

Unitarian Universalist Church of Asheville
Oral History Collection
Interview with Claudette Reed Upton
February 10, 1993
Interviewed by Bob Potter

Bob: This is Bob Potter speaking. I'll be talking to Claudette Reed [Upton]. This is the tenth of February 1993. Tell me about your reaction to your mother's trip to Europe by sailboat.

Claudette: I thought it sounded terrific. I was delighted that she had the opportunity, and was sure that she would do a good job.

Bob: Are you a sailor?

Claudette: No...

Bob: I can tell.

Claudette: She has always taken risks. I was a little concerned when she told me she was going to Peru, and going to Machu Picchu last year, and I said, who arranged the trip, and she said "Oh, some man." And I thought, oh god there was going to be a mule, they were going to load her up with cocaine and send her back (laughs). But in fact she had a wonderful time and never saw the time pass through it, and ended up in the place that in fact, that happens to be, and she did not know this, the largest cocaine shipment port in South America. She and another lady hiked in through the jungle, because they found it interesting that this is the place where Brazil, Peru and Colombia all meet and there were no Customs.

Bob: It that time, when your mother went to Peru, you thought she was in good health.

Claudette: Yes.

Bob: So this recent event shocked you some.

Claudette: Oh yeah. I saw her in September. She came out to visit me the last week of August and first week of September last year, and she seemed tired. She had slowed down. That was really what it was. And I commented on it, and she said yes and grudgingly admitted that she was beginning to feel her age, which at the time was 76, going on 77. I really didn't think she was ill. I just thought Mother had fought the aging process successfully for 76 years and it finally caught up with her, like it does with everybody eventually. But her terrible fatigue and decline happened so quickly that none of us were prepared for it at all.

Bob: I was bothered about trying to do the interview this week, because I didn't want you to be thinking about that the whole time. I'd like you to think about some of the happier times...

Claudette: Well, we've had the opportunity to... it's been about three...

Bob: The three of you.

Claudette: No, Andy and I. Ron only got here on Saturday. Andy and I have been here since the week before she died, and so we had the time with her then, we also were able to be with her

when she died. That to me was a real gift because that makes the fact of her death much easier to cope with.

Bob: I understand. Let's go way back to your earliest days. What are your most vivid memories from growing up in this home when you were very small.

Claudette: I guess outdoors. This was a very rural area then. We would walk out to the end, the road was dirt, and we would walk down to the end of the road for picnics on the banks of the river down there, which would have been Hominy Creek feeding into the French Broad, which was quite wide down there. And all of this area was wooded and the houses that were on the road, you couldn't see any of them from here because all of them had lots of trees, hedges, and it was really quite rural, and for children it was just amazing. Daddy built us a tree house down in the woods. It was really an idyllic childhood in that sense. I have nothing but good memories about that.

Bob: What sorts of things did your parents teach you to live by?

Claudette: Well, truth, for one thing. Our father could not stand lying. It didn't matter what the excuse or what trouble we had gotten into, as long as you didn't lie about it he could deal with it. But lying was the worst. And Mother refused to ever lie for us. When I was maybe ten or eleven and some friend of mine would call and want me to come over, and I wouldn't want to, and I would...my mother heard me once say "My Mother won't let me" and she jumped all over me afterward. She said, "I did not say you couldn't do anything...Don't use me as an excuse. If you don't want to go over there, you have to figure out some way to deal with it yourself. Don't blame it on me." So that was probably the foremost value that was drummed into us, that there was no excuse for not telling the truth. I will never forget Mother saying all through my growing up years, if you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all. So it really went even to that point, that you didn't lie just to be nice. You just didn't say anything.

Bob: There could be a lot of silences.

Claudette: Yeah. I have since learned to lie for those sorts of reasons. So there was truth, there was respect for other people. I mean, I grew up in a time when there were still separate water fountains on Pritchard Park for, I mean Pack Square, and Pritchard Park, for blacks and whites, and then my parents made sure that we were as color blind as we could be in the south at that time. Mother was involved with the lunch counter sit-ins and the only reason she didn't take me along was that she was afraid there might be violence. Because she wanted me to be there. I was involved with the student committee on racial equality, A-SCORE, Asheville Student Committee on Racial Equality. She took me to virtually everything. She took me out of school to take me to trials in Madison County when there was the voting fraud, things happened and the FBI were called in, and she took me out of school, and took me to the court every day in Madison County so I could see what length people will go to, to ensure that their interests were served. And of course, in that whole thing, there were people voting who had been dead for fifty years, really classic Madison County politics. I was about eleven or twelve when that happened.

