

Transcription of cassette tape recording

Unitarian Universalist Church of Asheville

Interview with Bonnie Habel

Transcription by Ann McLellan, December 28, 2009

**Tape 1, Side A (February 18, 1993):**

This is Bob Potter. I'm talking to Bonnie Habel. The date is February 18, 1993.

**Bob:** Tell me where you were born, Bonnie.

**Bonnie:** I was born in Kirtland, New Mexico. Kirtland is near Shiprock, Gallup, and it's desert country and lots of Indians, because it's Indian reservation country.

**Bob:** I know that area. I'm from Colorado. All right, let me begin at the beginning. I'd like to know if you began life as a Unitarian or became a Unitarian later.

**Bonnie:** I became a Unitarian much later.

**Bob:** How did it happen?

**Bonnie:** Well, I started life as a Methodist. My parents were both Methodists and my father was a teacher, and he had moved from Iowa to New Mexico, and I was born in New Mexico and we lived among Mormons. They were wonderful people. They had been so good to us. And so my folks of course held on to their Methodist background, their upbringing in Iowa, but they certainly had their eyes open that there were other things in this world besides just one denomination. And these people had been grand to us but they knew that they didn't want to go ahead and hear the call of Mormonism because even though the people proselytized hard and fast, they really would have liked to have us part of their Mormon faith, they also understood and let us go on and be a family in that small community holding our own views. Of course, I was too small really to be involved in all that. But I'm sure that's where it all started. And then, as my father moved around, as a coach and civics teacher, we found the Methodist church and worked hard as a family within that church. I have a lot of fun wonderful memories of good times with couples and families, sledding and chili parties, and summer Bible school and, you know, all the little blue ribbons and things you get for knowing your Bible verses. But we began to find, as my parents learned more, that maybe the Presbyterian church fit more what we were looking for, or, in another area, or it might be the Episcopal church might fit more toward what we were looking for, and we then must have realized that we were seekers. And we were curious and we were wanting to know more answers than what was just laid out for us.

**Bob:** Was this true for the whole family?

**Bonnie:** Well, my father particularly, but mother and father both, and my sisters and I thought that was the way it was. I mean, you read, you asked questions, you sat around the table, you discussed, you argued, you debated everything. Everything was debated around the table. And people were included if they happened to drop by. You know, there was always somebody else that was included in on the debate, the discussion. It was an exciting time! I didn't know that, you know, because I didn't have anything to compare it with. I thought every family was like this. We moved from La Junta, Colorado, we'd gone to Greeley and La Junta, and then finally Denver. My Dad left teaching. He had been with the teachers union...

**Bob:** Which one, the MEA or AFT...?

**Bonnie:** I don't know, I don't even think it had that name at that time. I think it was such a new thing. He was organizing this one, in La Junta Colorado, and the superintendent took offense, and fired him. And so, he worked at the railroad, and earned more money in six months than he'd earned for three years as a teacher. So, he was discouraged because he loved teaching, and the kids loved him, I mean, oh, I can remember high school kids coming by our house in tears, just weeping, and saying can we still come by and talk to you. So Daddy missed that, but he knew that that period of his life had gone. And so, he bought a motel, moved to Denver where the motel was, and we all then got into the motel business. Which is such a waste because he was such a wonderful teacher.

**Bob:** Such a waste?

**Bonnie:** Yes, it was a waste for him not to be able to teach. He should have been still in teaching and later in his life, I'm sure he had some regrets. But he never let us worry about that. He never let us see that. We jumped into this motel thing as a family, and made money, in fact, made a lot of money, and from that...for that time, of course. And from that money they reinvested in land and made more money, so it ended up that he had a very successful life monetarily but was still frustrated as the giving of himself, as far as sharing his skill which was as a teacher.

**Bob:** Was he involved in religious life then? Using those skills?

**Bonnie:** No, my dad was not a joiner. Once we got to Denver where the motel was I don't think we...that Daddy went to church with us any more. Mother saw that we went to church, she drove us all the way in to Denver even though it was about ten or eleven miles because we were in Aurora at the time, across from Fitzsimmons. And she drove us in to Denver to Park Hill Methodist Church. We had some very nice young people's groups; I went to summer camp down near Colorado Springs many summers. Mother also was a teacher, and she would teach at the summer camp. So mother was the strong one to see that our religious life was continued. We stayed at Aurora until I went to the University of Denver. And then they sold that property and moved to Evergreen, which was up in the mountains, and developed Spruce Island Chalets, which was a nice mountain resort, and continued, of course to work hard. But I wasn't involved a lot in that period because I was definitely involved at the university and was making good grades and honors. As a senior I was an honor student and was in two universities colleges, and... I was there at the university on a full scholarship because I had gotten a full scholarship out of high school, a four-year scholarship, so I felt an obligation to do well, and yet I loved it, too. And it wasn't just the obligation, I really loved the college part and

continued going to college. And now my students today ask me, are you still in school? And I said, well, I've taken classes all my life and probably my last official class two years ago. And she said, How old are you? (Laughs) So, you know that I loved being in school. I went on, after college I got married, and my husband went directly into the service while I was home alone.

**Bob:** This was your only marriage, to Robert?

**Bonnie:** Yes, we were married in 1953 and have our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this March. And I'd known him since high school. We went to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, 9<sup>th</sup> grade and all through high school together, met him at a basketball dance, after a basketball game, and he took me home. I dated lots of boys from freshman, sophomore, but this was our senior year and I decided I liked him and I guess he decided he liked me and he went to the University of Denver, too and we went on through school and then we married after college. But he went into the service and went to Japan so I was home in Denver teaching and when he came back...we didn't have children then for six years. He was in the service two and a half and we even waited because he was finishing law school. So, we finished law school, I was teaching, he was deep in the books in law school, and he took the bar, passed the bar, and our son was born the same month. (Laughs) So we really...I guess we planned it. I don't know if we did or not, but it certainly worked out OK. We loved Denver, mainly because we were skiers, and we developed our ski technique. Bob was a whole lot better than I was, he still is, but we still ski and go every year from here if we can to Colorado. So we thoroughly enjoyed developing those activities together with our family, because they're terrific skiers. Our second boy was born three years later. But he was born in Washington D.C. because after Bob graduated his first job was at the US Court of Customs and Patent Appeals. So he became a patent attorney. I did some substitute teaching, but I was pretty much full time mother and enjoyed Arlington Virginia and raising Steve and then later David. We attended the Lutheran Church. I haven't mentioned that one yet. (Laughs) The Lutheran Church got into this because Bob was a Lutheran and Bob would not hear of being married in the Methodist Church. So, here I was, this open-minded person and I thought, well, what the heck, one more denomination to add to the others. And I taught Sunday School in the Lutheran Church. Now I look back at it, I have to laugh. How in the world did they trust me with their little ones. Because I must have given them some awfully new open minded ideas. But...they were wonderful, and it all worked out well.

**Bob:** Isn't it true that there are two strains of Lutheran? There's a Missouri synod, and there's another one that's very different?

**Bonnie:** Yes. This was not Missouri synod, this was United or something, and they were much more flexible, I honestly didn't feel threatened by any of the order of service, or anything. Of course, I was still young and innocent and flexible, and I was going into this because I wanted to be a good wife and mother, and had my children enrolled in the Lutheran church.

