The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Linda Reedy
Conducted by Kelly Crager
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Transcribed by Emilie Meadors

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NOTE: Any text included in brackets [ ] is information that was added by the narrator after reviewing the original transcript. Therefore, this information is not included in the audio version of the interview.

Kelly Crager: This is Kelly Crager conducting an Oral History Interview with Mrs. Linda Reedy. Today is July 22, 2009. We are in the interview room of the Southwest Collections Library on the campus of Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas. Linda, I'd like to thank you once again for taking time out of your busy day today to speak with me. It will be very good to get your perspective on things. Mrs. Reedy was a civilian activist, social activist during the 1960s and was active in the anti-war movement in the United States during that time. To start this off, I'd like to get a little biographical information, if I could. Could you tell me when you were born and where?

Linda Reedy: I was born in March of '48 and in Hartford, Connecticut.

KC: Hartford, Connecticut. What were your parent's names?

LR: Hazel and Parker.

KC: Hazel and Parker.

LR: Bartley.

KC: Bartley, okay. What did your parents do for a living?

LR: My mother was a homemaker and my father was a mechanic at Pratt and Whitney.

KC: Mechanic at Pratt and Whitney?

LR: Yes.

KC: Now, your father was also a veteran of the Second World War?

LR: He was, he was a tank driver in Europe for three years.

KC: Three years, okay. And I believe, as I understand it, to the end of the war as well.

LR: Right.

KC: And moved into Southern Germany in Munich and in that area.

LR: Right.

KC: Very interesting stuff. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

LR: I have two sisters and a brother. I am the second oldest.

KC: Second oldest. Describe for me in broad terms, if you will, what was life like growing up in the late 1940s, 1950s in New England?

LR: Well, it was the post-war and so we lived in a post-war development, all the houses that were built after World War II. So we lived in, what my parents thought was, was a wonderful place to live because they were farmers from Northern Maine and economically the war provided them opportunities. So I grew up in a neighborhood with a lot of fathers who had been to the war. I'd say alcoholism was a big part of that culture, but, you know, probably had a very typical upbringing from that time.

KC: What was it like being a child in these post World War II developments? As they began to sprawl, you got the defense industry with Pratt and Whitney which your father's working. World War II veterans, World War II families essentially.

LR: Right.

KC: World War II set the stage for this post-war world. What was it like in the neighborhood, and the other kids and the sort of things that you do?

LR: Well, there were lots of kids, for one thing. I think every household had at least four kids, and so with that it was very child oriented, but not in the way we see today. There was a lot of freedom to run and go off and do what we wanted to do. It was a completely white neighborhood. We had one Jewish family in the whole neighborhood, and maybe a couple of Catholic families in the neighborhood, but—

KC: How were these religious minorities received in the neighborhood?

LR: Umm, probably with suspicion. I do remember all of us as kids walking by the house with the Jewish family at Christmas time trying to figure out how could they

not have a Christmas tree? And there was a lot of prejudice. I'd say prejudice was, was something that we grew up with racially, religiously. I think my parents worked really hard along with all of the other parents in the neighborhood, but maybe there's a feeling of, "I fought for this, this is mine, and nobody's going to take it away."

KC: No one with—being perceived as different is going to have an opportunity to threaten their possessions. And that's obviously very, very typical.

LR: Right.

KC: And as you mention, it was an all white neighborhood, just a very few people of different religions; so it's often times, I think easier to be prejudice against other people when you're not around them all the time. The proximity doesn't always bring understanding and acceptance.

LR: Right.

KC: But a lot of times it does, as well. So there were a lot of kids in the neighborhood. What'd you guys do?

LR: We had the woods in the field near us, and so we spent all of our time building forts and playing dodgeball in the street. We could be out till late at night, no one was particularly concerned about where anyone was because there was always a pack of kids. It was in some ways very idyllic, ice skating in the winter, going off sledding in the winter. Culturally, it felt safe, I think not so much in the home, but in the neighborhood, it was very safe place to be.

KC: Did this transfer to school as well? What was school like?

LR: Personally, for me it was very boring. (Laughs)

KC: Why do you say that?

LR: I'm not sure, I'm not sure what the reasons for that were. I just never became very engaged. I'd only become engaged the first few days of anything new, and then after that I just spaced out. I didn't like the experience of school, but again, I had a whole group of friends; and that part was good.

KC: Did you do well in school?

LR: No, not at all.

KC: Were you ever in danger of being dropped back a grade, or flunking classes, or things like that?

LR: No, but I was shy, and I tended to daydream. I was probably frustrating to my parents in that way, because my older sister was just the perfect student. And so I was let known and they let me know that I was quite dumb (Both laughing).

KC: Well, as we've found out over the years that that's certainly not the case. When did you graduate high school?

LR: In '66.

KC: In '66. Okay, now as a child of World War II, post World War II generation, the baby boomers, if you will—of course, you grew up in a global situation in which there was this power struggle, there was this rivalry between the United States and the communist block—the Soviet Union and later China. What do you remember about—as a child, what do you remember about the Cold War, and the types of things that the Cold War meant domestically?

LR: Fear, fear. I mean, it was in the schools that we had alarms that would go off and we'd have to hide under our desk, and nuclear bombs, and the communists and at home my father was very angry about all of that, and probably instilled some of those fears. So there was a lot of fear with that.

KC: It certainly institutionalized in a lot of different ways it seemed like for that generation.

LR: Yeah, fallout shelters, you know, signs all over the neighborhood about where fallout shelters would be. Yeah, I mean it's not something you felt all the time, but there were times when you'd hear the adults talk, or you'd have these alarms, that it would instill some fear.

KC: What do you remember about some of the specific larger incidents, if you will, in the cold war? Sputnik, Cuban Missile Crisis, Bay of Pigs, things like this.

LR: I remember more of the feelings of them than the actual incidences. The Bay of Pigs probably the most, because I think we all thought something was going to happen. I can't say that I have a memory of it being anything more than just a general fear.

KC: Sure, sure. Well, going back to this general feeling of things, what did you know about the role of the United States in the larger world? And the way the US was behaving about the world.

LR: We thought we were the best. We were told we were the best. I do remember when there was the race to space, and thinking that, "Wow, maybe we aren't the best because the Russians were going to do it before we were." And that's the first time that it ever occurred to me that we just weren't the best.

KC: The best at everything.

LR: At everything, and that we were lucky to be an American; and everybody else, it was really sad that they couldn't be. And that the Russians were evil.

KC: Right.

LR: And we were not, we were pure. We didn't do anything wrong (Laughs). And that was instilled at home, too. Not only in history and school, but at home, there was a negative word for just about every other culture.

KC: I certainly see a pattern developing here.

LR: Right.

KC: As a young person in the 1960s, many people remember the presidency of John F. Kennedy, and Kennedy himself very fondly. Was this the case with you?

LR: My parents were for Eisenhower, and so the fear of a Catholic president was in our home. Individually I remember looking at the pictures and thinking what a happy family, you know that everything looked perfect. And so personally I thought it was a wonderful thing, and I remember thinking it was a wonderful thing, but probably not in our neighborhood. Our neighborhood was pretty much republican and Eisenhower.

KC: It was kind of a socially, politically conservative area.

LR: Very conservative.

KC: I would assume that Kennedy posed some sort of perceived threat to this established order.

LR: Right.

KC: What about Kennedy as an individual? Many people, and again, I don't mean to put words in your mouth here, so don't let me, but to many people of the generation, Kennedy represented something new, Kennedy represented something exciting. A dramatic break from the past in terms of his youth, and his energy, and these kinds of things. Was that something you perceived from Kennedy or is it not?

LR: Oh definitely. I think that's when—there were a combination of things that all came together at the same time. Kennedy becoming president, and me waking up socially, and just beginning to view the world a little differently than my family did. I remember being very, very young and visiting my grandparents in the city, and going through neighborhoods, black neighborhoods.

KC: In what city?

LR: Hartford.

KC: In Hartford, okay.

LR: And remembering, I wish I were one of them.

KC: One of the—part of the black families?

