopping experience that we know and love in a mall.

Joynes: Do you see an increase in the money that is coming in? The number of people that are coming in?

McGuire: Right. The downtown development office has convincing evidence of increase of assessed valuation for downtown, increased of sales tax receipts for downtown, and the money that the city invested has been repaid several times over for construction of new things downtown and in the tax receipts that come back to the city and county.

Joynes: I was reading in the newspaper that there is some worry of the threat of the downtown Anderson's office being closed.

McGuire: The new majority on the City Council fired Doug Bean the first day.

Joynes: What is the real contention?

McGuire: I think there is a half sincere and half self-serving thrust of the whole thing. It's part of an age-old conflict between the native population of Asheville and newcomers to Asheville. Newcomers see it as a jewel in the rough that needs polishing and needs to shape its growth. The people who've grown up here and have heard from their parents and grandparents about the Depression and hard times think of it as a place of everlasting struggle where you have to take advantage of every opportunity, and, if it means putting up more signs or if it means gouging out a hillside or fighting a historic district because that's going to keep you from doing your thing in that neighborhood, that's perceived as interfering with economic development and with some financial gain for the beleaguered native population here. The feeling of the other side---and there are

many native Ashevilleans who are more thoughtful and visionary, but it tends to be natives vs. people who have moved here--- are people on the side of planned growth and restraints. They argue, and I think, properly, that our scenic beauty, our topography, is our most important economic asset, and, if for a short-term gain we kill the mountain landscape---and a lot of destruction has been done over the last thirty years---Asheville has lost its character. Tourism is certainly not the be-all and end-all of economic development, but we certainly don't want to do anything to damage it; we'd like to enhance it. That will help us in this information age when companies are portable. It will help us to attract, because of our beauty and our lifestyle, new businesses here that will provide opportunities for young people who grew up in Asheville. Without a doubt, there is a great drainage of young people from Asheville to other places like Atlanta, the Triangle Area. They have trouble finding jobs here with the promise of significant income in management or in science and technology. We need more opportunities for young people. But there is a better way than just abandoning any government restraints on development.

Joynes: What is your relationship with the Chamber of Commerce?

McGuire: Well, I've had little or no relationship other than because of our company that developed 60 Haywood, an apartment condominium development downtown, I've been a dues-paying member of the Chamber of Commerce. I was asked once to come on the board and declined. I believe that our Chamber of Commerce does a lot of good for people who are able to take advantage of its services. But I think it suffers badly from the fact, as does so much of our civic life, that many of our civic leaders are, by and large, vice-presidents of businesses headquartered someplace else. This is a branch office town. While the Chamber of Commerce in Charlotte might be headed by Hugh McCall, who is the executive officer of Nations Bank, the Chamber here would be headed by the regional vice-president. There is quite a difference there. Because they have to please everybody in their membership, they are not able to provide much thrust when it comes to political issues having to do with planned development vs. laissez faire, do your own thing development. They don't get very much involved.

Joynes: What I have heard about the Chamber of Commerce is that they place a great deal of emphasis on bringing in new businesses or new industry. They lack the vision.

McGuire: They raised a million and a half dollars a years or so ago for a thing called the Asheville Initiative. It will have some value. I have never been much impressed with their approach to economic development. I think their tendency has been to look for that big factory, warehouse or distribution center that can be relocated here, partly because some of their most influential members are big real estate developers. They say it themselves, that we don't have the kind of real estate. We have beautiful rolling, hilly mountainous real estate that lends itself to small businesses and other kinds of development, but not factories in the traditional sense.

Joynes: I wanted to ask you about vision. Is there any way that a lot of the people who are influential in business here and have small businesses here and particularly in West Asheville have not had an opportunity to see other cities in any extent. So they don't know what is possible, so that they lack the vision, but they do remember the Depression. How can these people be brought up to date and encouraged to see beyond the immediate.

