

Interview with Helen W. White by Clark Groome, Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania Oral History Project, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, October 6, 2014.

CLARK GROOME: Where are you originally from? You're not a Pennsylvanian?

HELEN WHITE: Indeed, I'm not, Clark. I had the great privilege and wonderment of growing up in the Southwest. I'm a fourth generation Oklahoman, born in Oklahoma and raised in Oklahoma. My great-grandfather—one of the more interesting things that fits into how my life got shaped is my great-grandfather, who brought his family from Hot Springs, Arkansas, to Ardmore, Oklahoma.

CG: Ardmore!

HW: Ardmore, Oklahoma, and he was a gunsmith. And of course, the frontier, when it was opened, Oklahoma, as you know, has a story, and we can talk about that at another time, about the Indian removal.

CG: Yeah.

HW: And then in the late eighties of the 19th century, Oklahoma was opened to new settlement. And so the frontier opened, and that was a good place for a gunsmith. What was extraordinary about George Ritter was that he made seventeen violins using the same instruments that he did to shape gunstocks. In his shop, he made seventeen violins. As a child, I had one of them. Some of them were quite good, and were used by some artists. So I thought that was an interesting dichotomy.

CG: So you were born there, and raised there?

HW: Yes, I was born in a town called Tecumseh, Oklahoma.

CG: T-E-C-U-M-S-E-H?

HW: Himself! The chief. And while my father was working in the oilfields, in the early 1930s. So, that's the beginning. And as a consequence of that, when the opportunity came at a very fine school system in Tulsa—incidentally, I probably was in my teens before I realized Tulsa was not the center of the universe.

CG: Oh, okay.

HW: Because Tulsa really, and still to this day, considers itself above the normal, or above the average. So I had the opportunity to study the violin, and that put me on the—simply because I had the violin that my great-grandfather had made.

CG: Okay, where did you go? Tell me about your education. Not high school, but I mean, after school.

HW: Well, let me just briefly say, and this is not stretching the point by any means; anyone can look it up. The Tulsa school system, because of the unusual circumstances in the way Oklahoma became a state, was one of the finest school systems in the country.

CG: There was a lot of oil money, wasn't there?

HW: Lots of oil money. Lots of oil money.

CG: That helped the public schools then, there.

HW: And during the 1930s, after the crash, the city fathers and the district fathers really set about to develop a very fine school system. And I benefited from that personally. By the time I reached high school, as a student of violin, I was playing in an orchestra in the high school that had over 70 members. It was a very large high school. So this was a wonderful benefit, sent me on my way. I had the benefit of studying with a woman who was a refugee from Germany, a Jew, who

came over with her parents. That's a whole 'nother story, but it's a very important part of my background, because Tosca Kramer became my mentor.

CG: Spell Kramer.

HW: K-R-A-M-E-R. Her full professional name is Tosca Berger Kramer. Dr. Berger brought them, his family, to Tulsa as they were fleeing Berlin.

CG: So when did you graduate from high school?

HW: '49, 1949.

CG: '49, yeah.

HW: Right after the war. My father had come back. He had served in the Navy as a volunteer during the war. And so the opportunities to go to university were limited because of circumstances at that time, so it was not where I would go to university, but if. In those days, University of Tulsa was predominantly male, on an average of ten to one, and the attitude of women getting an education was not enthusiastic.

CG: No.

HW: And there were members in my family who said—because it was family business—“We can't use family money at this time to put a woman into—because she'll only get married, etcetera.” But Tosca, who my parents valued very much, said, “She will be educated.”

CG: Okay.

HW: And that prevailed.

CG: So where were you educated?

HW: At the University of Tulsa, right there in the city.

CG: And what was your major?

HW: Music, and education.

CG: A bachelor's?

HW: Yes, I got my bachelor's there. And I began to teach in the Tulsa schools.

CG: Again, teaching music?

HW: Yes. [Laughs] It was all quite wonderful when—and here's another step forward—born in Oklahoma, and lived there very happily.

Loved growing up there; loved going to the university. It was very good to me.

CG: So did you graduate in '53?

HW: '53. I graduated in '53.

CG: On time? In other words, you did it in four years?

HW: On time. I will say, because it helped to shape things in the future, the four years at the university—maybe I really tried even harder, because of the resistance of my going to the university.

CG: Because you wanted to prove that girls were okay?

HW: [Laughs] Yes. I think I wanted to prove my grandmother wrong, when she said—

CG: Nothing wrong with that.

HW: That's right. So I probably became, then, an over-achiever, as a result of that kind of motivation. And I did very well at the university, in many aspects of university life. Then, there was a young woman, a young girl, studying with Tosca also who had won the audition to Curtis Institute, and had been at Curtis for two years. Her Godmother, who had taken Janie to Curtis, was no longer able to do it because she became ill. So Tosca then—and we knew the Smith family—suggested that maybe I could take Janie, for a year, to Philadelphia.

You can see why this is an important part of the story, how did I get here?

CG: Right.

HW: For one year only, while they made other arrangements.

CG: And what did you do when you brought her here?

HW: I was her guardian and supervisor. I worked with Curtis Institute to be her guardian during that year, at the ripe old age of 22, 23.

CG: How did you survive? I mean, did they pay you to do this?

HW: They paid for all expenses, and the other thing, another door opened—part of the plan and support for my doing this was to pay for my tuition to start my master's degree.

CG: And your master's again was in music?

HW: Yes, but I applied [to the] University of Pennsylvania, not knowing the difference here. And Penn was very good. They said, "You have a good background in English. That would be a good department. But as far as music, our department at Penn"—

CG: Wasn't much then.

HW: Not much then, "But let us recommend that you look to Temple," because they saw my credentials, which because of Tosca and four years of study at Colorado College in the summer, they were excellent. It was an excellent record, and I was very happy to have that. So I did go to Dean Stone at Temple.

CG: David Stone!

HW: [Laughs] David Stone.

CG: Yeah.

HW: David Stone welcomed me enthusiastically, and I had a great year there. But I was longing to go back to Oklahoma, expecting to go

back to Oklahoma. [Laughs] Cheltenham schools called David Stone and asked if he had anyone with certain credentials, for teaching music in [the] school system in Cheltenham. They wanted to start an instrumental program. And Dr. Stone said, “I only have one, and she’s on her way back to Oklahoma at the end of the year.” The superintendent said, “Oh, heck. I’m from Nebraska. Let me talk to her.” So that was a good conversation.

He talked me in to coming out to Cheltenham for an interview. It worked very well. They were interested in me. I was intrigued by Cheltenham, an excellent school district. [Sighs] I agreed to do it for two years. By this time my father was anxious, because he was really wanting me to get back to Oklahoma, and I fully intended to do that. However, another really important step happened. There were others, but these are the big ones. I had to be assigned to a school for faculty meetings on Monday, and I was assigned to a certain school. And at the faculty meeting, at the faculty tea, I was introduced to George White.

CG: Ah, okay! That’s a clue. What school was that?

HW: That was Thomas Williams, in Cheltenham. George was on his way to becoming a high school guidance counselor. But all of this is pure happenstance.

CG: Well, that’s the way life—what you planned in life, and life goes its own way.

HW: It just kept happening.

CG: All right, let me stop you. You’re in Philadelphia, and you’ve just met your husband-to-be.

HW: Mm-hm.

CG: Let's go back to—you did not grow up an Episcopalian?

HW: I did not. That's a parallel to the story we've just talked about. We often refer to Oklahoma as being the belt buckle of the Bible Belt?

CG: Yeah.

HW: And without too much detail, my experience as a young person, growing up in a small church in suburban Tulsa, where my grandparents', my family business—the family business was building what was one of the first suburban ideas of building houses out in the suburbs. And it was a grand idea, and very successful. However, the churches, the main line churches, were all in the city. And so these little churches cropped up around the suburbs, and I, and many of the other children, went to this local church—very evangelical.

CG: Was that a denominational church?

HW: It was actually Cincinnati Avenue Christian Church.

CG: Okay. So it was an independent?

HW: Very independent, very evangelical.

CG: Did you like that?

HW: I grew to question it so severely that—

CG: What were you questioning about it?

HW: [Sighs] I have a very quick story about it that opened my eyes, so the light bulb moment. I was in a class, and the teacher was talking about the Red Letter Edition of John.

CG: Red Letter meaning that those were "Jesus' words."

HW: These were Jesus' words. This was a really important moment. The Bible was open; there was not one black letter on the page; there were all red letters. And we were being extolled to memorize these very words of Jesus, and put them on our hearts. And all of a sudden, the

light bulb went over my head. [Laughs] Jesus didn't speak in Elizabethan English. And that became a moment of questioning.

CG: He didn't?

HW: No! Well, that's what I knew. I had been a good student. But here was another important part of the moment. I couldn't question the teacher. I dared not raise my hand.

CG: It was, "This is the way it is."

HW: This is the way it is. I dared not raise my hand, but I had that confrontation of a moment of truth, that says, "I'm being told to do something that is not true."

CG: Okay, well let's compact the long story. How did you go from there to the Episcopal Church?

HW: Back to university. Music—we were doing Christmas vespers. I was in charge of the orchestra, and the professor told me to go down to Trinity Church in Tulsa, the Episcopal Church in the city, a beautiful Gothic church, so I could see the layout, the physicality of the church where we were going to do this.

CG: This was where you were going to perform?

HW: Where we were going to do the vespers. So I went down on a Sunday morning, and I—again, it's a moment indelible in my head and heart. There was this magnificent service. There was a liturgy. I didn't even know the word liturgy at that point. But there was a procession with great dignity and great care, and the music was glorious! Dr. Eckel mounted the steps into the pulpit, and he spoke—

CG: Eckel, E-C—?

HW: E-C-K-E-L.

CG: Right.

HW: Dr. Eckel climbed up into the pulpit, and he spoke with such clarity, and such warmth, and with such meaning! He didn't shout or yell, or condemn anybody. That was different. [Laughs] Really different!

CG: Sounds it.

HW: And what was more, it was a glorious organ and chorus, choir. And the hymns! Clark, the hymns were "we" and "our," not "me" and "mine." And that stuck in my head.

CG: Wow.

HW: And the way I described it, probably wrote a little poetry later on: "Upon reaching a foreign shore, I knew I had soon come home."

CG: Okay, so it was before you moved to Philadelphia that you'd gotten hooked by the Episcopalians?

HW: That event really spoke to me. We went ahead and did the vespers there, and I've never forgotten. Then I was on my way to teaching in Tulsa, and I taught until the time when Tosca suggested that I take Janie to Curtis. So that was the succession of events. That was how I—

CG: After you had that initial experience, did you continue to go to that church as a parishioner? Or weren't you a particularly active churchgoer at that point?