LR: Right. Because they were together on stoops, and there was a lot of sitting and interaction, and laughing and I felt like, "This is the place I want to live." Then, to be hearing the words from my family and neighborhood about these people didn't connect for me. At a really early age that didn't connect for me. And then with Kennedy and then—my family belonged to the Congregational Church in town, and even though they didn't go, they sent us. Well, they didn't know they were sending us to a very liberal church, with very progressive social ideas. So by the time I was thirteen, I was beginning to understand different cultures, and the importance of communicating. The importance of trying to be together on things, and this church started bringing together kids from a black church in Hartford. I actually brought the first black person to our home. It was a black minister; and my father was just—he was polite to this person, but just outraged that I would do that. And I think that was when I began to feel like I'm not going to be like my family. And so all of that collided at the same time and I think at a really young age I knew I was not going to live in that environment.

KC: Now, you mentioned the church, the Congregational Church to which you belong, what other sort of things, either in general, or—please feel free to be as detailed as you can. What other sort of things was this particular church doing to help create this kind of awareness, and to help draw you in this kind of direction?

LR: Well, they had a youth minister who was just—that this was important in his life and so he brought it into ours. So we did a lot of outreach to hospitals, elderly. Worked in different communities, participated in social events with other churches with

different backgrounds. You know, we went on retreats to discuss social issues; and this started when I was thirteen.

KC: What kind of social issues would you—to go on a retreat to discuss social issues sounds like it would be, obviously very different from your background. So there'd be a very, very wide ranging.

LR: Right, and part of that was talking about war, and talking about why people don't get along, talking about the racial differences in our country, and why this was so, and helping us discuss some of our own prejudices. I remember having a retreat with a group of teenagers from the inter-city and I remember this one conversation stuck with me because my parents always said, "Well, they live in the slums, and they have these big cars and drive around all the time." And I remember one young man talking about his father couldn't buy a house. They wouldn't let him buy a house. And they did have money because they worked very hard. The only way they could show they had money was to buy a car. And so right in my head that was, that changed my thinking of how you look at people. And I remember that conversation very clearly. That one view isn't the only view.

KC: So this church was, as you said, your parents may not have known what the church was about. How long did you stay with the church?

LR: Right through the end of high school and then it was my decision to—I wasn't ready for college, wasn't interested in college, but I was interested in social issues and so I did a year of volunteer service through the United Church of Christ.

KC: Tell me about that year. Where were you? What were you doing?

LR: Well, to begin with I was in Pennsylvania for some training, very close to Harry's home. Then, during this time went to different social agencies throughout Pennsylvania to see what kind of work would be good. I spent some time in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, spent some time working with children in a children's home, convalescent home. And at the end of these two months everyone had a chance to choose what they wanted, and then with the support of the staff, found a place. I ended up in Elon College, North Carolina, working at a children's home where most of the children had lost one or both parents, or parents couldn't take care of them, or have different levels of emotional problems. It was also in an area where the Ku Klux Klan was still very predominant. I

was eighteen years old, dumped into this little community, and I remember the first day walking around and there's Ku Klux Klan signs hanging all around.

KC: Tell me what that was like. Here you are with an emerging sense of understanding and sensibilities. As you try to find your way through and try to mature in terms of your social attitude and things you're trying to do. And seeing what you've seen, and been through, what you've been through. And you're dropped off, as you said, in North Carolina in this type of environment. What was that like for you?

LR: To begin with, it was very scary. I was eighteen and I didn't have the life experience to suddenly be in a culture that was totally different. I remember the outrage of how can I like these people who are so kind to me—and they were all very nice to me—when you still could see the outline of "white only" in all the windows in the stores. At that time, they were told they had to take them off, but they all left the outline. Economically, you could see the difference from one part of town to the next. And again, I was drawn to the other side of the tracks. I felt like, that's where I will be more comfortable. I also remember taking down one of the signs, and wanting to send it to my friend to say, "Can you believe that this is right out there?" And I was told never, ever to do that again.

KC: To never take one down?

LR: Yeah, yeah.

KC: Here you are, eighteen, in a part of the world where you clearly don't feel comfortable for a variety of different reasons, and you have the temerity to take down someone else's segregation signs?

LR: Well, that was stupidity. I mean, it was ignorance of how serious the problem was there, or everywhere. I mean, I don't think it was much different in Hartford, Connecticut, but there was the freedom of being able to put out those signs in North Carolina.

KC: Where did you take this sign down from?

LR: A telephone pole.

KC: A telephone pole?

LR: Mm-hmm.

KC: Now what was it that the sign said that offended you?

LR: It was just about the next meeting and where it would be.

KC: About the next Klan meeting?

LR: Klan meeting and where it'd be. It was a rally; it was advertising a rally and I just couldn't believe it.

KC: You must not have been thinking very clearly, you could get yourself in a lot of trouble doing something like that I would think.

LR: Right, but I didn't even know that much. I mean, looking at it from my point of view now, I probably would not have done that.

KC: Did you send it back home to a friend? What was their response?

LR: Yeah, I sent it to Bob. You know, I don't know, I don't remember. I don't remember at this point.

KC: Did someone confront you about taking this down?

LR: Mm-hmm.

KC: Who was it?

LR: It was one of the staff people at the children's home because I showed them. I said, "Can you believe this?" And of course, they could believe it, that was their life, but for me, I couldn't believe anyone could accept it.

KC: Now, was this person confrontational or angered that you had done this or just warned you?

LR: They just said, "You know, this is different from where you're from and I don't advise you ever to do that again." So it was very clear.

KC: Was that the end of it then?

LR: It was. But something exciting happened during that year too, because at that point the children's home received federal money, state money, and local church money. And so federally they needed to integrate, but the two-thirds of the money that came from other sources said, "Don't integrate." And so during that year, the head of the children's home brought in a family of color. My memory of that, it was not a black child it was an Indian child, an American Indian child, and there was outrage, there was outrage with some of the staff saying they were going to quit. There was some outrage, I think, with local charities, churches, but he weathered the storm really well.

KC: The director of the—

LR: The director of it and it settled down fairly soon. I remember thinking that was truly—I admired him and how he handled that.

KC: Is it safe to say that his was a pretty strong influence on you then?

LR: Yes, I think so. Because I saw him as a really good man who wanted to do the right thing. You know, but I was certainly the—I made fifteen dollars a month, I worked there.

KC: That's righteous bust.

LR: Yeah, and that was part of doing this was it was volunteer service, I made fifteen dollars a month. And of course, I had room and board from them, but I worked with them and helped them run the childcare center.

KC: How was this American Indian child received in the home?

LR: You know, I don't remember anyone being cruel or unkind, and I do remember thinking I had to make sure I was kind and I felt protective of that child. But then again so many of the children there had such sad lives I felt that way about a lot of them.

KC: Sure, sure. Let me ask you this, as someone who, who professionally became very successful in terms of working in childcare centers as you have over the years, how has childcare, at this type of center, changed from the way we understand and practice childcare today in the intervening years?

LR: Oh, leaps and bounds it has changed. When I started out, it was basically babysitting, you know, and grouping a lot of children together, and maybe being concerned about some of the academic things. Making sure they learned the days of the weeks, and their letters in their alphabet. And now it is about the social-emotional growth of a child and understanding the developmental needs of a child and knowing what a child needs at a certain age to be successful, to learn the alphabet, and to read, the social-emotional. So totally changed.

KC: Alright, you're eighteen years old, you are in North Carolina at a very different environment from anything you've ever been used to before and you're by yourself.

LR: Right.

KC: No one else came with you to North Carolina. You've been, like you say, dropped off. What sort of things do you do? You're not always working, probably seemed liked you were always working, but you have to live in the community, you have to buy groceries, you have to wash your clothes, you have to interact, you have to have some sort of social life. What sort of things did you do while you were there?

LR: Well, there are two things in the town. The town is called Elon College and it had the college and the children's home, and a small little center. And so there was not much to do. My life evolved totally around the children's home. I'd sneak over to the college, go over and sit and really fantasize, "Wow, what if I was that smart and I could go to school?" And I could sort of sit here and pretend I'm one of these smart people.