McGuire: I think you put your finger on a real problem. Asheville-Buncombe Discovery, which a bunch of us started, was intended to provide information and experiences and bring in speakers and create more awareness of what the possibilities are, based on the experience of other communities. One of the most meaningful things that Discovery ever sponsored was, I think, a luncheon where Joe Reilly spoke. He is the mayor of Charleston, a guy who believes in quality and believes in investing in the downtown and making the most of the distinctiveness of your city---a theme that Asheville needs to concentrate on. The Executive Editor of *Southern Living* spoke about the South, how to make it what it should be, not make it like something else. The genius of this was that it was sponsored by Discovery and by the Asheville Board of Realtors, so you had people there who ordinarily don't believe much in government as well as people who are idealistic about the role of government, so a lot of good information was

exchanged there. A thing that never got done before Discovery finally folded its tent after, I think, a very useful seven or eight years of existence, other organizations are doing some of the things that Discovery had originally undertaken. What Karen Fields was working on were bus trips for Asheville people to places like Birmingham, which has had a tremendous renaissance over the last twenty-five years and to other cities where there are things to learn. The problem is that, if you push those things all the way through, you tend to get the believers who go along and have their beliefs reinforced, more than you get people who are prospects for conversion.

Joynes: They are still working with the children.

McGuire: Yes that's right. Discovery Day was carried out this year by the Downtown Development Office, the first year since Discovery suspended operation. I think there were seven discovery days over seven years, so that every fifth grader in Buncombe County had a thorough-going classroom and on-site experience of their downtown. So I guess we can look ahead to when those youngsters graduate from high school and become active in the civic life of the community.

Joynes: Because of Discovery, you've had a lot of spin-offs of other groups. There are so many groups that are working, and there were times when they pulled together and all got together and focused, and then there are times when they go out and do their own thing. But RiverLink was a first through this, was it not?

McGuire: I don't think so. I believe RiverLink was actually underway. When Discovery had its first big Civic Center Bazaar when people were invited to describe what they thought the future ought to be and say what role they would like to play in it, a lot of them said they would like to help develop the river, so those people went over to Karen Cagnolin at RiverLink and have added to the strength of the organization. But there are a lot of wonderful initiatives now.

Joynes: Quality Forward came out of that, didn't it?

McGuire: No, Quality Forward started in 1974, I believe. It was created to help celebrate the Bicentennial.

Joynes: How is that financed?

McGuire: It is financed through support from the city and county government and by grants.

Joynes: So it has allocations earmarked for this for government money and it also solicits.

McGuire: Right. But it is primarily supported by the city and county government, I believe.

Joynes: Downtown Development is also. . .

McGuire: Downtown Development is a city department, but there is a Downtown Association, which is a non-profit independent of the city but sort of served by the Downtown Development Office.

Joynes: Is that the Downtown Association Active Alliance? Is that the one that puts out a newspaper?

McGuire: They have a periodical that appears from time to time in the *Asheville Citizen*. They are a separate board but the Downtown Development office provides services to them. But they are separate and they raise money through dues. One of the opportunities that hasn't been seized is to do what twenty-six other municipalities in North Carolina have done, and that is to have a special tax district, where downtown property has an extra property tax that is used for the benefit of the downtown, to provide money for street clean-up, for festivals, for marketing, whatever, and it can be used for a wide variety of things. It is up to the organization to decide.

Joynes: That's done in other places but isn't here.

McGuire: Yes, that's right. It can be enacted by the City Council. It does not require a referendum.

Joynes: And doesn't have to come up to the public each time.

McGuire: Right.

Joynes: Off tape we were talking about the various aspects of the complicated history and the complicated organizations within Asheville, and we talked about the Grove Arcade, which is not quite on the area we were taking about.

McGuire: The Grove Arcade occupies a full block and was a product of the mind of Dr. Grove. In the 1920s he built the Grove Park Inn and had an insatiable desire for development. He took down the old Battery Park Hotel which stood on a hill at what I think was the seventh or eighth floor level of the present Battery Park Hotel that is now an apartment or hotel building. He dumped all that dirt down Coxe Avenue and filled in a ravine and started a real estate development there, then built the Grove Arcade. It was finished after his death. I think it is now a three- or four-story building. It originally was supposed to have a twelve-story office tower that was never completed because of the Depression. There are photographs showing what now is filled in all around the ground floor. The building is used for federal government offices, but at one time those were all plate glass windows. It was not totally successful but a quite successful retail sales and office complex. The Depression slowed everything down, and I guess many of the office locations and retail locations emptied by the end of the 1930s. The federal government bought it and began locating office facilities there, most especially the National Climatic Center. Back in the early 1980s, I believe it was, the University of North Carolina at Asheville had a brilliant idea. That was that they would bring the National Climatic Center out of the Grove Arcade. It was never a satisfactory office building for it; the spaces were very constricted and very compromised inside. They were in there like a bunch of sardines.