HW: Well, Janie and I—Janie came from Hot Springs, Arkansas. On Sundays—we were living at 16th and Spruce in Philadelphia, which was utter joy! And so we went to different churches every Sunday.

CG: Different denominations, or different Episcopal?

HW: Different denominations. Different denominations. Both of us really enjoyed doing that. That also fit into a course I was taking at Temple, music and congregation, so I was doing a little research while I was

doing that, as well. So that was the background that set all of this up. And everything was going swimmingly. I would go back to Tulsa, except I met George.

CG: Okay. And he was a Philadelphian?

HW: Provincial! He was provincial Philadelphian.

CG: Well, that's the pot calling the kettle black, a little bit.

HW: [Laughs]

CG: You were a provincial Tulsan! [Laughs]

HW: There we were, not quite knowing what to do about all of this, but very sure that something was going to happen. It was very clear.

CG: So when did you guys get married?

HW: The following August.

CG: Was he an Episcopalian?

HW: George was not only an Episcopalian, Clark, he was a vestryman at Good Shepherd Rosemont.

CG: Okay.

HW: And had grown up there with Dr. Lander as his guide. His family were members of Good Shepherd. And I have to say that during our courtship, when I learned he was an Episcopalian, the light bulb went on again! [Laughs]

CG: Yeah. Well, it was that moment. All right, so now you're married.

HW: Yeah.

CG: You're living in—where are you living at this point?

HW: Well, we moved to Plymouth Meeting, because George was called to be guidance counselor at Plymouth Whitmarsh High School in Plymouth Meeting.

CG: Okay, all right. So you're living in Plymouth Meeting, and you're probably still going to Good Shepherd, because he's on the vestry?

HW: Yes, our first two sons were actually [baptized]—I was confirmed there, and they were baptized there.

CG: Baptized there, okay. So here's where the real story that we're getting at begins. You're teaching, I assume? Well, you're also having children.

HW: Yes. There's another very important step in this. When George and I drove back from the honeymoon in Tulsa, the very next Sunday—we arrived back on Tuesday. On the following Sunday, George and I were both teaching Sunday school. Dr. Lander had made sure of that.

CG: [Laughs] No fool, he, huh?

HW: No fool, he. So from my very first Sunday, even before I was confirmed, I was teaching—from 1956, I've been teaching in the church.

CG: Okay, so that's, God, [58] years.

HW: That's a long time, yes. I'm of age.

CG: Yeah, because you were married when?

HW: 1956.

CG: '56.

HW: Mm-hm, and that was—we came back—

CG: If George was still around, two years from now it would be 60 years.

HW: That's right.

CG: Bless your heart.

HW: Yes, we had 52 magnificent years. He was the light of my life.

There's just no question. As an Episcopalian, Clark, he raised me in the way I should go.

CG: Okay, well there you go.

HW: He was very devoted; let me just underscore that.

CG: No, I understand that.

HW: He was very active.

CG: And you were also committed to education, to music, to the church, because you kept going to the church, even though you didn't have to, once you moved to Philadelphia.

HW: Oh, yeah!

CG: How did you become so involved that you ultimately did the things that we'll talk about as this goes on?

HW: Oh, it's just quick steps, one after another. I took my instruction for confirmation from Dr. Eckel before the wedding, and wonderful, because it was one-on-one. I was not in a—

CG: Were you married in the Episcopal Church?

HW: Yes, we were married [unclear].

CG: You weren't married in—?

HW: No, we were married in Trinity Church [in Tulsa]. Dr. Lander called Dr. Eckel, and said, "My son George, my vestryman George, is planning [to be] married in Tulsa." It was all set up so we had all— everything was quite wonderfully arranged.

CG: Yeah.

HW: And then I entered in instruction with Dr. Eckel.

CG: For confirmation?

HW: For confirmation, yeah. It was a wonderful entrance into the church!

CG: What was your first formal responsibility in the church—not teaching, but committee? In those days, women were not quite as involved at the higher levels of the church as they would be in a decade or so.

HW: You're so right.

CG: What was your first—but there was the Episcopal Church Women, or whatever they were called.

HW: Well, that's a really important point, right there. Given everything I've just told you about our moving right away into the life of the Episcopal Church, led by George, actually I went to my first Diocesan Convention that fall. George was a delegate, and the convention was held at the Academy of Music. And Bishop Hart was on the stage with the acolytes, and all the rest of it. Great singing—I was tremendously impressed. So that was my first—

CG: It's a pretty impressive facility.

HW: It was a very impressive facility, and Dr. Hart, Bishop Hart, knew what he was doing. But that was my introduction into Philadelphia Episcopal life.

CG: Why did you go?

HW: George was a delegate, and I went with him.

CG: Okay, because that doesn't happen all that often anymore.

HW: We just sat, and everybody was just sitting as if you were attending a concert at the academy.

CG: Oh, okay. What was your first—okay, so you're still at Good Shepherd, Rosemont.

HW: Mm-hm. I was confirmed by Bishop Armstrong, who—

CG: Subsequently, I mean—

HW: —lived only a month after, so a very short time.

CG: Okay, so after Armstrong died, Bishop Armstrong died, Bob DeWitt became—

HW: And that was really dynamic!

CG: This is the beginning of the history we're talking about.

HW: That's exactly right.

CG: Really was when DeWitt became the diocesan.

HW: If you look at all of these steps that I've been talking about, where the church is beginning to influence me, even the little church in suburban Tulsa, that was saying, "Jesus spoke all these words. Memorize them."

CG: Yeah, and they're in red letters, which of course is really important.

HW: Yeah, of course. When Bishop Dewitt was elected coadjutor, there was a rumbling, apparently, in the diocese, because he came from—

CG: Well, he was already a bishop in Detroit.

HW: He had come from Detroit, and Detroit was, you might even say, aflame. [Telephone rings] Let it go. Do you want to stop?

CG: It's up to you.

HW: Let's stop for a minute, and then I won't be distracted. [Pause in recording]

CG: You were talking before the phone rang about DeWitt.

HW: I was aware, astute, that when Bishop DeWitt was elected coadjutor, there was a rumble in the city. It just was the 1960s; we were in the early part of the 1960s now. There was anxiety. I don't know if Detroit was on fire, but it had been very, very badly upset by race riots, etcetera, however they were called.

CG: So most of the focus at this point was racial?

HW: Very.

CG: It didn't have to do yet with women, but it was racial?

HW: It was racial. That began to have misgivings, and also the other factor was that Dr. Lander retired.

CG: At Good Shepherd?

HW: Mm-hm. And all of these dynamics began to affect our life, because we were traveling from Plymouth Meeting to Rosemont.

CG: It's a long way.

HW: And so George—

CG: With little kids.

HW: With the little ones. And so George said, "I think it's time for us to go to a neighborhood Episcopal Church."

CG: Okay.

HW: So we both agreed, living in Plymouth Meeting, and the little church down the street was Saint Jude and the Nativity.

CG: Which is still there.

HW: Yes! And full, and exploding of babies and children.

CG: Well, the babies were everywhere in those days, weren't they?

HW: Everywhere!

CG: Because was the real baby boom time.

HW: Uh-huh. And Dr. Raffensberger, our obstetrician, was a member there, and he said, "We have upwards to 200 kids running around," because that whole area had just blossomed with new housing.

CG: Okay, so you changed your churches?

HW: Yeah. And so we started attending Saint Jude. Before long, George was vestryman at Saint Jude, and we took the children. We could actually walk to Saint Jude's. I was very involved in the women's auxiliary, and that's another really salient point. When we were married—and I was very conscious about all of this—George was a layman in the church. He was called a layman. I was sent to the

women's auxiliary, and being interested in English and the language, I was intrigued by the difference between layman and auxiliary.

CG: And the auxiliary, yes.

HW: I wondered about that. And I soon learned that what it meant was that women were not valued.

CG: Second class citizens.

HW: Yeah. And not much informed, as we came along. Nonetheless, as I said, I was an over-achiever in high school; I probably continued to get involved very easily. So at Saint Jude's I became active in the women's auxiliary, and as a resource person I went down to Church House, which was at Rittenhouse Square, on the square, at the time. And I met—oh, names are going to—! Pete Stevens, who was a major assistant to Bishop DeWitt.

CG: S-T-E-V-E-N-S?

HW: S-T-E-V-E-N-S. He was also, later on, very active with the Episcopal Community Services. Pete and I struck up a very good conversation. He was very interested. I didn't realize the political dynamics that were behind that, because I was somewhat aware that Saint Jude and the Nativity was most likely in a very conservative class. The reason for that is I was walking through the undercroft one day. Again, I was a teacher, or had just been asked to be a teacher.

CG: At Saint Jude's.

HW: At Saint Jude's. And the Sunday school superintendent was there, and as I walked up—I'll never forget this moment [laughs]—he yanked the liturgical calendar off of the bulletin board, which bore the picture of Robert DeWitt. You know the calendar that I'm talking about, that still is printed.

CG: Yeah.

HW: His picture was on that calendar. He yanked it off of the bulletin board, turned it upside down, and stuffed it in the wastebasket as I walked up. I was aghast! My chin probably was on the floor. And looking at me, surprised, he said, “It’s the only place for that man!”

CG: Well, there was a lot of that going on.

HW: But I’m remembering it because that was my introduction into [unclear].

CG: Now was this at the time of, or before, the Girard College business?

HW: In the midst of.

CG: In the midst of? So people were angry at him for trying to break Stephen Girard’s will, and all the things that it covered elsewhere.

HW: After that, the Vietnam War.

CG: But that was still not the main issue here. It was racial politics.

HW: Especially at Saint Jude and the Nativity—very much so. I could—

CG: Did you have any black members? Of course not.

HW: Oh, absolutely not! I don’t think I should, but I could include in this interview instances where derogatory, really awful jokes and words were used, that were inflammatory, and people laughed.

CG: Well, you don’t need to; you just did. That’s the way to do it.

HW: Yeah, but there are specifics that I will never forget, and we don’t need to do that.

CG: We don’t need them.

HW: But that was the milieu; that was the time. That was just where we were.

CG: Okay, so at some point, while you were sort of representative, not of the parish, but from the parish, you became involved in a committee?

HW: Something very significant—again, another step. With this kind of background, I didn't realize the politics in the diocese, vis-à-vis Saint Jude, but when I met Pete Stevens to get some resources for my work with the women's auxiliary at Saint Jude's, that must have caught Pete's interest. So then one day, I received, of all things, a letter from the bishop, a personal letter from the bishop, appointing me to something called the Task Force for Reconciliation.

CG: Tell me what that was, briefly.