**Bob:** How old were they in those days, in Washington?

**Bonnie:** Well, In Washington D.C.... Steve was three when David was born so David was only 8 months old when we moved from there. So they were very young. I thought of an incident there at the Lutheran church that really...Bob and I were just appalled, and it really was probably the beginning of the end of our not continuing with the Lutherans. The minister talked very seriously to Bob and I about original sin and had we taken care of that in our own minds and had we done all the things for our children. I don't even understand why in the world he was so concerned. But he was quite concerned and I told him point blank I didn't

believe in original sin and that upset him, so he came down on us hard. I mean, he came to see us frequently and we had many cups of tea with this minister. I think the next thing was we talked about the blacks that were beginning to move in to Arlington and he said, we need to train our ushers to seat them in the back. This was a lovely big church in Virginia, and I can remember to this day how my mouth dropped open and he saw the look on my face, but he didn't know why I was appalled. I mean, he had always lived in Virginia and so to him, here he was, an intelligent man, a minister, and he was going to train his ushers to seat the blacks in the back. So that was the beginning of the end for Bob and I because, though we didn't have the same Southern experience, you know, we'd come from the West, we still couldn't understand why it was so difficult for these people to see that this is not the way you treat people. So then we moved when our second son was...Oh, my husband was technical advisor to the Court of Customs and Patent Appeals, so he was doing well with the judge who was the head of the Court, and I would very much have liked to have stayed there because we liked the area and so forth. But, Bob was young and restless and wanted to try it on his own and wanted to be out away from the government. So, we came to Asheville and he interviewed at Enka and he got the job at Enka, so we moved to Asheville. And this was bringing us to the 1960's. We moved here in September of 1961. But we didn't join the church then, until the next spring.

**Bob:** You had to find it!

**Bonnie:** We had to find it. And it was on Vermont, and who'd ever heard of Vermont. So we looked up the Lutheran church, that was still our religion, and we went to the Lutheran church...

**Bob:** In Enka, or in Asheville?

**Bonnie:** Here in Asheville, down on Charlotte Street wherever it is, right down there, no, it's off of Merriman, that Lutheran that's off of Merriman. And the young minister was just grand, as far as young and enthusiastic minister. But again he worried about us not believing in original sin, and not taking care of some of those things.

**Bob:** Did you figure out what he meant by "taking care of it?"

**Bonnie:** (Laughs) Well, I think... well, baptism and all the things, well, we'd had the boys baptized but I could never quite know what we were supposed to do, except to understand that all of us were born in original sin, and I don't even want to get into this, because it was years ago, and you know, I've forgotten even what the arguments were, but I never believed it, and nobody ever convinced me otherwise. And, it wasn't because I was rigid, I would have listened if they'd had a logical argument, but none of them came through to make sense, and so we forgot it. And, Bob said after the third visit with this new minister that was nice but, really, we weren't comfortable with the service. He said, surely there is some other religion that will let us grow. And we happened to look in the paper, and he said, what do you know about the Unitarians? And I said, not a thing. I mean, I'd never heard of them before. And he said, well, they have a little church down in West Asheville. Do you think you could find it? And I said, what do you mean, I could find it? (Laughs) And he said, well, I'll take care of the kids, because I don't think we should take the kids to a strange church. I'll take care of the kids and you go find it. And if you think that it's some place we'd like to go, then I'll go back with you the next Sunday. So I found it. I sat there and listened to Dan Welch. It was in this little living room, you looked outside and the trees were just softly blowing and everything was so kind of genuine and quiet...and, the front yard, I mean everybody trampled across it, nobody had

taken care of it, people drove across it, they parked all over it, I mean, it was nothing like the beautiful churches that we had gone to, that we didn't like. (Laughs) And, I mean, not that there's necessarily a connection but, I sat there, and I was so amazed that Dan Welch was so intelligent and he read something out of...wonderful poetry that I hadn't even had a chance to hear myself, I knew the poet, but I didn't know the poem, and he was telling me in church about the ...and I was saying, church has never been to broaden the mind before and here he was, teaching me, you know, things to broaden my mind. Well, I went home, and I said yes, I think that you would like this. I think we need to go and try it together. So, we went back and...

**Bob:** What did you do with the kids that time?

**Bonnie:** We did take them. Muriel Cornell greeted us at the door, and Muriel took our children and put them in this lovely little nursery where Miss Lindsey was. Miss Lindsey was with us at that place, and at that time, and Miss Lindsey loved our children and took good care of them and we got to sit in the service together and meet people after church and Bob said, Yeah, I think we would like this church. And so, we didn't miss a Sunday. We were there all the time, and our children were happy as could be. I started teaching, and Bob was even on the committee that selected the next minister, because Dan Welch was going to retire, and we were really sad about that. I think, either he was on the Board, or he was on this committee that selected the next minister, but he got involved with Roger Guthrie who was also at Enka...

**Bob:** I met him this Sunday!

**Bonnie:** Oh, he came? For Helen's... We were stuck up on top of the mountain in the snow and couldn't come down because it was icy.

**Bob:** It was great! Three hundred people.

**Bonnie:** Oh, I know.

**Bob:** I met a boy from South China who is going to Clemson in Mathematics.

**Bonnie:** Because Helen met him in China. Bob will be so sad, because he would have loved to see Roger. Roger Guthrie. Well, he worked with Roger, not only at Enka but in the church, and Bill and Willa Moore were a close couple of friends. They didn't have Melissa yet. They didn't have any children when we first met them at the church. Then Melissa came along after we had moved away, but then when we came back we were close couple friends. Melissa was a little eight or nine year old redhead, real cute, Melissa Moore, and she's enough younger than our kids, probably five years younger. But anyway, I taught Sunday school, and two things about that era, Muriel and George Cornell were so grand, and Muriel most of all, I mean George was intelligent, and Bob really admired him, but Muriel was just one of these loveable, I mean she was round and plump and just the mother of the earth. She was a toucher, hugger, lover. I taught junior high and I wanted to teach them about the stars. I have no idea why. It must have been part of the curriculum. I'm not sure we had a real organized curriculum, but Muriel was the organizer of the curriculum and RE director at the time, and she said come out to our place. Now, I'd love to know where their place was, because in those days, that many years ago, it seemed like it was out in the country.



**Bob:** It was in Leicester.

**Bonnie:** I guess so, it was a farm, and she had a nice big front yard, and all those kids came out and we had a fun picnic, and as it got dark we laid our blankets out and laid down and George told us about, you know, there's that constellation and here's this and here's that and we began to really see different things. The kids had probably never really taken the time to sit still long enough to try to figure out if that looked like Orion, or if that looked like Leo or looked like Cassiopeia but he was really directing and guiding the kids and we had such a grand experience with those kids. It couldn't have been Orion because it wasn't cold. When I was remembering this I was thinking it was not cold. In January we could have seen Orion beautifully and it would have been freezing cold and I would have remembered that. So it must have been July for a nice picnic out there. Another couple that were significant in those early years were Henry and Sarah Walters. Henry was a retired engineer from Bethlehem Steel and he worked with Tim Takaro on developing the staple for the heart operations that Tim developed out at Veterans Hospital. Henry Walters worked very closely with Tim about that. They had a train set in their downstairs area up here on Old Toll, they lived right up there on Old Toll, and were one of the first Unitarian couples that we knew to move up on the mountain and they had groups of us come in. Sarah was different from Muriel Cornell and yet a fabulous strength for this church. I can almost see an iron backbone. She was so solid. She was one of the first people that scolded me at a Board meeting for...the idea had come up that we ought to send out envelopes every year and have people put their offering in their envelopes during church service, and just have people send it in. And I said, oh Sarah, that just feels very money grabbing. And she scolded me and she said if we are ever going to become something in this community we are going to have to stop worrying about what it looks like if we ask people for money. She said we are going to ask them and they are going to be grateful, and they are going to give it. And she really let me have it during a Board meeting, and I went home and thought about that, and I thought you are probably right, absolutely right.