Bob: You weren't going to the Day School.

Claudette: No, I never did. I went to Enka.

Bob: Enka High.

Claudette: Uh huh. I went to Venable for the first six years, and then Mother discovered that I was spending half my day in the Principal's office. He did not have a secretary, and I was in the sixth grade doing secretarial work for the Principal, and had access to all the students' confidential files, and I was making straight As. What really upset Mother was, I had such a big mouth, she was sure it was absolutely dangerous for me to have access to any confidential files at any time. So they pulled me out of there and put me in David Millard. I didn't get a chance to have a vote on that one. They had to pay tuition to get me into the city schools, but...

Bob: Did that mean that all three of you were in private schools at one time?

Claudette: No David Millard wasn't private, it was a public junior high, right downtown across from the First Baptist Church. It's torn down now. See, the city system was 6 - 3 - 3, with elementary school, junior high from grades seven to nine, and then high school. The county system was not. The county system was 8 - 4. There were no middle schools at that time in the county. So I had two more years at Venable had I stayed in the county system then. But Mother didn't want me there, so they sent me to David Millard for those two years. And of course because I was outside the city they had to pay tuition because I wasn't in the district. But then, I was given a choice, when it came to ninth grade, whether I wanted to stay at David Millard for one more year, or switch to Country Day, or go to Enka, and I chose to go to Enka because I felt that, I didn't like the girls in my class very much at David Millard, they were the daughters of the elite and they were snobs. My parents didn't have a lot of money and certainly were averse to spending it on things like the right clothes for me to fit in with cheerleaders. So, I knew the people out here didn't have those same values, so I went to Enka for four years.

Bob: And then, did you end up at Duke?

Claudette: Uh huh.

Bob: What did you do at Duke? What did you study?

Claudette: English.

Bob: English. Other languages?

Claudette: Well, I had done four years of Latin in high school. So, at Duke I took one year of German, did not like German at all, and switched to Spanish. So then I took Spanish for the rest of the time.

Bob: Did you hear always English in your home?

Claudette: My grandparents lived in West Asheville, my mother's parents.

Bob: I didn't know that.

Claudette: Yeah, they moved down here, I believe the year I was born or shortly thereafter. And so, Mother always spoke Russian with them, and we spent a lot of time with them. So we heard Russian in that house, but not here, because my father didn't speak Russian. And Mother had tried teaching me French during the summer. She had a little French class of little kids, this was before she was actually teaching at Country Day. But we didn't want to be inside. It was summer, we wanted to be outside playing. We were not particularly responsive to having French lessons every day. (laughs) But I grew up knowing that there were other languages certainly and

that English was definitely not the only one. But what I was interested in was English language literature. So that's what I studied.

Bob: What are you doing now, out on the West coast?

Claudette: I'm a medical editor, medical and scientific editor.

Bob: Trying to make English out of what they write.

Claudette: Exactly.

Bob: How long have you been doing that?

Claudette: Well, I've been a scientific editor since 1978. That wasn't medicine. That was a multidisciplinary northern science journal that I edited. And for the last seven years I've been a free-lance editor who has done mostly science. Just before Mother got sick I accepted a job as managing editor of a medical journal which will be starting this Monday, instead of three weeks ago when it was supposed to start. They've held the job for me for three weeks.

Bob: Are all your siblings involved with language skills?

Claudette: Yeah, to a degree. We all write. Part of my work as a free-lancer has also been writing information pamphlets on medical conditions and environmental issues. Ron writes poetry, and in Mother's footsteps letters to the editor, great long letters to the editor, and he also edits his union newsletter. And Andy writes short stories and has had several published and has always been in the creative end of marketing.

Bob: I get the impression that your mother was a more powerful influence on you than your father.

Claudette: I think that's probably not true for me. I'm the most like our father. Daddy provided the leavening. He was not well educated. He was the first person in his family to finish high school. He was a sharecropper's son, tenant farmer's son, one of ten living children. But he had incredible common sense. He was driven to improve himself, so that when he...

Bob: I understood he was an engineer.

Claudette: No, he was a self-educated dye chemist. Textile chemist. But he did all that...he started as a messenger boy at the Enka plant.

Bob: He grew up in the south?

Claudette: He grew up in Georgia, south Georgia. And his sense of humor was just wonderful and I have always believed that it was Daddy who provided the balance in Mother's life, without which she would have been so intimidating and so serious. I mean, really, Mother did not have much lightness in her nature. And Daddy gave her that, and gave the family that. He was a very down-to-earth and very earthy person. He had a temper and believed in dealing with things as they came up and not mincing words about things. The pair of them, it's hard to imagine having been raised by one without the other. I did not get along well with Mother when I was growing up. She considered me far too emotional, and of course Mother's creed was rationality. If it can't

be proved rationally it doesn't exist. I tend to be much more emotional, and that I get from Daddy. But ultimately Mother and I learned to accept each other as we were.