HW: Well, I will tell you what it was. Enough is in our history about it right now, as we've been doing things in diocesan reflection on the history recently. It wasn't even on the time line, but we got it on. The Task Force for Reconciliation was Bishop DeWitt's effort to respond to the national and local demand for reparations. That's how severe, how focused the issue was in the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

CG: This was, "If they come in, and want one of your typewriters, give them two"?

HW: That was part of it. And I don't know if you remember, but the diocese was in a terrible state, because members of the Black Panthers and other associated groups were going into congregations in the morning, and doing very upsetting things.

CG: During services.

HW: During services.

CG: And that really PO'ed a lot of people.

HW: Oh! Well, that one experience at Saint Jude's was just mirrored throughout. It was reflective of all that was going on. So when I got this letter appointing me to the Task Force for Reconciliation, to deal with racial issues in the diocese and national church—

CG: How large a commission was it?

HW: It was designed as 24 members to be a microcosm of the diocese.

CG: All lay people, or lay and clergy?

HW: Lay and clergy. Lay and clergy, black/white, women/men, young/old. Extraordinary! Extraordinary. Well, I said, "I do not want to do this." My grandmother had been very sure that a lady stays out of conflict. [Laughs] And this was not staying out of conflict!

CG: Not exactly, no!

HW: But George, being the churchman in the family, said, "Helen, you can't say no to the bishop. This is an appointment. This is not—

CG: It's not a request.

HW: —this is not an invitation. You have been appointed." There's my husband, standing as a true, "You have to pay attention to this."

CG: Even though he was probably as uncomfortable at Saint Jude's as you were, by this point.

HW: Well, he was a member of the vestry, and we were—George was such a good worker. Ooh, I made a mistake. Stop. [Pause in recording] We had reached a very important part.

CG: You were talking about George, and he was the churchman, and of course he was obviously going to be loyal to the place that he was serving. But he must have agreed with you politically about the things that you were hearing at Saint Jude's?

HW: We were both in the learning process, side by side. We really were, and we were both—

CG: And you were appointed, clearly not asked. You were appointed.

HW: He made this very clear. This is a letter of appointment, not an invitation. Would you be willing? It just said, "I'm appointing you to

be.” That might have been Pete Stevens, you know, making sure. Well, all right. I’m going to take some steps about this, because it was really important, and says about the dynamics. I did not want to do this. I agreed to do this, and I went immediately to Jim Partington.

CG: Who?

HW: Jim Partington was the rector of Saint Jude’s.

CG: Spell his name for me.

HW: P-A-R-T-I-N-G-T-O-N.

CG: Okay.

HW: And Partington was—

CG: He was a conservative?

HW: Ugh!

CG: Okay, I got it. She grunted yes!

HW: [Laughs] I grunted yes! Just a quick insight. When President Kennedy was assassinated—

CG: Oh, dear.

HW: —the organist, in 1963—this was in ’68, the appointment. Back to ’63; it’s a little insight into the life at Saint Jude’s. Marty Harbison, the organist, went to the rector and said, for the big weekend of the Kennedy funeral, and all of that going on, she said, “Don’t you think we ought to do something special this Sunday morning in light of all that’s happening?” Partington said, “No, Marty, we don’t need to. Everyone here is a Republican.”

CG: Whoo! Okay.

HW: Mm-hm. And the reason I know about that—I had to help put her back together. She and I were good friends; we belonged to an organization together.

CG: What was her name?

HW: Marty Harbison. She was the organist at the time. But that was—

CG: Okay, so tell me about the commission. There was this diverse group.

HW: First, I went to the rector and I said, “Here’s my letter of appointment. I want you to know that I’ve been appointed. I want to work with you as I work with this task force. I want to get your guidance.” It was a rector/parishioner relationship, I saw. “This is happening. You should know about it. I want to work with you about this.”

CG: Yeah.

HW: Two things happened after that. I went to two sessions. The second time I met with him, he said, “We don’t need to do this anymore. Please, I don’t want to meet about this again.”

CG: Oh, he didn’t tell you to get off the committee?

HW: No. Well, no. The other thing about the second meeting George pointed out. He said, “Something has happened to you,” and I said, “What?” He said, “When you went to the first meeting, you came home and you told me, ‘They did this; they did that. They said this. He said that. She said this.’ The second one you came home and you said the same thing. Last night when you came home, you said, ‘We did; we said. We then did.’ You changed your pronoun from they to we.” That was profound! I had entered into the process, and I had by then realized that if you put a nametag around my head, it would say, “Conservative Suburban Housewife.” That was my identity on the task force. The task force met for eighteen weeks, during terrible times of the Vietnam War.

CG: What were its main focuses? Reparations has to do with race.

HW: It was all of the racial issues that were going on, all of the issues, all of the things in the National Church that were happening, that took place—oh, they played football yesterday in Indiana—Notre Dame.

CG: Right.

HW: Just, we were bombarded by dealing with all the incidents that were going on in the world, both locally, nationally, in the church, and outside of the church.

CG: Was this before Bobby and Martin were killed?

HW: Yes, it was before.

CG: So if this was '68, it was early '68?

HW: Yeah, it was early '68. I'm not sure about the year.

CG: King was killed in April, and Kennedy was killed in June.

HW: I'm not sure—I should have checked to see what was recommended by this committee after eighteen—Norman Harberger was the chair of the task force, from Saint Peter's Glenside. And Clark, I was introduced then to my great advantage, one of the best examples of leadership of process that I have ever experienced, and it stayed with me the rest of my life. The principle was, "We don't know how this is going to end," when we began. "We don't know what the end result is going to be. We don't know what we're going to recommend." The bishop took his hands off of it completely, to his great—I was just absolutely astounded.

CG: So what did you recommend?

HW: We recommended a special convention be held, and it was held at Irvine Auditorium at Penn.

CG: Irvine, I-R-V-I-N-E.

HW: You're right, Irvine Auditorium at Penn. And at that special convention, it was heated, because our recommendation was that the \$500,000 sale of Church House at Rittenhouse Square be given to the Diocesan Union of Black Episcopalians.

CG: Episcopalians.

HW: For their dispersal, where as needed among the black churches and community.

CG: At their discretion?

HW: At their discretion. They were totally to be in charge of that \$500,000, to do with what they thought was necessary to be done.

CG: As I understand, that is what happened. And then there was some question as to how that money was used. There was never—even though you didn't have any control over it, there was some concern even among the people that recommended it, later—if I'm remembering the history right—that there was no accountability for how it was used.

HW: I would put it in this context: in that climate, with people feeling in all degrees, but mostly weighted on the anti-, suspicion just was so—

CG: Well, how was the money used? Do you know?

HW: They wrote a complete report. They reported—the Task Force for Reconciliation full report. I have a copy. I tried to find it in my files for this, but I loaned it to someone not too long ago, when we were doing, recently, a diocesan racial program. We've done several of them in our diocese. I'm not sure I got it back. But in that book—

CG: It's likely already in the archives.

HW: I'm sure it is. I'm sure there's a copy in the archives. So the actual date needs to be determined, because I don't have that, but it's the late

sixties. During one of the meetings, the Cambodian—something incredible happened in Cambodia that just upset the young people on that. I remember it vividly. So that's the period of time.

CG: I think that was December of '68. I may be wrong, but we can clear that up.

HW: I'm sorry; I didn't check this out. Emphasizing this right now, it was incredibly important for our diocese, for me personally. It was the time when the Church began to minister to me.

CG: Okay, that's important. But also important is the question of: you were a public figure at that point in the diocese.

HW: Made so by membership.

CG: And therefore, how did your parish react to you at this point? Did you become a *bête noire*? A bad pun.

HW: I can tell you exactly what happened. That was Saturday, the special convention. Sunday morning, George and I attended church. Saint Jude's is very small. The choir gathers in a room just off of the sanctuary. And as I came in, I heard a voice that I'd heard many times before, shouting, "Have you heard what Helen White did? She gave \$500,000 to those N—s!"

CG: Yeah, using the real N word?

HW: Using the real N word.

CG: Said, "Niggers."

HW: I will never forget. I was stunned. And that morning, because it floated all over the church—

CG: Oh, I'm sure.

HW: It floated all over the church.

CG: Were you shunned?

HW: I felt shunned. I think later on we began to realize it wasn't so much being shunned as people didn't know what to do, didn't know how to react, didn't know what to say, in that particular climate of that congregation. But we walked out with no one speaking to us.

CG: Did this change your relationship with the parish? Is this when you decided to move?

HW: It began. It began to change the relationship.

CG: How long after that did you switch parishes? Because I know you next went to Saint Thomas, Whitemarsh.

HW: Yeah, it was several months. Intervening was, we had three children in the Church, at Saint Jude's, and we were concerned about all of this, the effect on them. So one good thing happened there. Jim Trimble came out to meet, because people were meeting around the diocese, trying to help. And I was invited to give a report on my experience as a member of the task force. Now, notice the difference—not on the task force report, but my experience on the task force. And it was at that time I had the opportunity to say largely what I've just said to you, what it was like when I first became a member, and how I processed through, really trusting everybody in that room.

CG: Right.

HW: That's what I mean about the church beginning to minister to me, because, go back to my earlier statement about growing up in Oklahoma? What we did not tag was that Oklahoma was a profound Jim Crow state, by design and stated as statute.

CG: Oh, yeah. Was Trimble on the task force?

HW: No, he was not on it, but he had spoken—he and Jim MacColl—

CG: Of Saint Thomas.

HW: —of Saint Thomas, were background figures at the special convention. They were on stage. We were on—at big tables.

CG: Was Trimble on the standing committee at that point?

HW: I think it was after he became standing. I'm not sure when he became standing.

CG: Okay, because I know he was, and certainly one of the most respected priests in the diocese.

HW: But what we introduced there, and just in this moment in our conversation, and it was a small congregation; it was a full congregation—small church, full congregation. It exploded. It just exploded! This whole thing in the diocese was—if things were in a terrible place before, this was the rift.

CG: Yeah. Ultimately, you moved from Saint Jude's to Saint Thomas, and the Church was beginning, ever so slowly, to think women shouldn't be auxiliary anymore; they should be full members, full life—

HW: We can turn to the National Church.

CG: Wait a minute.

HW: Okay.

CG: Let me get the question.

HW: Okay.

CG: And at some point Bob DeWitt resigned, and Lyman Ogilby, who was his assistant, became the diocesan.

HW: Okay, that pushes us five years ahead. If we go back to what was happening, our move to Saint Thomas and why to Saint Thomas?

CG: Right.