KC: Were you sitting in on classes, or just outside?

LR: Oh, I never would have thought that that was a possibility at that time. So no, it was just sitting there thinking, "Oh, I could pretend this." So my whole life revolved around the children's home, and I did work all the time. I lived right in one of the cottages that housed the children. At the time this was a very progressive place because instead of having big buildings where children were housed, they had cottages and tried to have house parents, and tried to mix the ages and the sex of the children. So I just became part of a larger family. And some of these kids were my age. They were from five to eighteen, and so that was my social life, where children who were placed there because of dysfunctional families.

KC: So you didn't get out into the real world community, make any friends with the people you saw in college.

LR: No.

KC: It's just focused just on that.

LR: Yup.

KC: And you're working through the, what did you say, the United Methodist Church?

LR: The United Church of Christ Congregation, yeah.

KC: Okay. Did they have these sorts of programs throughout the country? Just in the south, where were they?

LR: The children's home or the volunteer service?

KC: The volunteer service and the things that they did.

LR: They did this throughout the whole country. So for me there could have been opportunities anywhere to go to. But, for some reason, when I had read about this place it felt like it was a —I knew it was in an area I hadn't lived before, and even though I was introverted and shy, and didn't feel very bright, I also knew I wanted to see places outside of the environment I grew up in. And I think one of the attractions of picking that place was that it was far away. Probably not the best way to make a decision, but I think that's why I did it. It was working with children and it was far away.

KC: I mean, in a racially segregated community like this was, from what you said, people were very, very aware of it. You said that you felt that you'd be more comfortable with African Americans, on the other side of the track, so to speak.

LR: Right.

KC: Did you have any contact with, with the African American community at the time?

LR: No.

KG: Why not?

LR: There wasn't the opportunity. I mean, the town was that segregated that you really didn't even get a sense that there was that part of town. People talked about it and I saw them going by in cars, but it was certainly—I was never encouraged to go take a walk or try to seek that out at all. It just was a very confined time.

KC: Was it something that you felt that you'd missed out on an opportunity to or that you felt that, "Man, I should really be doing this, but I know that I can't." Any of this sort of tension within yourself about this relationship, and your role, or your lack of role?

LR: You know, I think I was an observer and at that point probably not ready to be someone who participated. I didn't even think it was possible. I didn't even think it's possible, so I didn't even—I don't think I could even figure out how to do it. I think I had the same feeling about that as I did driving through the inner city in Hartford. I was an observer and it felt like it was an experience I wanted, but it just didn't feel like that would ever be a possibility.

KC: You mentioned a couple of times here that you felt that you were an observer. From the prospective that you had, limited as it was, what did you observe

about the African American community in this area? About culture, about the way they saw themselves, about the way they saw the outside world, about the way they treated each other? What did you see from this being so close to it, yet so separated?

LR: I think it was the same thing I saw early on. There seemed to be a larger sense of community, of belonging, of interactions. It seemed more—I don't know if this is even true, but it felt like family meant something. The way you would see the interactions and the way children were cared for. Just from my point of view it looked like there was a closeness and a feeling of belonging. Which is funny because I would never have belonged, but that continued later on when I did end up working in a completely black community. So it certainly was something from very young that pushed me to seek that out.

KC: Let me ask you this and you may not be able to answer this, you look from the outside as you've mentioned, and you see what you believe to be a closer, more close knit type of environment, community more family oriented, and the larger kind of thing. Would you have recognized that in the white community of which you were apart?

LR: There was something different about it and I don't even know—I mean, I can't even look back at this point and pinpoint what was different about it, but I knew it was different. And whatever that difference was, it was very attractive to me. I did see a difference, and this is only from being an observer, that's all, but I think the first time I identified that was probably when I was around ten, even maybe younger.

KC: And it stayed with you.

LR: And stayed with me the whole time. And then probably just again, the church I was involved in and being able to begin to have conversations with kids that were different. I felt it then. And I felt like, I like being part of this group of people that things are hard for and I knew were hard for. But there was some kind of spirit that I identified with.

KC: Very interesting. Now, you were here in North Carolina for a year, right?

LR: Mm-hmm.

KC: What sorts of things do you remember about this time here, your experiences here?

LR: It was hard, it was just hard. I was alone, and just being surrounded by so many people who had hard lives. You know, all these children had hard lives and it was just hard. I don't think there was a lot of joy in that year. I think it was probably one of the hardest years I ever had, but I stayed with it. And I could have gone home, but I stayed with it. In the end they hadn't even asked if I would want to stay and I did not want to stay.

KC: Why wouldn't you want to stay?

LR: Because I needed more of a life than being in a children's home. You know, I needed to be eighteen. I felt like a lot of my friends that I was writing letters to and communicating with, they had gone off to college and their lives were so different from mine. And they were having a lot of fun, I was not. So I was ready to leave there.

KC: It sounds like that this early experience outside of high school in this environment doing the work you're doing, seeing the things that you were seeing and then having someone, I don't want to say a role model or mentor but someone who was important in this position of leadership, who had this courage to do what he did for the home. This obviously was a very important influential time. What did you take away from this experience when you left there after a year?

LR: Well, I think the most important thing is how precious childhood is and that I would probably always work with children, and that children need protection. I think that was the main thing. We need to protect children.

KC: What did you learn about yourself?

LR: That I could be on my own and that it wasn't easy, but it was important to do. And I still felt very stupid at that point. I felt like I was fooling everybody at that.

KC: Is that right?

LR: Mm-hmm.

KC: I feel like that everyday, I'm not sure I'm fooling everyone though.

LR: I pretended to be who I wanted to be, that's probably—I could pretend to be who I wanted to be, and I could pretend that I could do it on my own.

KC: Doesn't sound like you were terribly comfortable with it, though.

LR: No, no.

KC: What about your views on social issues? Were they continuing to evolve during this time? I know you were consumed with what you were doing.

LR: Right

KG: But do you have a sense that back then things were continuing to move in one direction or another?

LR: Oh definitely. Because from that experience I went home for a short period of time and tried going to school and again, I was totally bored by it or felt I couldn't do it. And then through the same organization I did the volunteer service, one of the trainers in (unintelligible), where I did the initial training for volunteer service, I had become friends with and he was my dad's age, a very nice man, and he called and said, "I have this great opportunity for you, how would you like to move to Philadelphia for the summer?" And with this opportunity there were college students and adults coming from all over the world to stay in Philadelphia for the summer, to work in different social agencies. And I was part of a group that sort of oversaw all of that, so I got to be in all the different areas in Philadelphia. They were working in community centers, and healthcare, and living in the neighborhoods they were working. That was—I just thought nothing could be more wonderful than this.

KC: Let me interrupt you and have you back up a little bit and we'll get back into this, obviously it's very, very important. When you left this position in North Carolina at the children's home, where did you go back to? Did you go back to Hartford?

LR: I went back to Hartford.

KC: Okay, and you said that you—did you move back in with your parents?

LR: Yep.

KC: What was that like after this experience?

LR: Not good, not good. Because I had developed a certain amount of independence and probably, I was very vocal about my point of view on things. I probably wasn't as respectful to my parents as I should have been, because they still had their point of view. I think they were happy when I left.

KC: You said you enrolled at school; did you enroll in a local college?

LR: Yep, enrolled in the local college.

KC: Which college?

LR: It was Manchester Community College, and I was very excited because I thought I was going to do this, but it didn't seem relevant. It just—

KC: Compared to your real world experiences.

LR: Right. It just didn't feel like—nothing captured me. And again, I was still thinking I was not a very bright person, so between not being about to identify what was happening and not feeling very bright, it didn't last. So then going back into an environment where people were working together was—

KC: Did this gentleman call you just out of the blue?

LR: We had stayed in touch the whole time I was in North Carolina and I think he understood how exciting all of this was to me, and actually he was from North Carolina and he had some involvement in the children's home. So he probably influenced my decision to even pick that place. So we had stayed in touch and so when he called to say he had this opportunity, and then this is the time of the Vietnam War. And that's another reason—and this is the sad thing, is that Vietnam War was going on, my father was so against the protestors. He had spent three years at war. I had no sensitivity to that because I was young, and I felt it was unjust and that's probably one of the other reason's I left home again.