Bob: You stayed in Asheville throughout your childhood. Have you ever been abroad?

Claudette: Oh sure, I never stayed here. After I left Duke I went to Alaska and I lived in Alaska for eight years, I went to Europe during that time, spent four months in northern Italy. After I left Alaska I lived in Calgary, Alberta, emigrated to Canada. I lived in the Yukon every summer for seven years, cooking in a research camp there. Now I live in Point Roberts, Washington which is the furthest north point in the contiguous United States. I go to England every second year because my husband's family is there. And I spent a lot of time in the Caribbean.

Bob: You go to England every other year? How do you do that?

Claudette: Frequent flyer bonus points. (laughs)

Bob: Oh you go as a vacation.

Claudette: Yeah, we go to visit my husband's father who is now the only one left. He is 86. He won't travel, so...

Bob: Then your name is not Claudette Reed. You didn't stop me with that.

Claudette: No it isn't. I use Reed as a middle name, so that is not a problem. I put all four of my names on the approval sheet, I put Claudette Diana, because I was known as Diana when I was a kid. That's my middle name.

Bob: That's what I found in a...

Claudette: Claudette was my first name, but I hated it. I grew up in a culture where every girl was named Sharon or Betty Jo or LouEllen, and Claudette was just too strange and foreign sounding. So I just dropped it and I went by Diana.

Bob: Would you tell me what were the chief turning points in your life. When did things change for you drastically?

Claudette: Well, you mean going really far back?

Bob: Any time. What were the big breaks.

Claudette: Well, I guess the first one was when I started traveling through, and this was associated with the church actually, when I was a teenager and started attending LRY [Liberal Religious Youth] conferences in the deep south and ran into real prejudice and found myself compelled to fight it, to stand up for black people in bus stations at the age of fifteen, sixteen.

Bob: What year would this be?

Claudette: Well, I was born in 1948, so it would have been the late 1950s, early '60s. No, it wouldn't have been as early as the late '50s, I was born in 1948, so 1963 to when I left here in 1965. So it would have been probably 1962 to 1965.

Bob: It was a big shock to you.

Claudette: Asheville didn't have that kind of... I mean there was prejudice, but there wasn't that kind of viciousness. Birmingham Alabama, let me tell you. It was vicious.

Bob: How did you meet those people? Did you meet them out here at, what was it called, the Blue Ridge Assembly or something? [Southern Unitarian Institute, Blue Ridge NC]

Claudette: I did start going there when I was quite young. I was probably twelve when I started going there.

Bob: Who else went with you, do you remember? Art Poultney?

Claudette: No, he was older than I was. Just enough so that he and I were never in the same RE [Religious Education] group. His sister Lillian was in the same group.

Bob: You were age segregated.

Claudette: They are. And the thing is, the groupings, the way the Sunday school classes were grouped was, like my brother Ron who is two years younger than I am, we were always in the same class. I was on the older end of it. And so Ann Young, Gus Young's daughter, Lillian Poultney, and I, Steve Kemic, John Wood, there was a group of us that were sort of the top of the Baby Boomer generation and a couple of years down. Prior to that there hadn't been enough kids to actually have a real church school. So Art Poultney was already attending services, the adult services by that time. And nobody else was really active in LRY outside of the group in Asheville. I was one who was really interested. I got to know people at Blue Ridge, and then there was a conference every Easter and every Thanksgiving time, and I always went after that. And I had to save my allowance to do it. But I really liked going to those things. I liked meeting other LRYers from all over the south.

Bob: I never participated in an organization like that so I have no idea what it means. There were youth groups in the Methodist churches I went to, but I never went out of town for anything. And that goes along with this very small church connection that we had. The big churches could stay in town.

Claudette: I think the reason that I was drawn to do that, to go to those things, was simply that our family did not exactly fit in without a seam in this rural, southern Bible belt community. I had two friends in high school with whom I could talk about serious issues, war and peace and Vietnam and civil rights. Virtually most of my peers were not interested in anything beyond the dance that Friday night.

Bob: Who were those two people?

Claudette: Libby Israel and Judy Crawford.

Bob: Do you still have contact with them?

Claudette: Still very close friends with both of them. One lives in California, the other lives in Silva [NC]

Bob: Tell me the main story you had with those two people, the best story, or the worst time you had with them.