**Bob:** Do you remember what year that was? Who was the minister at the time?

**Bonnie:** It was when we were in this building.

**Bob:** After 1972.

**Bonnie:** Yeah, Henry had already died, and so it was either Pullman...It might have been one of these later years of Pullman. I think it was. And Pullman wasn't pushing it. He knew we had to grow and he knew we had to pay for this building and the growth we wanted. See, we didn't have this area. This Sandburg Hall was not here because Bob, my husband, was the chairman of the long-range planning committee that planned and built this section, this Sandburg Hall. Because when we first came back to this church they had the new part of the building but you stepped out to an old house. And when it rained it dripped between the two buildings. And we used the old building for RE and for lots of things, but we knew that we needed to complete these buildings and to have something much better. So it was fun to be the wife of the chair of the long-range planning because I got to be in on when Bill Moore and Bob would be planning out, you know, this is what the long-range planning committee says we ought to have, now can you give it to us and what space and what shape and how much will it cost and we can't afford that and you know those discussions were a lot of fun. And to see the results was very pleasing. I think Bill Moore took a little flack on the sound in Sandburg Hall was bad. For a while, the reverberation was really bad, but he took care of that, it's not bad anymore, is it? I mean I don't worry about it. Some of the other things: Well, people thought there was some

wasted space, the kitchen wasn't big enough, but I think in light of the money that we knew we didn't have, that we needed to raise, we did pretty well to get what we got. And I know there were other things that we probably needed, but it has served us to this point pretty well and we need to move on to bigger and better things but for the time and I'm thinking probably 1973 was when Sarah was telling me about money, and she probably brought people up short a lot, but she was so wise, I guess maybe from past experience she knew that if you were timid nothing happened. And she was not timid. And Henry was an intellect. The magazines that he had in his house just amazed me, you know, I'd say, oh can I borrow a copy of this? So they were our first as far as sharing some of the newest, at least new to me, kinds of thinking, and...

**Bob:** On a personal friendship basis.

**Bonnie:** On a personal friendship basis. Sarah also scolded Rev. Gross because he wasn't well-read, that's what she told him, because he needed to read more broadly so that his sermons could reflect a more broad base. And, by golly, she loaned him the things she wanted him to read and he began to search out and broaden his base. So even though we feel uncomfortable and threatened somewhat by someone who's way ahead of us, I think Sarah Walters brought this church a long way, in just those little kinds of things. She could not abide fools easily.

**Bob:** She wouldn't suffer fools gladly.

**Bonnie:** She wouldn't suffer fools gladly, that's right. If you were ever caught being the fool, you know, you remembered it. But you also grew from it and that was OK. I think one thing that I probably would say about Unitarianism is that I have stretched and grown, I have hurt and I have had pain, but it has not defeated me, it has made me stronger. It has made me grow, and I'm glad... From my beginnings I guess I told you that I wouldn't have been comfortable if I'd stayed in my own little round hole, I just couldn't do that. Because my father had already led the way and shown me that there is something else out there if you look for it. When we came back... We left in 1964 and we went to Salt Lake City and we were Unitarians in Salt Lake and their church was more of a New England Unitarian church and it was nice. The minister was very intelligent, he wore robes, I was very surprised, he was very formal. He was young and he also went to march for King, to Selma Alabama, from the Unitarian Church in Salt Lake. And I can remember sermons where he worried about it because part of him wanted to go, the other part of him worried about his family, you know, what if he was killed, and there were people killed. But he came back fine. We had a good experience there. I went to the University of Utah, and I took mass media courses and primarily television, educational television, because I had the opportunity not to have to work because my kids were small and I didn't have to work because Bob had good jobs in patent law and was at Einco, a company in Salt Lake, so, I went back to school. I took educational television and did a show called "Number Seven Sunny Street" which was for young children. We did lots of things like beginning phonics and storytelling and colors and numbers and things like that. And I did all of the background stuff most of the time. Occasionally I would be responsible for a program. So I not only had to plan it, I had to cast it, write it, and one time... I would be in other student' parts of it, too. If they were producing, I would be acting. We all had to do parts of it, and that was good. And then I was on a game and fish show, because it was the educational television program and they needed people to be involved in that. So that was a fun two years. From there we moved and we skied because skiing in Utah is wonderful only if you live in Utah. It's hard to get to if you live here. It's powder snow and it's twenty minutes from our back door to get up to Alta, thirty-five to get up to Park City. I took lessons, the kids took lessons, they were good skiers, but the educational system was awful in Salt Lake. My first grader had three

different teachers during the first year because it was on three shifts. We started at seven in the morning to 10:30, then you went from 11:00 to 2:30, then from 3:00 to 5:30 or something like that. They were shifting kids all day in order to use the space because I guess they couldn't afford to build buildings or I don't know what the reason was. But I'm sure it had to do with costs and they were using the same building for three different first grade classes. And the teachers just threw up their hands and quit. They just wouldn't stay.

**Bob:** Were all your children put on the same schedule, or on different ones?

**Bonnie:** Well, we only had the one in first grade, and the other was too young, David was just four... It was an eye-opener to me. The teachers actually went out on strike. It was the first time in my life I'd been involved when the teachers went out on strike and some Mormon friends of ours that we had known in Arlington Virginia, he called me, and he said, Bonnie you're going to have to come teach, you're going to have to volunteer because the teachers are all out on strike and I said, I sympathize with them, I can't go and teach when I want them to get better teaching conditions. And he was just horrified. He was donating his time, because he needed to teach during the strike, and I said, I just can't do that. I know I like to teach, but I don't like to teach if it's interfering with somebody else getting good teaching conditions. So, we moved from Salt Lake and went to Washington State and we were in Kennewick Washington and my husband was with Battelle Northwest, which is a research and development company and was in patent law there. We spent four and a half years there, and our boys loved it. I mean, it was a wonderful place to raise children, probably a terrible place to visit, just the opposite of here, which is a wonderful place to visit. Nobody understood that flat desert, dry, hot area. You came in from Umatilla if you came up from Portland or something and you were along the Columbia, and it was hot and dry. Grew wonderful melons and onions, peas and things like that in Walla Walla. And children. Because the children were safe, they could play, they could ride bikes, they could ride horses, they could swim, they could learn to boat, and water ski, you know, they grew and loved it. They had one of the best teachers our kids have ever, ever had in the second grade at Washington Elementary School in Kennewick Washington. I started substituting and then because they needed teachers I fell into a regular job there and taught kindergarten. It was half day kindergarten and that worked out beautifully because then I could be home with my kids the other half of the day. My younger boy was coming home from kindergarten so that was a good time. And we made our own fun. Friends did things with friends. And then we came back to Asheville.