HW: Yes. Things settled down at Saint Jude's. I think people began to react in various ways. George was still on the vestry, and I continued to function as—I was the junior choir director. So we weren't going to do anything precipitously, because of the kids. So we stayed until that spring, and then it was very clear that we not only needed to make a decision to change; we wanted to very much. And I think people understood why we were going to do this. The reason we went to Saint Thomas was because Jim MacColl was involved, and background about the—he had retired, and Dick Hawkins was the new rector at Saint Thomas. And Dick Hawkins was chair of the Hawkins Committee, which helped to bring the task force into existence. So not only were we someone interested in Saint Thomas—we knew we were going to leave Saint Jude's. We weren't sure where we were going to go.

CG: Going to go, yeah.

HW: But there was another factor that really [laughs] was extremely important. Our son George was an eighth grader, the oldest son—ninth grader. And he had friends at Plymouth Whitemarsh, and one of them was Charlie Hawkins, Dick's son, and Rick Tatnall. And they said, "George, you should come to Saint Thomas. They've got this great youth group. Why don't you come over to Saint Thomas, to the youth group?" So to be very short, a little child shall lead them.

CG: Yeah. He was the biggest of the little children.

HW: He was the biggest. He was the oldest of the three. He came home excited, energized, instead of worrying about what it was going to do to him, with all that was going on at Saint Jude's. Here was this

young man saying, “I’d like to join Rick and Charlie. They’ve invited me to Saint Thomas.”

CG: That sort of answered your question.

HW: It really moved us in real direction. And so it wasn’t long that we decided to go to a service at Saint Thomas, and that was in this whole process. [Laughs] God does amazing things, to open your eyes to things you would never notice. When we got there that morning, it was a morning at Saint Thomas that you wouldn’t believe! The altar had a big cloth across the front of it. It says, “The Future is Open.” Women were ushers! They were ushering!

CG: No!

HW: Yes! They were ushering, and they were wearing buttons that said, “The future is open.” And the whole leaflet of the service was about the future is open. We were crying, “What is this?” Well, what is this was, as we came out, somebody said to us, “Won’t you come down to the parish house for the parish forum, for Martin Bell?” And I said, “What’s a Martin Bell?” Well, Martin Bell was doing weekends around the Episcopal Church, incredibly important weekends that opened our eyes of looking at scripture and the church, and images and metaphors, and so forth, in new and wondrous ways. And Saint Thomas had sponsored two of his weekends, and this was a Martin Bell weekend. How is that for happenstance?

CG: Yeah! The women’s issues—now we’re getting towards 1970.

HW: Mm-hm.

CG: And as I understand it, that was the first—the General Convention of the church in 1970 was the first time that women had been admitted as delegates.

HW: To the house, yeah.

CG: Actually, they're not delegates. They're deputies.

HW: Deputies to the house.

CG: Deputies to the House of Deputies.

HW: Mm-hm.

CG: And there was the beginnings of the stirrings that led to the ordination of women as priests. Tell me about all of that experience, and then we'll talk about you, and your time working in the diocese.

HW: Okay. All of this was having tremendous influence on all of us. It was interesting. 1970, the women were seated in the House of Deputies for the first time. The diaconate was opened to women.

CG: But they were deaconesses.

HW: They were deaconesses, but now they were going to be called deacons.

CG: Okay.

HW: And they would be ordained deacons, but that would be it.

CG: They couldn't go any further.

HW: No, that would be it. Sue Hiatt came out of that experience.

CG: H-I-A-T-T.

HW: Yeah. And that was an incredibly important thing, because what it set forth—and this had a profound effect on me and others—at 815, our national church office—

CG: 815 Madison Avenue.

HW: Yeah, began—particularly in the work of Frances Young, who wrote a very important article [about total ministry] that was shared abroad—and I was really open to these kinds of things, with all that was going on in my experience—on the ministry of the laity, including women.

CG: So you were no longer auxiliary; now you were lay people.

HW: I was no longer auxiliary. I was, like I said to George, “You’re a layman. So am I.” That had a profound effect on me, coming out of this rich, rich, rich experience that I had just had. I was no longer attached. I was in!

CG: Yeah.

HW: And so, of course, I was teaching at Saint Thomas’ church school.

CG: Were you doing anything outside of the church? Were you teaching anywhere else?

HW: No, just at Saint Thomas. This was in 1970-’71. I also had—

CG: So you were a housewife, at that point?

HW: I was mother of three children, stay at home mother of three.

CG: Stay at home mother.

HW: But I was doing some teaching at Abington schools, instrumental music, because that was good income. And they wanted me to go full-time, and I was hesitant about doing it. But meanwhile, in ’72, Dick Hawkins—and this was another very important moment for me—Dick Hawkins invited Mary Morrison of Trinity Church Swarthmore to come and lead some classes in the gospel studies, particularly the synoptics. And she came and did four sessions, very well attended. Afterwards, and this is a drum roll in my life, Dick said to me, “Helen, I want lay led classes here at Saint Thomas, and I want you to be a leader.”

And I was appalled, because everything that I understood about being an educator was to master your subject, and he’s asking me to do something—teach violin to whatever? Yeah, I can do all of that, but to teach the gospels? I couldn’t do that! And I told him no, and

he said, “Well, didn’t you like what she did?” I said, “I was intrigued. I’ve never seen that kind of biblical teachings, where the person leading asked the questions and doesn’t tell you the answers.” And we were all intrigued by this, and of course what we were being introduced [to] was first experience around the gospels of the Socratic approach. Whole new, and wonderfully different!

But I was on my way to getting my doctorate. I had already worked it out with John Mickelson at Temple. As soon as I was able to get the house and the children in a place where I could get back into it, that’s what I was going to do.

CG: Doctorate in music?

HW: No, John Mickelson was head of the graduate school [of secondary education] at Temple, at the time.

CG: So what was your doctorate?

HW: I was going to get a doctorate in education, yeah. Oh, yeah. By that time, all of this had had a profound effect on me. I was still playing viola professionally, but by the end of sixties and in the seventies, I began to give up the discipline. And this all was just a huge dynamic in my life. Well, I said no to Dick, but he said, “You know, Mary’s leading a class at Pendle Hill for ten weeks.” He said, “Why don’t you go down and just take her class, since you were impressed? I will pay for it.” And I said, “No, I will pay for it.” [Laughs] He said, “Well then, I will pay your gas fare.” He was very sensitive about such things.

And I went down, and this was really important. I took the ten-week course. She did not talk to me afterwards; I just went down, took the course, and came back. After the 10 classes, Dick called me,

and he said, “Let’s talk,” and asked me what I thought about the sessions. I said, “They were absolutely magnificent for people in the pews, me. I’ve learned so much!” And he said, “Well, when are we going to start a class here at Saint Thomas.” He said, “You know, Mary’s doing a class at Trinity Swarthmore on Tuesday mornings. Why don’t you go down and take her class, and then start a class here on Wednesday?” I said, “You mean, monkey see, monkey do?”

CG: Exactly!

HW: That’s exactly what he said! “Exactly.”

CG: Nothing wrong with that!

HW: Oh. And so I was so intrigued by this point. Remember all that has happened to me up to this point, in the church. I was being fed and nurtured, and fed and nurtured, and challenged.

CG: Yeah, kicked around a little bit, too!

HW: Kicked around a little bit, too. I’d had a real—I knew what the church was like, could be like. So that’s how it all got started.

CG: Okay.

HW: That was the beginning of what followed into the resource center, and everything [unclear].

CG: All right, tell me about—okay, let’s talk about the diocesan resource center, and what that was, and how that was founded, and then you went to work there for Bishop Ogilby.

HW: I was appointed [coordinator of the Education for Ministry (EFM) program for the diocese]—

CG: But let’s first of all talk about the resource center. What was that?

HW: Okay, here’s what happened: by now, we’re approaching the eighties.

CG: DeWitt is still the—?

HW: Oh, yes. He didn't leave until '74. We're in the middle of the 1970s, with what's going on right now. And all during that time at Saint Thomas, I not only was leading the classes; I was helping others to lead classes. At one point there were over 200 people in those classes. It was beginning to get some national—not national, diocesan awareness. Of course, Dick was very pleased with what was happening there. Dick, himself, is a master teacher, which was part of this story. He did a seminar every year in January and February that was over-subscribed at Saint Thomas—an excellent teacher. So right away, we had a lot that we were sharing. Phoebe Griswold shows up into this scene. She invited me to come and visit with her, and a couple of other people, at Saint Martin[-in-the-Fields in Chestnut Hill].

CG: Where her husband, Frank, was the rector.

HW: Where Frank was the rector.

CG: And her family was a Saint Thomas' family.

HW: That's right. I knew Mrs. —

CG: Wetzels.

HW: In fact, I'd worked with [her father] Carroll Wetzels at Saint Thomas. He was the rector's warden.

CG: Right.

HW: While all of this was going on, so I did know Carroll.

CG: And Phoebe, Phoebe Senior.

HW: And Phoebe as well. And so Phoebe and Frank—Frank had been very active—this all ties in—in the revision of the prayerbook, which is a major thing on the horizon now. We'd been dealing with race, and we'd been dealing with women; now, internal things within the

Church, like the prayerbook. One of the things that happened with the new prayerbook was that the baptism of small children would no longer be private, but would be brought into the liturgy of the full congregation. Frank and Phoebe—and this is really important at how all of this unfolded—Phoebe was raising the question, “What does this mean to the children? What does this mean to the congregation? This is a big shift. Now we’ve got the Baptismal Covenant to be recited by the entire congregation. What does this mean to the congregation? What are we saying to the children? What are we saying to families?”

That was the gist of that big conversation we had that morning with her, and I recognized that she was an advocate, a profound advocate, for children’s ministers, and had been at work at this at Saint Martin’s for quite some time. Let’s shift just a little bit to another dynamic that was happening in the diocese, and that was post-1970, and then the ordination—1974 [in Philadelphia].

CG: The irregular ordination.

HW: The irregular ordination in 1974, moved just within two years to where women were being ordained.

CG: Or approved for ordination.

HW: Were being ordained—

CG: Were you at the service in 1974?

HW: No, I was not. No, I was not.

CG: But you were obviously in favor of it? Or were you not?

HW: I had mixed feelings.

CG: Tell me about that.

HW: Well, my mixed feelings were one of my dearest friends was Elsa Walberg. By this time I was very active with the Companions of the Holy Cross, the Society of the Companions of the Holy Cross, with our conference center in Adelynrood. And all the work I had done on the task force with Norman Harberger – that I had learned about task force process – had fit into the life and circumstances of this conference center, and I was deeply involved in that. So all of this was meshing together.