Claudette: The best time we ever had was when we went to the beach after our senior year. We went the week after we graduated, we went to the beach with another friend and our chaperone. We had gone the year before and our chaperone had been Libby's mother. And we didn't have a great time because Libby's mother really cracked the whip. We had to be in at 11:00 at night, and no boys and all of that stuff. So the next year the mother of one of the girl's boyfriend, the other girls that went with us, actually the fourth girl that went with us, her boyfriend's mother went as our chaperone. And she was a real wild lady and we just had a ball. We didn't have any curfew, we were on our own for the first time. And it really was great, just lots of fun.

Bob: Terribly important to be on your own.

Claudette: Yeah.

Bob: Is it still true that you love to be on your own?

Claudette: Yeah, it is. I mean, I like being married, I love my husband, he is also my best friend. But to me, living alone and having all that time just with my own company is a real luxury. I don't like being restricted in what I can do, I guess that's the real bottom line.

Bob: Do you and your husband live busy lives?

Claudette: Busier than I would like.

Bob: You live in the same city. Do you work in the same city?

Claudette: For the last seven years I've been working at home because I've been a free-lancer, so I go out to my clients in Vancouver but I work at home. My husband has an office in a little town ten miles from there because the town we live in is very tiny, 900 people. There is no office space there. So we live a life that is very connected to each other. We are both very active politically, we are both active in the environmental movement, I am active in a professional organization for editors. So there are a lot of meetings at night, a lot of back and forth between where we live and Vancouver, about a 25 mile commute. And with this new job I'm going to be commuting every day, so that's going to change our lives a bit.

Bob: You won't be working at home.

Claudette: No.

Bob: Alright now, I think we can start on the church if you are ready, but what were you about to say.

Claudette: I was just going to give you, you asked what were the major turning points in my life, and I think there were a couple, if you want to have this as background, that you should know. When I was 26 I was quite seriously in love with a young man who was a geologist and a pilot, a hobby pilot. And he got into a situation that he wasn't experienced enough to handle and crashed the plane and died. He was 29. That was my first really serious, like, we're going to have children together kind of relationship. That was 1974. I then three years later married a man who had been a close friend for a long time, who was divorced and had two pre-teen, well, one

twelve and one fourteen-year-old son. Two sons, 12 and 14. He was quite a bit older than I, but we were very well-suited for each other, and then in 1984, seven years after we had gotten married, he died of primary liver cancer, at home with me there. So, I've had some turning points. And then three years later I married my present husband.

Bob: That's more than your share, it seems to me.

Claudette: I've thought that way sometimes. But Mother always said, life is not fair, no one ever promised that it would be. (laughs)

Bob: Okay, I think we could start talking about this church that you grew up in. I'm going to give you a couple of things to think with. Here's one with your name in it, you were at Duke, 1969. You may find names in there that you remember. I gave you a picture of the building on Vermont didn't I. Did you ever go to Sunday school at the portable Sunday school in this building?

Claudette: I did.

Bob: Can you tell me anything about that, because that is going to be the hardest to document, no one remembers...You don't remember it.

Claudette: This was...1956, it was. I was eight in 1956. So I have images.

Bob: All right, give me a couple images.

Claudette: Well, the image is that Mrs. Cornell, Muriel Cornell, taught Sunday school. And I just remember a big room with tile floor, no carpet or anything like that. And kids chairs, and toys and crystals that she would bring for us to grow in water so that we could see what happened, the salt crystal thing. But I don't remember anything specific, just those sorts of images, that what we were being given, I mean to me at that time, it certainly was not what you would call spiritual education, but it was a way to become acceptable. I went to Sunday school like everybody else in my class. I mean, this is why my parents joined the church, because I was the only kid in my class at Venable who didn't go to Sunday school. And the teachers were starting to be a problem, telling me I was going to hell. Oh yeah, this was really the Bible Belt.

Bob: I heard the same thing over at ...

Claudette: Oh really. Interesting. So what I basically remember about it was that it made me acceptable in school, that I had a Sunday school and I went to Sunday school like everybody else. And I do remember those crystals...

Bob: Sunday school was a very brief experience, and this church that we are talking about here in Asheville has always placed tremendous emphasis upon the importance of the Sunday school, they want it to go, they've always had a lot of children in it, ever since 1953 or something like that when they first had any place at all for the children. The Cornells, the Andrews and so forth were involved from the beginning. And I think it is important to try to assess what is the virtue of that. Is it really a reactionary virtue that we have to do it because everybody else is talking about it.