**Bob:** Before you come back to Asheville, tell me about your religious life in Washington.

**Bonnie:** OK. (Laughs) That, again, was bad because when we got there, there was a Unitarian fellowship. They were a California-like fellowship, kinda weird and strange. I can't say that for all the people in the church, they were good friends, but the burning your bra and marching, you know, so much, and there was even marihuana that we heard happened. We weren't involved in it, but when we heard about that we just said, life's too short, we don't have to do that. So we...my husband kind of dropped out period. I think he was disappointed. He'd gotten me into this Unitarian thing and the third Sunday we visited he said, Bonnie, I think we are going to sign the book today. You know, at Vermont. And I said, Bob, let's give it some thought. And he said, No, I think we're going to sign the book today. I said, You are? I am? (Laughs) He signed it, and I thought well heck if he's the leader in our family I'll sign it, too. But I was not as ready. I was not as ready to sign the book on the line the third week. I liked it, you know, I felt good, I felt comfortable but that wasn't enough for me to make a commitment. But I did it. And so, I think in Washington when Bob was disillusioned and he didn't know but



what we were going to live in that spot for the rest of our lives, he kinda dropped out. I wanted to stick it out since I'd signed, and I'd made this commitment, but I understood that this was probably not the place for us. So I went to the liberal Episcopal church and it was quite liberal.

**Bob:** Now I want you to stop because I'm running out of tape, I've got to turn it over.

**Bonnie:** OK.

**Tape 1, Side B (February 18, 1993):**

**Bob:** You had an experience In Washington with an Episcopal church.

**Bonnie:** Right. One part is that you have to take communion. And it's required. You must take communion. And if you don't you can be excommunicated, after they talk to you several times, severely. And I said to this young priest, I can't take communion. I mean, I've led such a varied life, for you to ask me to go up and take communion, I mean, I'd choke on the bread. And he said that's all right, we'll talk about this, you don't have to join the church yet, we'll just take our time. He was very patient with me, very patient, and I think it took me a year and a half before I could understand enough that it could be my own private kind of communion with God.

**Bob:** Your own private kind of ceremony, meaningful to you.

**Bonnie:** Yes. And so, after that year and a half, he said, are you ready to join the church? And the kids were in the Sunday school and they were happy and I said yes. So Bob came to the service where I became a member.

**Bob:** Consecration, or something.

**Bonnie:** Yes. Whatever. And so, I just about did choke on the bread when I went up to take communion. (Laughs) Because, you know, Bob was there, but he had not made the same commitment. But it worked out, because the priest was so patient and...actually, I hesitate to call him a priest, because he was younger than us, and we were real good friends. There were some bright spots, I think I benefitted from the experience. I'm not sure I grew as much as I've grown in other places, but I didn't have a lot of pain either. They allowed me time to think about it. So now, we're moving back to Asheville because Bob's going to work with Olin Corporation in Brevard. Both of us wanted to come back to Asheville.

**Bob:** Except he thought for a while he might be settling in Washington.

**Bonnie:** Well, he just didn't know. He didn't know if he would have any opportunities to come back. But Marion and Dave Williams, Marion who is now Marion Stivers, Marion and her first husband Dave Williams, we were such good friends, the children grew up together, we went on picnics and wonderful things together when we lived in Asheville the first time, and they came to see us in Kennewick Washington with their children. And Marion was eight months pregnant with Morgan, their last one. And she was still taking this long trip across the country. Such a good sport. To have them come in and have salmon with us and to have barbeque and stay with us for two or three days was just one of the most special things that

had happened to us. And so we got to talking with them about Asheville and some of the changes and some of the things that were happening, and they said, would you come back? If there is anything there for you to come back, a job that you could come back to? And Bob said sure we would. And I looked at him, and I thought what are you saying? Here we bought our house...and what are you saying? I guess I've always been about half a step behind what he decided we were going to do. And sure enough, Dave got back here and talked to a friend who knew a lot of people in the area and one of his close friends was also a lawyer down at Olin and he said, sure, we need a lawyer at Olin. Why don't you have an interview. So, they called Bob, not Dave but the other guy, called Bob and said, why don't you come down and interview in October? Bob was here for the birth of Dave and Marion's son. Marion brought him home from the hospital, and Bob was staying at their Inn, they called it High Haven, and he got to hold Morgan who was just three or four days old. And I was sitting back there wishing I could be here too. But he had come to interview, and he got the job, and he came in February, very cold, there was lots and lots of snow that year, it was February of 1969. In April of 1969, the boys and I drove across the country because we didn't want to drive in winter. My parents went with us as far as Denver. They came out to Washington State and my dad and I took turns driving to Denver, and then Bob flew to Denver and drove us the rest of the way. So, we came back to Asheville. And we moved in to 35 Martindale.

**Bob:** Now, let me interrupt here. I want to get the news tonight. Would you like to stop now, because I would like to talk to you about the church since that time.

**Bonnie:** OK.

**Bob:** You've been here since I came in 1966, so you probably have as much experience with this church as anybody who is still alive.

**Bonnie:** Oh, my goodness...I hope I can remember details...

**Bob:** Well, I don't want to wear you out. I'm very pleased with what we've done so far. Are you?

**Bonnie:** I am, yes, I definitely am. There are a couple more stories I want to tell, but it's about after this period.

**Bob:** OK, we'll break now, and I want to go home and hear what they have to say about the President's speech last night. We're breaking for now and we'll come back later.

**Break in interview. Continuing February 24, 1993:**

**Bonnie:** OK. We were on our way back from Washington State, as I recall when you and I last talked. I arrived in April of 1969 with two boys and a dog and Bob greeted us with a rented house that he had found and he had slept on the living room carpet until we got there with the furniture. And it turned out to be the house that we bought. It was in Lakeview Park, a nice neighborhood and good place for the boys and a pleasant location for us. We had lots and lots of repairs to do but we opted to do the repairs and stay where we were then and buy the house. And that is our 35 Martindale address that the church has had for many, many years. When we came back they had had some of the worst snow that Asheville and Brevard, you

know this whole area, had had in many years. It was the 1968 winter, November, December, into 1969 January, February, March. And so, the children had missed a lot of days of school. And when our kids arrived in April, they had to start making up Saturdays. They hadn't missed them, of course, but they did start making up the Saturdays with the children and I expected that maybe winters would always be that hard in Asheville. Not that I'd seen one yet, but because of all the snow days they were making up. But it hasn't been. We haven't had winters where they had to make up more than two days at the most. They always allow for them in the school calendar. They always put in five or six snow days, but we haven't used up that many.

We came back as Episcopalians and stayed at Grace Episcopal for about a year and a half and then kept hearing from our good friends Dave and Marion Williams and from new friends that Tracy Pullman was at the Unitarian Church. Though we had these questions about how many years can we keep flipping back and forth, we gave it a try. And we were well rewarded because Tracy Pullman was probably one of the most intelligent and most regal. He had a manner that was so kind and so thoughtful and so broadening. You learned so much from him. And you felt like he was your friend immediately. And I know that a minister can't be close friends with everybody, but he gave you that feeling that the time he spent with you was really quality time. And he wanted to know about you and he cared about the family. And of course everybody reciprocated because they wanted his association. You wanted to be with him.