KC: It seemed to be a number of things.

LR: Yes.

KC: Okay, well you opened up the box here about the Vietnam War, the first time we've talked about that. How aware were you? And we'll get into this because it delves into your activities and your thoughts and things in Philadelphia in what was it, 1967, 1968 probably.

LR: Well, by the time I went to Philadelphia it was'69.

KC: Okay, '69. Alright, how aware were you of the United States' role and growing role in Southeast Asia, and how it had been evolving over the years?

LR: I can't remember how it came about, I just remember that slowly as things were changing, that it was just part of that change. Most of my friends were in college so they were probably, in the beginning, more aware of the protests going on. You know, at that point I almost saw it as a luxury, that they had this opportunity to be part of that, and because they were in classes, they were learning about it, it was on college campuses. So

I feel like I was on the fringe of that at that point. When I moved to Philadelphia, one of the guys who was on our team, and who I ended up getting to know very well, was a resistor. And so through him and through all the people that were supporting him and his actions, and the lead people working in Philadelphia were all ministers, and social workers. And so they were right in the middle of protesting and working against the war. So then I just became immersed in it.

KC: You talked about what you believed to be the unjustness of the war. Was this something that was developing, you were developing on your own, as you paid more and more attention as it became, to use a bad word, newsworthy? Was it something you were developing on your own or was it the outside influences?

LR: I think it was the outside influence and I don't know if that's a female, male thing where war just wasn't ever—you know, it was not something I thought about. I didn't at that point certainly respect that my father had given up so much of his life to do what he felt very important to do. So I think at that point I was more interested in social injustice, but then moved into being concerned about the Vietnam War and being concerned about how unjust it was; but at the same time thinking back, I didn't know any Americans that were fighting in the Vietnam War. Which, thinking back it seems really strange that I wouldn't have known. I felt like I was isolated because I was surrounded by people who all shared the same ideas. I didn't have a chance to ever know a soldier, or know what that experience was like, or see it from that point of view. So I don't know how genuine—I don't know if that's the right word.

KC: I think it's a pretty good word.

LR: I don't know how genuine it was for me at that point. I thought it was, but you know, from my point of view now I was very narrow.

KC: Well, it stands to reason in the environment which you were in and the thoughts and ideas that were swirling around. It becomes kind of a common courtesy, I think, with all the other injustices or perceived injustices, that which your organization and your group of friends you were working with, that was one of the many. Well, let me ask you this question, and you already admitted that maybe it wasn't as genuine or organic from you. You talked about the unjustness of the war, why did you see it as being unjust?

LR: I think it was going to a country that was so far away and that American boys were being killed, and that wasn't right.

KC: Playing the devils advocate here, this has happened throughout the history of the country and then the history of humankind. I mean, Americans died—all the Americans who died in World War II died on foreign soil. I mean, there were young men who did the same and the same thing for Korea. What made Vietnam different? Was it because it was your war?

LR: It was our war and it was something I could identify with by the people I associated with, and just identifying that these are young men that are my age. And that we were in a country harming and killing people, where we didn't have any business being.

KC: Okay, let me take out this question then, we didn't have any business being there from your perspective. Okay, why not? Were you aware of the geostrategic issues, the global, the national security issues, the international political issues? Were you paying attention to that?

LR: Probably not to begin with at all and it wasn't until I was in Philadelphia, but again, surrounded by people who were so against the war that I can't tell you how much on my own I read, thought, contemplated those issues; other than it felt very personal being involved with the people I was involved with. So I can't say where all that separates into what I knew intellectually and what I felt emotionally and being part of this group of people.

KC: Part of the community, sure, sure. Okay.

LR: That's why I think I'm a lightweight.

KC: I don't think that's the case at all. And again, whenever (unintelligible) is really material for the purpose of what we're doing here. I mean, it's about the experience and that's the important thing that we're trying to capture here. Okay, now let me put together a possible scenario and I hope it doesn't influence the way that you answer this but it might. It's one of those "leading questions that I'll ask anyway", kind of things. You mentioned that the war was very personal for you and then for your generation. This one was ours.

LR: Right.

KC: Just to paraphrase what you said. Korea was what it was, and World War II was what it was. You have expressed the fact that you have broken away, in a variety of different ways, from your family at an early age. And part of it is just a natural growing and you want to push away, but there was a lot of that in your generation. They said that, you know, the mores, the standards, the morality, the overall approach to life and our understanding of things. That was what our parent's generation understood and their parent's generation understood, but it's not necessarily what we understand, and by god will not be what we understand. War is an acceptable thing for them, but it's not acceptable for us. Their sacrifice was acceptable for them, but this sacrifice is not acceptable for us. How much do you think, for you personally, and in a larger sense, your generation, how much would you estimate—I could ask you to put a fraction or a percentage on this, how much do you think this overall pushing against or pushing away from previous generations and previous understanding of things influenced the overall anti-war movement, and the war movement against the Vietnam War?

LR: Well, I think everything collided during this generation. I think maybe because, and I can could speak probably from my father. He had such a difficult time, a hard life growing up on a farm in northern Maine and then being sent off to war at a very young age, coming back I think he wanted to feel safe. I think he didn't want to take anymore risk in his life. And there's a song, "Little Boxes on Hillside all made of Ticky-tack." And I think that's when our generation began to feel about the way we were being brought up. We were brought up in little houses on the hillside, all made of ticky-tack, and all the same. The world was opening, and we were learning more about the world. We were learning more about other cultures in a more positive way, and I think we wanted to be risk takers, and we were blessed. We didn't have to work on a farm when were very young. We went to school and even in our neighborhood, which was probably lower middle class, we had all the food we needed, we had everything we needed. Most of my friends were able to go off to college. Life was not hard in that respect, so we could start thinking about other things. And we could probably start thinking more globally than our parents were able to think about. So with that, with Kennedy dying, Martin Luther King dying, it seemed like our parents' generation had just done everything wrong. And part of that is being that age and breaking away.

KC: Sure.

LR: So all of that I think collided at the same time. So when that war became ours, we thought we had the power to change things. And I think that was genuine, for me it was, and I think for most people it was, even if we didn't understand how we ended up in Vietnam. I think as a generation there was the idea that we could make changes, because we weren't going to do our lives the same way our families did. I don't think there's one factor.

KC: Like you say, a confluence of a variety of different things.

LR: Right.

KC: And the war, and probably in most regards was a capstone for all of this. It was the easiest thing for your generation, your community, like minded people to attack because it is the most extreme of human experience.

LR: Right.

KC: You have that combined with the Civil Rights Movement, the awakening of the Women's Rights movement, and just social justice issues. Issues of the economy, issues of the environment, all of these things are kind of coming together. Alright, and I know they're a lot of issues that had to be addressed, no question about that. I'm not saying, of course, that the issue of the war shouldn't have been addressed because obviously it had to be addressed as well.

LR: Right.

KC: Alright, now you have all these things swirling around you. You clearly have a defined sense or a sense of social justice that's becoming more and more defined and you're participating in this social justice type of movement, whether it's the war or civil rights, or children, or whatever it is. You clearly seem to be defining where you stand in society. Maybe it's not as genuine or as organic on some issues as it was other issues, but regardless, you're coming together. You are forming a circle or a community of likeminded individuals. You're finally finding a place in which you are comfortable. It's what it sounds like to me. And you feel that you're acting, and you feel like you're making a difference. And it leads you finally to Philadelphia and this is 1969. After all the turbulence of the year of 1968 with King and Kennedy being assassinated, take me to your work in Philadelphia and give me all the detail you can.

LR: Okay, well I first started out working on what was called a central committee and just working with people from all over the world. And so for me that was a real eye opener because for the first time I was actually communicating with someone from Korea or from Germany.

KC: So it's North Carolina, but larger.

LR: Right, and it was just an exciting time. It was exciting time to be in the city when Civil Rights issues were so predominant—actually working in a black community center. Seeing the black leaders in that area working—worked down the street from the Black Panthers. So to me this was the most exciting place for me to be, and this was only a three month program, but I knew I was not going to leave Philadelphia. I knew that the city was a very important place to be and I wanted to be part of it.