It was probably when Highsmith was the chancellor of UNCA that some initiatives were taken to get the federal government to move the climatic center to a new building that would be constructed at UNCA and expand the University's curriculum to embrace climatologic studies of various kinds to make a fit academic surrounding for the National Climatic Center. Then, presumably, the Grove Arcade would be available for some redevelopment. That failed; for whatever reason the government decided that that was not a good idea. So a number of years passed.

I was having lunch one day with David Brown, who was by then the chancellor of UNCA, and someone else who was interested in downtown. David Brown was a go-go activist on all fronts, so he was downtown as one of the

founding board members of Discovery. We were wringing our hands. We had heard that the federal government was appropriating nine million dollars to tear the hell out the interior of the Grove Arcade to make what was never built as an office building, particularly a modern computer-driven office complex to make it fit for the future. Nine million dollars, and they were going to radically alter this structure, which is on the national Register of Historic Places. We were wringing our hands.

I said, "Has anyone ever talked to the head of the Climatic Center to see what the people in the building think of it?" We said no. David Brown and the other person went on. Being retired and being fidgety about what to do, I just went across the street and rode the elevator up to the floor where Kent Hadeen, the head of the Climatic Center, had his office. I said to the secretary, "I know that Mr. Hadeen is a very busy man, but could I just ask if he come out so that I could meet him and talk about an appointment for some time in the future. He came out and said, "Yes, what brings you here?"

I said, "We've all been worried about this nine million dollar appropriation to, as we see it, to wreck the Grove Arcade."

He said, "Would you please come into my office? I am very, very glad to see you."

I went in, and he told me how horrified he and many of his agency were that the General Services Administration, which is the federal landlord, was planning to do this to that building. He said, "We don't belong here. We need another home."

That was the beginning then of some discussions. Discovery was really the seat of this initiative. Larry McDevitt was mayor, but Lou Bisette was on the Council and was very interested in this particular problem, and he and McDevitt organized a mayor's committee to preserve the Grove Arcade. Several meetings ensued and trips to Washington, which Karen Fields was very much involved in. She was the quarterback as the Executive Director of Discovery. She was being encouraged by the mayor. Lou Bisette became mayor when things began to get serious. Bisette did not want the initiative to be taken by his office, but he

wanted to see that the initiative was taken. So Discovery, through Karen, organized meetings, organized trips to Washington, to Atlanta, where the regional office of the General Services Administration is.

I will never forget when a big 400-pound fellow from Georgia, from Atlanta, who was head of the GSA came up, and we had a luncheon for him and a couple of his associates. We toured them through the Arcade and around the downtown and told them about all the many wonderful things that were happening downtown and told them how great it would be to have the Grove Arcade returned to its original retail use. You can use this nine million dollars that you've been planning to use for remodeling as the basis for a new building. Won't it be wonderful?

He said, in effect, "No, we are going to spend the nine million dollars for a remodeling, and there's no possibility that we'll reverse our field on this."

The mayor's committee just kept working away at it, and Karen kept working away at it. Finally, the light dawned on the General Services Administration, and the money was appropriated with the support of Jesse Helms and Jamie Clark and Terry Sanford to build the new Federal Plaza Building and make the Grove Arcade building available for other use. At this moment the state has appropriated a million and a half dollars to investigate and begin planning for concentrating state office facilities in that one location. They are scattered in fifteen or more locations around Asheville and around Buncombe County and concentrate them there. I think their initial studies indicate that in six or seven years their cost of acquiring that building and renovating and restoring it for their use and for the use of the Grove Arcade Public Market on the ground floor would all be repaid in about six or seven years of rental charges in their present locations. So, it looks as if the state is going to appropriate money this summer to prepare the way for them to prepare the way to move their offices into that center. As it happens, Russ Martin, who has just been elected mayor, is the chairman of the Board of the Grove Arcade Public Market Foundation. The Public Market renaissance for that building really began to jell when Aaron Zaretsky, who is the principal executive of the Pike Place Market, which is the greatest