Claudette: I don't think so. For me, once I was older, once we were in the Vermont church, I remember very clearly the things that we studied.

Bob: You do.

Claudette: Oh yeah, and they were...it was really studied.

Bob: Was it as demanding or more so than the public school?

Claudette: No, because we didn't have homework assignments, and that sort of thing. But we were expected to read the books. When my father taught our class, which must have been the first year that we were in the church, because I remember we were in this funny little room, they hadn't finished renovating the upstairs yet, so we were in this funny little dark room that didn't have any windows, and we studied the story of Akhenaten and the Egyptian gods and goddesses and the way the rulers were supposedly descended from God himself. So that was essentially for my early, say, late elementary school education was greatly enriched by what I learned in Sunday school. Because we sure didn't learn about the Egyptians in public school. And then when we were about in junior high, the book that we used was *The Church Across the Street*. I think Gus Young was teaching the class then. And we devoted a month to one of several major religions, a month each. So what we would do is the first two weeks we would read about it, we would have to bring in our own research about that denomination. The third week we would visit a church in Asheville of that denomination and attend services, and the fourth week we would discuss what we thought about it, what our experience of it had been.

Bob: That was meaningful for you?

Claudette: Extremely. I personally had very little experience with the mainstream churches because my parents were desperate to keep me out of them. Because I always had friend's parents with "that poor little Reed girl who can't go to church with us." So they could see me getting "saved" and I'm in the Baptist church. My father had grown up a southern Baptist, and he did not find it to be an enriching experience. We visited the African Methodist Episcopal church, we visited the Presbyterian church, we went to a Catholic mass, and we went to the Congregational church, which I have attended with friends for years, because that was where the Unitarian church first started [meeting in the Congregational church building]. So it was very...I think it breeds tolerance, for one thing, to be able to do that. And it just makes you so much more aware of how many different ways there are to have a spiritual life.

Bob: When you went to these churches as a visitor, did you just go to the regular service?

Claudette: Yeah.

Bob: So you didn't stand out there.

Claudette: No, that's right.

Bob: You were just visitors.

Claudette: Uh huh. I can't remember if it was Mrs. Young, she would certainly remember.

Bob: Maybe, I was hoping you would remember.

Claudette: I know that Gus Young taught around that time, and I believe it was she that taught that particular course. We studied that for virtually the whole of the church school year. And that was also the year we learned about the history of Unitarianism, which was also extremely

important to me, to have a sense of rootedness in the church. Because I grew up in a family where knowing the history of things was important, and knowing background was important, and you didn't just skim the surface of things. And then, in high school, my age group was fairly rowdy, I'll admit it. We were not easy to teach, no one wanted to teach us. We were all rebelling, as kids that age do, but we were rebelling particularly because we had so little to rebel against (laughs). George Cornell was asked to come out of retirement and teach our class. I would have been 15 or 16 at this time and very much in a rebellious stage. I mean, my father and I didn't speak to each other for months, he took to putting notes under my door because I was so awful. When we talked we had screaming fights and such. I would get a note under my door saying obviously we can't discuss this face to face, so here's what I think. I was not an easy teenager. So, George Cornell had no illusions about this, about how we were and how difficult we were. He started that fall with our first church school meeting. My guess is that there were about seven or eight of us in that class. Tom Takaro...

Bob: That's quite a group.

Claudette: Well, we were the Baby Boomers. There were a lot of us. Tom Takaro, Lonnie Campbell when her family moved here, Marion and Steve Kemic, my brother Ron, John Wood who I believe was only here for one year, his parents were church members. And then a funny family from West Asheville who lived just down the street from the church who never really, I never have been quite sure about how they came to be there. Their parents did not attend the church. It was two kids, their names were Kathy Mosher and Bobby Lewis and they were half brother and sister, and they both attended regularly. But I never knew quite why, they weren't like the rest of us from an actual family, you know, they weren't from the background that you would expect. I mean, they were from a conventional lower middle class southern family, and I never did know how they found it.

Bob: Probably misinformation on the part of their parents.

Claudette: Probably (laughs) Ann Young and Lillian Poultney. And Joe Young as well, I think. So that was a pretty big class. George Cornell started off by saying "How many of you have read the Bible?" The only two who had were Kathy Mosher and Bobby Lewis because they had obviously gone to a traditional church before. So he said, you know there is a lot of really important stuff in the Bible. So I am going to assign you particular chapters in the Bible, and over the course of the next few weeks you are going to read what I consider to be some of the important parts of the Bible.

Bob: The interesting question is, did you do it?

Claudette: Sure we did it.

Bob: Why did you do it?