KC: All these things colliding in a major city like Philadelphia.

LR: Right, everything was exciting about it.

KC: What was the Civil Rights Movement like in Philadelphia when you were there?

LR: Again, it was a very black/white situation. And again, I saw how unfair that was. You know, there were the black neighborhoods and the white neighborhoods; and there was little communication between them. And what was so exciting about this program was an attempt to open dialogue between different cultures in different communities. I liked being with the people who wanted to do that. And so then, after the summer program I ended up staying and working in West Philadelphia, and I was the only white staff member in the community center. Again, it was a very difficult place to be.

KC: Why?

LR: Because I was the only white, ninety-pound woman in the community.

KC: Okay, expand on that.

LR: I wasn't wanted. A lot of people didn't want me there. And it was hard being in a place where somebody didn't want me to be there and I felt I had not only the right but the desire to be there. It was hard making friends. There was another organization called, "A Young Great Society". It was a group of young professionals and college students who were going to different parts of the city. I'm not sure it was just

Philadelphia or if this was a national program, but there was an office of young architects a few blocks from where I worked who were working on housing issues in the city. And sometimes I'd just go there just to be with someone who I felt would talk to me and want to be with me.

KC: And these were young, white professionals?

LR: They were all young, white professionals. But over some time, it began to work. And I began to realize I probably was not going to have as much influence in the world as I thought I could. And there was one person—and he was fairly high up in the organization, who didn't feel I should be there, who took me aside.

KC: The Young Great Society?

LR: No, I'm sorry, back to working in the community center in Philadelphia. And he said to me, "You have to give these children a black experience." I couldn't give anyone a black experience. I remember saying all I could do is be the person I am, and a good person. And for him that wasn't enough. I can understand that. This was the community center; that their mission was to make children feel good about being black and about being part of a community. Now I understand it, at the time I thought he was wrong.

KC: Let me pick up on this a little bit. You are devoted to this, you're taking this very big risk, you don't feel comfortable, people are not making friends with you in the African American community in Philadelphia at this time. Other's obviously in Philadelphia had a lot of racial anger, hatred even, if you will. You mentioned the Black Panther Party at one time. And obviously whatever Black Panther Party was, they were not about family values and community and sitting on a stoop and laughing.

LR: They were in their own community. They ran a community center right down the street.

KC: Right, first and foremost the Black Panthers was a political organization for social change.

LR: Right.

KC: You're also at this community center here, and you just flat out said, "I don't feel wanted." Now, you were there committed to helping to make this change and you see

that one race doesn't want you there because of the color of your skin. Does that give you pause to think, "Well, what really is the root of this racial issue here?"

LR: I think I being brought up in a home where—and in a community, I'm not just saying my home—where I heard all the racial slurs and all the comments about how they don't deserve—black people don't deserve, and that's not the word that was used.

KC: I'm sure.

LR: I felt that it was their right to feel this way about me. And I felt I had to take it. I felt that I had to accept it. I didn't feel it was right. I felt that I knew the reason I was there was because I felt the injustice and wanted to make a difference, but I also felt that they have the right to feel that way about me. You know, person by person, one by one, that changed. I felt I'd left there feeling that I did have a little comfort level in that community. It felt like my community, I liked being there. I felt it was home. And, you know, I can't explain that in any other way, but I felt that it was home. Very similar to eventually when I was in Hanoi. I felt like again I was the odd person, but again I felt like I belonged there. Strange, isn't it? (Laughs)

KC: I don't think so because as you've said before all you can do is be the person who you are, and when it comes right down to it the way you make a difference is through individuals, individuals who create some sort of sense of common community, of shared values and that, you know, its individual relationships that help overcome this overall larger problem.

LR: Right.

KC: Things that we're obviously still dealing with today in a variety of different ways. Alright, now the director of the center said, "You know what, you're just not right for what we want to do here" Clearly that disappointed you. You said that you were making friends and you felt good about your contribution. Did you leave as a result of this?

LR: Pretty much. You know, things in my life were changing, too. I had met Harry, and yeah, I think that I began to feel it was just too hard. It was just too hard, and it was not hard on—like you said, on the individual basis, but that community center had a mission and the mission was a good one, and I was not part of that mission. And so I think when I met Harry, it felt like, "It's time for a change." And then, part of me feels

like I did fail a little bit there. That I didn't stay with it more, but I was twenty years old. And so I think a little bit I got tired of always feeling like I didn't quite fit in and it was exciting to think about a new life again.

KC: Sure, sure. Especially at twenty years old and seeing what you've seen so far. Okay, when you leave the community center in West Philadelphia, where do you go? What's the next step for you?

LR: And then I wanted to be a mom.

KC: Really?

LR: Yup, and so at that point we even talked about continuing to work there. But suddenly I started thinking about my own safety, which I hadn't thought about before. I think I was just tired of not fitting in and I think at that point it was exciting to think about becoming a mom and influencing children in a different way. At the time I thought a less difficult way, but then I didn't know about parenting (Both laugh). And so that really closed the door probably on my thinking that I was going to change the world. I lost some of my optimism about that, desire even.

KC: Okay, and I'll take this back to the Vietnam War again because you mentioned it, you lost some of your optimism and you lost some of your desire. I probably know the answer to this already, but I'll ask it again, was this a matter of your life experiences that you had seen, the changes you had tried to make and that you did, obviously make, but that wasn't meeting your standards, it was very difficult? Or was it a matter of maturing and realizing that this is maybe nobody does truly make a difference?

LR: I think it was more that—and still at this time more that maybe if I was a different person, I would have been able to make more changes. So I took at it more as a personal defeat. Yeah, I think at that point—and I was ready to have some fun.

KC: You hadn't had a lot of fun up to this point.

LR: No. You know, I worked really hard and I think I was ready to just have some fun and leave some of that hard stuff alone for awhile.

KC: Then marriage and parenting, of course.

LR: Yeah, a breeze. (Laughs)

KC: Okay, let's take this back to the anti-war sentiment. Social Justice we know very well, I think, by now that that part about you. This specifically social justice as you

saw it, as it pertained to the Vietnam War. As the war progressed, as we move from Lyndon Johnson, and the Tet Offensive of 1968, and the assassinations, and all of the hammering on all the things that are coming home and the news. In 1968, of course Richard Nixon wins the presidential election over Humphrey and he's going to become president. Did you have any hope for Nixon?

LR: No.

KC: The Vietnam War?

LR: Again, I can't separate my own feelings with this, with the peer group I had and then all the discussions and talking about it. At this point, I don't know if I can clearly say what were my ideas and what was the group idea.

KC: Okay, well that's another good point. You talk about the discussions of the war and then there's a stereotype of social activists, very politically and socially culturally liberal people, kind of standing around in a group and discussing these things, or going to meetings, and then discussing the Vietnam War. Did you participate in any of those?

LR: There was one organization called "Resistance", which I didn't even think about until like two minutes ago where it was for the young men who were resisting the war for conscientious reasons, and I went to those meetings. Maybe if I were on a college campus it would have been different, of attending some of those meetings and protests. But I'd say it was more of a social group I had at that point, most of whom were older than I was, who were already established and working, social working and ministry. And so I've seen the movies and read books about those groups that got together, but I was not part of that.

KC: Well, tell me about the run of the mill resistance committee.

LR: Well—

KC: Who were these people, what was their point of view, what was the purpose of the meeting, what all went on?

LR: Okay, with my recollection, they were the draft dodgers—no, no, no not the draft dodgers, because they had made a claim that they were not going to Vietnam. So they were the resisters and they were the ones who were facing trial, probably the ones who were making the decision to go to Canada or not. Families and friends that were

supporting them, raising money for court costs, and to my recollection these meetings were discussing personal issues and problems that individuals were having with their own status.

KC: What was the background of these gentleman or the young men who were resisting the war?