public market in North America, in Seattle, moved here two years ago after having seen the Grove Arcade building and learned that the federal government was going to vacate it. He, through the support of Julian Price, our great local benefactor, was able to establish the Grove Arcade Public Market Foundation. He moved here and has been developing his board and making friends and making plans and raising money furiously ever since he got here. They are poised to move forward with a public market on the ground floor that will be comprised of fifty or sixty indigenous businesses, food businesses, every imaginable kind of public service, a daycare center and all sorts of small businesses that serve the downtown community. But the food businesses, the produce businesses and the cafes, ethnic foods, all of those things will, we believe, make it a Mecca for tourism.

Back to the delicious donut with a hole in the center. If it were in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, or in some town in central Indiana without any semblance of tourism, it would be much more of an uphill battle, but here there are millions of people are in and around Asheville every year, visiting the area and looking for interesting things to do. So that is the crux of the opportunity for a public market in the Grove Arcade. It will be a very colorful, animated and interesting sort of a place. There now is something like a hundred businesses or people that have expressed interest in starting a business there. Nobody has signed any leases, but the interest is very, very strong.

Ironically, the economic development agency of the federal government has said that you will have to have some private funds raised, which can be done, and you will also need to have the support of your city government in order for us to invest several million dollars in this project, which they would like to do because they see the economic development ramifications of it---markets for organic farmers and for food businesses that are native to the area. What they would apparently consider a valid level of support of the city government would be \$100,000 from the city of Asheville. This new majority of the City Council does not view the world in the terms that other cities that have developed their resources seem to. That is, if that \$100,000 is the fulcrum for a multi-million

dollar development that will enhance the life of the community and will encourage tourism and will produce new business opportunities and tax returns, that \$100,000 dollars is something we ought to invest. The present mood is that that \$100,000 we just don't invest. Let people in private business invest. That isn't a job for government. They have a very narrow view of the role of government, I think.

Joynes: It's a requirement that it has to come from government?

McGuire: The federal government would want to know that the city of Asheville was behind it. It's nominal that they need to some valid sign. Aaron Zaretsky is an enormously resourceful person. I think he ought to be on the list of people to talk to. What he's done is to begin getting people to sign pledges. And I've signed one. He wants to get twenty people to sign pledges of \$5,000. He has an agreement prepared. The city ought to do it without this kind of safety belt. But he is working away to get twenty people to underwrite \$5,000 as a backstop, and, if the city of Asheville, at the end of three years, has not received in sales taxes and other tangible benefits, \$100,000 to compensate them for the money they advanced to the project, these private individuals would pay them back. Isn't that stupid?

Joynes: I never heard of such an idea.

McGuire: He just thinks of everything. If that's the only way you can get the city to move, we'll do it in that way. It does sort of undermine the principle of the government really believing in its future and what it can do to stimulate a quality project .

Joynes: What a lesson if it works, maybe we'll learn something.

McGuire: Right.

Joynes: The natives really care about getting something done and not on the short term.

McGuire: Right. You asked about the number of organizations. I think there is a small group of executive directors of things like Pack Place, the Arts Alliance and the Community Foundation, who are beginning to meet informally for lunch once a month. I agree with what you had said, that it is a problem that there are so

many initiatives and there seems to be little coordination. That was a role of Discovery. I think that Discovery office knew an awful lot about what was going on---if someone was about to start an initiative that would overlap or supplant something that was already underway, they would be the first to know and say something about it. It would be a very good idea if there were an association of organizations, maybe of those that are interested in the downtown. At any rate, there is a need for that. There is not much coherence in the efforts to develop our community.

Joynes: But there is coherence in the attitudes and visions.

McGuire: Well, there are different attitudes, visions. I've thought about another project, that is, organizing our family photographs, memorabilia, finances, records, all this, now that I'm spending less time on Pack Place, I'm going to spend a good bit of time this spring and summer on that.