Claudette: Well, because it was a challenge. We were all quite bright, we liked challenges. So we did, and each week he would assign us another section. We certainly didn't read the whole Bible, but we read representative sections.

Bob: What was your favorite section?

Claudette: Revelations, because it was so dramatic and...

Bob: Did you care for Job?

Claudette: Didn't like Job at all (laughs). We were 16! But basically we were very critical of it. And so after we had completed this reading assignment and discussion of each thing, and we were as I say very critical, Mr. Cornell said, okay, you've all had a lot to say about how bad it is, how wrong it is, now you are going to write your own. So for six weeks we worked on a book of ethics that dealt with such questions as, if your mother is dying and she is being kept alive by a machine, do you pull the plug? Well, this was pretty good grist for the 16-year old mind. We never missed a class if we could help it. We met on Sunday afternoons out at George Cornell's house to continue the discussion. It was remarkable. It was wonderful. I got nothing like that in high school. Except through the National Forensic League, but that was an extracurricular thing. With Mr. Cornell, we talked about everything. We talked about race, we talked about sex. He was not afraid to tackle any subject. Then at the same time, John and Barbara Kiley moved here from Toronto, and they were a very different breed of cat. They were sophisticated. John was a Scotsman and Barbara was Canadian. They were very sophisticated. Barbara always wore the latest fashion mini-skirt, had bouffant blond hair. They were big city people, sort of, but also very bright, and they loved people our age. So John became the LRY advisor. So between George Cornell and the Kileys we had these adult mentors to whom we could go with any question. Any problem that we couldn't talk with our parents about, certainly in my case, I went to Barbara Kiley. Because I knew that she would answer me assuming that I was an intelligent person who could make an intelligent decision. So for me, and I think probably for several others, Sunday school at the Unitarian church for us as teenagers provided something that otherwise would have been... we would have been much less well-rounded people, much less understanding of things like ethical questions. It was Barbara Kiley who got us involved with A-SCORE, the Asheville Student Committee on Racial Equality. She used to take us to the black churches regularly to meet with black teenage activists. Because she was one of those people who, there weren't that many in those days, who felt that the Asheville Unitarian Church should be out there taking a stand on these issues in the community, and not just bewailing the fact that racism existed in the sanctuary, they should be out there doing something about it. So she took the kids. It was a remarkably rich experience for me. I have felt for many years that I would not be the person I am at all had I not had that opportunity.

Bob: Do you think the kids are getting it in the Unitarian churches today?

Claudette: I don't know, because I don't go to church.

Bob: You do not?

Claudette: No.

Bob: You don't need it now.

Claudette: There is only one church in my community, it's Lutheran, it's a small community, there are a lot of Dutch Lutherans and Icelanders in that area and I don't like their kind of religion. I'm not going to drive 25 miles to attend a church just to say that I do it.

Bob: I was really asking you whether you think children of teenage today are getting that kind of fare.

Claudette: I just don't know. I do know that, I think that what I have read about the Asheville UU Church is doing now, I don't know any teenagers that are in the church school, but I certainly

think that the church has taken amazing steps, and I think it stands for something in the community that everybody recognizes.

Bob: In my opinion, I am speaking just as a historian right now, that some really crucial steps were taken 1964, 1974, somewhere along there, that set the line, they got the great benefactions, something unexpected that would never have happened in the ordinary world. I've noticed that I've reached the end, now we are going to turn over to the next side.

SIDE TWO:

This is the second side of this tape with Claudette Diane Reed Upton. And we are going to talk some more about the Unitarian Church, maybe. Or about anything in the City of Asheville that interests you. Let's stay on the subject of the church for a little while. There are a couple things that have happened in this church that I'm trying to pin down. I have serious social scientist in me. Like for example, there is a period when the number of young people joined the church, that was right after the move to Edwin Place, they built the new building.

Claudette: I was gone.

Bob: You were gone during that period.

Claudette: I left in 1965.

Bob: That reminds me of a question I wanted to ask you when you were talking about your high school experience with George Cornell and the Kileys. Did Duke live up to your expectations?

Claudette: I'm not sure how to answer that. I don't think I had any very clear expectations. Certainly academically it did not until my final year when I got to take seminars. There were an awful lot of uniform requirements, it didn't matter if you were going to be an English major or a chemistry major, you had to take a year of lab science and a year of math and a year of religion, and all of that stuff..

Bob: For bright kids it's a lot of repetition.