LR: I can't really tell you other than the couple that I knew. They were educated. They had been drafted and made the choice with the United Church of Christ. This organization was standing behind the one person that I was close to and supporting him, and financially supporting him, and the way they counseled him, giving him the opportunity to alternate service. And I think part of this group was to provide alternate service for young men, like the Quakers did. And it might even be that the Quakers were involved in this. I'm not sure, but I have some memory of the Quakers being involved, helping resistors because that has been their history.

KC: Right, and again, this is in Philadelphia.

LR: Right, in Philadelphia, in which Quakers are very predominant.

KC: What did you think about this overall resistance to the draft? Resistance saying, "Look, I'm simply not going to be a part of something that I believe is morally wrong, and I will do it to whatever legal lengths I need, even if it means physically leaving the country to avoid this." In general, the approach was, and this is assuming the best of these people because there are a lot of people who are associated with this who didn't have the best of intentions. Who flat out were afraid, did not want to go. But assuming that that's out of these individuals, morally I am bound to not serve in a position where I cold take part in something that I believe is absolutely wrong.

LR: I think because of the very few that I knew, that they were willing to go to prison instead of going to war, it made it very honorable to me. I think—I'm not sure I had the same feeling about young men going to Canada, because it didn't feel like they were making the stand and making a personal sacrifice, making that stand. I think there's a difference just for reasons why maybe young men went to join the service. There's probably a range of reasons that happened and I think the same happened with people who resisted; and some were honorable, and some were not. But I think if you're willing to personally go to prison for something you stand for and fight for, then I think that has

the same conviction of someone who's saying, "I'm going to go to war and fight for my country."

KC: Yeah, I think in a moral sense that there is some equilibrium in the two sides. And of course, that kind of stance was the hallmark of what was best about the social protest movements of the 1960s. Those who were, such as Martin Luther King Jr., who said, "Throw me jail."

LR: Exactly.

KC: Because my cause is just and if that's—then that's fine, rather than, like you say, leaving the country or going into hiding, or something like that. So was this the only organization with which you were associated?

LR: Yes, yes, and that was only in the fringe because, again I was a young woman at that time, and this was not something I had to face. I could only participate and then I knew people who were doing it, and had empathy for them, and again, looking back, I didn't know any young men who went off to war, which shows how isolated I was in my whole experience.

KC: What was your role with resistance and this overall anti-war thing? Did you bring any sort of special talents or abilities or attitude?

LR: No, I don't think I did. It meant something to me because I really felt that these people were doing it for the right reason, but I don't think I had any influence or impact. Protesting the war in Washington felt right, and it was certainly an amazing experience being part of this mass that felt this way. But certainly, that was a lot easier than going off to war, wasn't it?

KC: I would think so. I mean, I never participated in a protest or war. I don't have the grounds to say.

LR: You know, and you don't want to trivialize that because it was very important, and it did make a change. You know, I really felt like it did influence history. And I think I understood the power of a generation of having so many people the same age in this country. When you think of that many young people going to Washington and doing that, and that they could make a change. And, of course, they weren't all young all people.

KC: Right, it certainly became much more mainstream.

LR: Oh yes, it became mainstream.

KC: Okay, you've brought this topic up. You talk about the march in Washington D.C. I assume you're talking about the one in September of 1969, this massive one. You mentioned to me before that you took part in, in every larger demonstration against the war that was available to you. Okay, first off, why did you do this?

LR: You know—and part of it is probably being that age, is that in that time you had to take a stand somewhere with the war. Either you were going to be part of the group that went off to war or supported the ones that went off to war, or else you were going to protest it. It feels all very black and white to me now.

KC: And probably more so then, I would think.

LR: Right, right and so the question is—it would be more of a question is why wouldn't you have done it? Because it felt like that's what the world was at that point, at that age, is that you had to take a stand somewhere.

KC: So you're twenty-one years old.

LR: Right.

KC: And you're making this type of decision.

LR: Right.

KC: Alright. You mentioned that you were involved in a number of these things. Okay, what was the first one? Do you remember?

LR: You know, it was probably the September one in Washington and I remember being scared.

KC: Why?

LR: Well, the police were there, there was tear gas and at one point I remember just a mass of people moving, and the need to get out of the area because there was tear gas. If they were saying tear gas was in front of us and people were moving this way and trying to get out of the way of people and trying to get into a building just to get out of the mess.

KC: You personally were trying to get into a building to get a hold of them?

LR: Yes, and the fear of losing the people you were with and that was a very small part. I think that was the only time I felt any fear from it. The rest of the time it was a very lovely event to go to.

KC: Now you said you didn't want to lose track of the people you were with.

LR: Right.

KC: You went with a group from Philadelphia, then?

LR: Right, yeah.

KC: Did you drive? Did you take a plane or a train?

LR: We drove and then we had to park far outside the city, but there was an older couple with a van who said, "Come with us." So there was lots of cooperation of getting people into the city. You know, there were lines of busses in front of the White House and the police. But I have to say, you know, it seems like a very easy thing to have done, to go to those marches. I mean, I think the reasons were right, but it was a good feeling of doing something you thought was for the right reason that you'd hope to make change. It was also a very nice time; it was a very nice time of being with a group of likeminded people all cooperating.

KC: Describe that environment for me.

LR: Well, there's a lot of singing and holding hands and moving in as a group, and helping and sharing food, probably not unlike Woodstock in many ways. I remember being surprised seeing people from another generation, I don't think I expected that when I went there. People of different color, and music, there were singers. But it was so hard to get close to anything, you know. We just walked and walked and walked.

KC: Alright, now this was surprisingly to a lot of people, the month of September was surprising because it lacked violence. The US Military had planned for some really bad things to happen if you've got busses lined up in front of the White House to keep people away and then you've got the police, the tear gas and horses and all of this kind of thing going on. So it was surprising in that things didn't seem to get out of hand.

LR: Right.

KC: That people didn't—large numbers of people didn't get hurt as a result of this thing. The success of this particular march—and this was huge. There were running an estimated two million people there eventually throughout the course of the whole thing. What did it feel like to be a part of something that seemed to be so successful?

LR: Oh, it was, it was life affirming. I mean, it really felt like there is the power and the number of likeminded people. It was high, it was just very exciting, and you

could feel that this was historical, you could feel it and just the number of people that you knew this was very important and that you were a part of it.

KC: Did you feel that it was organized? Did you feel like it was chaotic? Did you feel it just flowed on its own?

LR: It flowed on its own and I do remember in one of the marches and I can't even tell you which ones were which, but in one of them there was a small bit of vandalism and it was stopped.

KC: By those who were there?

LR: And it was not stopped by the police, it was just stopped, it was not tolerated. You know, I think the only way it could go was on its own because the organizers couldn't have controlled two million people, no matter how hard they tried. And so it had to be controlled by the group.

KC: So the one in 1969 was your first one in Washington DC, the big one. You were involved in others as well?

LR: I think three total.

KC: Well, tell them. If you can remember them, distinctly tell me about them individually or just tell me about them in general.

LR: I think generally they all had the same feeling.

KC: Do you remember where they were?

LR: They were all in Washington.

KC: All in Washington.

LR: Though, there was some in Philadelphia, but they weren't as large. And so, you know, my memory fails me, I feel like I couldn't give you honest details that aren't just—they all blended together.

KC: Was this all 1969? Or was it 1970, 1971?

LR: I think'69 and maybe the early part of '70.

KC: Anything in response to the Nixon administration's incursion into Cambodia in the spring of 1970? Do you remember specifically?

LR: I really can't say that I do. I remember the feeling of it and the outrage of Cambodia, but that's where it fails me. I don't think I can clearly tell you anything more than that.

KC: Sure. Well, let me shift gears here a little bit and ask you about soldiers returning from Vietnam. It is very well known that soldiers returning from Vietnam did not receive the type of welcome that we owed them, I think.

LR: Oh definitely. Right.

KC: That soldiers received in previous wars and wars ever since. That war protestors, the anti-war groups and the individuals associated with them were just flat out terrible in their treatment of soldiers who came home. Now, I don't think that it is, in any regards—there's a lot of myth, there's so much myth in the Vietnam War. And I think there's some myth in the way that the anti-war group treated returning soldiers. It would be simply flat out incorrect to say a blanket statement, "Anti-war protestors hated the American soldiers". Having said that however, there's an awful lot of truth to that. The organization that you were with or the group, the community, the friends that you were with and the anti-war movement, what was your personal perception of the American soldier returning from combat from Vietnam or sailor or the airman or whatever and those of the groups that you were with?