I think there is a book to be written. It would not be a best seller by any means, but there is an interesting book to be written about the clash of cultures in Asheville. There are clashes of cultures in most places but I think it's quite pointed here. It's the native born who have had to do everything the hard way, have had to tough it out and make do, and the people who've moved here and have a little different view of things. It ought not to be so hard if we could all work together and have a common vision and take advantage of Asheville's distinctive qualities rather than thinking that we have to abuse them and be like other places in order to move forward. I was talking to somebody about this book idea, but he said, "Yeah, but there's another group, and that is the counter-culture group. This is a great place for people to come who are interested in natural foods, who are interested in the environment and who are interested in traditional music, alternative life styles---acupuncture, massage. That whole outlook is one that falls somewhere outside of the people who moved here who are civic movers and shakers who want to get things done in a more progressive way than the native population. There's a struggle there, and it's being fought out right now in this city.

Joynes: Biltmore Forest hasn't been discussed. Even though that is an enclave in itself, they are still a factor in the community, and they represent a different element.

McGuire: They do. Biltmore Forest tends to be an older group. They are well off; they travel more. A lot of them go to Florida before or just after Christmas and spend three or four months there. If they are involved in the civic life of the community, there is an interruption there. I believe that most of them are motivated by a desire to live in some kind of an ideal community, as they would perceive it, that is protected from the harshness and the hullabaloo of life in America, as it's broadly experienced. I believe that every day it gets harder to hide from the realities of crime and drugs and disaffection. I think if I were living in Biltmore Forest I would be real interested in making Asheville as strong a city as I can so that I would not be living in a community that was separate and lovely but next to a sick and deprived community that would spill over into my life. That whole idea of creating separateness just does not happen to fit my way of looking at life and enjoying it.

Joynes: Do you have people who are really very interested in basically the same concepts?

McGuire: I must tell you that, of the eight and a half million dollars in private funds that were contributed to the Pack Place capital campaign, a very high percentage came from Biltmore Forest. A very high percentage also came from people who had lived in the area less than ten years, too. The two big gifts that were received from Biltmore Forest were from people who had lived here less than ten years. There are lots of well-educated people who appreciate the arts.

Joynes: They are more apt to be interested in the cultural than the development of downtown Asheville itself.

McGuire: Right. Every time I see someone from Biltmore Forest at the Café on the Square or the Blue Moon Bakery, it tickles me that they come down here. Those are breakthrough. They are finding something that they can't find at the malls or at their club---something that they thought they had to go to New York or Atlanta or Paris to find. It's nice.

Joynes: You mentioned malls, and I am thinking of the Biltmore Square Mall, which mostly serves Biltmore Forest and is far away from where we are right now. Does that seem to be pulling people even farther out into the mall areas?

McGuire: Biltmore Square Mall has had a terrible struggle. There isn't enough population in Biltmore Forest to support that. There are only seven or eight hundred families, I believe. I believe that Biltmore Square Mall was built to supply people from Saluda and Tryon, Bryson City and the whole western part of the state. I don't worry any more about the effect of malls on downtown Asheville because I think that the merchandise, the quality of the experience, everything about it is just different. That's all. We do have a mall mentality in America now but the more people travel and the more they see that a mall is a mall is a mall, and the more they find in interesting places like Charleston and Santa Fe and Paris and the south of France what it is to go to a retail store that has real personality, local ownership, that's an experience that the malls don't compete with. Nor do the shops in downtown Asheville compete with the malls because people who are glazed over and just gotta go to the mall don't respond to the kind of experience you have when you go to the Blue Spiral Gallery or Street Fair or the Blue Moon Bakery or any one of a hundred places downtown. It's just different.

Joynes: Dress shops will be coming in there too. Outside of the Commons Shop there isn't any men's shop.

McGuire: Yes, there are a few. In fact, one of them is a tenant of ours: Gentlemen's Gallery right across from the library. I got my Christmas present from there, and I bought a Christmas present for somebody there.

Joynes: I want you to tell me some more about 60 Haywood.

McGuire: In 1985, about this time of year, Jim Samsel, who is now our son-in-law but then was not, had done some architecture for remodeling of our house in the country. One of the things that was going on downtown was to try to plan for a quality commercial development at the head of Montford, where the outdoor shop and Hunter Banks are. The architects and the city Planning Department had all put together a workshop. Jim and I went to that, and it was really quite wonderful.