Claudette: Yeah. It's not a challenge. I did very poorly. I had an appalling grade point average. I was still rebelling. I was sort of methodically going through breaking all the rules I could break just to prove that I could do it. I was not attending classes nearly as often as I should have. So I dropped out. The administration instituted a policy in 1967 that students could take a leave of absence for up to two semesters without losing their student status.

Bob: Sounds like a Democratic Party idea.

Claudette: (laughs) Well, I think there were a lot of us flunking out in those days. This was the '60s. I was the first student to take advantage of it, because I was about to quit anyway. I thought it was a waste of money, it wasn't my money, it was money that my grandmother had left for my education. That caused a serious rift between me and my father. He did not speak to me for about nine months, probably not quite that long. But I was home all summer, and we fought all summer long, then I left. The interesting thing was that, my father thought that education was the most important thing, THE most important thing in the world. So it really hurt him deeply that I was just throwing away this opportunity for a Duke education.

Bob: He paid a high price for his education.

Claudette: Yes, that's right. And he was always very sensitive about not having one, and not having any degrees. But the other thing was, once he accepted, and Mother said she wasn't worried, she knew I'd go back.

Bob: She has these upper class sentiments, I swear to god.

Claudette: (laughs) Yes, she was sure I would. One year of working out in the real world, she knew I'd be back in school. And it was true. I mean, making \$60 a week to write ad copy for a radio station in Durham did not make me think that the world was rich with opportunity for somebody without a college degree. So I went back to school. The thing about my father was that he thought that if I was going to drop out of school that I should take advantage of that year and go to New York on my own and experience things. But I wanted to go to Durham where my friends were. I just didn't want to be in school. So this was the real cause of the disagreement. And of course I did what I wanted. He couldn't make me go to New York, so I went to Durham and rented a house and my father just wouldn't talk to me that whole year. When I came home he just was cold and...but he forgave me eventually and came down. He was at a meeting in Raleigh and called me, I'm down here in Raleigh, I thought I could take you out to dinner tonight. So we went out for beer and pizza and he never said he was sorry, but I knew that it was okay then. This was funny in a way, because it was in Durham, which is not a college town, it required much more of the students to find a life outside the classroom. Because to the Durham people, Duke is that town over in East Durham, the Durham people don't take any pride in the basketball team, it's not part of Durham. It's like a walled city inside the city limits. And of course none of us had cars in those days. Chapel Hill which was only twelve miles away was a complete university town and offered all the things that college towns do. Then of course as soon as we could borrow a car, or for some of us who by our senior year could afford to buy a car, we spent a lot of time in Chapel Hill. But being in Durham gave us the opportunity to do things like attend a Ku Klux Klan rally, which was a rather mixed opportunity because they stoned us when we were leaving. My letter to my parents about that experience was read in the pulpit at the Asheville Unitarian Church. I think that would have been in 1968, no sorry, it would have been 1966. Dick Gross was the minister then, Mother showed him the letter and he said he would like to read it as part of the lesson the next Sunday.

Bob: Have you got it? You don't know. You might find it. Andrew might as he goes through things.

Claudette: He's been doing it. So I had real mixed feelings about it. If I were going to do it, I went there because at the time I was really interested in psychology, and I wanted to study psychology. But I didn't do enough research. The Duke psychology department was very geared to the medical model and not the community model. I wasn't interested in medicine.

Bob: All undergraduate psychology is like that.

Claudette: Is that true? I didn't know that.

Bob: It's only in graduate school that you get to human behavior.

Claudette: Well that's fascinating. I just thought that if this is what they are going to teach me in psychology, I'm not going to major in psychology. That wasn't what I wanted at all.

Bob: This kind of Watsonian Pavlovian approach, reductionism, has so much sway, has maintained it. They simply block about half the people who would be interested in the field, who never try, who just say, no I can't put up with that, I won't, and they go off into English. Which is all right.

Claudette: Yes, it's fine, but it was a disappointment. I had been reading psychology books since I was 14 I first read Freud. I was very interested, and I was a bit at a loss once I discovered that psychology for an undergraduate meant endless courses in statistics. I didn't mind biology, but the lab courses and all of that stuff, I wanted a human approach to psychology, and I didn't understand why I couldn't have it.

Bob: there are so many charlatans in here.

Claudette: Now I understand why. I didn't know!

Bob: I'm sorry I expected that of you. Well, we've been going on for an hour, Claudette. I don't know what I should do next.

Claudette: I honestly have told you about all of my personal responses to the church. If you have particular questions that I might be able to help you with I'd be happy to, but I left here in 1965. The first time I ever attended a service at One Edwin Place was my father's memorial service in 1978, and since then I've only been in the church these last two Sundays.