What was happening after the 1976—you'll remember; the actions were just amazing. Women were ordained, but they weren't accepted, by and large. And they were finding their way through. But what happened is—and I remember Lyman being very excited that all of a sudden, the whole process was open in our diocese, and lots of people, men and women, were beginning to explore: what does this mean? And women, who now were lay folk and had experience being lay folk—not very many congregations still had women's auxiliaries. The name had been changed—drum roll—to the Episcopal Church Women. And that was a huge dynamic in the life of women!

CG: It's funny; looking at it from now, it doesn't seem so big, but at the time, it must have been.

HW: It was huge!

CG: It must have been gigantic.

HW: It said something to us viscerally, internally, as women.

CG: Yeah.

HW: And so all of those dynamics were working. Women who had been very spiritual and involved, and teachers, and so forth, were suddenly self-examining: what does this mean? And Lyman was thrilled,

because there were so many of these people excited about all of this, exploring the process toward ordination.

CG: Did you ever think of that?

HW: No. Frank Griswold and I talked about that. Frank was my wonderful director for a number of years.

CG: Spiritual director.

HW: Spiritual director. And we talked about that, and I said, “Frank, I’ve listened, and I haven’t heard anything! Whatever my background, there’s nothing there that’s calling me to ordination.” But I had these—oh, I must have had five really close, dear friends, who were going through the process, so I knew the process from the inside of their experience.

CG: But it wasn’t for Helen?

HW: It wasn’t for me. It just was not. I thought why, and I did have an experience [at the College of Preachers in Washington that made it all clear].

CG: Our mutual friend Nikki Wood, when I interviewed her, said, “Who wants to be a priest when you can be a powerful lay woman?” I mean, you know?

HW: [Laughs] I couldn’t say it any better.

CG: That’s why there are the multiple opportunities.

HW: Here’s a piece in the history of the diocese that’s really important now, because with this excitement and issues, enters Jack Hardwick, who was on the bishop’s staff.

CG: Lyman Ogilby’s staff.

HW: On Lyman Ogilby’s staff. And dear Jack, to his everlasting credit, began to say, “Lay folk need to know who they are, and that they can

be leaders in this church without being ordained.” And he began a major, major effort to raise the consciousness in our diocese about lay folk, being lay folk, being lay leaders. I got caught up in that, and he brought me—this was before my appointment to Lyman’s staff. I wish I could remember the gentleman who was in charge of this!¹ Jack asked me to come down and visit with him. Now by this time, my experiences teaching scripture at Saint Thomas apparently had become more known than I realized. People in the diocese do tend to talk to each other.

CG: It’s a very small club.

HW: [Laughs] So I think Dick Hawkins was very pleased [about] what was happening, about the studies, the classes at Saint Thomas that were going so strong. I wish I had time to really tell how that worked so well, with the rector. Always, it was in collaboration with the rector. That’s a very important principle for me. So Jack Hardwick had picked up—and he had started education for ministry in this diocese.

CG: Right, okay.

HW: The EFM. He was the one who brought that into the diocese, generated by that kind of energy that he had. And [Jack] knew what was happening at Saint Thomas. Dick wanted lay-led classes in scriptural study. That is revolutionary, when you think of top-down, authoritative teaching that’s gone on for 2,000 years.

CG: It’s got to come from those people that went to seminary, and had classes.

HW: You got it. You got it!

CG: And wore collars and such, right?

¹ George Soule

HW: And I think back now on that moment when Dick Hawkins said, “I want lay-led classes in scripture study, because I’m preaching to a congregation that’s blank!”

CG: Doesn’t know a damn thing.

HW: “They don’t know which Joseph I’m talking about. And I want them to know more so that we can do more.”

CG: Yeah, interesting.

HW: Oh, it was so incredibly important! And that brings us to this point.

CG: To the resource center.

HW: Yeah, because in the mix of all of that, that was going on, and particularly with Jack. He brought me down, tested me with this gentleman from Springfield. [George Soule] tested me, gave me some texts, to explore, you know, did I preach? Did I teach? Did I what, you know, as a lay person? And out of that, I guess, conversation with Jack and Lyman.

But, let’s shift to Phoebe. This is what was happening with Phoebe. At the end of 1979, the diocese, under Lyman’s instruction, coming out of the whirlwind of the seventies, asked for a full study of what’s going on in the diocese, and recommendations for how to proceed.

CG: Things were beginning to settle at this point?

HW: They were beginning to settle.

CG: And he wanted to heal, I gather. Is that correct?

HW: Absolutely. He wanted to be a healer.

CG: Okay.

HW: And out of that came this report that Ruth Feisal, F-E-I-S-A-L—Ruth Feisal chaired that committee. And one of the pages says, “We will

have resources made available in this diocese for children, youth, and adults.” Just a page of it, and so forth. And dear Phoebe Griswold—remember, she was back with: “What are we doing with children?”

CG: Right.

HW: Her advocacy for children was extraordinary.

CG: And for women, but that’s another issue.

HW: And for women, oh, yeah. And she went to Lyman and said to him, in effect, “Lyman, what does this mean? How are we going to do this? Where is it going to happen? Are you going to have a resource center? What is this?” And Lyman, I heard, said, “Oh, Phoebe.” And she said, “Well, Lyman, it says right here you’re going to produce [Christian education] resources.”

And so, fast forward very quickly. I was doing adult education out at Saint Thomas. If this was a resource process, it should be children, youth, and adults of all ages, right? How’s that for a concept? And so I was asked to work with Phoebe. And the first three, 1981, ’82, and ’83, she and I worked. She traveled around looking at resource centers, doing research, and study.

CG: And this is before Frank got swallowed up and taken off to Chicago?

HW: Yeah. All of this was fine until she got elected wife of the bishop of Chicago.

CG: Right, in 1984.

HW: ’84. And now comes the story of the resource center. We’ve done all this background, working together. Meanwhile, I’m still teaching at Saint Thomas. Also, Abington Schools asked me to go full-time; I said no. So the consequence of that was in the late seventies,

Chestnut Hill Academy asked if I would come and teach two days a week, little boys, to play the violin—fourth and fifth graders.

CG: Okay.

HW: Boy, did that fit in, because it gave me a little income for the family, but it also freed me to continue to do what I was doing. And I worked with Barnaby Roberts. I loved working with Barnaby!

CG: He was the headmaster, yes?

HW: Yup, he was the headmaster at CHA, and he put me in charge of the instrumental program. So I was getting ministry—it was a wonderful [unclear].

CG: How long were you at CHA?

HW: From 1979 to '84.

CG: Okay, because that's when Barnaby became headmaster. It was just his first year.

HW: Yeah, yeah. And the head of the lower school was also a Companion [of the Society of the Holy Cross], the organization, the society.

CG: Margaret Ann Young.

HW: Margaret Ann Young was a Companion, so I knew her through Adelynrood, and their conference center up there. All of this was coming together in so many incredibly good ways.

CG: Did you work with her and with Joan Frank?

HW: I was already on bishop's staff when Joan came in, so I knew her.

CG: Okay, because Margaret Ann retired, and then shortly thereafter, died.

HW: She retired, that's right. And she died while she was Companion in Charge.

CG: I know. Oh, I know. Anyway, that's—

HW: But all of the richness of all of that was playing out in this. So Phoebe and I were given two desks at Church of the Savior, in the parish house, in an old room just off of the hallway, and that was going to be—

CG: Because that's where Hardwick was then rector?

HW: Jack was down the hall as rector of the Church of the Savior.

CG: Which later, for this interview, became the Cathedral.

HW: Yeah, but we haven't got there yet.

CG: That's way down the line.

HW: So he gave us this old room, with all the old furniture there, and two desks. Now, Frank Turner enters into the picture, at this point. He was asked to supervise this new process of establishing a resource center, which Lyman has now said is going to be. So we had two desks at Church of the Savior for Phoebe and for me. I represented adult education; she represented children's ministries.

CG: And Turner was on staff at that point as the—he was basically running the aided parishes, right?

HW: Something like that.

CG: Yeah, this was before he was elected bishop.

HW: Long before he became coadjutor—I mean, before he became suffragan.

CG: Suffragan.

HW: So were these exciting and wonderful, wonderful times! Well, here's where Phoebe Griswold becomes the founder of the resource center in no uncertain terms. She now knew she was going to Chicago. She had committed so many years to this idea, and this concept, for this diocese, on behalf of children, youth, and adults of all ages, that she

recommended to Lyman Ogilby that a committee of 30 people be appointed by the bishop, and the 30 people, every one without exception, be parish-based clergy and lay. No person at the diocese; all parish-based people. And then there would be a staff person to staff that group. And that was a concept. I wasn't named yet. You just pointed to me, but I wasn't named then.

CG: But you would become that staff?

HW: We were, eventually; that's how all of this evolved. Here's Phoebe; you can't say enough. She interviewed personally over 60 people in the parishes around the diocese, to talk about this concept of a resource center, for children's ministries, youth, and adults of all ages, to be located in the diocese as part of diocesan life and experience. And we, she and I, then recommended 30 of those people to Bishop Ogilby for appointment. He appointed 30 of them. Twenty-nine accepted. One, the rector and that person were not in sync. The rector objected to this person, so based on the principle, that person could not be appointed.

We met in the Church of the Savior. When Phoebe and I first went down to the Church of the Savior for our first meeting [with Jack Hardwick], the scaffolding was everywhere! This was also what was going on, 1974, when dear Bishop DeWitt left, and we had moved to having diocesan conventions in that church. Were you ever there before?

CG: No, not before.

HW: I walked in that first time we had a convention there, and I turned around and walked out. It was just grey, drab, awful, in terrible condition, had not had anything done to it. It was just awful!

CG: And the only reason it was surviving is that it had an endowment, which makes it—but that’s a whole ‘nother story.

HW: That’s a whole ‘nother story. As I said to Jack Hardwick, reported to me, “We don’t have people. All we have is money.” And Jack said, “Well, let’s see what you can do with that money for the good of the church, and the diocese.” So there we were. The scaffolding was up, and when Phoebe and I first went to meet—it was probably 1982, somewhere along in there—it was being restored, in its full 1903 splendor, when Nelson Eddy was a member of the choir. That was its most significant historical fact.

CG: Okay.

HW: And so there we were. New church; we had this meeting in there. I have pictures of this celebration in which Lyman came, and he appointed in the service, liturgically appointed, the 29 members for the resource center, including me. Then he said, and I will never forget these words, “My dear friends, it has been decided that there should be a resource center, and so I am saying this to the newly appointed committee. You tell me what you want, where you want it, how you want it to be run, who will help you run it, and I will find the money for you.” That stands out in church history [laughs] as a moment to be remembered!

CG: Yeah.

HW: And by golly, Clark, he did. The ordinands went to the resource center, as a way of saying to the newly ordained.