**Bob:** Was his wife well at that time?

**Bonnie:** No. Was her name Ruth?

**Bob:** I don't know her name. I just remember that she was ill when they came here.

**Bonnie:** Right. She was never very strong when we knew her, and did die during that time.

**Bob:** Was he a full-time minister?

**Bonnie:** He was a full-time minister.

**Bob:** But it was a lot easier than being in Detroit's biggest church.

**Bonnie:** I'm sure it was. But we remember him here, not in this particular building but in the other sanctuary and office. Where some of us are sitting right now was his office, back where the audio equipment and everything are now, was his office. And our son was taking "God and Country" in his scout troop.

**Bob:** What is your younger son's name?

**Bonnie:** David.

**Bob:** And your older son was Steve, right?

**Bonnie:** Yes. David was working on his Eagle Scout, and one of the ways to the Eagle was to take this God and Country, which was at least half a year that you worked with your minister. You met with them and you actually laid out some projects at the direction and guidance of the minister. And Tracy Pullman was his minister. And he chose to do that. We had only been

back in this church for four or five months, maybe more. We had probably been back for at least a year that we had been back, and he had started in the church school. He had Nancy Hammond as his teacher later, but before that when he was getting the God and Country as probably a fourteen-year-old Tracy Pullman was wonderful to David. I'm certain, as certain as I am of anything, that this was why David built the relationships within the church school that he did. Because he was really finding out more who he was and who he wanted to associate with, that he really liked those kids in that church school. And they were together at least five years, and still get in touch and write, and when they are in town they call me to find out where the other person is. Laurie Noto was one of those. She and her husband are coming now as active members in the church right now. Martha Tenney was another one. Her father was Dr. James Tenney from the Health Department. Good citizens, good people were being shaped by Tracy Pullman.

After Tracy retired to the Charles River, he wrote us letters and told about looking out his window at the Charles River and invited us to come. And I am so sorry that we didn't ever go to see Boston through his eyes, because he loved Boston. And then we got better acquainted with Naomi, and Naomi has certainly been a long time friend. Probably because of the first association with such a fine man.

Then the Hammonds were our next ministers. We were in on the groups that met to interview him and ... We weren't on that committee, but they had many different gatherings to introduce him and to talk with Nancy and Bill. Of course, Nancy won all our hearts. She was such a warm and wonderful person. And we all said, Oh Nancy is so wonderful, and we said, Yes, but we are calling Bill. And we'd think but he's good too, he's bright and I'm sure he's a good strong leader. He was different, the style was different than Tracy Pullman's. I'm sure that his leadership began to make it possible for us to gather the money and the resources to build this. So, everybody has talents. They don't show up in the same package. They are evidently needed at certain times. That was when they did the long-range planning and Bob worked with Hammond on a lot of the things to get this pulled together. The major thing I remember about those years is this strong high school RE [Religious Education] group. Nancy Hammond had a lot to do with that. I did work with them also on off years. I think she had them two years and then I had them for a year, and then she'd come back and work with them again. It was kind of hard to have your own teenage son in a class. It was fun for me, but I think it was probably kind of hard for him. And so it was better for me to be working with a different age group. Nancy was so loved by these kids that I think it was hard for them to give her up. She still keeps in touch with these kids. David made a definite point before he went to Arizona, he knew he was going to be away for a long time, he made a definite point of going down to the library and asking to see Nancy Hammond, and they said, Oh I'm sure she's in a meeting, she's too busy to see you, because David had a beard, he was really looking scruffy, he'd just gotten back from Africa, and they were sure that she was too busy to see him (laughs) and she came walking in at that time and she saw David, and she went up and hugged him and everybody in the library was sort of, oh Okay, (laughs) maybe she's not too busy to see you.

**Bob:** This happened recently?

**Bonnie:** Yes, this was July 1992. Before he left for Arizona. It's just to point up how very valuable she is in his life.

We weren't the strongest members along about 1981 and 1982. I sure I was trying to finish up a Master's degree, and then I went right into an Educational Specialist degree and I really

bombed out of a lot of things.

**Bob:** What's your educational specialty?

**Bonnie:** My educational specialty is in supervision. But my teaching specialty is special education. And that's what my Masters is in.

**Bob:** Handicapped children, or exceptional children?

**Bonnie:** My Masters is in handicapped, we call them exceptional children. Exceptional children in Buncombe County includes both handicapped and gifted. My masters is more with the handicapped kids.

**Bob:** Have you ever worked at Lucy Herring [School] or Wortham [Irene Wortham Center]?

**Bonnie:** No, I haven't been employed there. I had associations with people who worked there, because we would work together on projects or in different groups. The sub-specialty under that is learning disabilities because I was one of the early teachers in Buncombe County to have developed an interest and a beginning specialty. At that time no one was a specialist in learning disabilities, in fact we had professors at Western Carolina University telling us that there wasn't such a thing, and that all they meant by learning disabilities was that they had something else that was giving them problems in education. Because it wasn't well defined. It was to us, as we were beginning to study it and in 1963 it had been well defined. It just hadn't gotten to Western North Carolina yet. Because I knew a little bit more about it, having worked with some other people before I came back here, you know how it is, as nobody else knows about it, and you know something more about it, then as you are looked to for some answers, then you go and look for more yourself. You teach yourself, and you go and there are lots of conference and workshops.

**Bob:** When did you take your Masters?

**Bonnie:** 1977.

**Bob:** Here?

**Bonnie:** Yes, I finished it up here. But it had to be not so much in specific learning disabilities but in mostly other handicapping conditions because that's what Western Carolina University knew about. In fact they were exceptionally strong in all the ranges of mental retardation and they were exceptionally strong with behavioral, emotional handicaps, and in speech and language. Those were their strengths and those were strengths that I received in my masters. But I was interested in getting stronger in learning disabilities so even in my educational specialist degree I really took from other resources, Appalachian State, for instance, and I could get more expertise as I searched for it. I was chosen to be the national Teacher of the Year for specific learning disabilities. The Sam Kirk Award is given out by the Learning Disabilities Association and so that was a lot of fun. I had a chance to go to Miami to make an acceptance speech, but then to Anaheim California to present in a workshop. So those were two fun times in my life. It was 1984. I have been a regular ed teacher, I've taught first grade and third grade, and then into special ed and have taught just in the special areas since then. And I have been in supervision, I did supervision for seven years here.