There were a lot of good ideas, few of which have been acted on. We had parked downtown and walked over there, and walking back, we were walking down Haywood Street and I said to him, "Jim, Pat and I really ought to make an investment in downtown. We're real interested in it and we're out in the country and like it out there, but we have one foot in downtown."

He said, "Well, why don't you buy this building here?"

There was a restaurant called Jared's in the 60 Haywood building. They were about out of business and the family had a big feud. At one time it was the best restaurant in Asheville.

Anyway, he said, "I understand that's for sale."

So we wound up thinking about it for a couple of weeks and he thought there was a market for apartments downtown. So we bought the building and the building next to it that was owned by the Eagles Club. They had a bingo party there once a week, and there were a couple of businesses upstairs. Basically, the two buildings were empty, and we bought them, invested in the acquisition of the property and the redevelopment of four retail shops and fourteen apartments, an investment of about two million dollars of our money and the bank's money. It was a wonderful experience. One of the key things about it was that I was showing up at a lot of meetings and was active in Pack Place and was perceived as someone who was real interested in downtown and occasionally might have something intelligent to say. But it was a terrific lesson for me in the difference between the way you are perceived if you've gotten involved and are doing something--- doing "business." The perception is so different than if you are just a person that is expressing rational thought. Everybody thought of me as a different person. Well, he's redeveloping these buildings. Well, they are just two little buildings downtown in a small city, but it made quite a dent on people, I could tell. They rented about as fast as we got them finished. It took longer to get the four retail spaces rented, but they are now nicely occupied. But we were timid and we set the rentals too low, so every year we had to spend about thirty or forty thousand dollars making up the shortfall. We had an accountant, a CPA whom we were using, who was a very passive sort of a guy. We'd bring all of our

papers in at the spring of the year, and he would work up our tax returns and never commented about anything one way or another. Well, this thirty or forty thousand a year got to be very old, and we would increase the rents, but it wasn't quite adding up. So we changed accountants. I asked a friend of mine who had lived here for a long time and knew a lot about accountants and lawyers and such to tell me who would be an aggressive, thoughtful accountant who would sort of look at me as if this were his money and if he were me what would he be doing. We went to John Cletus, who is up here on Merrimon Avenue, and it took him about five minutes to look into all the things we were involved in and said, "How long are you going to continue this habit? This thirty or forty thousand a year that you are expending on it?"

I said, "Yeah, it does get kind of old."

He said, "Why don't you sell them as condominiums?"

So, we found a very able person to come in to plan the marketing those as condominiums. As the leases were up for renewal, we would ask the people if they would to buy their unit and we would offer a small discount in there for them compared to what we would be selling them for outside. Three or four of them did. Most of them did not, but now of the fourteen apartments--- We have a small one there that we use as a little office---of the other thirteen, twelve have been sold. So, instead of having our money all tied up in the building, we've gotten it back and we will continue to own the one unit that we use for visitors and an office and the four retail stores. But it was a very nice demonstration of what you can do with a nondescript rundown empty building in downtown Asheville. It was that and Robert Armstrong's project, which was the redevelopment of the Ivy's building into the Haywood Park Hotel and the Haywood Building into the Haywood Office Building and Promenade. Those two things adjoin each other there. Those and the redevelopment of Wall Street and the Pack Plaza Development which is the private development that occupies the south side of Pack Square that surrounds Pack Place, our cultural center, which has a similar name but is separate and distinct, that being a profit-making development and ours being a non-profit cultural center. Pack Plaza, Wall Street, the Haywood

Promenade and Hotel and our 60 Haywood Project all happened at about the same time. That was a surge and people really began to take notice. Of course, Discovery was beating the drum and the downtown was developing its downtown development office and the Downtown Association got started.

Joynes: And you were getting people to live downtown.

McGuire: Right. There are about a thousand people who live downtown now.

Joynes: You and your wife, as a unit, have demonstrated what you believe in. You've put your money where your ideas were. You made it work. You demonstrated your philosophy and you brought people in to take place in it.

McGuire: Right, and I've been wanting to say that Pat has had a central role in this because she was the person who helped the public radio station to come from being a little five-watter at the university to a fully community-supported public radio station WCQS downtown. She was on the board and then chairman of the board during its crucial years of formation. She has been on the Downtown Streetscape Committee as its co-chair, and they've now developed a streetscape plan which has now been adopted by the city.