CG: What resources were there? What did that exactly mean?

HW: At one point it was \$900; at another point it was \$850. And then—

CG: But I mean, if a parish wanted to take advantage, how did it work?

HW: Okay, it's back to the room that Phoebe and I had two desks in. Now we had some money to work with. We went to work, and we called in some decorators, or person with church furniture and so forth, and we converted that room into the first resource center. So at this event, when Lyman appointed and made his commitment to the resource center, there was a room in the church house, parish house, for this resource center.

CG: How was it used? Did people come into it? Or did it go out to—?

HW: No, no. There is a simple story to describe that. The committee went to work deciding on the resources. We had a room; we had big shelves. And in those days it was printed resources.

CG: Yes, of course.

HW: The computer came in a little bit later on. So they had much to—but, more importantly, they began to talk to each other. Remember, they're from 26 different parishes. They began to, "What are you doing at your parish? What are you doing? Well, what are you doing? Well, we don't have anything for our children. What are you doing?" You see the cross-energy that began to develop. They came to the meetings at ten, and they left at two. Phoebe provided lunch for them, when she was still doing the first lunch. She had tuna salad and bread. How do you like that? Fish and bread, loaves and fishes?

CG: It's also cheap.

HW: [Laughs] Yeah! But right away, food was a really important factor. We also established a publishing thing. We hired an administrative assistant, Lois Sibley, from Saint Peter's in Glenside—excellent, really outstanding. So we were on our way. And then Phoebe had to leave and go to Chicago.

CG: Chicago.

HW: And then the question was: who would be the director of the resource center? And Frank immediately said—he was speaking at Saint Thomas.

CG: Which Frank?

HW: Frank Turner was speaking at Saint Thomas. I was driving him back, because he was the speaker that morning. I was driving him back, and he said, “Oh, I think you should be the director. We should name you director of the resource center right away.” And I said, “No you don’t! You can’t do that.” He said, “Well, why not?” And I said, “Because those directives that the bishop approved of says the committee will recommend to the bishop a director. You can’t do it without that recommendation. You’ve got to put it in the hands of that executive committee, and the committee, to decide. They need to look at who’s the best person anywhere, available to be the director. This is too critical; it’s too important.”

And I meant that. I really meant that. They did meet. They did work it out, and to my great delight, I was asked by the bishop to be the director, upon their recommendation. I’m making a point of that. It was so critically important, because it gave me the confidence to be a director.

CG: Oh, sure. How long were you the director of the resource center?

HW: Until 1998.

CG: Okay.

HW: I’m sorry; 1997, because I retired in order to do the General Convention.

CG: All right, we’ll get to that in a second.

HW: Mm-hm.

CG: What were your responsibilities? Just coordination? But you must have had—that couldn't have been all you did for the diocese. You must have been doing other things.

HW: The work at setting up this resource center—another very important step was, we were in this confined space, and we also had a resource center, of sorts, by Bob—the one with the video center? What is his name? I'm sorry, because that's not fair not to come up with his name immediately. What would we do with—and it was out at a parish in—oh, I'm blocking, and I'm embarrassed for having done that.

CG: It'll come to you. We can always add that later.

HW: Yeah. These things were coming together quite rapidly. And so, we had Gateson House next door, this old, old building which was the former rectory.

CG: G-A-T-E-S-O-N?

HW: Mm-hm. It was the former rectory, and we learned some secrets at Church of the Savior. Outside Jack's office, which was a lovely, wonderful office, there was a hidden doorway, and hidden path, so the rector could leave the office and go to his home over in the rectory, without anybody knowing where he was coming and going. It was lovely. But oh, that Gateson House! In fact, our advisors to facilities at Church of the Savior said, "It will not go through another winter. It is going to fall apart. Pipes are freezing, blah, blah, blah." Here's another important step, as Lyman Ogilby went to the standing committee and asked for money to restore Gateson House to not only usable form, but to make [Church of the Savior the education] resource center for the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

CG: Okay. At some point while you're doing this, Lyman, who was—clearly, you described what it's like working for him—retires, and they have an election. And Allen L. Bartlett, Junior, is elected as the coadjutor, and almost immediately the diocesan. What was it like working for Allen, and how was it different, in terms of the relationship with the resource center to the diocese under Bartlett than it was under Ogilby?

HW: Now, you're asking me about the transition.

CG: I am. And also, the time spent with Bartlett.

HW: I would sum it up this way: my time as staff member for Allen Bartlett, my title was “bishop staffer, education, and director of the Christian education resource center.” That's a mouthful.

CG: It is, but it's [unclear].

HW: So that had been established. And working for Allen Bartlett, as I did from the time of his—what do we call it? He was already consecrated, because he was a dean.

CG: Coadjutor.

HW: Yeah, he was a coadjutor. He was the dean at Louisville.

CG: He wasn't a bishop when he came here.

HW: That's right. His consecration took place at the old Convention Center.

CG: Yeah.

HW: Yes! Oh, now you're reminding me of all of that. Yes, he was consecrated. It was seamless. And working for Allen Bartlett were twelve of the happiest years of my life. I cannot say enough about that man's ability to encourage people, to support people, to make things happen in gentle, quiet ways. He is so good!

CG: Okay, and along the way, during his episcopate, Frank Turner was called to be the—he called for a suffragan, and it turned out to be Frank Turner, the black guy on the staff, the first black bishop in the diocese. But also clearly a huge fan of the resource center, at least initially. How was it when Turner became suffragan? Did you have more responsibilities? Who did you report to? Did you report to Bartlett or Turner?

HW: It was beautiful. It was absolutely beautiful! Allen appointed all members of the committee, and he appointed the staff. When Frank became the suffragan, his responsibility was the resource center, among other things, particularly in the black community. But we were always in relationship to Allen Bartlett. It just was a wonderful way. Ginger Goodrich was brought on to—all of the members of Allen's staff were lay people. He really followed on—Jack Hardwick was still a wonderful influence. Things were working so well about lay folk and the diocese, this whole thing of getting lay folk involved in the diocese. Ginger Goodrich and—I'm not going to be able to recall. Should have rehearsed all of that, but of course there were John Midwood—there were clergy on his staff, to be sure. But he had—

CG: Barbara Hames.

HW: Yeah.

CG: Oh, but there were clergy.

HW: There were clergy on his staff, but that's where—I will never write my book, but I have its title. The title of the book that I will never get around to writing it, because I'm being kept too busy, is *Joyful Collaboration*. That's what I learned.

CG: All right. Let's wrap up, because I've got a couple of other things I want to talk about. Let's wrap up the resource center. Does it still exist?

HW: It's in the process of being rebirthed.

CG: Because there's a whole different world out there now because of the computers.

HW: Well here, I will say, yes. Here I will make an observation that I think Bishop Charles will not object to. In 1970—

CG: You mean by that, Charles Bennison?

HW: Yes.

CG: Well, we'll talk about him later.

HW: By 1995, because of George's health—he had Parkinson's—I had a conversation with Allen. I said, "I'm told by the doctors that after 1995, it's questionable as to the quality of life that he has." And one of the things is when I filled out a form, it said, "How many hours a week do you work?" I put down 40, and George erased it and put down 60.

CG: Okay.

HW: So that answers one of your questions. We were just all so caught up in this, seven days a week, often.

CG: Right.

HW: But happily, George was part of it, too, because of his background and his interests. He was our most severe critic, our staunchest supporter, and was there every moment of the time.

CG: Good. What happened? So you're thinking about retiring?

HW: Yes. And Allen understood that.

CG: And we'll get to that in a minute, because that comes to the next topic. But what's the status of the resource center today?

HW: Okay. It has to be reinvented, and it has been. The quick answer to that, I am happy to tell you, is that it has now been established at Christ Church and Saint Michael's, and its title is the Diocesan Ministry Resource center, which is absolutely just right for it.

CG: Did it for a period, cease to exist?

HW: Yes, it did.

CG: During the Bennison years?

HW: Yes, it did.

CG: Which is '98 to 2010.

HW: Yeah. By '99, a series of people came in that were called to lead—the one who immediately followed me was Robyn Szoke.

CG: Who?

HW: Robyn Szoke, the Reverend Robyn Szoke.

CG: Can you spell the last name?

HW: S-Z-O-K-E.

CG: Okay. R-O-B-Y-N?

HW: R-O-B-Y-N. And Robyn was just the right person. In fact, we took 24 people out to the National Education Conference at Estes Park, which Allen—

CG: Estes Park is—?

HW: Estes Park, in Colorado, to the conference center there. There's a huge conference center at Estes Park. And Allen made that possible. Twenty-four people! Robyn went with us, and when we came back he appointed her the new director to succeed me. So, she and I were just very—worked together very well, and I was thrilled that she

would be the new director. Then Charles became the diocesan, and it got a little rocky.

CG: Well, this wasn't his priority, and we'll talk about that in a minute.

HW: No.

CG: All right, so you retired—you resigned from this position at the diocese, to do some stuff for the 1997 General Convention, which was held here in Philadelphia.

HW: And Robyn was on staff by then, and I was free then. When I retired, Allen asked me if I would stay on to be the educational coordinator for the convention.

CG: What was that role, and what was it like being a major player in a national convention?

HW: Fabulous! It was just the right thing to happen at the right time. I moved into being on Allen's staff for preparation for the convention, which meant working with the national staff as well here, and also getting set for—that's a whole 'nother book, of getting ready to do the convention at our convention center.

CG: No it's not; it's part of this book!

HW: Robyn now is the new director, so she is very involved in developing children's ministries for the General Convention, and incredible things working. One thing I did not put in our story is that Robyn and I—I was working with the national church by this time, a good bit, too, because that spills over. The national church had learned what we were doing in the diocese, with our resource center here, and it had become very well known nationally, and was seen by many as a model.

I was asked to work with the program at the national church known as Treasure Kids Project, and Robyn was very much involved in that. So this was just very yeasty and quite wonderful, and Treasure Kids became a really important part of the convention. In fact, it opened the door as people came through. They came through children's ministries. How do you like that as the symbol?

CG: I'm not as interested, frankly, in limiting this. You said that's a whole 'nother book. Tell me what it was like, setting up for the General Convention here, and not just from your area of interest and expertise, not only what you did, but what it was like. I mean, because this was a big convention, because they were going to elect a new presiding bishop.

HW: That's right. Well, fortunately, I had attended five conventions as the bishop's staff, so I had some working knowledge of how conventions were going, and the one in Indianapolis, we knew I was going to be the coordinator, educational coordinator for this convention in Philadelphia.

CG: Indianapolis was in '94.