**Bob:** Was this in the county schools or in the city schools?

**Bonnie:** County. So, life goes on. As we left the Hammond years and Jim Brewer came in, I see you have lots of information here. The church was definitely growing. We were dealing with growth, but I don't know that we were putting down any real good plans. We didn't really have some strong planning about growth. But it was coming, and some people were saying we needed an assistant minister, one that might even work half time with Hendersonville. Other people were saying we needed an Associate Minister and then there would be the finance people come in and say, no, no, no, we can't afford that. I was on the long range planning committee for three years during that real difficult time because Janet [Harvey] had begun her work toward being a minister of religious education but it was quite a ways down the road. She had begun and sometimes she would see it clear to completion in four years, and other times she would say, well, it might take me longer. So we really didn't have a real clear idea about how soon that would be, and so we weren't really incorporating that into our thinking when we were talking about would it be an assistant minister or an associate minister. We were really thinking about someone else would be called to do that. And the Board ... our recommendation was the Board would form a committee to see if we could work out something at Hendersonville, so that we could have a half time assistant minister, and they would have then a minister for half time. I wasn't on the Board, so I don't know what the Board's discussion was, but that was not something they decided to go ahead to do. I don't know if Jim Brewer indicated that he really didn't need us to spend that kind of money, didn't need the assistant? He was never really clear to us, we didn't know his schedule and things like that. He said, I've been through all that, he said I'm too old for that, I'm not giving my schedule out and I'm not counting my hours, I'm not saying I'm spending two hours this way and fourteen hours that way. And I'm sure he had a point, and I'm sure that at his point in life where he is close to retirement he just said, I've done all that, I'm not doing it any more. And he didn't. He did not give his schedule to the Board. They didn't know hours. So I can only surmise that maybe is what happened.

**Bob:** Can you tell me anything about how Janet became the director of religious education here? Were you involved in that?

**Bonnie:** She was paid half time, and then she was three quarter time, and so I think that with so much more expertise, she certainly had gained skills and been working long and hard at religious education that, I wasn't on the Board so I don't know, but I think that her growth with adult programs as well as children's programs just needed more time. And when we did not use whatever money we might have had for an assistant minister, the money was there. It was approved at a congregational meeting to have her be a full time RE director.

**Bob:** Do you know how Janet became director in the first place, even part time director? Instead of just having volunteers as director, or chairman of the committee?

**Bonnie:** I'm sure that she came in to the part time job just like a lot of other RE teachers came into it, because she was willing to do the RE. And Bill Hammond encouraged her to go to school. Bill Hammond saw skills or something special that she was willing to add to the RE department. He encouraged her to go for her minister of religious education, set up her contacts to begin the application process and to begin the work. She is a very intelligent person. I'm sure she has lots of brain power. I have personally seen her grow a lot from her first timid effort at talking in front of a group because I think that was not what she was used to do. Some things that we enjoyed together were the studies that I had in gifted education,

she was also very interested in gifted education for her children, her two girls were gifted and she wanted to see that they got what they could get in the public schools and all the other resources too. So we talked a lot about gifted education. Janet certainly was quick and capable as far as picking up and getting right into the reading material as well as course work and everything that was a possibility or a suggestion to her.

**Bob:** Can I take you back to that long range planning committee? Can you give me some names of other people who were on it at the time when Brewer was here?

**Bonnie:** Yes, Alice Hancy was at first and then her term ran out.

**Bob:** I was asking you how the Sandburg gift occurred because I haven't had that story. How am I going to find out about that?

**Bonnie:** Well, I know you really have to ask David Williams. He's the only one that knows really what happened. But I know second or third hand, because he came over to our house right after he talked to Mrs. Sandburg and he was very, very excited, you could tell he was, even though he wasn't the kind that jumped up and down. He came over and he wanted to sit on the back porch and talk and talk, and he said that he had just seen Mrs. Sandburg, we lived a block away from her house, they were in a lovely big two story red brick home and of course the girls are still there, Janet and Margaret live in that house with their big German shepherd dog. And Mrs. Sandburg was with them, too, when they first bought the house. And he said, I think the most exciting thing has just happened. Mrs. Sandburg and I have agreed, she wants to give a gift to the church. I don't know that he went asking her for it, but I think that he may have given her the openings and the opportunities to think of it herself. She had evidently told him that she was willing to give a nice gift. And I'm sure that's where the Sandburg Hall came from. And he would have to tell you how much and what all the arrangements were. It was a nice big gift. He came to our house because Bob was on the long range planning, and I'm sure that he knew that Bob would be pleased and interested to know that there was something to work with, money to work with. That's really all I know about that part of it.

**Bob:** Was your husband one of those that recommended professional fund raising?

**Bonnie:** I doubt that. It's not in Bob's nature, no, I don't think he would have.

**Bob:** Do you think it's necessary for me to talk to him about that, and about the other work he did at the church? Would you say he was as involved as you have been in the church?

**Bonnie:** For a short time he was as involved. He might have been a sprinter, because he took off, and he was for a short time involved, but he has not been as involved for as long as I have, but I would say that he did not recommend the professional fundraiser, that sounds more like Bill Hammond. Bill Hammond was really hot on that kind of thing, and he thought that would be the way to raise the most money. Now, I guess they did raise money but of course they spent quite a bit of it, too, on the professional fundraiser. And we haven't had another one since, which I think says to me that Unitarians just have the skills, the knowledge, the energy to put...when they decide to. (laughs) They can do all of that perfectly well themselves. And I still think that. But I know it really wears some people thin, because people with that kind of talent are used over and over, in a lot of other things, too.

**Bob:** That reminds me, one of the things I wanted to make clear to you is that I want to know

more about your contributions to Asheville as a community, in this last time that we have together. I'd like to know more about the other involvements you have had. You've been involved with teaching and with education all your life.

**Bonnie:** Right. I was Vice-President of the Asheville League of Women Voters. The first time I was Vice-President for two years, I was intending to be quite a bit more involved, I had been asked to be the President of the League, but we moved, so I did not do that, but when we came back I was involved for two or three more years, until I started teaching. Then, teaching really kind of stopped a lot of the extra involvement.

**Bob:** You returned to teaching because you simply are really very interested in that and its something that you could not leave alone, as soon as you were free of children in the home and things like that...

**Bonnie:** I really had to fight Bob a lot along the way about it, because he couldn't understand why I was intent upon getting back to teaching and doing this masters and doing an EdS and he was supportive in the only way that he knew how to be because his mother always stayed home. His mother was home all the time. And so he didn't understand. But of course my mother was a teacher, my father was a teacher, and it wasn't so unusual for me to imagine how a family worked things out around having everybody working. So this was difficult for him. Now when I look back at it I wonder why did I work so hard all my life? Why didn't I stay home and make cookies? (laughs) But really, I couldn't have had it any other way. I just probably had that drive. And I did like teaching so much. But it wasn't because he wanted me to go to work, or that we needed for me to go to work. It helped pay for nice things like for trips and things. I don't think my working has been a bad thing economically but it wasn't the major reason. It was definitely just a side amount and it was more rewarding for its own rewards. Just the fun of learning, the fun of being with kids, the fun of doing things in a community. I also was President of our learning disabilities association for three terms. Not right together, but they were separated by some other years. But I would come back to it when they would need a leader, and I was willing to serve in that. I still am a strong member of that.

**Bob:** Is that a small organization?

**Bonnie:** It's had as many as 150 members. It's maybe 68 or so now. It varies because parents are the members. There are teachers, also. But the parents come and go as their children have needs.

**Bob:** Are you involved in the planning of the new school in the county?

**Bonnie:** Well, we all are...Oh, no, I'm not involved in the planning because our own school needs as well as, you know we've got a new school that's being built in that area, and so I've been involved in that planning.