LR: I think there was a time where there was that anger that was directed to soldiers and I think that was—rather I felt it personally or rather I just took on that feeling because of the people I associated with, but I think for the time there was an anger that, "Why did they choose to go? They could have chosen not to go. If they chose not to go then we wouldn't be in this situation." And I think it was probably part of being passionate about something and that you lose your perspective a little and part of it's being young. But yeah, for a while I remember feeling angry at the people who chose to go. Again, I think that was easy to do because I didn't know any soldiers that had gone, and I didn't know any soldiers that came back. I think—I don't think that was for a very long period of time and I think because culturally something started to happen here too is that suddenly there were movies about the soldiers coming back, coming home. About what it was like for a soldier to come back. I can't tell you exactly how I felt about it, but I do know at some point I did have an anger that why would somebody choose to do this? And that was certainly wrong.

KC: Sure, because the answer is they probably didn't choose to go.

LR: Right, exactly.

KC: You were one of the draftees and you had no choice but to go.

LR: And you had no choice, but at that point, at that time, being with the group of people that I was with and they had made the choice not to go. And I thought that was taking the morally high road. You know, which was the wrong point of view looking back, but I did think people had the choice. You know, and it was then meeting Harry who made the choice when he was drafted to go and so suddenly I had to start thinking, "Oh, you know, what about this person who I'm caring about, he made the choice to go. He thought it was his responsibility and though he was against the war it was his country." And so it began to balance my thinking.

KC: Was this while the war was still going on?

LR: Yes—wait a minute, I'm not even sure anymore.

KC: Well that's to be expected, it was a few years ago.

LR: Yeah, to tell you the truth, I don't know. Well, it had to be because I met Harry six months after he left the Pentagon.

KC: Okay. Did you witness any acts, any sort of negative acts toward returning American veterans?

LR: No.

KC: While you're a part of this?

LR: No.

KC: Okay. Well, because the later organized events which you participated, they kind of run together for you.

LR: Right.

KC: It sounds like you said. We'll try to wrap up maybe this part of it, but let me ask you again, how did your participation in this—when you look back, what did you take away from this? About yourself and about this generation and about the country as a whole? What did you personally learn? What did the country take away from this?

LR: Well, I think looking back on it I don't think any of us were as individualistic as we thought we were.

KC: Why do you say that?

LR: Because I thought I made choices in my life early on because of who I was as a person. But I think there was a whole grown swell of change going on in the country

and I was just very much a part of it. I think because our generation had seen the world change in war, in assassinations, and the way our parents had done things, I think there couldn't help but be a big shift in how our country went at that point. And so I think I was part of the generation who really did want to make a change for the better. And part of it, like you said, it was just from one generation to the next. There's that need to break away and be different. But because there was so many of us and so many things that happened during that time, I think it was very exciting to be a part of so many social changes that happened and yet to feel like it only influenced very few in making those changes. But with so many people doing so many things, I think there has been a great change. And probably a little bit lack of respect for our parents who worked for the change that they made, you know. My father made probably bigger changes in the world than I ever did. Driving the tank in Europe during World War II probably made more powerful changes than I could make.

KG: Well, it's a sliding scale.

LR: Right.

KG: There's something to be said to the fact that your family, for these two generations at least, were able to make such an impact. Even if it's an individual level, once you're not so sure here—

LR: Right, right, but I think my only point in that is being young and so ambitious to make changes. I think we did lose out on something by not knowing more and appreciating what happened before us. And that's probably my father's generations fault in that they weren't willing to share their experience because of how difficult it was. So we went on our marry way and didn't get the chance to reflect on that.

KC: Well, it's part of the human condition.

LR: Right.

KG: Every generation does it.

LR: Right.

KC: Only when we become old enough to look back on it.

LR: Right, exactly.

KC: Especially that we appreciate this sort of thing. Okay, now just briefly take us back to the war and we're wrapping up the war. You mentioned that you meet your future

husband then you settle down, have a family; you've got kids on your mind. I believe your first daughter's birthday is 1971 or something like that. Were you still paying attention to what was going on over there?

LR: Yes, I think it was still—again, I think it's what we all do, we surround ourselves with like-minded people and as we became a couple and a family, we surrounded ourselves with people who thought like us. So yes, we continued to be concerned and think about it. I think at that point we did not participate other than—no, we really didn't continue to participate. I think our focus became our family and making sure we were raising our children to have good moral standards. To see the world and giving them the point of view to make sure they're going to go out into the world in a just way and make the changes. So I think there's a time and we're probably part of the majority of this where we became more insulated in our world and our world became protecting these two children, and having them go off in the world to be good contributors.

KC: Did your attitude towards social justice and the war included, was this important in a way that you raised your kids?

LR: Yes, definitely. And I think it took on as times changed, I think it was important to always talk to them about the changes. About talking to them about being just people when it comes to relating to an issue or to people along with racially, sexually, globally understanding cultures. I think that was a very important part of how we raised our children and wanting to make sure that they were in an environment that did not have violence, that had respect. You know, all those experiences seemed for a time—those experiences made us the parents that we chose to be.

KC: When American participation in the war ends with Paris Peace Accords did—how do I ask this without trying to lead you—what was your reaction to the end of American participation in the conflict?

LR: I was very glad, and I remember watching those images on TV and feeling like it was okay that we didn't win. It almost felt just that we didn't win.

KC: Why do you say that?

LR: I think, you know, for no other reason that it felt so unjust to be there that it was okay to feel that it was right that we didn't win. And that's what I thought at that time.

KC: Sure.

LR: And it certainly has gone through many more changes after spending time in Vietnam. Vietnam certainly has been a part of my life, even though I feel like I've certainly been on a fringe of both sides of thinking about the American Vietnam war and then being in Vietnam and thinking about the Vietnam American War. Both sides just sit on the fringe, but so much a part of the influence in my life. In a way that I can't even intellectually talk about or think about the facts, or just the feelings of being that time in history and seeing both places in my lifetime and having the influence.

KC: Well, I like a good segway.

LR: (Laughs)

KC: We should also mention here, get your impressions about your time in Vietnam. You later went back to Vietnam.

LR: Right, went to Vietnam for the first time.

KC: Oh, I'm sorry, went to Vietnam, I'm sorry. You studied art.

LR: Right, artist resident at the University of Hanoi.

KC: Tell me about this, how did that come about?

LR: I began to feel smart enough to get an education, so I went back to school and got a degree in Bachelor of Fine Arts. During this time one of the professors at Emmanuel College had been a Vietnam veteran artist and for the last fifteen, ten, fifteen years had—his experience in Vietnam had really been influential in his life and he wanted to go back to Vietnam to work with artists there, see what happened to some of the villages that he worked with while he was there. And so he started the Indochina art project. It started with him going to Vietnam maybe three or four times and finding artists who had been in the American Vietnam War and starting a community there. One of the first things they did was to organize the art show of American veterans and Vietnam veterans and have them share their artwork for this time period. And so this art show actually travelled through the United States. It was called "As seen through both eyes." And I don't think immediately it was in Vietnam, I think it was not allowed in Vietnam,

but it made a huge impact on American Veterans and a way for them to express this whole experience and to see the art through both cultures. And then at that point he had brought Vietnam artists to the United States and they had never had an American artist to go to Vietnam. So through this relationship of spending a lot of time in class talking about our experiences, as peers because he's my age and I was in school with a lot of younger people, it just sort of evolved that this would be an experience that might be really good for me. So I go home one day and say to Harry, "What do you think about me going to Vietnam for three months?" As usual he said, "I think that's a great idea." He was even the one that said, "If you're going to do it, I think you should do it for four months." And so again, I found myself going someplace by myself, in a place—

KG: Completely foreign.