HW: Yeah. So we were already making that connection with the national church. I was working with a number of people in the national church, but we need to make a clear distinction here, because they did, to be sure. In fact, one of the people, major domos, from the national church, reminded me, "This is not your convention. This is the general church's convention."

CG: Right, which makes sense.

HW: Of course!

CG: But it's in our house! [Laughs]

HW: And that draws a distinction. Richard Schneider? His wife—

CG: Peggy.

HW: —Peggy, was then the coordinator for the big group that is involved with the big national church project. You have about 1200 volunteers from the hosting diocese that does all the things that General Convention wants them to do.

CG: Yeah. Ushers, and guards, yeah.

HW: So there was a distinction between that and what Allen was asking me to do. It's really important, to be the coordinator for diocesan education, helping our congregations wake up to the fact that we were going to host the General Convention here, and we wanted everybody involved.

CG: Yeah, and as I remember, the General Convention here, the masters of ceremonies were people like Ruth Kirk, and Tom McClellan, and people who were from this diocese. So a lot of it was, in fact, staged by this diocese for the national church. And you had a room, as I remember, at that convention. What was that?

HW: Well, I think we had it, but I still had access to the resource center, so we worked a lot out of that. That was still active.

CG: But you produced some historical information.

HW: Oh, I know exactly what you're referring to now. You're talking about the historic exhibit.

CG: Yes.

HW: Yes! I thought you meant like a functioning office.

CG: No, no, no.

HW: No. Oh, that was major! That was major.

CG: Tell me about that.

HW: That was part of—well, two things about it. Back to the racial dynamics in our diocese. There were half of the members on that committee were black, and half were white. I'd never served on a committee with that kind of proportionality. It was wonderful! But they took charge. They wanted this exhibit to be about Absalom Jones. Of course!

CG: But that's only part of the story.

HW: That's only part of the story.

CG: Both sides, it's only part of the story. That's an interesting dynamic, isn't it?

HW: So we worked through those dynamics, making sure that Absalom Jones was alive and well.

CG: But not the only person who was alive and well.

HW: Not the only one. And I depended on people from Saint Peter's. I can't think of that wonderful man's name, and others. We really, really worked hard. We even got—I went up to Connecticut, the Diocese of Connecticut, to their magnificent archives, in Church House, and talked with their director of the archives. And the consequence of that visit was they decided they would bring Bishop [Samuel]-Seabury's mitre to this convention.

CG: Wow! That's cool.

HW: It was cool.

CG: He was the first, wasn't he?

HW: He was the first.

CG: And White was the second.

HW: Well, this was a little dynamic, and there was kind of fun, because we were claiming that the church started in Philadelphia.

CG: Which it did!

HW: Which it did, but Connecticut didn't like that at all!

CG: Never has.

HW: No. After all, they could claim far more and earlier than we could in Philadelphia.

CG: A bishop.

HW: Forget that Bishop White organized it.

CG: Yeah, the Episcopal Church was founded here.

HW: Yeah. So now you've got three things going. You've got the history of the United States. You've got the history of the Episcopal Church, and the history of Absalom Jones. And they're parallel.

CG: Right.

HW: And that drove this exhibit. It was magnificent, and you've seen the copies of the brochure that was created?

CG: Oh, yeah, I have one.

HW: They're very hard to come by.

CG: I had a friend who gave me one. Her name is Helen White.

HW: Oh, good! [Laughs]

CG: Now, okay, let's—

HW: Well, I just want to say one more word about that. We not only had his mitre; we had the baptismal font from Christ Church that baptized William Penn.

CG: Oh!

HW: Yes! And the whole concept of the exhibit was being founded in Philadelphia, which was William Penn's Holy Experiment.

CG: Right. The interesting thing that also happened at that convention is that they elected a presiding bishop. And the election by the House of

Bishops, which is the critical one, took place at Christ Church, naturally. And Jim Trimble told me the story that he was going to retire, and that Ed Browning, who was the outgoing presiding bishop, said, “No, Jim, you’re not. You’re going to stay on a year and work us through the General Convention.” And he said, “Oh, Ed, do I have to?”

HW: Do you know how important that was?

CG: Oh, it was very important.

HW: Well, I was going to go back to the tension between General Convention office and the Diocese of Pennsylvania office.

CG: Right.

HW: A lot of tension. When it came time for the election, General Convention office balked. There was no need to move the House of Bishops to Christ Church—too expensive, bada-bah, bada-bah, bada-bah.

CG: What a lot of nonsense!

HW: It was. They said, “No. The convention is here. We’ll do it at the convention, where all presiding bishops are elected.” And because of the exhibit, and the emphasis within our diocese that had grown really strong about all of this: “What do you mean, you’re not going to elect the next presiding bishop at Christ Church?”

CG: Yeah, and Ed Browning apparently was in favor of it.

HW: Yes, he was.

CG: That’s why he got Jim Trimble to do it. All right—

HW: That was so important.

CG: Oh, that’s cool.

HW: And they brought in air conditioning units.

CG: Yeah, for Christ Church. Yeah.

HW: And the woman at General Convention was howling her head off about her budget!

CG: Oh, shush!

HW: [Laughs]

CG: Okay, but the other interesting part about it is not only was it at Christ Church in Philadelphia, but one of the candidates was a former Philadelphia priest, Frank Tracy Griswold III.

HW: You got it!

CG: And it turned out that he did pretty well.

HW: Yes, he did.

CG: What was it like, since he was also the rector, the former rector of your parish? By this time you had moved from Saint Thomas' to Saint Martin's.

HW: Mm-hm.

CG: He was your pal Phoebe Wetzel Griswold's husband, and your former spiritual advisor. What was it like for you to be a witness to—because you weren't at the House of Bishops, obviously—but to witness to that? And how did that enrich the convention for you, and for the diocese? Because one of our own was elected.

HW: Well, here's a personal story that I don't often get to tell, but I will tell it now. We move forward to January, when the new presiding bishop was going to be—his installation—

CG: Investiture.

HW: Investiture, thank you.

CG: At the National Cathedral.

HW: His investiture at the National Cathedral. Well, getting tickets to that was really—everybody was struggling to get tickets, because they all wanted—he had so many friends here!

CG: Yeah, and it was an easy drive.

HW: And Saint Martin's was going to go down, and all of sudden I realized I had not gotten around to procuring a ticket, for me and George. And that's only, like, oh, gosh! Well, what can be done about that? I don't know. When—

CG: Phoebe.

HW: No. I hadn't seen Phoebe. I hadn't seen Frank.

CG: They were very busy [in Chicago].

HW: They were very busy. Here's where a lovely, wonderful moment happened. George said, "Well, maybe we can just go down, and we'll find a way." Nobody knew that I was trying to find a ticket. They might have at Saint Martin's, because the tickets at Saint Martin's were all gone.

CG: Sure.

HW: At any rate, I came home one day. George was in the kitchen, and he could hardly get it out of his mouth. He said, "You have a call from Chicago. Return it right now." And so I did, and it was his private secretary, Frank's private secretary. "Bishop Griswold would like for you to be part of the group that presents the water for baptism."

CG: Wow! And of course, baptism was a big—they sprinkled everybody.

HW: And they had these great big vases, so there were four of them.

CG: I remember.

HW: There were four of us. And everything was arranged so that we could attend.

CG: There goes your ticket!

HW: Well, I looked around—George was crying.

CG: Oh, I can imagine.

HW: I really filled up at that point.

CG: It chokes you up.

HW: Yeah. And we had to go down for the rehearsal, for Friday afternoon.

CG: Sure. It was a wonderful event. Okay, so you are no longer a staff member.

HW: No.

CG: But you're active. You're teaching; you're doing all of those things. You're on the history—I don't know whether there was a history committee then or not, but you're on it now. And in comes our new bishop. Charles Bennison is the coadjutor, and some time in early 1998, a little longer than he wanted to wait, a little longer than was originally planned, he becomes the diocesan. What was that transition like? And what has it been like from inside, semi-inside, outside position, watching what's been happening in the diocese over the last fourteen years?

HW: You put me just where I am, an observer, an active observer.

CG: A little bit more, yeah.

HW: I'm active, but an observer to diocesan matters and events.

CG: Yeah, but you had a lot of inside connections and what not.

HW: Well, a lot of—still aware of things going on. First of all, when Charles when—I'll refer to him as Charles. When Charles became the diocesan, I asked for an exit interview. He did not . . . he had not asked me one question about the resource center. Not one. So I said, "Could I have an interview with you? Could we have an exit

interview? I'd like to bring you up to date about the resource center, and all that's been going on there." And he said, "Yes, certainly." So we had a very pleasant visit, but he didn't ask me a word about the resource center.

CG: Okay.

HW: He redirected everything. We just talked about the convention, and this and that and the other thing. He was very amiable, and he was always asking about George. By this time, in the year 2000, Parkinson's was beginning to take its toll on George, and so affecting him physically, although we were still traveling. We had moved here, at Cathedral Village, and he was doing extremely well here. But that was it. [Charles] didn't ask me about Robyn. He didn't ask me about director. He didn't ask me about anything, and I left very frustrated, because I was not able to tell him the history of how it all came about.

CG: Did you sense that that was because it was not a priority for him?

HW: Not only it was not a priority. He was not interested.

CG: Or more than not a priority; he just didn't care.

HW: Mm.

CG: All right.

HW: And that raised concern for me. But I knew Robyn was on the staff, but she had very quickly, by the year 2000, I think, realized she could not work. She went to 815. She decided to accept the post at 815, where she had been working before, and Margaret Sipple—did you know Margaret and Peter?

CG: Yes, I did.

HW: Margaret was then asked to be the director. By this time, a major thing had happened, and that was part of what turned Robyn

completely off, and she would—about this, if you were talking with her. He moved the resource center down to Church House, eviscerated the whole thing. Staff, he discontinued; no appointments to staff. Didn't need the committee. Didn't need the resources to be—everything should be at Church House, which was totally antithetical to what Allen Bartlett was doing. Allen Bartlett, which it needs to be said here, at this point, decentralized Church House.

CG: And Charles did the opposite.

HW: He did just the opposite. And Allen and Lyman both had the wisdom to realize that if you're congregations are Congregationalists, where is the strength?

CG: All right, now let me ask you a question. I want to talk more about Bennison and his time, and all the controversies in a second. But one of the things that you talked about earlier on was Jack Hardwick, who was by this time dead, but was the—I guess he was the first dean of the Cathedral, but he was also—

HW: 1992.

CG: —the rector, because Bartlett was the one that turned the Church of our Savior into the Cathedral Church of our Savior, now known as Philadelphia Cathedral. He was pushing for lay leadership, and the lay leadership in this diocese has always been a little frisky, and always been a little bit—there's always been a little bit of competition between the traditional Episcopal hierarchy and the laymen, and this has been seen over the years; this can be seen in any number of books.