**Bob:** No I didn't know that. What are you talking about?

**Bonnie:** Well, Venable and Sand Hill Elementary are merging into a new school. In Back Talk, you've probably been reading about what the name will be. We were naming it Heritage, now there is some other feeling about going back to naming it Sand Hill. That will be resolved on March 4 so in the meantime we all are sort of in limbo about what to call this beautiful new

facility until the Board decides what it will be called on March 4. The other facility for the handicapped is more in the realm of the central office. They are all working hard on designing and deciding where that is going to be.

**Bob:** But Sand Hill is not only a school for the handicapped. That will be down by Roberson, is that right?

**Bonnie:** Yes, that's right. What we will have are intensive intervention classes for the handicapped and a preschool handicapped class. So, we have space in the new building that was planned a long time ago for a nice wing for special education and plenty of therapist, preschool handicapped, intensive intervention and all the children in the school. There will be 850 children in the school. So the numbers will be probably in the, 90 or so regular children will have speech...

**Bob:** You give me the impression that learning disabilities is a kind of continuous thing with normal children mixed in together going on almost all the time in almost all classrooms. Is that correct?

**Bonnie:** Specific learning disabilities definition is that it needs to be children with average or above intelligence but with processing problems. You know, a problem with perception. Either vision, visual perceptual, memory problems with visual memory or auditory memory, distortion of their vision, of their perception of the things they see, or distortion of the things they hear. So, they don't discriminate the same and since it's different for all kids who have learning disabilities, it takes quite a bit of intensive evaluation to put your finger on it and to say, what is this child's problem. And when you find out what that child's problem is then you can intervene with some educational special interventions.

**Bob:** I'm sorry to be so ignorant about all of this.

**Bonnie:** I'm glad to have a chance to tell you because it's not something, unless you are in the field, that you know a lot about. You wanted to ask about how the Unicorns got started.

**Bob:** Yes I did.

**Bonnie:** Well, I think that was probably in the early days of Patsy Keever and Lisa Holt, Lisa and Larry, and Patsy and Johnny were early in seeing the need for a group that liked to do some similar things and get better acquainted in the church. Even though Bob and I were, what, seven to ten years older than they were, I'm not just sure how old they are but they extended the parameters to include those of us that were in that age. There were maybe 19 to 20 couples that would take turns having people at their homes and at first it was just strictly to party and to get to know each other. We brought our own casseroles to share and just had fun. And then they began the treasure auctions. Pat Godbold and her husband joined that group, and we had the best treasure auctions. This was when... **End of Tape One, Side B**

**Tape 2, Side A (February 24, 1993) (continued):**

**Bob:** You were telling me about silent auctions. Were those held at the church or in people's

homes?

**Bonnie:** Yes, this was Friday nights, at the church, and big crowds. And I know of three that were given. They may have had more than that. Lisa Andrews, on the third one, said that she would match anything that we could raise at the treasure auction. So, that one made about three thousand, so she matched that. Which is a nice help to a church budget.

**Bob:** Was that the kickoff for the expansion plan or had that already begun?

**Bonnie:** I think they wanted to raise this money for RE [Religious Education]. And I think it was for furnishing this new addition. Unicorns had an interest in RE, because their kids were usually still in it. So, I'm not sure that the Board had them earmark it for RE every time they did a treasure auction, but I think that sometimes they would state ahead of time, This is a treasure auction to furnish the RE department. And it would be clear what it would be going for. Lisa Andrews, if nobody else has told you this, Lisa Andrews had those beautiful collection bowls hand worked by Bob Brunk. Bob Brunk is a very important artist in this town. He has things at the Smithsonian. Right now he is working with antiques and he has an antique auction. But there are a number of people in our church who have an original by Bob Brunk and I think that's kind of nice because he has his things shown at the Smithsonian, that's kind of important. I don't think he's ever been a member of our church but I think he is certainly well known by Jo Birdsall, Bob Birdsall, and Lisa Andrews. Ann Upton has an original Bob Brunk. Ann Upton has a coffee table that he made for her.

**Bob:** She is someone that I intend to interview one of these days. Were you here when Richard Hendrick began the social action vote and reorganization, so that we had votes to decide what we were going to emphasize?

**Bonnie:** Yes, I was here, and he must have been Vice President, because he was chair of the church council. And, we'd talk about those things. I remember feeling pretty strongly that they could not state something out of a committee that said "the Unitarian Church believes..." and that then everybody in the Unitarian Church had to supposedly believe that. And I said, we can't do that. We can say, we will choose different things to work for, and that we believe in the general goodness of mankind, this kind of thing. But to come out with one statement that "The Unitarian Church of Asheville believes that marijuana is a healthful crop" you know, nobody could expect that 480 people could all believe that same thing. So, I remember that early discussion, when they said we need to vote on the things that we are most interested in working for. But we cannot make the blanket statement that all Unitarians believe this.

**Bob:** So, the church sponsors an emphasis, and then the people are asked to volunteer to work with it ...

**Bonnie:** With different things. You get three or four different choices ,

**Bob:** One time, since I have been here, there's been a goal which was unanimous, fortunately, of approving some kind of euthanasia choice in older age. I can't state it the way it was stated. That was a case when there was a total congregational vote on the item for which there was a unanimous vote in favor of approving people making decisions about eliminating life support systems and things of that sort. Do you recall that?



**Bonnie:** I wasn't active at that point, maybe? I took a "sabbatical" (laughs) in my mind with nobody's approval or anything else. After the long range planning three years were over, I just was bombed out. I was so burned out. I just stayed home on Sunday morning. Went walking in the woods, or whatever. And I don't know if I would be back now, if it hadn't been for Bill and Jane Frisch because they called me and they said we've missed you, where have you been. And they talked with me because they were having some feelings too that things were going a little bit differently than what they had hoped. And I remember Jane's statement. She said we are Unitarians and we have talked about this so much and we know in our hearts that we understand the choices and our choice is to remain with liberal religious education, liberal religion, with liberal religion as we know it. And so, we are not going to go searching for another church or anything. So they didn't put any hard sell on me or anything, and I think it was even months after that...

**Bob:** Was this just over the phone, or what.

**Bonnie:** Over the phone, I talked to Jane for some time and, nobody else had ever called me, nobody else had indicated that they had missed me or wondered why.

**Bob:** Isn't that interesting?

**Bonnie:** It's interesting, because I want people to know, it is important.

**Bob:** You will be surprised to know that after Arnold Walz's wife died so tragically he told me that he felt unloved and uncared for here. People were cruel to him in a number of ways a year after his wife died. That's unbelievable for that to happen. It happened and it's strange to hear it, isn't it?

**Bonnie:** I don't know why that particular period in our church history was so stand-offish, keep people at arms length, and don't act mushy, don't act like you care. Carl Grenadis and I were working together with the learning disabilities association and we knew each other through that, not through the church, and were surprised when we both had come, I arrived back at the church, and he arrived at the church for the first time, and we were surprised to see each other. Of course, Carl is a hard-working member. I can't say that he was one of the reasons that I came back, but it certainly was pleasant to see his smile. It was pleasant to have somebody that you kind of knew and who would smile at you if you came and were in the coffee hour. But I think the crucial win, and again I'm not good at names, she was at the TJ District...