Bob: You've been a busy Unitarian all over the country like an awful lot of people have.

Claudette: I guess I've put my energy into other things. I became a really active feminist...

Bob: What did you do in 1968 in the fall, and the Chicago Democratic convention?

Claudette: I was in New Mexico in summer school taking archeology, and living with a Mexican boy and listening to the radio. We didn't have a TV so we listened to the radio and the riots, smoked a lot of dope.

Bob: You can see where I have a flag, and that's before your time.

Claudette: It wasn't before my time, but I was too young to know what was going on in the church.

Bob: We are doing much better as soon as we get up here to Pullman, you see. About Gross, you know very little.

Claudette: I can tell you a fair amount about Gross. I can. I used to babysit for his children.

Bob: All I know is that he seemed a serious man.

Claudette: He was serious, but he was also very warm in his way. He was not warm the way Tracy Pullman was warm. Dick was one of those awkward people who really likes people but was always a little stiff in his manner. He just never quite was able to overcome that. His wife Goody was, her name was Gudrun, she was German, I mean from Germany and had a very pronounced German accent. But she was just wonderful. She was warm and genuine and she was the perfect minister's wife because she made home visits and she was really comfortable

with people and just really a down to earth person. Dick was not ever that. I did not hear his sermons generally because I was in Sunday school, but I knew him quite well as a person. I think that his call to ministry was purely intellectual. I don't think that he was cut out to be a minister. I think in some ways he wanted to be a pastoral counselor type of person, but he had the wrong personality for it. He wasn't a person you would ever want to hug because he was sort of like a stick. And I'm sure it wasn't true, I'm sure if you had hugged him he might have enjoyed it, but you always had a sense that he'd stand there like this if you hugged him. Whereas Goody was a toucher. She was always very down to earth.

Bob: Tell me about their children.

Claudette: I liked them just fine. I haven't actually seen his daughter in recent years. She lives in New York. Andy has gotten to know her again. She's about, when they came here I think Monica was about eight and Wolfgang was about ten. Monica attached herself to me like a limpet. It was like she was my honorary baby sister. She was just with me all the time. On Sundays she'd come running across the grounds when I arrived and throw herself in my arms and wrap herself around my knees. I mean, I adored her. I was 13-14 years old. I adored her, I thought she was just wonderful. So I babysat for them regularly. I liked them as a family. I knew of course, being a teenager you pick up things, so I knew there were problems in the church, that a lot of people didn't like Dick as a minister.

Bob: That was very common. People knew it but they didn't know what they didn't like.

Claudette: Well, I was always sad about it. I always thought that it was a tad unfair. I remember saying to Mother at one point, you know everybody can't be a damn Welch, because they were so spoiled, because your first minister was so wonderful. He was. I was only a child when Mr. Welch was there, but I remember him with such love. He was a wonderful, wonderful dear man. And his sermons were apparently good, although you couldn't prove it by me, but apparently they were, and yet he has this warmth and this caring that just shown out of him. So I really felt that they judged Dick Gross too harshly because he didn't compare well. He was a nice man, I just think he was in the wrong business.

Bob: This is a really good lesson, in favor of interim ministers. There is not that kind of comparison between Pullman and Gross, because there was a year and a half between them. We haven't had that experience here in the last few years because we had a man named Houff from Oregon. He is now in Vancouver. You should look him up. He had 15 years as a minister, and before that he was a research chemist.

Claudette: Is he at the Vancouver Unitarian church?

Bob: He is. I'm not sure exactly, I can give you the address any time. I'll try to get it to you.

Claudette: Okay.

Bob: Anyway, we have no problems about comparisons between Maureen and Brewer, because Houff was there. Everybody wanted to keep Houff, but they couldn't. That was the rule, they couldn't. They could get as attached as they wanted to...

Claudette: That makes a great deal of sense.

Bob: ...but that makes no difference. Then we were rested, ready to open up to somebody new. This is a really fine thing they've invented. Well, that's sociology. I really have enjoyed this.

Claudette: Good, I have too. I wish I could help you more with the earlier years but I just...

Bob: No one can. We are doing very well.

Claudette: You know who might be able to? Gail Cornell.

Bob: I've heard the name, her name is Gomez now, and I haven't located her yet, but I want to keep after her, I'll find her if she's in town.

Claudette: I think she should be, I never heard that she left.

Bob: And there are others.

Claudette: She's old enough. She's five or six years older than I. She taught our class at one time, and she was older enough to be able to teach our Sunday school class, and she would certainly remember.

Bob: This is going to be the end of my interview here today. Thank you so much.

Claudette: My pleasure.