HW: And part of the struggles.

CG: But part of the struggles between the standing committee and elsewhere. Do you think that Hardwick's encouragement of that, and

that whole generation that really became empowered, and active, during the Bartlett and then Bennison years, was feistier and therefore more resistive to a bishop that came in like Bennison did, with very strong ideas that not necessarily everybody was going to agree with? In other words, do you think that it ended up being a good thing, and causing some of the tension that later grew up between the standing committee and the church generally, and the bishop? Because it did, because he ultimately was called to resign. He didn't do it. He was inhibited. He didn't quit; he kept going and doing things that people didn't want, and there was all this horrible time. Do you think that that encouraged him?

HW: I think as an observer, not deeply involved in the day-to-day things, as an observer, I think that he was moving in such a direction—let's go to principles. His principles were so different from what had been applied regarding the resource center.

CG: Expand on that.

HW: I'm going to. Remember that we said, Phoebe—going back to Phoebe, the founder—Phoebe said, "Parish-based committee."

CG: Can you widen this beyond just the resource center?

HW: Yes. Well, it opened up, in this diocese—this is just my own personal feeling, by observation and experience. When you have a committee for resource center that's being as fully supportive as the resource center was by Lyman, and then Allen, their full energy, decentralizing Church House. Allen even referred to it as "Church House West." Our group went down and did things at Church House. We provided lunch for the staff at Church House. There was a strong intermingling between the resource center people, committee, staff, and the people

working at Church House. It's just a whole different feel about people collaborating. Collaboration, collaboration.

And the fact that the principles of parish-based leadership for the diocese? Go back to Bishop DeWitt's time. People who were out of sync with their congregation and their rector, over racial issues, Vietnam, all the rest of it—tended to work at the diocese, or do things at the diocese. And the congregations began to fall further and further away from Church House. And Church House was seen as the enemy, in the DeWitt years.

Lyman began with all these other dynamics, like ordination issues, women issues, sexuality, racism. And the things that Allen got into later on, as you follow that train, those successful years—if you look at the time line now that we've been doing in this remembrance, it's in this period of Lyman Ogilby, at the end of DeWitt, to the end of Allen Bartlett's tenure, that all of the energy is there on that time line. It's extraordinary. And then after the Bartlett years, the time line fades out. There just doesn't seem to be much out there.

CG: What do you think it was about Charles? He's viewed as an imperial, or a traditionally—

HW: I think that's the word.

CG: —monarchical bishop. And there are bishops who are like that.

HW: I think you've hit a really important word, from my observation.

Imperialism at any point, with anyone or group, is going to be difficult. And his imperialism as I saw it, being energized, was in the principle of top-down. He wanted people on his staff who were ordained, and if they weren't ordained, they should have their PhDs, or be top authoritative people, recognized as authoritative people.

That's totally antithetical to what Phoebe was suggesting, and what we were experiencing in the eighties and the nineties.

CG: Put on your psychologist hat for a minute. Neither one of us owns one, but put it on for a second. Why do you think he was so resistant to a collegial kind of a management style? One of the reasons, and this is a fair one, is that he was committed to what he thought was the right thing to do for the diocese, and we've got to respect that. But he sort of turned people off, didn't he? And yet, one-on-one with people in trouble, or people who were in pain, he was superb.

HW: He had a particular gift in that. He never forgot a name! Never forgot a name!

CG: Yeah. And he was very kind.

HW: I know we all envied that.

CG: As you say, he was kind to you about George. He was kind to me about things. Lots of people will tell you this. What was it? Why did he make the diocese so damn mad? And he did!

HW: I think it's in one particular area. I think he brought a background that we've all been sorting through, and this court sorted through, and all of that. Someone called Robyn Szoke from Los Angeles, as soon as Charles was elected, said, "I don't understand. You all did not do your homework." So Charles brought his own baggage into whatever it was. He was a good man. Ann Greene often refers to Charles the Good, you know, looking at the good things that he did. He wasn't trying to fail.

CG: He really was a Jekyll and Hyde, though, in many ways, wasn't he?

HW: He was, but from an observer's point of view, what I think was the turning point—he got this bee in his bonnet about Wapiti.

CG: The camp, the diocesan camp.

HW: And I think he became so wedded to that, so enamored of that idea, so in love with that property, what he, he Charles, wanted to do with that property that everything else got left behind. I know that Pat Pregmon was his legal person, for doing all of the things that were needed to be done for legal easement of what the land could be used for, and not be used for, what needed to be preserved, what needed to be protected for the eagles, etcetera, etcetera. That's where his energy was!

CG: How much of the resistance—

HW: And if the energy was that focused, and my point: what else was not being tended to?

CG: Being tended to? How much of the resistance to him—and this has always been a fairly progressive diocese. Even the experiences you had at Saint Jude's—Saint Jude's changed over time.

HW: Oh, well look at it now! Another story.

CG: Most parishes have. There were a few that were rebellious about women, and about gays, and what not. But Charles was a very—

HW: You know, Saint Jude's right now has a woman priest, and a member of the vestry who has a partner, and they hosted the most successful workshop on racism that I've attended all this last year. Now, how's that for righting?

CG: Yeah. Well, yeah, exactly. It's like the Philadelphia Phillies were the last team to integrate in the National League, and last year, in this past baseball season, they had more black players than any team in Major League Baseball. So, things do change.

HW: Things change, mm-hm.

CG: The interesting thing is that Bennison was perhaps the most supportive of women and gays of any of our bishops.

HW: Not true.

CG: Well, I think it may be true, but that's all right.

HW: Yeah, I'm speaking as observer, and the experience of some older women in the diocese who tried to get in the front door for the process. I'm not talking about old women; I'm just talking about women in their forties, thirties and forties.

CG: Okay. Well, he had an age problem. He didn't want to ordain them.

HW: He also did not want—he wanted Jeff Ross to go with him, after Jeff was ordained, to go around the diocese to recruit young men for the process.

CG: Okay. All right.

HW: Now, that's a factor I know is true.

CG: All right. Well, but he came across when he was elected, and certainly on the gay issue, and certainly on the ordination of women generally; whether or not he practiced it in the diocese because of financial or balance reasons, I don't know. But everybody—there weren't many parishes that were fully supportive of him. They ranged from the Good Samaritans, which was a fairly conservative, large, rich parish, to even Saint David's in Radnor, who didn't really pull out. But there was resistance across the board. Was it his imperiousness, do you think? His lack of willingness to—?

HW: I think that certainly was a part of it.

CG: His insensitivity?

HW: I need to speak up here, and say that as one who is observing all of this and making comment, I'm affected and biased by what I saw

happen to the resource center, what I saw happen to Wapiti, what I saw happen to some of my women friends who wanted to explore the process, and the consequences of all that. So that's my relationship with Charles, at this point. And it makes me sad.

CG: How do you think it could have been handled better? Because there's also the view among many that the standing committee overstepped, as well as the bishop overstepped. In other words, there's plenty of blame to go around.

HW: Once you start getting things wacky, wacky things happen.

CG: There's wacky everything, yeah. And the whole business that ended up in his being relieved of duty for those number of years—that was something that was brought in out of left field, really, because of the stuff that they were doing in diocese. How could it have been better handled? Could he have been more sensitive, and resigned earlier, retired earlier?

HW: I can't comment on that for two personal reasons. By 2005, we were losing George, and from 2005 to 2008, my attention was totally here, with George.

CG: Right. Sure.

HW: He eventually was in hospice, and our three sons were here, and it became such a strong family matter that—

CG: Everything else was—

HW: —everything else was secondary. I had been, the first four years, 2000 to 2004. I was deeply involved in the conference center at Adelynrood. In fact, I was a Companion in charge of discerners for those four years, which really took a lot of time. So I was really out.

CG: Of diocesan—

HW: I was not conscious of the comings and goings. I was aware that Marek was causing quite a stir in the diocese about taking such—

CG: Marek Zabriskie, the rector of Saint Thomas’.

HW: Yeah. He was vocal. I heard things here, there, and everywhere. But I was essentially out of it. And it’s only been since 2009, when Jeff Ross asked me to come down to Saint Peter’s, to be the inaugural speaker for his summer series, that he—

CG: Saint Peter’s, Third and Vine?

HW: No, Saint Peter’s, Lewes, Delaware.

CG: Oh.

HW: Yeah, he has a fabulous story going on there, and successful, doing incredible things with biblical studies in that congregation. He called me essentially out of retirement, and asked me to do the inaugural thing for his summer series that he does. And I laugh, because that put me back on the horse.

CG: Yeah, well, and one of the horses, or at least one of the places that the horses have driven you, is to the diocesan history committee, which because of Bennison, published the diocesan history. It wouldn’t have happened if it hadn’t been for him. This is the Jekyll and Hyde thing again. What do you think the role of the diocesan history committee, and more to the point, history, should be, as we move forward, since you’re participating in it?

HW: It can be summed up in very recent feelings. I give a lot of credit to Cliff. His report to the bishop of the history of this committee is really important. It’s the first I’ve seen.

CG: Cliff?

HW: Bill Cutler; excuse me.

CG: Oh, Bill Cutler.

HW: Sorry, I misspoke. Bill Cutler.

CG: Cliff Cutler is the rector of another church, yeah.

HW: I got my Cutlers mixed up. I was really impressed by that. There was no such thing as a really functioning history committee. It came out of the '97 convention.

CG: Right.

HW: That's how I was involved. In fact, that's how these meetings continued, because Charles asked me to set up a meeting here at Cathedral Village for the committee, and we've been having those. But nothing was really, except it got focused on the book. And not only were meetings here, but meetings were everywhere.

CG: Right.

HW: And the sad, sad story of what happened to our diocesan archivist. That happened under Lyman's time. What was that wonderful man's name?

CG: Glenn Colliver.

HW: Glenn Colliver. He was cut out of the budget line for the diocese, and he continued to work as archivist.

CG: Yeah.

HW: That man is a saint.

CG: Yes, he is. The other interesting thing is that the book, while not complete, and the fact that you can't cover everything in a book of 300 and whatever it is pages, covering 325 years, generated this program, which is an ongoing—this oral history program is an ongoing thing. Are you happy to be part of this program?

HW: This immediate—the oral history program?

CG: Yeah, the oral history project.

HW: I'm enjoying it, because I love my experience! I feel so incredibly blessed, and you can see why. Everything that has happened for me, within this church! Being rescued in Tulsa! [Laughs] Of all places!

CG: [Laughs] From the red letters!

HW: I was rescued. I found a foreign shore that became home. And that was it.

[End of Interview]