**Bob:** You don't happen to mean Allie Gooding, do you?

**Bonnie:** Thank you very much! Yes, Allie Gooding saw me at the hospital. I just happened to be going to visit somebody else. And Allie said, Bonnie, I certainly wonder why I haven't seen your smiling face at the church. And I said, Allie, there's probably a lot of reasons, but I just might come back and try to share that smiling face again. She was just very pleasant but I thought, my goodness, I've never worked with Allie, I don't know Allie very well, how in the world would she of all people have missed me when the people that I worked the hardest with didn't. (laughs) and never said a thing. It was just interesting that she made the comment. And I was glad she did.

**Bob:** I think that this burn out issue is a big one that has really never been settled among

Unitarians. They say they are skillful and energetic people, and they tend to get heavily involved in a lot of things so they are likely to be burned out in one place or another. But I knew people who were in this church before I joined it and whom I met elsewhere in the city who wouldn't have anything to do with it now, who would not come. I know people who come and leave the minute the service is over, so that they don't get hooked, again. Because they got over-involved. And I don't know what churches in general, or what this church could do. Something should be done, to try to make sure that people don't get over-involved, or try to do more than is possible, and don't have the kind of long-term frustration which comes from really trying and not getting much response. And then the kind of clamming up, which I think you observed, and which other people have observed.

**Bonnie:** And to have the perfect right to say no, not this time, and feel comfortable and OK about it. And to know that you are still a valuable member, and that we're glad that you are with us, and when you are ready, you'll let us know. Because at different times, as your children leave, you have more time, or as you finish a degree, like Marsha Allen has just finished her masters, we're hoping to get her more involved, and if she wants to, at least to invite her.

**Bob:** I can name I think four or five families that are burned out that were either a key person in a fellowship of Unitarians and it just got to be too much and so they left and they moved to Asheville or somewhere so they didn't have to do it that way and other people who were involved in churches tried to go too fast. I heard something at the Sunday discussion from at least three people, one of them Andy Reed, and Dave Guerin, and Harry Hamill all expressing the problems of trying to get too big. Resistances that come as a consequence of being burned out or seeing someone else that is burned out before. So we have to really give attention to that, it seems to me. Well, I'm keeping you a long time. Any more stories?

**Bonnie:** I really don't have any more stories. I probably have thousands of them, but I think this definitely represents anyway a long and fruitful and I hope even longer and more fruitful time as a Unitarian.

**Bob:** Where is your son Steve right now?

**Bonnie:** He's in Hendersonville.

**Bob:** Oh, he is,

**Bonnie:** Uh huh

**Bob:** Does he go to the Unitarian fellowship there?

**Bonnie:** No, Steve was never a Unitarian. Steve hit the points with the Episcopal church, and must have felt comfortable because he met an Episcopalian in high school, went to the same college, North Carolina State University, and they graduated and got married in the Episcopal church, and they are raising their son in the Episcopal church, and are very comfortable. And I've always felt that we needed to provide our children a place to grow from. We had religion in our home, it was not always the same religion, but we had time for thinking about our own spiritual growth. And I feel OK about it as a mother. I feel good about it.

**Bob:** Well, I think this doesn't belong on a tape, but what the heck. I heard this word liberal

religion used by Bruce Larson and by this man Gaines, Charles Gaines who talked to us about the importance of liberal religion in this city or in the world and I agree with that statement, but I don't think it has to have a particular label on it. Unitarian, or Universalist, or Episcopalian or Presbyterian. I find lots and lots of denominations that are pursuing the same liberal religious goals. I was impressed with a meeting I went to of the Ba'hai sponsored by the Ba'hai for Racial Unity last Saturday.

**Bonnie:** Absolutely.

**Bob:** And I went home and I read the encyclopedia about Ba'hai principles. You and I could agree with every one of them, all ten of the ones that were stated in 1921. The Unity church has similar goals and I don't think that we have to compartmentalize it in terms of some kind of creedal thing or some kind of organizational thing. I hope that in our pursuit of liberal religious principles that we are not sectarian...

**Bonnie:** That we are not proselytizing just Unitarianism.

**Bob:** ...points of view. I tried that idea on Jim Brewer once and didn't get very far with it. I mentioned Muslim views that are similar. I didn't get at all to first base. I'd like to see that that changes the next time around here.

**Bonnie:** I think we have a chance for that. One of the nicest groups in Asheville that I have ever had an opportunity to be a part of was a group called Dimensions. You've never heard of it before because it isn't functioning at this time, but I wish it were. When we came back in 1969, a good friend of mine from the previous Asheville, when we lived here before, Mimi Shackleford was definitely an Episcopalian but it doesn't matter, as you say, it doesn't matter because her views are very open and broad and caring and involving other people. She organized very informally a group of us that grew from twelve women to about 60 women which was too large for anyone to have in their home, which was part of the problem that we had to work with. And then some of those began to be not attending so much, and it kind of leveled out at about thirty women that got to know each other very well. And they were picked because of their representativeness from many groups in Asheville. But we had two women who always would come, the Episcopalian, the Jewish, the Unitarian, the... We really hit many different groups of people.

**Bob:** In the way that the Rotary tries to see that different occupations are represented in its members.

**Bonnie:** Okay. Yes. And these women...

**Bob:** These were not ordained women, these were just ordinary people.

**Bonnie:** Just ordinary women that had all kinds of occupations and interests and children, families, but our religions we could talk openly and freely about. And we could share things that were happening in our particular churches, we invited each other to come. I went to Bar Mitzvahs that I never would have known about. I wouldn't have known what a Bar Mitzvah was before, but because this friend in this group invited me to her son's Bar Mitzvah. It was beautiful. Much more meaningful because we were friends and close. And one of the Jewish girls, and I don't know what they call that, but it was similar to the Bar Mitzvah that they...

**Bob:** Bat Mitzvah.

**Bonnie:** Bat Mitzvah. At thirteen, this little girl was a little older than that, but we had chances to attend each other's churches and talk freely about our worries, our cares, our concerns, our anger, what we were angry about, being excluded. Not me so much maybe, but certainly my eyes were opened about how I had been involved with a group that had excluded, you know. So I stopped, I wanted that stopped in any group that I might have been involved in.

**Bob:** The League of Women Voters was like that. It drew from all faiths. The political focus made that an open thing. But Dimensions is different. It is a women's organization strictly, or were men in it at all?

**Bonnie:** Well, we weren't organized enough to say whether we'd have men or not, you know, it was so informal that it just grew from a friendship and stayed a friendship kind of thing. But too many of us went back to work, and during the day could not meet, and they didn't want to do it at night because our children needed us at night, so it just dissolved.

**Bob:** About when do you remember that happened?

**Bonnie:** That was 1969-1970...

**Bob:** Long ago.

**Bonnie:** Yes, it was early 1970's we started the Green Circle which was a program that went into the schools and each one of us took a part and went with a team and the schools let us come in to teach about opening the circle to include all races, and all religions. The early 1970's. Of course, it was a time when the schools wanted us, because they were integrating, you know, and they needed a group that was willing to come in and talk to the children about it. And it was a very well written program. And it's still around. You can ask [Rev.] Maureen [Killoran] about it today, and she'll know about it. It's called the Green Circle.

**Bob:** I think we'd better stop.

**Bonnie:** I think so.

**Bob:** Sometime I will have to ask you about how you think the current integration plans have been going in Jones School and in all...

**Interview ended**

**End of Tape 2**