LR: Completely foreign except they're all the same height. (Laughs) And so I ended up going to Hanoi and through that, I met a lot of artists who had the experience of living in Vietnam during the conflict. And it was one of the hardest things I'd ever done. First of all, being away from my family for four months and being in a different environment. But to see how much a sacrifice they made in their own lives and went to marches. I believed in it, but there were families that were separated for ten years. There were families who never got to be together again and they're a lot of women my age in Vietnam who don't have those husbands that they married. Typical in Vietnam, art is very important and so there would be occasions for there to be art shows, art shows showing the works during this time. I have to tell you walking into one of those art shows it was like being hit in the face to see these images of what war was like for them.

KC: Let me ask you this question, in a closed political state like Vietnam, which a state governs so much, was this art—were those who created the art, were they free to create what they wanted, was there a really statist kind of stamp on this stuff? What did it look like?

LR: I'm sure there was and you could see that in some of the work. Actually, you could see it more in the architecture and sculptures that were then starting to be taken down when I was there. They had a Russian influence because after the Americans, the Russians were there and so some of the art shows the influence of Russia. But artists are individualists and find ways to express themselves. And I think art it's very difficult for

society like Vietnam to live by those rules. And I do remember artists talking about not having supplies, not having the money for the materials they need. And they used everything, anything, and everything they had to express themselves. So I think the influences I saw in the walls were true and honest and not governed by the state. They had too much emotion for them to have that to be the case. And the one thing that struck me as the only American in one of these places, one of these shows, was how emotional it was for me and with language barrier, sometimes how difficult that was to express and how surprising that was to the Vietnamese because they talked about that was the past. I think for myself and probably a lot of our generation it didn't feel like the past yet.

KC: It was a very real, important part of where you were.

LR: Right.

KC: We understand history as relates to us and in other cultures it's a much larger thing.

LR: Right. I had two very preferable experiences there, well maybe three, that have stayed with me and will always stay with me. I was at the university and I was painting, and the director came to me and said, "An American's coming, he's from New York." And he showed me his picture and said, "Do you know him?" I said, "No, I did not know him." And he said, "Well, come have lunch." And so I came to meet this American who was a writer for Esquire. He was doing a special assignment for a nature magazine and he was only going to be in Hanoi for an hour or two, but he promised the spread that he would stop by the university. So I met him and we were going to go have lunch and the funny part of this and the most wonderful experience is the director, who, in broken English said to me, "Tell him we're going to lunch." And so I said, "We're going to lunch." And he said, "Well, tell him I only have an hour." "Well, he only has an hour." And it was this long conversation before I realized we were all speaking English (both laughing), but I was the translator. And so we went to a home of an educator and she was in the United States at the time, but she was also—her family was a friend of Ho Chi Minh and so she was well thought of in Hanoi. And so we went to her home and they started bringing out artwork that again, was done during this time period. And this man that was with me he had not gone to Vietnam. And he was looking at all of these images and he started to cry. Well, he starts to cry so I start to cry, and the Vietnamese are all

sitting around looking at us like we are just so crazy. And so I started to explain to them that we just felt very sad about what our country had done in their country. And they toasted us and said, “No problem.” Because again, that was past for them and this man it was that past for him. He had very strong feelings, guilt feelings about not being that young man who had to go to Vietnam and part of it was this is what happened in Vietnam. After that experience, he had been staying at the fancy hotel and he said, “I need to stay some place else and I need to stay here and learn about this more.” So he ended up staying for a whole week and got sidetracked going off to North Vietnam. And then one other time it was the family, the hotel I stayed at the husband had been off to war for years and came back injured and with illnesses that still remained with him. And they would often ask me to dinner, and it would just be with the family, but this time they’d made an appointment for me to come and I knew it was important, but I couldn’t figure out why. They brought flowers and when I came in the table was all set beautifully and in broken English the father showed me the good wine that he’d bought for the occasion and his daughter spoke some English, so we were able to communicate. But then when they went to toast for the evening, he toasted all of the lost souls that were left behind and wanted me to take that back home. And that was pretty profound. So again, I’m on the fringe, but it felt very powerful.

KC: Yes, absolutely. Let me ask you about this, as an artist, in what ways did the Vietnamese artists represent their experience of the American invasion of the war? In what ways did that come out? And I don’t even mean American phase, the French phase, the Japanese phase or how did this come out in their art? In what ways?

LR: Well, it came—it’s hard to answer that question because there’s so many other influences. I think the most powerful one for me was when I went to North Vietnam to the Chinese border, to the minority villages. These villages, they’re living the same way they’ve done for hundreds of years. Huts, earth floor, and a lot of these villages sided with the Americans, so they were in jeopardy with the Vietnamese. So they were isolated groups. And in walking in one of these villages, the side of one of the huts they had burnt in the images of war. A helicopter overhead, bombs coming from airplanes, people on the ground, people with guns. So you know, that was one person’s experience showing it artistically.

KC: Very literally.

LR: Very literally. And then in the art shows, again, they'd be very literal expressions of war. One painting I particularly remember was a painting with two moons in the sky. It was explained to me that was one way families felt the connection, that the soldiers in the war looking at one moon and the family at home looking at the other moon and then two moons were together. So you would see very representational work of the war, of what it was like to be at home. Another image was of young people in an environment, but their peers in the sky, as in heaven, watching over them. And then the influence of Vietnam opening up to the western world when they were beginning to use abstract art and so that influence was coming in at the same time. But that didn't represent so much of what was happening for my generation. Though, there was one artist who his abstract paintings represented the streams, with the fish in the streams and he said—he was younger, his family would take him out of the city to the country, to get away from the war. And so, his memory of that time was the tranquility of the stream.

KC: Now, you were here for four months then? You've already alluded to this and you've spoken on this to some small length, but as you look back on it now and you've talked about how Vietnam somehow played a role throughout your entire life. Did this coming back to Vietnam force you to reconsider the American phase when you were in your twenties? Did it provide any sort of closer from your prospective of what it was then and what it was now, looking at it from both prospective?

LR: I think again because I have to say this, the fringe and looking, I could see the devastation from both sides. You know, speaking with a doctor who left his family for ten years and never got to see his daughter because she died before he came home and how he set up hospitals all through Vietnam for the soldiers, and the sadness in killing elephants for food and then just leaving. The other side of that, seeing the openness now in Vietnam and seeing how changes have been made there and part of that has been the American influence, a large part of it is an American influence. They're so happy to hear about America and they have such high regards for Americans and the entrepreneurs that we are. And when I was there, little businesses were exploding, for the first time they could have businesses and how much they identified that spirit with the American spirit. So part of that was a real celebration. It was the extreme ends of the sorrows and yet the

hope for the future. And that might even be more visible there than here because of the extreme living conditions. And I felt it more there than I ever felt it here. I felt it in the regard that they had for Americans. How for them that conflict was only a small part of their history and for us it was a generation. We think of it as such a large thing and they think of it as such a small thing. And it was interesting to get that point of view.

KC: Alright, final question that I have for you.

LR: Okay.

KC: It's a big general one, feel free to answer in any way that you choose. Looking back on it, from 2009, in what way has—and I'm going to use the word Vietnam, and it can mean anything to you that it means to, in what way has Vietnam most influenced your life? Or in what ways?

LR: The first thing that comes to my mind is probably a theme that's been in my life, in that I've always had this desire to be with people who are different from myself. And from being a child, looking out the window, seeing—I want to experience that. When I went to Vietnam, I really thought, "Okay, this is a time where I'm going to have four months pretty much isolated because of language, because of culture, and that the experience will probably be an art experience. I'll get to learn something there, but probably I'll be very isolated, and I'll probably have to figure out how to live alone without much communication." And the exact opposite happened. Somehow communication had nothing to do with language and I felt very much at home there. I felt I arrived home and would have really considered if I did not have a family here, and such a pole here, that it was a culture that I could have stayed and lived in. Even not understanding the language, getting very little of the language while I was there, and yet feeling at total peace with the culture. I guess I got—I guess that's it, that I got to live in a culture that was different and still feel like I belong.

KC: Well, is there anything else you'd like to add?

LR: No, I think that's it.

KC: Okay.

LR: We've talked for a long time.