Joynes: What is that?

McGuire: It is a plan that prescribes how the sidewalk and the trees and the street furniture writing and the lighting and all of those things that furnish the downtown, as if it were a large room. One of the best ways of expressing a downtown is that it is the community's living room. With the help of a consultant and the Downtown Development Office and the Planning Department, they have developed a streetscape plan for downtown Asheville. It's a wonderfully detailed plan, and, if we can get a city government in place that will invest in such things, we will take another great leap forward in the development of the downtown that can become what healthy cities need, and that's a meeting place for all of its citizens of all kinds in the heart, where you have these casual intersections with people and where you are operating outside of your home entertainment center and getting out where people can be with each other and learn from each other and enjoy the city as a whole.

Joynes: And getting activity in town so the people can feel safe, and knowing the community by having the walks and the markers.

McGuire: Right. That's another activity that Pat has been involved in----the Urban Trail, that is chaired by Grace Plass, and Pat has been active in that because it's such a natural counterpart to the downtown streetscape.

Joynes: Can you tell me more about the radio station? I didn't know that there was any connection with what had happened with the radio station.

McGuire: The occasion for moving it to the University was when the Lipinsky building with its auditorium was going to be renovated, and the university asked the radio station to find other quarters for a few months. Pat and a few others on the board had a serious doubt that it would be just a few months. They thought it would take a year or two to complete the project, and I think they needed a federal grant that required that they be in a permanent location, among other things. If they had done what the university said, to keep its base there but move into temporary quarters, they would have lost that federal grant. They decided that it was time to vote to separate itself from the university and establish a community-based and financially supported station at 73 Broadway.

Joynes: Tell me more about how the thing was put together and how it works.

McGuire: It's 88.1 in Asheville, and they have translators that carry the signal into the far reaches of western North Carolina. It is a National Public Radio affiliate and has wonderful programming, news, and public affairs. It has grown from having practically all of its support provided by the university as a very small station that you could only hear in North Asheville and maybe downtown but not much east, west or south. It's gone from that to having a strong signal throughout the area. It now has a budget of about \$300,000 to \$400,000 a year. So it's a very substantial station that is supported by the community rather than...

Joynes: Is that mostly through advertising?

McGuire: No. They have two on-air fund-raisers a year and raise about \$70,000 from each of those, that's \$140,000. They get some federal support and then they have "underwriting." There's no advertising they announce that this

company or that is sponsoring this program, with just a very brief announcement. You pay something like \$300 a quarter to be one of those underwriters.

Joynes: Is Pat still involved in this?

McGuire: She's not on the board any more. She was on, I guess, for six or eight years but is not now. Actually, a number of her activities have phased down.

Joynes: I'm sure busy with you on your 60 Haywood project.

McGuire: She had to help with the decision-making, but not the day-to-day operation. She was on the North Carolina Humanities Commission, which is an affiliate with the federal Humanities. So maybe she's looking for something to do. She's in charge of the farm operation: head shepherd. We have about thirty sheep. She loves to garden, and now we have two of our children living here. Kim is a program officer with the Community Foundation, and our son Kevin is a writer and is here and is married to Ann, who works for TEACH, the North Carolina operation that has such a great national reputation for their work with autistic children and their parents. Kevin and Ann lived at the farm until a few weeks ago. They bought a house in the Norwood Park area. Kim and Jim live in that same area. Jim and Kim have Emily, who's just turned three. Kevin and Ann's daughter, Molly, Mary Frances, turns three in a couple of weeks. Having that much of our family here when we just retired and moved off to this place where the family had never been before is a great outcome for us. We see a lot of them and enjoy it. Kim and Jim, by the way, are members of the Unitarian-Universalist Church; they come fairly often.

Joynes: You also have two other children.

McGuire: I have a son in Minnesota who lives with his wife and four children in a religious community. It's an old-world type of community, the Hutterites; they are less well known than the Amish, but they are similar. His name is John; his wife is Gretchen, and they have four children, ranging from about 4 to 13. The fourth child is Steve, he's the eldest and lives in Birmingham; he's a contractor. His wife is Kathy and they have two boys, Patrick and Matthew, and they come up two or three times a year. Everyone except our kids in the religious community were here this Christmas and we had great times together.